

REPORTS



Juanita Wilson collects her award.



Casa del Cinema, Rome

Irish Film Festa

The 4th Irish Film Festa
(24–28 November 2010, Casa del Cinema, Rome)

It's the last day of the Irish Film Festa in Rome and the long queue of determined faces snaking out of the Casa del Cinema in Villa Borghese has sent the festival organizers into a spin. Where are they going to put everybody? Eventually they are forced to open a second screening room. For the next two hours Tomm Moore's *The Secret of Kells* plays to two separate but equally enthusiastic audiences. It's a chaotic but rousing finale to this, the fourth edition of the festival.

Five days earlier the festival kicked off with 'Going Irish', a meeting exploring the possibility of co-productions between Ireland and Italy. What was striking was the attitude of the Italian producers present. Long used to dealing with the drudgery of Italian bureaucracy they seemed staggered and slightly incredulous at the simplicity of film financing in Ireland. How could anything be so straightforward?

The idea of the cultural exchange lies at the heart of this festival. This is what has made it such a warm and engaging experience for those of us invited to present our work. Over its five-day run a string of recent Irish films have been screened including *His & Hers*,

Waveriders and *Nothing Personal* and each screening is bookended by discussions on Irish cinema and culture. It is clear that the predominantly Italian audience is taken by the strength and diversity of the films on display. This doesn't surprise the festival's artistic director Susanna Pellis. Since discovering *December Bride* in the early '90s, she has been a passionate supporter of Irish cinema and has authored two books on the subject.

Her hope is that the Irish Film Festa will become a highlight of Rome's busy cultural calendar. Judging by the packed houses all week it is well on its way there.

Pellis adds that 'The Irish Film Festa is the concrete meeting of two wishes: that of making Irish cinema better known abroad and that of sharing my own discovery of Irish films with Italian audiences. The name itself, Irish Film Festa, conveys the notion that meeting is the core of the festival, which is attended by filmmakers from Ireland as well as by Italian experts and artists. I firmly believe that Irish cinema, in particular that of recent years, is a unique phenomenon: small or great as its stories may be, they are all characterised by strong cultural connotations and by a magnificent blend between writing, acting and *mise-en-scène*. www.irishfilmfesta.org

Conor Morrissey