



Latest Technology Connects Multiple Venues of the Taormina FilmFest in Sicily

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(Barbara Klein *) The Taormina FilmFest expanded in 2009, adding three new open-air venues throughout the beautiful island of Sicily. In its 55 year history, the festival has screened films in the spectacular Teatro Antico of Taormina, with majestic Mt. Etna as its backdrop. Now spectators seated on the scenic staircase leading up to the Chiesa Madre in Palma di Montechiaro enjoyed the festival offerings on a large screen set in the Piazza Santa Rosalia; while those in Siracusa watched in the historic 13th century Castle Maniace and in Palermo in the suggestive Villa Filippina.

According to Executive Director Deborah Young 'It's totally unique and I expect several important film festival directors to come by and take a look at us, because it's a model that could be easily exported'. The additional venues allowed the festival to expand the number of films offered and dramatically increase the number of spectators during 2009.

With the addition of the three new venues, Deborah Young turned to long-time festival sponsor and technological partner Videobank Communication Service Provider to provide the technological support necessary for the expansion. During the closing award ceremonies, the four cities were connected interactively by live bi-directional satellite hook-up allowing the master of ceremonies and special guests at the various locales to interact and be seen by the spectators in the other cities.

The Taormina FilmFest has for several years been one of the most technologically advanced film festivals in the world, providing excellent services for print and TV journalists. Videobank provides wireless Internet connection throughout the Taormina venue and all the necessary services for TV journalists, such as mobile video camera operators and editors, and satellite uplink. And for the interactive closing ceremonies that were subsequently aired on RaiSat Extra, Videobank used four OB-VAN SNG units providing mobile broadcast studios, including mobile production facilities, mobile generators, and ten cameramen with broadcast cameras.

Festival organizers are already looking toward 2010 with plans to expand to more Sicilian cities and add daily interactive connections, with the objective of making the Taormina FilmFest in Sicily one of the largest and best attended film festivals in the world. With Sicily's breathtaking scenery and historic sites, it will undoubtedly be the most spectacularly set film festival in the world.

Barbara Klein
Film Critic