HOLLYWOODGLEE, LLC
1226 N Salsipuedes Unit C 1(805)704-5994 |https://hollywoodglee.com Larry@HollywoodGlee.com



AFI Member Spotlight: Peyton Bradley, Philanthropist by Nature

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

AFI Member Spotlight: Peyton Bradley Discussing AFI FEST and Championing Diversity in the Industry

I, for one, am very excited to be a part of this yearâ??s virtual AFI FEST presented by Audi. Moreover, I am looking forward to hearing more from Peyton Bradley.

Peyton Bradley is a young philanthropist who generously provides major support for AFI. With a passion for the arts and helping underrepresented filmmakers gain greater opportunities within the film industry, Peyton also created the Peyton V. Bradley Scholarship at the AFI Conservatory.

This year, as we prepare for AFI FEST 2020, presented by Audi, we spoke with Peyton about her favorite moments at last yearâ??s FEST, watching Patty Jenkins inspire Fellows on the Opening Day of the Conservatory and what motivated her to become a member of AFI.

AFI: What is an inspiring or defining film that you saw in your life that made you fall in love with the art form?

Peyton: Thatâ??s like choosing your favorite child â?? you do it, but you keep it a secret. Growing up, I didnâ??t own a TV in my household, which meant skimming the internet for free content on YouTube or other sites. I got my hands on several films at age 14 that shook my concept of reality. My favorite â??childrenâ?• were: TEETH, PULP FICTION, SEXY BEAST, DONNIE DARKO, REQUIEM FOR A DREAM, FOXFIRE, LÃ?ON: THE PROFESSIONAL, HEATHERS and GIRL, INTERRUPTED â?? to

name a few. In a world full of rules, these characters became their own heroes, despite the limitations society placed upon them.

AFI: What made you first excited to get involved with AFI and decide to become a member? What is it about AFIâ??s mission that resonates with you?

Peyton: Iâ??m a philanthropist by nature â?? my momma always told me, â??If I have to give the shirt on my back to someone else, I best be doing it.â?• I love being involved in communities that preach their goals and put them into action. I still support the theaters and state parks where stages and campfires are the original spaces for storytelling. Growing up in a technological age, the film was the spark you could immortalize. I chose AFI because of its promise to take a predominately white male, patriarchal structure historically found in the film industry and step aside to give space to new voices. That space allows for female and diverse talent to tell their stories, to showcase their work, and to bring their unique perspectives and talent to the forefront.

AFI: You recently joined the AFI Conservatoryâ??s Opening Day online conversation with WONDER WOMAN director and AFI alum Patty Jenkins. What was that experience like for you? Did you have a favorite moment of the talk?

Peyton: Patty Jenkins, oh, Patty Jenkins. What an incredible human! It was moving to watch how the Fellows identified with her humble beginnings and her drive to take on bold challenges. I appreciated that MONSTER was the primary topic in the Q&A and how she managed to find the humanity in a personâ??s story where other people wrote the narrative that best suited them. The AFI Fellows were inspired by Patty and that she, too, once was an emerging artist who had the curiosity to find the truth and intention within her characters, without judgment. They laughed, cried, and expressed their love for Patty, and she returned it all back and ignited hope during these hard times.

AFI: As you know, AFI FEST presented by Audi is coming up. Last year was the first AFI FEST you attended. Did any films or events make an impact on you?

Peyton: I would have to say the premiere of QUEEN & SLIM. It was mind-blowing, packed full of energy that rippled through the audience. Writer Lena Waithe and director Melina Matsoukas tackled racial profiling and what self-defense means when the color of your skin can cost you your life. It offered the viewer a chance to see this love story unfolding, knowing that these two souls wouldnâ??t live long because of the deep-seated racism by those in power who promote hate crimes. How does one claim self-defense when the law is not on your side? It evoked compassion and the stark reality that life is fleeting. That beautiful masterpiece was felt by all.

AFI: For this yearâ??s AFI FEST, which of the special presentations are you excited about?

Peyton: PINK SKIES AHEAD. It is very fitting with whatâ??s happening today. Students are reconsidering college or leaving. Young adults who are forced to bury their anxiety or mental health challenges due to shame are now forming productive conversations. We have music artists like Billie Eilish, LDR, SZA, and Dizzy Fae boldly and openly talking about their own battles with anxiety and reforming their identities. We see in films as well, that gaslighting and societal expectations on what is â??normalâ?• further contributing to anxiety and mental health issues. New thinkers are reminding us that what you feel isnâ??t your fault, nor is it bad. It is okay to grow at your own pace.

Another one Iâ??m excited for is THE REAGANS, especially after watching THE POLITICIAN â?? props to AFI alum Brad Falchuk who wrote it â?? in which the opening scene talks about how becoming president no longer requires an educational standard but a celebrity status, and how television and social media are shaping campaigns. It is too surreal, and we all have to come together and fight for our democracy. So please vote!

AFI: Why do you think film festivals are still important, even as weâ??ve shifted online this year to keep everyone safe and healthy with the pandemic?

Peyton: We are social creatures. We want to share and connect around moments that impact us. AFI is making its virtual film festival an exciting party, and it feels unifying knowing that other individuals are watching the same content as you and being able to share the same experience.

Join Peyton and the AFI community at this yearâ??s virtual AFI FEST. Passes are now on sale. Tickets available Oct. 7. The festival runs online Oct. 15-22. Become a member and receive discounts to FEST films, events and exclusive festival merchandise.

(Source: AFI New Release)

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Date Created
October 5, 2020
Author
hollywoodglee