

Palm Springs Film Festival 2009

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Friday, 09 January 2009
Last Updated Friday, 09 January 2009

Palm Springs Convention Center

Tuesday, January 6, 2009

Story and photography by Pat Krause

The 20th anniversary of the Palm Springs International Film Festival held its annual Gala on Tuesday, Jan. 6, at the Palm Springs Convention Center. It is usually held on a Saturday evening, but due to conflicts with an awards show in Los Angeles, festival officials decided to hold it this year on a weeknight. They were concerned that some of the actors and directors would not be able to make it during a weekday. That proved wrong as most could commute from L.A. for the night. I think the weekday gala might just prove to be the best idea yet. The crowds gathered early along the fenced area across the road from the Palm Springs Convention Center along Avenida Caballeros.

Celebrities walked the Red Carpet so all the fans could see them as they embarked from the limos. Each time a celebrity would make an appearance, the fans would scream and yell out the celebrity's name. It worked magic as Anne Hathaway, Dustin Hoffman and Ben Stiller all walked across the road to greet the fans and sign autographs for many. Hoffman, the great celebrity that he is, spent a lot of time going the whole length of the area to greet them

Anne Hathaway

all. What a great guy, as I am sure all the fans would agree. Others took time to greet some of the fans too.

Each celebrity conducted interviews as they arrived for the television cameras. They would then walk the Red Carpet in front of the many photographers who always shout, "Turn this way," or "look to your right," or "turn to your left." Shouts from the photographers were almost as loud as the crowd's, as each tried to get just the right photo. Most of the celebrities walked slowly and posed for the photographers. At other galas in years past, some of the celebrities chose not to walk the Red Carpet and just went into the ballroom for the awards.

Sean Penn

Notoriously camera-shy Sean Penn chose not to do that last year, so it was a real treat when he walked the Red Carpet this year. He tried to hurry past the photographers, but they yelled loud enough that he came back for a few photos. This is his second award in two years. The list of celebrities was huge this year. A few local celebrities who were not listed came to the Red Carpet, which was a special surprise for all.

Actress Amy Adams of "Doubt" received the Spotlight Award. Young Dakota Fanning who starred in "The Secret life of Bees," was presented the Rising Star Award. Beautiful Hathaway won the Desert Palm Achievement Award that was presented by another beauty, Rosemarie Dewitt. Actor James Cromwell from "W" presented Freida Pinto of "Slumdog

Millionaire" with the Breakthrough Award. The Ensemble Performance Award went to the Cast of "Revolutionary Road" with stars Leonardo DiCaprio, Kathy Bates, Zoe Kasan and others. DiCaprio accepted the award for the cast.

Gus Van Sant earned the Sonny Bono Visionary Award that was presented by Josh Brolin, "W" and absent congresswoman Mary Bono Mack She had to be in Washington, D.C., for the seating of Congress.

Stiller, actor and comedian, presented the Chairman's Award to actor Hoffman.

Dustin Hofman

He joked that Hoffman was 92 and he was the reason that short Jewish actors are allowed to be leads in movies. Hoffman came back by saying that looking around the audience the median age of the audience meant it was not the MTV awards.

Actor and director Ron Howard earned the Director's Lifetime Achievement Award as presenter Frank Langella joked he wasn't old enough to have made all these fabulous films to get this award.

Penn received his second award in two years. This time it was the Desert Palm Achievement Award for acting in his new film "Milk."

Clint Eastwood

The final award for the evening went to legendary Oscar Winner Clint Eastwood. Actor and some-time co-star, Donald Sutherland presented the Career Achievement Award to Eastwood for all his accomplishments in the film industry from acting, producing and directing movies. He mentioned that Eastwood doesn't mince words.

"He comes right to the point. He will call and ask if you would be interested in a part in a film he is directing for \$100,000? You say, can I have a couple days to raise the \$100,000," Sutherland said.

One of Eastwood's latest films is "Gran Torino." He said you start your career as a young guy and end up an old car. Film clips were shown for all the honorees. "Entertainment Tonight" hostess-with-the-mostess Mary Hart was the emcee for this grand affair again this year. Her wit and expertise as an emcee keep this awards ceremony one of the best.

Little did Sony Bono know when he started this festival it would become one of the top Film Festivals in the country.

It keeps growing thanks to some top management and dedicated hard work of staff. This year's sales have topped last year's.

That says a lot for the festival in this economy.

Special thanks to all the staff and management of the Palm Springs International Film Festival and Palm Springs Convention Center for their assistance and cooperation.

For more information about the Palm Springs International Film Festival, [click here](#).

For more information about the Palm Springs Convention Center, [click here](#).

For more information about Anne Hathaway, [click here](#).

For more information about Dustin Hoffman, [click here](#).

For more information about Ben Stiller, [click here](#).

For more information about Sean Penn, [click here](#).

For more information about Amy Adams, [click here](#).

For more information about Gus Van Sant, [click here](#).

For Leonardo DiCaprio's official Web site, [click here](#).

For more information about Ron Howard, [click here](#).

For more information about Donald Sutherland, [click here](#).

For more information about Clint Eastwood, [click here](#).

For more Palm Springs Film Festival photographs by Pat Krause, [click here](#).