



NEWS RELEASE

AFI AWARDS 2008 MOMENTS OF SIGNIFICANCE ANNOUNCED

Annual AFI Almanac Names
Eight Moments of Significance in Film, TV and Web

LOS ANGELES, December 28, 2008—The American Film Institute (AFI) today announced the year's AFI Moments of Significance. These eight noteworthy events were determined to have had an impact on the world of the moving image during the calendar year 2008.

Each year, AFI AWARDS adds another volume to the history of American film and television by documenting the collective opinion of the moving image communities, archiving the year's significant moments and honoring the talent and collaborative teams who have created the year's outstanding accomplishments.

Ten AFI Movies of the Year and 10 AFI Television Programs of the Year were announced earlier this month. A complete list of the 2008 official selections and the 2008 juries can be found at AFI.com.

The 2008 AFI AWARDS selections were made through AFI's unique 13-person jury process in which scholars, film artists, critics and AFI Trustees discuss, debate and determine the most outstanding achievements of the year, as well as highlight these significant events that will shape our cultural legacy. Two AFI juries—one for motion pictures and one for television—convened in Los Angeles for two days of deliberations.

AFI will honor the creative ensembles for each of the selections at a luncheon sponsored by Hewlett-Packard on Friday, January 9, 2009 at the Four Seasons Hotel in Los Angeles, California. The luncheon is by invitation only.

CRITERIA

AFI Moments of Significance may include accomplishments of considerable merit;

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influences with either a positive or negative impression; trends, either new or re-emerging; anniversaries or memorials of special note; and/or movements in new technologies, education, preservation, government or other areas that impact the art film, television and digital media.

The AFI Moments of Significance selections are listed below:

AFI MOMENTS OF SIGNIFICANCE

SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE—A CELEBRATION OF THE GLOBAL FILM

SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE stands as a monument to the possibilities of cross-cultural storytelling. Danny Boyle's masterwork is rooted in the worlds of Dickens and Dumas but captures their spirit with a visual and narrative splendor that serves as a cinematic passport to a vibrant, modern India. A love story at its core, the film is also a powerful reminder that our global obsession with money leaves many of the world's children in need.

Also of significance, SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE is a signpost in America's search for greater authenticity in its stories. Subtitles—once an inconvenience to American audiences—are now expected and, in fact, demanded to confirm the universality of our daily, global experience.

Other films that reflect this cultural shift include GRAN TORINO, THE VISITOR, AUSTRALIA and television's HEROES.

TELEVISION AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES PROVIDE A GLOBAL ORACLE FOR AMERICA'S PRESIDENTIAL RACE

America's historic presidential race between Barack Obama and John McCain mesmerized a global audience like a long-running television series. Television and Web coverage played to each other's strengths, as every nuance of the long, arduous campaign was accessible for public celebration and scrutiny.

During this process, Obama not only won the election, but also took his place among those statesmen—from FDR's "Fireside Chats" on radio to JFK's telegenic performances in debates and news conferences—whose mastery of a new medium captured the public imagination.

Obama harnessed the power of the Internet for both messaging and fundraising, communicating with e-mails, online videos and social networking. His campaign crescendoed with a 30-minute infomercial that was transmitted simultaneously over several broadcast networks and cable channels in the closing days of the campaign.

New technology also helped to engage American citizens at unprecedented levels,

most notably with CNN's "Magic Map," which brought a greater understanding of the electoral process to a new generation.

NBC COVERAGE OF SUMMER OLYMPICS BRINGS THE WORLD TOGETHER

For 17 days in August, NBC marshaled the forces of today's technology to beam the spectacle of the 29th Summer Olympics from Beijing, China, to screens around the world. NBC supplemented their coverage on television with over 2,000 hours of video on-line, creating an immersive media experience that celebrated diverse cultures, as well as each country's place in a larger, global community.

The Opening Ceremony, directed and staged by acclaimed Chinese filmmaker Zhang Yimou, marked the most significant live event of the year—one staged with breathtaking pageantry and poetry. The Opening Ceremony was seen by nearly 2 billion viewers worldwide, with 70 million viewers in the United States—a record American audience for an Olympics on foreign soil.

AFI salutes the athletes from around the world that inspire audiences to reach for more—and to NBC, for capturing this historic event with such glory and grandeur, making us all players in these global games.

"AGE OF ANXIETY" AS BUSINESS MODELS FOR THE ARTS EVOLVE

Though the Writers Guild of America ended its strike in February, the tension between artists and executives continues. The one certainty in these uncertain times is that the film and television communities continue to redefine their business models for the digital age.

A significant moment in the evolution of content delivery was NBC and News Corp's launch of Hulu, the first popular effort to present premium content in a user-friendly, no-fee, on-line exhibition experience.

Seismic shifts in the television advertising model included NBC's announcement that *THE TONIGHT SHOW WITH JAY LENO* would be moving to prime time, marking a dramatic reduction of drama on network television. Meanwhile, narrative fiction on cable television continues to grow and flourish. And in a new twist, DIRECTV—a distributor—funded a third season of *FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS*, an hour-long high-quality drama supported by an ardent fan base too small for network television.

With the historic downturn in the American economy, these issues weigh even greater than ever—as America looks to the worlds of film, television and digital media for entertainment.

TINA FEY—AMERICA'S FIRST LADY OF LAUGHS

Tina Fey made the world laugh in 2008—an immeasurable gift in a year marked by ongoing war and an historic economic downturn.

Fey's impersonation of vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin served as a lightning rod for laughs when she appeared on the season premiere of SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE. As America entered the final months of a long and heated campaign, Fey captivated the country with the wink of an eye.

In addition to regular appearances as Palin on SNL, Fey also continued to serve as writer, producer and star of 30 ROCK, a weekly testament to her talents as America's first lady of laughs.

INDEPENDENT FILM ARTISTS FACE DISTRIBUTION CRISIS

2008 marked a year when many of the independent film divisions created by the studios—Paramount Vantage, New Line, Warner Independent and Picturehouse—were closed or folded back into their parent corporations.

Despite the unprecedented availability of filmmaking tools and the explosion of opportunity in on-line exhibition, the challenge for independent voices in American film is perhaps greater than ever. Now, an artist outside the studio system must also master finance and distribution to have their stories told.

This moment is best illustrated in 2008 by BALLAST—by writer/editor/producer/director Lance Hammer. When the heralded film struggled to find an audience through traditional means, Hammer took the movie back from the distributor and embarked on his own campaign to market the film.

FILM CRITICS LOSE VOICE

In 2008, many of the ardent voices of film criticism were silenced. Full-time posts at Time, Newsweek, The Los Angeles Times, The Village Voice and Newsday, among others, were eliminated as the circulation of newspapers and magazines declined. As a result, writing about film has moved to the Web—a world where authority can be lost among the voice of the masses.

AFI celebrates the global community of film lovers interacting on-line, but also encourages these conversations to honor and appreciate historical context in addition to personal opinion.

The year also marked the passing of iconoclastic film critic Manny Farber. Farber was a champion of genres overlooked by many critics—crime, westerns and horror films—whose raw energy he admired. Among the publications in which his words

appeared were The Nation, The New Republic and Film Comment.

DR. HORRIBLE OPERATES IN EXPLOSION OF SHORT FORM

In 2008, director/writer Joss Whedon's DR. HORRIBLE'S SING-ALONG BLOG was released as three 13-minute webisodes and quickly became a cult hit. The films mark another moment in the evolution of established artists presenting short films on-line—pioneered last year by Will Ferrell's THE LANDLORD.

This movement was catalyzed in part by the Writers Guild strike of 2007, when artists from film and television came together in greater numbers to express themselves in the short form, an integral part of the moving-image experience since the dawn of cinema.

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About the American Film Institute

AFI is a national institute providing leadership in screen education and the recognition and celebration of excellence in the art of film, television and digital media.

AFI trains the next generation of filmmakers at its world-renowned Conservatory, preserves the legacy of America's film heritage through the AFI Catalog of Feature Films, and explores new digital technologies at AFI's Digital Content Lab. For 37 years, the AFI Life Achievement Award has remained the highest honor for a career in film. **AFI's 100 Years . . .** series has introduced and reintroduced millions of film lovers to classic American movies. And as the largest nonprofit exhibitor in the United States, AFI's festivals include AFI FEST presented by Audi in Los Angeles, the AFI Dallas International Film Festival Presented by Target, Founding Sponsor Victory Park, and SILVERDOCS: AFI/Discovery Channel Documentary Festival in Silver Spring, Maryland, while offering year-round programming at the ArLight Theaters and Skirball Center in Los Angeles, and the AFI Silver Theatre and Cultural Center in the Washington, DC area. Additional information about AFI is available at AFI.com.

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

The complete jury rationales for each AFI AWARDS selection and the AFI AWARDS Moments of Significance will be distributed at a later date.

Press coverage of the AFI AWARDS luncheon is very limited and by invitation only. Photos and video footage will both be available through AFI immediately following the event on January 9, 2009.

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