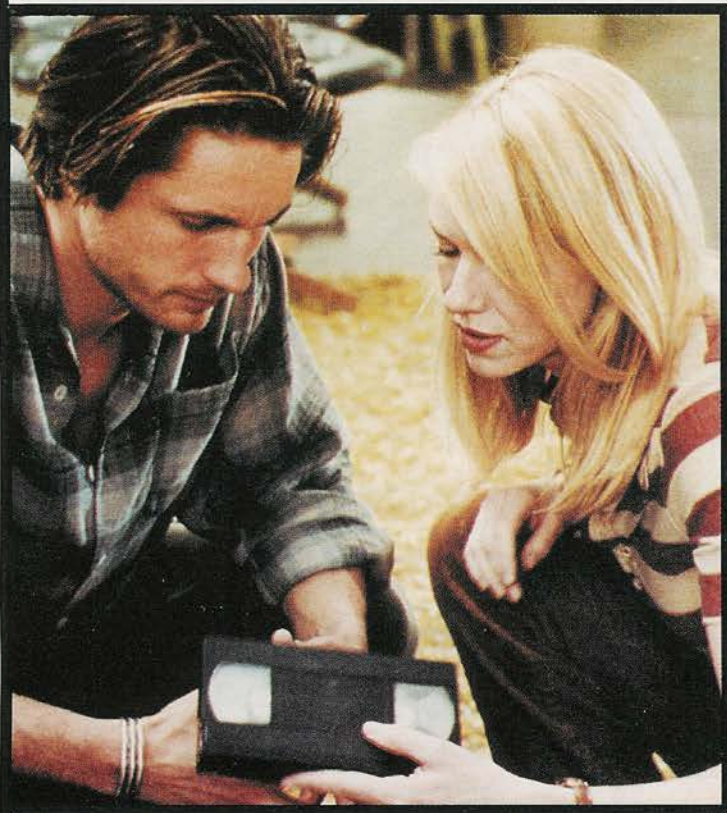


# SPOTLIGHT ON TALENT

## THE HOLLYWOOD MOVIE AWARDS ILLUMINATE AN ARRAY OF EXCEPTIONAL FILMMAKERS FROM IN FRONT OF AND BEHIND THE CAMERA

By Todd Longwell



### VISUAL FIXATION

Gore Verbinski's DreamWorks thriller "The Ring," a remake of the 1998 Japanese smash horror film "Ringu," opens the Hollywood Film Festival and stars Hollywood Movie Awards honoree Naomi Watts.

**P**roponents of the auteur theory believe that motion pictures are the unified vision of one person: the director. But in truth, filmmaking probably is the most collaborative of the arts, combining essential contributions not only from directors, actors, producers and screenwriters but also from cinematographers, editors, composers and casting specialists.

Nonetheless, historically, outside of the Oscars, nearly every film awards program has honored above-the-line talent and ignored other collaborators — unless the event in question is sponsored by a crafts guild, in which case it honors its own.

The Hollywood Film Festival's Hollywood Movie Awards, which take place on Oct. 7 at the Beverly Hilton, are one of the few exceptions to that trend.

"We felt that there was so much talent that does not have an opportunity to be recognized outside the guilds," says Carlos de Abreu, who co-founded the festival in 1997 with wife Janice Pennington. "This is not a criticism; that's just the way it was. We thought, Why not have a third party that would be able to recognize the work of everybody involved in all the disciplines of filmmaking?"

Discussing their work with this year's Hollywood Movie Awards honorees, it becomes clear that the creative elements involved in filmmaking do not involve simply a group of talented people doing their individual jobs well but a community of collaborators forever sticking their noses in each other's business, hopefully for the project's greater good.

Hollywood Outstanding Achievement in Screenwriting Award honoree Robert Towne knows the value of being a team player. The Oscar winner (1974's "Chinatown") worked closely with star Warren Beatty and director Hal Ashby on the script for their acclaimed 1975 film "Shampoo" ("Probably as much of a collaborative effort as you're going to get," Towne says), and more recently, he has enjoyed working with Tom Cruise to hone the scripts for 1996's "Mission: Impossible" and 2000's "Mission: Impossible 2."

But it's not always possible to have a meeting of minds.

"When I wrote 'The Last Detail' in 1970, there was a counter-reformation going on in Hollywood," says Towne, who also has directed his scripts for 1982's "Personal Best," 1988's "Tequila Sunrise" and 1998's "Without Limits." "They worried that they loosened up things too much and the script was a little too raw.

"I had this meeting with David Begelman, who was running Columbia at the time. He said, 'Wouldn't 20 "motherfuckers" be more dramatic than 40 "motherfuckers"?' And I said, 'No, David; it might be more dramatic, but the whole point of "motherfucker" is these guys are not men of action — they're lifers in the Navy ... thoroughly browbeaten by the system. The swearing is an expression not of their power but of their impotence. The more they swear, the more impotent you see them as being; if you do that, you're not going to make the point.' And he said, 'Well, we can't make this movie.' Then (star) Jack (Nicholson) became better and better known, and he was able to get it made as written a couple of years later (in 1973)."

Of course, studios and the executives who run them can have a positive influence on the creative process. Hollywood Richard Sylbert Outstanding Achievement in Production Design Award honoree Harold Michelson, for one, longs for the days when those executives had more control.

"If (I) were to get a picture today, I'd have to get myself draftsmen and sketch artists and people like that and call them up," says Michelson, who began his career as an apprentice illustrator at Columbia Pictures in 1949 and later earned an Oscar nomination for his work on 1979's "Star Trek: The Motion Picture." "With the studio system, you were usually assigned these people, or you'd say,





## VENGEANCE IS THEIRS

Starring Ray Liotta, left, and Jason Patric, writer-director Joe Carnahan's gritty *Lions Gate/Paramount* release "Narc" closes the fest.

'I want so-and-so upstairs on the picture.' It was like a family, and you knew who were the specialists were; it was a very well-organized setup."

Editors always have been a vital cog in the film-making machine. Some think of them as nothing more than manipulators of images, but Hollywood Outstanding Achievement in Editing Award honoree Pietro Scalia believes that they also can be deputy directors in a sense, shaping and modulating an actor's performance.

"On (1997's) 'Good Will Hunting,' (director) Gus Van Sant let the actors do a lot of improv, usually three or four takes," says the two-time Oscar winner (1991's "JFK," 2001's "Black Hawk Down"), who has enjoyed fruitful multifilm relationships with helmers Oliver Stone, Bernardo Bertolucci and Ridley Scott. "But with Robin (Williams), he'd let him do a lot of takes, and I was wondering why because I thought Robin's performance was great, and he had it in the first few takes — but he kept going on and on. Then one time I asked Gus, and he said, 'Well, Robin asked me to give him another one and give him another one — and I do it. You never know what comes out of it.'

"But I felt that the more that it would progress, the more precise and artificial it became. He'd be in some argument, and he'd get bigger and louder and not necessarily as interesting as the early takes that were more tentative and uncertain, which I felt was better for the character. So I limited myself to the early takes, and Gus agreed with me. There was something fresh; it probably had to do with even the actor not knowing all his lines properly, all the movements. It was a major difference in terms of going from someone big and loud to someone quiet who would listen a little bit more. When I showed it to Robin, he said, 'You guys did an amazing job, but I remember there were other takes.' But he liked what he saw."

Williams liked it even more when his performance earned him an Oscar for best supporting actor.

"He sent me a nice letter saying something like, 'You made the kindest cut of all,'" Scalia says.

Hollywood Outstanding Achievement in Songwriting Award honoree Carole Bayer Sager already had written the lyrics to several pop hits before teaming with then-husband Marvin Hamlisch to craft "Nobody Does It Better," the theme to the 1977 James Bond film "The Spy Who Loved Me," which earned the couple an Oscar nomination for best original song. Sager discovered quickly that she had a collaborator in addition to the one sitting behind the keyboard: the director.

"Unless a song is coming very early in a scene to propel it, which is more like a Broadway play, most directors don't want a song to tell a story they just told," says Sager, who won an Oscar in 1982 for "Arthur's Theme (Best That You Can Do)," co-written with Peter Allen and Burt Bacharach. "They'd rather it capture an essence of the soul of the film, and sometimes they know better than other times. When I worked with (composer) Carole King and (director) Nora Ephron on 'Anyone at All' for (1998's) 'You've Got Mail,' Nora was specific about a certain sound. She's not a musician, so she couldn't tell you exactly what sound, but she could say that it's a sound you hear in a child's music box; she felt there was a melodic innocence that she was looking for in that song."

Pleasing the director also is of utmost importance to Hollywood Outstanding Achievement in Casting Award honoree Marcia Ross, who during her 23 years as a casting director has worked on a diverse list of major films, including 2001's "Pearl Harbor" and "The Princess Diaries," 1999's "The Sixth Sense" and 1998's "Armageddon."

"I try to work very closely with the directors to figure out what it is that they want that's going to make them happy, and at the same time what's going to be best for the movie and my studio," says Ross, who as senior vp casting at Walt Disney Studios not only is casting director on several projects a year but also hires casting directors to work on other studio projects.

One of Ross' more delicate duties is persuading reluctant directors to cast the actors that she believes are right for certain roles.

"Part of the casting director's job is having a lot of tact and grace for guiding people toward what you hope is what's best for their movie," Ross says. "But you have to do it in such a way that makes everybody feels good about it; no one should ever feel pressured. I always feel I owe it to myself to say how I feel, but you try to say it in such a way that makes everybody really feel open."

Even those who believe that filmmaking is the ultimate act of collaboration, as does Outstanding Achievement in Acting Award honoree Jodie Foster, acknowledge that the auteur theory has validity.

"I was taught that basically the director is always right," says the two-time Oscar-winning actress, who has helmed two films (1991's "Little Man Tate" and 1995's "Home for the Holidays"). "It's his movie, and you're there to serve him; I still believe that. No matter how inexperienced the director is, and even if he doesn't know what he wants, you're still there to serve his vision; you just have to find out what that vision is — and you need to find it out very early on because if you're on different tacks, then you need to not do that movie." ■

# 2002 HMA Honorees



LEADERSHIP AWARD  
**Jack Valenti**



TEX AVERY ANIMATION AWARD  
**Jeffrey Katzenberg**



OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN DIRECTING  
**Martin Scorsese**  
"Taxi Driver," "Raging Bull,"  
"GoodFellas," "Casino,"  
"Gangs of New York"



OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN ACTING  
**Jodie Foster**  
"Taxi Driver," "The Accused,"  
"The Silence of the Lambs," "Nell,"  
"Panic Room"



OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT  
IN PRODUCING  
**Douglas Wick and Lucy Fisher**  
"Girl, Interrupted," "Stuart Little,"  
"Gladiator," "Stuart Little 2"



OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN SCREENWRITING  
**Robert Towne**  
"The Last Detail," "Chinatown," "Heaven Can Wait,"  
"Mission: Impossible"



OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN  
CINEMATOGRAPHY  
**Janusz Kaminski**  
"Schindler's List," "Jerry Maguire,"  
"Saving Private Ryan," "Minority Report"



OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN EDITING  
**Pietro Scalia**  
"JFK," "Good Will Hunting," "Gladiator,"  
"Black Hawk Down," "Hannibal"



RICHARD SYLBERT OUTSTANDING  
ACHIEVEMENT IN PRODUCTION  
DESIGN AWARD  
**Harold Michelson**  
"Catch-22," "Star Trek: The Motion Picture,"  
"Terms of Endearment," "Dick Tracy"



OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN CASTING  
**Marcia Ross**  
"Armageddon," "The Sixth Sense,"  
"Pearl Harbor"



OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT  
IN SONGWRITING  
**Carole Bayer Sager**  
"The Spy Who Loved Me," "All That Jazz,"  
"Arthur," "You've Got Mail"



OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN MUSIC  
**Marc Shaiman**  
"When Harry Met Sally ...," "Sleepless in Seattle,"  
"The American President"

## Hollywood Breakthrough Awards



**McG** — Director  
"Charlie's Angels," "Fastlane,"  
"Charlie's Angels 2"



**Naomi Watts** — Actress  
"Flirting," "Mulholland Drive,"  
"The Ring"