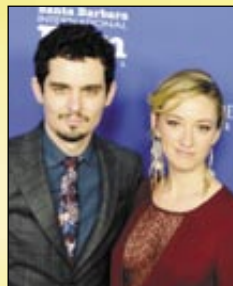


32
Santa Barbara
INTERNATIONAL
Film
FESTIVAL

STARS SHINE



Leonard Maltin with Maltin Modern Master Award Recipient Denzel Washington



La La Land Director Damien Chazelle and Olivia Hamilton



Casey Affleck and Michelle Williams were presented with the Cinema Vanguard Award



Outstanding Directors of the Year Award: Denis Villeneuve (*Arrival*), Ava DuVernay (*13th*), Barry Jenkins (*Moonlight*), Kenneth Lonergan (*Manchester by the Sea*), and Damien Chazelle (*La La Land*)



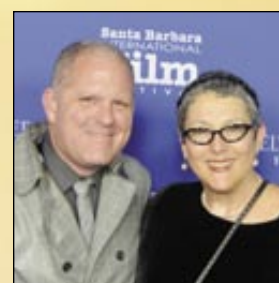
Ryan Gosling and Emma Stone were presented with the Outstanding Performers of the Year Award



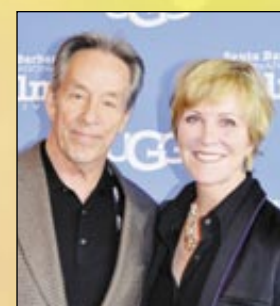
Eduardo Garcia from *Charged*



Charged Producer Dennis Aig and *Charged* Director Phillip Baribeau



Bruce Heavin and SBIFF Board President Lynda Weinman



Marc Appleton and Joanna Kerns



Variety Artisan's Award: Justin Hurwitz, Benj Pasek, Joe Walker, Jess Gonchor, Alessandro Bertolazzi, Alan Robert Murray, Kevin O'Connell, Mary Zophres, James Laxto, and Robert Legato



Laurie Leis and Montecito Bank & Trust COO George Leis



Montecito Award Recipient Isabelle Huppert

For the Film Festival Schedule see page 17 or visit www.sbiiff.org

The 2017 Virtuosos Awards The Illustrious Eight

By **Robert F. Adams** / Special to VOICE

A FULL HOUSE GOT TO MEET A SENSATIONAL GROUP OF ACTORS for the Virtuosos Awards, actors who have excelled in acclaimed films from the past year, on Saturday, February 4th at the Arlington Theatre. The honored this year were particularly distinctive, each having a wealth of experience under their belts. As a group their performances have garnered a combined 35 critical awards and nominations. The actors included Mahershala Ali (*Moonlight*), Naomi Harris (*Moonlight*), Simon Helberg (*Florence Foster Jenkins*), stage veteran Stephen McKinley Henderson (*Fences*), singer/actress Janelle Monáe (*Hidden Figures* and *Moonlight*), Ruth Negga (*Loving*), Dev Patel (*Lion*), and Aaron Taylor-Johnson (*Nocturnal Animals*). This slate was incredibly diverse, from films that explore poverty, racial discrimination, urban environments, and culture in empathetic ways. Screening short film clips and starting with one-on-one interviews with moderator and *The Today Show* entertainment journalist Dave Karger, provided a solid structure for the multiple interviews as all were welcomed to the UGG sponsored "living room set" after introductory remarks from Director Roger Durling.

Introduced first, the charismatic Mahershala Ali strode onstage. Ali played a sympathetic father figure to the young protagonist Chirone in *Moonlight*. Giving credit to writer-director Barry Jenkins' script, he exclaimed that he was "blown away" by the characters and the sympathetic look at race, poverty, and diverse sexuality in *Moonlight*. He then discussed an intentional transition from television parts to feature films, sharing humorous anecdotes from the swimming lesson scene, an important

moment in the first act of the film, with a fast storm approaching off the Atlantic Ocean, limited light, and a crew submerged underwater. Ali is a favorite to win the Best Supporting Actor trophy at the Oscars in late February. His costar in *Moonlight*, Naomi Harris was up next, and discussed the challenges of shooting within an overly-tight, three-day schedule, in which she convincingly portrayed the drug-addicted and abusive mother. Harris plays the only character in *Moonlight* that appears in all three acts, and displayed the tragic circumstances with an indelible sensitivity.

Simon Helberg followed, known for his work in the comedy series, *The Big Bang Theory*, he related how he chased the role of pianist Cosmé McMoon, playing for a tone deaf, over-assured opera singer in *Florence Foster Jenkins* played by the legendary Meryl Streep. An inventive comic-character actor with a gag-line writer's sensibility, Helberg has a promising future and kept the audience amused.

Next introduced was a 67 year old veteran of plays, the wise Stephen McKinley Henderson, who gave one of the most touching performances this year as Bono in Denzel Washington's film version of August Wilson's *Fences*. In discussing his long career, Henderson related that dreams are achievable and stated an observation regarding the perseverance of dreams, "All I can tell you is to just stay on the train, and it will eventually arrive at the station."

Next up was Janelle Monáe, recognized for her work in two movies released last year, the critically acclaimed *Moonlight* and in the historical drama *Hidden Figures*. She credited the directors, as well as her fellow castmates. In discussing her wide-ranging talents, she mentioned "I have always considered myself to not just be a singer, but mainly, I am an



Photo by Priscilla, SantaBarbaraSeen.com

2017 Virtuosos: **Stephen Henderson, Mahershala Ali, Dev Patel, Aaron Taylor Johnson, Janelle Monáe, Simon Helberg, Ruth Negga, and Naomi Harris**

artist-storyteller...I was always inspired by David Bowie and his concept albums in my music-making." Monáe has made a serious leap into film roles, catapulting her into a serious actress spotlight.

Following Monáe was Ruth Negga, nominated for a Best Actress Oscar for her role as Mildred, dramatized in the well-received drama about an interracial romance in *Loving*. Giving credit to her co-star Joel Edgerton and director Jeff Nichols, Negga seemed to glide across the stage and exuded an effortless quiet confidence. With her expressive large eyes she shared meaningful perspectives about inclusiveness and racial equality. Originally from Ethiopia and half-Irish, she is respected for her stage work in Dublin and London.

Dev Patel followed, honored for his work in *Lion*. This tall actor, effusive and enthusiastic, has brought his own special brand of charisma ever since he was introduced to worldwide audiences in the Oscar winning *Slumdog Millionaire*. Speaking to VOICE, he mentioned that his appearance at multiple film festivals, and awards functions sharing, "This year has been a magical journey for me. I am so appreciative that I was cast in *Lion* as I fell in love with the script

the first time I read it."

On his approach to his acclaimed portrayal, Patel revealed, "I allowed the camera to enter through my eyes, which was challenging to me at the time, but the director, Garth Davis, was helpful in so many ways."

Patel was followed by Aaron Taylor-Johnson who excelled at playing a murderous creep in director Tom Ford's *Nocturnal Animals*, saying, "I spent three months researching the inner turmoil of my character, learning about psychopaths, and abnormal behavior in order to create the character I had to play in the film."

To conclude this uplifting and inspiring evening, character-actor extraordinaire Christopher Lloyd (*Back to the Future*), offered an articulate tribute to the group as a whole, and handed out the inscribed awards one by one to each performer, in which the actors had a chance to thank their collaborators, thus completing an evening of compelling insights.

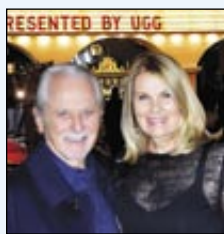
Robert F. Adams, a Santa Barbara landscape architect, is a graduate of UCLA's School of Theatre and Film, as well as Cal Poly. He has served on the film selection committees for the Aspen Film Fest and the SB International Film Festival. Email him at robert@earthknower.com.



Jeff and Margo Barbakow



Phyllis de Picciotto and Stan Roden



Barry and Jelinda De Vorzon

Anti-Defamation League Opening Night Soirée



Patrons and board members of ADL are **Rob and Judy Egenolf**, **Cyndi Silverman**, ADL Regional Director, and **Cindy and Steve Lyons**



Craig Zimmerman, The Towbes Group; **Kristin Chambers**, Santa Barbara Airbus; **Holly Gagnon**, Chumash Enterprises; and **David Edelman**



Robin and Bob Fell

CELEBRATING OPENING NIGHT OF THE **SANTA BARBARA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL** and presenting an award to a film, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) of Santa Barbara held a Soirée and red carpet event at Petros Restaurant, across from the historic Arlington Theatre on February 1st. ADL is a sponsor of the 32nd SBIFF.

The Soirée was the first event of what has been a star studded eleven day Film Festival that has put Santa Barbara on the international cinema map as a leading festival. This year 24 Academy Award nominees will or have attended. Also, this year's festival is representing films from 58 countries.

ADL presented the Stand-Up Award to the film *Strawberry Days*, which is about a Polish family's experiences of prejudice in Sweden. The film was written and directed by Wiktor Ericsson and will be screened at the festival.

Serving three counties, ADL Santa Barbara hosted over 100 people at the event.

For more info visit www.santabarbara.adl.org



Roger Durling, SBIFF Executive Director; **Cyndi Silverman**, ADL Regional Director; and **Dan Meisel**, ADL Regional Board Chair



Anti-Defamation League supporters **Robert Skinner, Angel and Frankie Martinez**, and **Meghan Skinner**