



Good ticket sales assure return of film festival

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The film festival will survive in Christchurch after ticket sales recovered this year from a post-earthquake slump.

Ticket sales for the New Zealand International Film Festival in the city rose 18 per cent this year, recovering from the 25 per cent drop in sales last year.

The festival suffered last year from the disruption of quakes and a three-day Antarctic blast that brought a heavy snowfall.

Festival publicist Nick Paris said: "The momentum was stolen by the polar blast last year and it flummoxed us.

Mother nature waited until after the film festival to dump all that hail on us this year. The weather suited us well because there were lots of cold, rainy days."

Paris said two films about Antarctica, *The Last Ocean*, directed by Christchurch film-maker Peter Young, and *Chasing Ice*, drew big crowds.

"Christchurch has always been a gateway to the Antarctic, so it is not surprising that those films scored highly," the publicist said.

Ken Loach's *Angel's Share* and Canadian drama *Mon-sieur Lazhar* were also popu-

lar.

This year's festival was the first time that more films were shown in a digital format than on traditional 35-millimetre celluloid.

Paris said the Christchurch festival needed a large auditorium to capitalise on popular films.

Historically, the Christchurch festival has sold fewer tickets per capita than Auckland and Wellington, which festival organisers believe is because the city does not have a large cinema to show popular films.

"We turned away a lot of people this year. We are turning away audiences, which is a good position to be in, but it is unfortunate for those that wanted to see films," Paris said.

Press chief film reviewer James Croot said the sales boost proved Christchurch was ready for movies again.

"People were more ready for it this year. I think people have got used to going to the cinema again after the quakes, and people are ready to see some arthouse stuff."



Ticket sales for the New Zealand International Film Festival in Christchurch are recovering after a post-quake slump

