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## "Monsieur Lazhar" Named 2012 Best Picture at CAIFF

Laurie Snyder



Back row, from left: Leonard Pirkle, Patricia Philipopoulos, Cuong Ngo, Dave Trotter, Sherry Shahrooz, George Eliopoulos, Joanne Foy, Pete Crooks; front row: Edy Schwartz, James Madio, Karen Mendonca, Beau Behan, George Retelas Photo Andy Scheck

respect for one another was evident.

And Young was clearly touched by the audience's standing ovation, saying, "It's quite an honor. Thank you for caring."

Both later dished about what it was like to work with Sylvester Stallone.

The festival continues with a special screening of "Little Women" at the Orinda Theatre Wednesday night and more Hollywood insider tips on tap with screen legend Margaret O'Brien ("Meet Me in St. Louis") on Thursday at the New Rheem Theatre.

Key 2012 Slate Award Winners

Best Picture: "Monsieur Lazhar"

Best Director: Viktor Chouchkov ("Tilt")

Best Actress: Melissa Leo ("The Sea Is All I Know")

Best Actor: James Madio ("Applebox")

Best Cinematography and Best Music: "Pearls of the Far East"

Best Short: "The Stand-In"

Best Mini-Short: "Franklin"

Best Documentary: "The Power of Two"



The Opening Night reception at the 14th California Independent Film Festival drew enthusiastic crowds. Photo Tod Fierner

A Canadian film about a teacher who transforms his pain in order to help his students transcend theirs has been on the lips of audience members and minds of reviewers since the opening of Lamorinda's 14th Annual California Independent Film Festival (CAIFF).

Written and directed by Philippe Falardeau and nominated for a 2012 Academy Award as Best Foreign Language Film, "Monsieur Lazhar" took Best Picture at CAIFF'S 2012 Slate Awards last Saturday night at Moraga's New Rheem Theatre.

The awards were emceed by San Francisco film critic and historian, Jan Wahl, who said of the Rheem, "This is OUR Cinema Paradiso."

Wahl also moderated a Q&A with Talia Shire and Burt Young, two of the Academy Award-nominated stars from the 1976 Best Picture Oscar-winner, "Rocky." Shire, whose wedding dance with Marlon Brando in "The Godfather: Part II" was one of that film's most memorable scenes, was on hand to honor Young who was recognized with the Slate Lifetime Achievement Award.

Applause, punctuated by cheers, built with each clip shown of Young's work - as Curly in "Chinatown," as Bed Bug Eddie in "The Pope of Greenwich Village," and in "Transamerica" and "Win Win."

"When I heard that Burt Young was being honored," said Shire, "I had to come." Their genuine affection and



Sue Olsen and Ben Olsen addressed the crowd as part of the opening ceremonies. Photo Tod Fierner



After the screening of "Five Time Champion" on opening night, Orinda resident and popular NBC Bay Area news anchor Diane Dwyer conducted a Q&A with Ezra Benito, director Berndt Mader and actor Jon Gries. Photo Andy Scheck



From left: Talia Shire, Lifetime Achievement award winner Burt Young, and Jan Wahl Photo Andy Scheck

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