

ChloÃ© Zhao, David Fincher, Lee Isaac Chung, and Thomas Vinterberg receive the Outstanding Directors of the Year Award at SBIFF

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

CHLOÃ? ZHAO, DAVID FINCHER, LEE ISAAC CHUNG, AND THOMAS VINTERBERG ARE HONORED WITH OUTSTANDING DIRECTORS OF THE YEAR AWARD AT THE 36TH ANNUAL SANTA BARBARA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

The 36th Annual Santa Barbara International Film Festival (SBIFF) presented by UGG featured a tribute to this yearâ??s recipients of the Outstanding Directors of the Year Award, sponsored by The Hollywood Reporter. ChloÃ© Zhao (*Nomadland)*, David Fincher (*Mank*), Lee Isaac Chung (*Minari*), and Thomas Vinterberg (*Another Round*) received their awards during the live virtual event and discussed their work with The Hollywood Reporterâ??s longtime awards columnist and host of its popular Awards Chatter podcast, as well as a professor at Chapman Universityâ??s Dodge College of Film and Media Arts, Scott Feinberg.

Some of the highlights from the conversation included:

ChloÃ© Zhao on connecting with Francis McDormand: â??Sheâ??s so authentically herself and tries to live a life thatâ??s authentic to herself. And she brings that with her to whichever character she plays. When we first met, we both took off our shoes and sat on the floorâ?¦.that was pretty telling. We all know that she is an incredible actress, but for me it was most important for her ability to be vulnerable and to not always know the character in the moment, to not always know whatâ??s going to happen and yet be completely present.â?•

When speaking about the film *The Searchers*, Zhao noted, â??If there is a modern-day John Wayne, it is Francis McDormand.â?•

David Fincher on *Mank* and the script written by his father: â??My father was sort of raised in movie theaters. He was a latch key kid during the depression in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and had a fairly difficult relationship with his father who drank a lot. My grandfatherâ??s idea of taking care of little Jack was to

leave him in a movie theater for the 11 oâ??clock, 1 oâ??clock, and 3 oâ??clock so he saw the dream factor of Hollywood as very much a safe place to sort of nestling in and spend oneâ??s afternoons. *Mank* was a film that began with sort of a quest for a challenge, he was retiring and decided that he wanted to take a swing at writing a screenplay. He was the kind of person and writer who very much had a great deal of respect and almost awe for how screenplays were constructed. I mean that not in a highest-minded way, but he loved entertainment, he saw movies very much in the same way people now love television shows. So, for him, it was a way to go out into the world and to sort of experience anything else that was happening in Tulsa.â?•

Lee Isaac Chungâ??s objective of making *Minari* for his daughter: I came to a point in my work where I wasnâ??t sure of what I was doing, if what I was doing was really what I wanted to do, especially once my daughter came. I started to think more on the long term, what would it be that sheâ??s watching based on work that Iâ??ve made. That question stayed with me and haunted me quite a lot and so naturally I ended up coming to this point where I just started to want to make a film that she could have in the future. She was the age that the character of Alan [Kim] is in the story and that helped me kind of figure out how to write a story thatâ??s told from her perspective and also captures a little bit of what I see in her.â?•

Thomas Vinterberg on filming *Another Round* during a personally challenging time: â??As you know, I lost my precious daughter while making this movie and it has made this whole situation very different from anything Iâ??ve ever tried and hopefully anything Iâ??ll ever try again. It made this film precious to me. As we decided to make this movie for her. She died four days into shooting this film. She was supposed to be in it, she loved it dearly, she loved the whole project. Making this movie, I guess, kept me from insanity. The whole thing is inseparable from what we experienced with my daughter. All these people, including Madds, knew my daughter since she was born and we were all in grief, of course particularly myself and my family and we still are, and they carried me through, the actors and the crew of this film. There was so much love on the set, there was so much embracement and I hope you can see that on the screen.â?•

The honorees came together at the end of the discussion and spoke about what itâ??s been like meeting each other for the first time during this yearâ??s award season and participated in a rapid-fire list of questions from Feinberg. Here are the top things we learned:

On their â??Must Watch Filmâ?• this season:

- ChloÃ© Zhao â?? Ramin Bahraniâ??s *The White Tiger*
- Lee Isaac Chung â?? Eliza Hittmanâ??s *Never Rarely Sometimes Always*
- Thomas Vinterberg â?? Sofia Coppolaâ??s *On the Rocks*

On the one question they never want to be asked again about their current film:

- David Fincher â?? Did the film have to be in black & white?
- ChloÃ© Zhao â?? Why isnâ??t this a documentary?
- Lee Isaac Chung â?? Did I really feed my grandmother pee?
- Thomas Vinterberg â?? Were the actors drunk on set?

On the first thing to do post-pandemic:

- David Fincher â?? â??To go back to movie theaters and fly.â?•
- ChloÃ© Zhao â?? â??International travel, going back to China and eating the food I can digest.â?•
- Lee Isaac Chung â?? â??Drinking together again.â?•
- Thomas Vinterberg â?? â??To sleep a full night.â?•

SBIFF Executive Director Roger Durling provided glowing accolades to the recipients making filmic connections to their work that brought admiring smiles from me, Scott Feinberg, Chloe Zhou, and David Fincher. Thomas Vinterberg seemingly sat in a dumbfounded form of awe. Unfortunately, at the time of publishing, I did not have access to a clip that I might share as Durling is quite remarkable.

The Outstanding Directors Award was created to recognize a select group of directors who have pushed the boundaries in their storytelling and created films that showcase the art of filmmaking at its best.

The 36th Santa Barbara International Film Festival, presented by UGG, will continue through April 10th, 2021, online and with the two ocean-front drive-ins sponsored by TOYOTA. Tickets and passes are available at SBIFF.org.



About the Santa Barbara International Film Festival

The Santa Barbara International Film Festival (SBIFF) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit arts and educational organization dedicated to discovering and showcasing the best in independent and international cinema. Over the past 35 years, SBIFF has become one of the leading film festivals in the United States â?? attracting 100,000+ attendees and offering 11 days of 200+ films, tributes and symposiums, fulfilling their mission to engage, enrich, and inspire the Santa Barbara community through film. In 2016, SBIFF entered a new era with the acquisition of the historic and beloved Riviera Theatre. After a capital campaign and renovation, the theatre is now SBIFFâ??s new state-of-the-art, year-round home, showing new international and independent films every day. In 2019, SBIFF opened its own Education Center in downtown Santa Barbara on State Street to serve as a home for its many educational programs and a place for creativity and learning.

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Author
hollywoodglee