

FILM INDEPENDENT SPIRIT AWARDS

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Contact: Alia Quart Khan, Film Independent

Tel: 310.432.1287 or aqkhan@filmindpendent.org

Gina Pence, Ginsberg/Libby

Tel: 323.645.6800 or gina.pence@ginsberglibby.com

2016 FILM INDEPENDENT SPIRIT AWARDS FILMMAKER GRANT WINNERS ANNOUNCED

**Spirit Awards Winners To Be Revealed on Saturday, February 27
Broadcasting Live on IFC at 2:00 pm PT / 5:00 pm ET**

LOS ANGELES (January 9, 2016) - Film Independent, the nonprofit arts organization that produces the Spirit Awards and the LA Film Festival, announced the winners of its three Spirit Awards filmmaker grants today at its annual Spirit Awards Nominee Brunch held at BOA Steakhouse in West Hollywood. Uzo Aduba and Rami Malik co-hosted the event and handed out the honors.

"This year's recipients of the Spirit Award cash grants are so talented and we're thrilled to be able to support them in this way," said Film Independent President Josh Welsh. "Our hope is that these unrestricted grants will enable the filmmakers to continue to make great and daring work."

Mel Eslyn received the Piaget Producers Award. The award honors emerging producers who, despite highly limited resources, demonstrate the creativity, tenacity and vision required to produce quality, independent films. The annual award, in its 19th year, includes a \$25,000 unrestricted grant funded by Piaget for the 9th year. Finalists for the award were Darren Dean, Rebecca Green and Laura D. Smith.

Felix Thompson, director of *King Jack*, received the Kiehl's Someone to Watch Award. The award recognizes talented filmmakers of singular vision who have not yet received appropriate recognition. The award is in its 22nd year and includes a \$25,000 unrestricted grant funded by Kiehl's Since 1851. Finalists for the award were Robert Machoian & Rodrigo Ojeda-Beck directors of *God Bless the Child* and Chloé Zhao director of *Songs My Brothers Taught Me*.

Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi, director of *Incorruptible*, received the Truer Than Fiction Award. The award is presented to an emerging director of non-fiction features who has not received significant recognition. The award is in its 21st year and includes a \$25,000 unrestricted grant. Finalists for the award were Mohammed Ali Naqvi and Hemal Trivedi directors of *Among the Believers* and Elizabeth Giamatti and Alex Sichel directors of *A Woman Like Me*.

This year marks the 31st edition of the awards show that celebrates the best of independent film. Announced earlier this month, Joel Gallen of Tenth Planet Productions returns for his second year as executive producer of the show held in its usual tent on the beach in Santa Monica, in a new location this year just north of the Santa Monica Pier. Producer Shawn Davis returns for his 14th show and Rick Austin returns for his second year as producer.

Winners for the remaining categories will be revealed at the 2016 Film Independent Spirit Awards in a tent at Santa Monica beach on Saturday, February 27. The awards ceremony will be broadcast live exclusively on IFC at 2:00 pm PT / 5:00 pm ET.

In addition to celebrating the broad spectrum of independent filmmaking, the Spirit Awards is also the primary fundraiser for Film Independent's year-round programs, which cultivate the careers of emerging filmmakers and promote diversity in the industry. To learn more about donations, table sales and attendance, please contact jmurby@filmIndependent.org or 310.432.1253.

To download the new Film Independent Spirit Awards logo, [click here](#)

ABOUT THE FILM INDEPENDENT SPIRIT AWARDS

Now in its 31st year, the Film Independent Spirit Awards is an annual celebration honoring artist-driven films made with an economy of means by filmmakers whose films embody independence and originality. The Spirit Awards recognizes the achievements of American independent filmmakers and promotes the finest independent films of the year to a wider audience.

The winners of the Spirit Awards are voted upon by Film Independent and IFP Members. Awards are given in the following categories: Best Feature, Best First Feature, Best First Screenplay, Best Director, Best Screenplay, John Cassavetes Award (given to the best feature made for a budget under \$500,000), Best Male

Lead, Best Female Lead, Best Supporting Male, Best Supporting Female, Best Cinematography, Best Editing, Best International Film, Best Documentary and the Robert Altman Award. The Filmmaker Grants include the Piaget Producers Award, the Kiehl's Someone to Watch Award and the Truer Than Fiction Award. The Film Independent Spirit Awards are sponsored by Premier Sponsors Piaget, Bank of America, Heineken, American Airlines, Jaguar and IFC. FIJI Water is the Official Water of the 2016 Spirit Awards. WireImage is the Official Photographer of Film Independent.

[Click here](#) to see the list of this year's nominees.

ABOUT FILM INDEPENDENT

Film Independent is a nonprofit arts organization that champions independent film and supports a community of artists who embody diversity, innovation and uniqueness of vision. Film Independent helps filmmakers make their movies, builds an audience for their projects, and works to diversify the film industry. Film Independent's Board of Directors, filmmakers, staff and constituents is comprised of an inclusive community of individuals across ability, age, ethnicity, gender, race and sexual orientation. Anyone passionate about film can become a Member, whether you are a filmmaker, industry professional or a film lover. In addition to producing the Spirit Awards, Film Independent produces the Los Angeles Film Festival and Film Independent at LACMA Film Series, a year-round, weekly program that offers unique cinematic experiences for the Los Angeles creative community and the general public.

With over 250 annual screenings and events, Film Independent provides access to a network of like-minded artists who are driving creativity in the film industry. Film Independent's Artist Development program offers free Labs for selected writers, directors, producers and documentary filmmakers and presents year-round networking opportunities. Project Involve is Film Independent's signature program dedicated to fostering the careers of talented filmmakers from communities traditionally underrepresented in the film industry.

For more information or to become a Member, visit
filmindependent.org/membership.

About IFC

IFC is the home of offbeat, unexpected comedies. Series like *Portlandia*, *Documentary Now!*, *Maron* and *Comedy Bang! Bang!* air alongside fan-favorite movies and comedic cult TV shows. IFC is owned and operated by AMC Networks Inc., and available across multiple platforms. IFC is *Always On Slightly Off*.

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