

# 25th Toronto film festival draws crowd, celebrities

TORONTO (AP) — After 10 days and more than 300 movies at the world's ultimate "people's" film festival, the people have spoken. Crouching Tiger, Hidden Tiger, Ang Lee's historical action-romance, was named the winner Sunday of the People's Choice Awards at the Toronto International Film Festival.

Lee is a native of Taiwan best known for such English-language movies as The Ice Storm and Sense and Sensibility. His current film, however, is set during the Qing dynasty in China and stars Chow Yun-Fat as a martial arts warrior who longs to retire.

"There's an innocence, a pure magic of movement to this movie," said festival director Piers Handling. "It takes you back to your childhood days, when people fly across rooftops and have sword fights in trees."

— Piers Handling  
festival director

and a half, lines formed in lobbies, down stairwells, around street corners and back again. Film lovers woke up early, went to bed late, used up vacation time and came out to see everything from Midnight Madness horror screenings to comedies in the morning.

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"I cut out of work to see a couple of movies," admitted 27-year-old Andrew Egan, a bank programmer who stood in the late summer cold one morning to catch a showing of The Dish.

Once a far more intimate affair, the Toronto festival can be likened to a small business that grows beyond its own expectations. The challenge becomes how to handle all the extra customers without losing what made it special in the first place.

"We were very worried a few years ago that the industry side would

crowd out the public side," Handling said. "So we just added press and industry screenings. In fact, it was press people who had a hard time getting to see movies."

Toronto has been known to "make" films. In 1999, response to American Beauty was widely believed to be a major step to its Academy Award success six months later. In previous years, productions such as Robert Duvall's The Apostle and the German action film Run Lola Run picked up U.S. distributors thanks to that mysterious, essential aura known as "buzz."

This year, however, there were no obvious favorites. Festival bees buzzed among several movies, including the Australian romance Innocence, the British comedy Billy Elliott and the American political drama The Contender.

For salespeople, the 25th Toronto festival was the busiest yet; Toronto now challenges Cannes and Sundance as an industry showcase. From the Iranian drama The Circle to the Thai gangster movie Bangkok Dangerous, films received distribution deals all over the world.

"This is my 10th festival and it was the most successful so far," said Wouter Barendrecht, chair of Fortissimo Film Sales, a company based in Hong Kong that represented Bangkok Dangerous and several other releases.

This was the 25th year of the festival, which ended Saturday, and it was marked by appearances from Gwyneth Paltrow, Al Pacino, Ed Harris and many other celebrities. But what defined the 25th festival is what has defined it from the start: the public.

Unlike Cannes, Toronto is where filmmakers get to show their work to a general audience. For the past week

# Serb forces massing in ethnic Albanian areas before elections

DOBROSIN, Yugoslavia (AP) — The leader of an ethnic Albanian rebel army in southern Serbia claimed Sunday that Serbian forces are massing in the Albanian-majority region in the run-up to Yugoslav elections.

The rebel group is prepared to fight back if the Serbs attack ahead of the Sept. 24 presidential and parliamentary elections, said Bexhet Mehmeti, a commander in the Liberation Army of Presevo, Medvedja and Bujanovac, known by its Albanian-language acronym UCPMB.

"The number of Serb forces has been increasing recently and continuously. There are reinforcements around this area," Mehmeti told reporters, flanked by two men armed with rifles and wearing uniforms with the group's red and black insignia.

Mehmeti claimed the Yugoslav government may try to distract attention from problems inside Serbia during the election by creating tension in the sensitive area near the U.S.-patrolled Kosovo boundary.

Belgrade considers the UCPMB a terrorist organization and blames it for numerous attacks on its forces. It also claims a number of Serbs have fled the region.

Mehmeti said the UCPMB would boycott next week's elections — a precedent set by rebel Albanians in Kosovo in the early 1990s.

The group first appeared in January. It is unclear how large the rebel force is, although it claims to have support and potential fighters throughout the ethnic Albanian majority area of southern Serbia.

NATO-led peacekeepers have repeatedly said they do not support the rebels' actions and have conducted several raids on suspected weapons stockpiles of the group inside Kosovo.

The peacekeepers moved into Kosovo last year, following NATO bombing aimed at halting Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's crackdown on ethnic Albanians in the province.

In Belgrade on Sunday, three student activists were sentenced to 10 days in prison each for spraying anti-government graffiti. A Serbian court found them guilty of violating "law and order."

Members of Otpor, which translates as "Resistance," the students were accused of scrawling "He's finished" on buildings in a Belgrade suburb Saturday.

The slogan referred to Milosevic, who hopes to be re-elected president. Independent polls show him trailing the leading opposition candidate Vojislav Kostunica.

Kostunica warned Saturday evening that Milosevic would use "thugs and liars" to rig the upcoming ballot if necessary to stay in power.

Also Sunday, 15 activists from the non-governmental Center for Free Elections and Democracy were arrested while attending a course for elections monitors in the central Serbian town of Knjic, the independent Beta news agency reported. They were released later in the day.

The group, which hopes to monitor the ballot, has been targeted by the authorities, who raided several of their offices recently.

AR KEY, Fla. (AP) — Tropical storm Gordon lost some strength as it charged toward the Gulf Coast on Sunday, but many of this nation's 800 residents are staying put.

ton proposes increased funds for nursing homes

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Clinton proposed spending more to remedy what he says is inadequate staffing at nursing homes, the "number one culprit" to neglect for too many Americans.

Clinton said he would "hard all their lives, respect, not neglect," Clinton said Saturday in his weekly address. He was broadcast in the Washington Home Careable nursing home not far from the White House.

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Republican-controlled Congress which expects to consider this fall, "will try to find middle ground" on a variety of issues, said John Czwartacki, spokesman for Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss.

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