



Day 4 Santa Barbara International Film Festival

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

The 34th Annual Santa Barbara International Film Festival (SBIFF) continued with the annual Producers and Writers Panels, as well as a special tribute to actor Viggo Mortensen.

Heavy rain throughout Santa Barbara County impacted traffic conditions and ultimately resulted in some changes to the scheduled programming, but the show still went on.

Moderated by Glenn Whipp from the Los Angeles Times, the Producers Panel featured Jim Burke (â??Green Bookâ?), Bill Gerber (â??A Star is Bornâ?), and Raymond Mansfield (â??BlacKkKlansmanâ?) as panelists. Discussion topics included what it takes to be a producer, saying â??no,â? awards season, the Academyâ??s popular film award, diversity, and advice for aspiring producers.

Next up, Paul Schrader (â??First Reformedâ?), Kevin Willmott (â??BlacKkKlansmanâ?), and Will Fetters (â??A Star is Born) participated in the Writers Panel, which was moderated by Anne Thompson from Indiewire. Over the course of the conversation, Schrader, Willmott, and Fetters covered a wide range of topics including their path to becoming a screenwriter, writing the most difficult scene in their respective films, endings, best work practices, the state of the industry, and upcoming projects.

The tribute for Mortensen consisted of an in-depth career retrospective discussion with Deadline awards columnist Pete Hammond, and concluded with Mortensenâ??s longtime friend and collaborator Ed Harris presenting the actor with the American Rivera Award.

During his introductory remarks for the tribute, SBIFF Executive Director Roger Durling thanked Santa Barbara Aviation and owner/pilot Max Rosenberg for their help getting Mortensen and Harris to the event, as the road closures would have most likely prevented them from getting into Santa Barbara via traditional routes.



Upon taking the stage, Mortensen was greeted with a standing ovation and he immediately thanked the audience for their patience.

Some highlights from the conversation that followed include:

- Mortensen on his love for soccer:
 - Note: During his introduction, Pete Hammond recounted an amusing anecdote of how he moderated what turned out to be a "beautiful Q&A" with Mortensen all while Mortensen watched a soccer game on a laptop that he brought with him onstage.
 - "I find it dramatic."
 - "I like seeing how people behave when things go well and things go badly. How do people behave when they win? How do people behave when they lose? That is inherently dramatic to me. How do you overcome a deficit, and if you don't, are you a good loser or are you a good winner?"
- Mortensen on how he decided to become an actor:
 - He came to the realization "relatively late" when he was 21/22.

- He started educating himself about cinema by going to revival movie houses where they would show films by Ozu, Bresson, Dryer, Bergman, etc..
- In the process he came across quite a few “spellbinding performances” (i.e. “that transported me”) and that made him consider: “I just wondered what the trick was how do these actors makes me feel that that is so real?”
- Mortensen on the early days of his acting career:
 - He recounted how he was cut out of films like Woody Allen’s “Purple Rose of Cairo” and Jonathan Demme’s “Swing Shift,” before he finally appeared in “Witness.”
 - “After some decades you look back and there seems to be some kind of order to your life, right? I would say that I was lucky that I did lots of small parts in plays, TV, movies, and many hundreds of auditions where you get close but you don’t get the part. But you’re practicing. You’re practicing all the time. You’re practicing working with different people each time, and you’re learning what is probably the two most important things I think for an actor, which is to be flexible to deal with all kinds of personalities and requirements and obstacles and to listen, to pay attention because the only way you’re going to be flexible really is well, what is coming my way now, I can’t do the same thing every time.”
- Mortensen on working with great directors:
 - “I always look at the script first.”
 - “It’s story, the role, and then who is directing. If I don’t get past the first two then it doesn’t matter who is directing.”
- Mortensen on David Cronenberg:
 - Note: During this part of the conversation, Hammond referred to Mortensen as Cronenberg’s muse during this part of the conversation.
 - “I just felt like I was in sync with him from the first day of “History of Violence.”
 - “It’s astounding to me that David Cronenberg, in nearly half-a-century of making movies he’s probably made, I would say conservatively, at least 8 movies that could,

and should have easily been nominated for an Academy Award.â?•

- Mortensen on the â??Lord of the Ringsâ?• films and fans:
 - He believes that the LOTR films opened the door for him to do films like â??A History of Violenceâ?• and â??Appaloosaâ?•
 - â??Itâ??s wonderful when anybody relates to your work or to the story youâ??re in because that is essentially why I got into it. I was relating in that way to what I was watching. I was fascinated with it and curious and you do get really good questions from people.â?•
 - He also related a fun anecdote about how he broke his tooth while filming the 2nd installment (â??The Two Towersâ?•) and then went into town (dressed in his costume) to get his tooth fixed by Peter Jacksonâ??s dentist.
 - The extended version of the first film is Mortensenâ??s favorite of the three because it involved the most human to human contact (not as much CG as the later films), and it was the closest to Tolkienâ??s actual words.
 - Mortensen on fight choreographer Bob Anderson:
 - ■ Note: During this part of the conversation, Hammond said that Bob Anderson remarked that Mortensen was â??without a doubt one of the best he had ever seenâ?• when it came to sword work.
 - He got to work with Anderson on the LOTR films and â??Alatriste.â?•
 - He shared an anecdote where Bob Anderson managed to best a very skilled fencer without much effort. [CLICK HERE TO WATCH.](#)
 - Mortensen on â??The Roadâ?•:
 - ■ â??I just loved the book and thatâ??s why I wanted to do it.â?•

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- It's not that far-fetched that movie. Every year it's less far-fetched unfortunately.
 - He reference climate change as one of the reasons why the premise of 'The Road' is not that far-fetched.
 - It's very moving and I like characters that are tested.
 - He shared an anecdote about how he helped convince Coca Cola to allow the production to use a can in a key scene. [CLICK HERE TO WATCH.](#)
 - Mortensen on acting:
 - ■ 'The foundation of good acting is good reacting.'
 - He said the reasons that the scenes in 'Green Book' are so funny is because of how Don Shirley (Mahershala Ali) reacts.
 - 'I've had so many good opportunities. I've been in so many good stories. Sue me if I complain about anything.'
 - Mortensen on 'Green Book':
 - ■ He praised Peter Farrelly's direction, saying that the film places Farrelly in the same league as Preston Sturges, Frank Capra, and Bill Wilder.
 - He remarked that one of the best results of the film has been that it has helped people discover/re-discover the music of Don Shirley.
 - Harris on Mortensen:

- ■ He recounted how Appaloosa came together and Viggo's involvement. [CLICK HERE TO WATCH.](#)
- "Viggo Mortensen is a man of his word. I don't think you can pay someone a much higher tribute."
- "He's a consummate pro, an incredibly talented actor, one hell of a human being, and my friend."



Category

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