



**AFI CONSERVATORY CELEBRATES 50TH ANNIVERSARY
WITH STELLAR ALUMNI TURNOUT
AT GREYSTONE MANSION**

**AFI Community Comes Together to Honor
The Conservatory's Legacy of Training Trailblazing Storytellers**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, Thursday, September 19, 2019, Los Angeles, CA — The American Film Institute celebrated the 50th year of the AFI Conservatory with an elegant, star-studded reception at Greystone Mansion in Beverly Hills, which served as the Conservatory's original home during its formative years. Members of the AFI community, including nine of the 18 Fellows from the first class, attended the event to mark the milestone. Since it first opened its doors on September 23, 1969, the AFI Conservatory has evolved into a fully accredited MFA program that is continuously ranked as one of the best film schools in the world.

AFI Founding Director George Stevens, Jr., President Emerita Jean Picker Firstenberg and current AFI President & CEO Bob Gazzale honored the anniversary of the Conservatory. Recalling the early Fellows' revolutionary spirit spurred by the political climate, Firstenberg said, "The Center was the heart and soul of the AFI, but you must remember that it was born at a turbulent time in our nation's history — and its first decade reflected that. It was a creative crucible — brilliant minds seizing on cultural unrest to find inspiration in the spirit of rebellion."

Stevens, Jr. observed the wealth of talent that the Conservatory attracted even early on, with guests for the first week including, "writers, Ray Bradbury, Dalton Trumbo and Budd Schulberg; directors Sam Peckinpah, Rouben Mamoulian, Gene Kelly, Don Siegel and Robert Wise; and composer Henry Mancini. The tradition that began fifty years ago is to this day the heartbeat of our Conservatory."

AFI alumni who gathered for the momentous occasion included inaugural class Fellow Caleb Deschanel (Class of 1969), Pieter Jan Brugge (Class of 1979), Jay Cassidy (Class of 1976), Susannah Grant (Class of 1991), Liz Hannah (Class of 2009), Marshall Herskovitz (Class of 1975), Mel Jones (Class of 2010), Matthew Libatique (Class of 1992), David Lynch (Class of 1970), Melina Matsoukas (Class of 2005), LaToya Morgan (Class of 2005), Rachel Morrison (Class of 2006), Wally Pfister (Class of 1988) and Mark Waters (Class of 1992).

As the evening came to a close, Stevens, Jr. said, "In the audience tonight is the fruit of AFI's existence. Accomplished filmmaking fellows from the past fifty years — I could recite your credits and awards 'til the sun comes up, but — I will simply request that you stand, so we can all acknowledge your proud place in AFI's legacy — and its future."

This has been an extraordinary anniversary year of achievements for Conservatory Fellows and alumni including this month's sweep of the Narrative Category at the Student Academy Awards®, as well as festival recognition and beyond.

About the AFI Conservatory

Celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, the AFI Conservatory opened its doors in 1969 to an inaugural class that included Terrence Malick, Caleb Deschanel and Paul Schrader. Today, the Conservatory offers a two-year MFA degree in six filmmaking disciplines: Cinematography, Directing, Editing, Producing, Production Design and Screenwriting. In a collaborative production environment, AFI Fellows learn to master the art of storytelling, collectively creating up to 175 films a year. Fellows actively participate in the entire life cycle of a film, from development through production and exhibition.

Alumni of this elite program, ranging from modern masters to bold new voices defining the state-of-the-art form, include Andrea Arnold, Darren Aronofsky, Ari Aster, Sam Esmail, Brad Falchuk, Liz Hannah, Patty Jenkins, Janusz Kamiński, Matthew Libatique, David Lynch, Melina Matsoukas, Polly Morgan, Rachel Morrison and Wally Pfister, among others.

About the American Film Institute (AFI)

Established in 1967, the American Film Institute is the nation's nonprofit organization dedicated to educating and inspiring artists and audiences through initiatives that champion the past, present and future of the moving image. AFI's pioneering programs include filmmaker training at the AFI Conservatory; year-round exhibition at the AFI Silver Theatre and Cultural Center and at AFI Festivals across the nation; workshops aimed at increasing diversity in the storytelling community; honoring today's masters through the AFI Life Achievement Award and AFI AWARDS; and scholarly efforts such as the *AFI Catalog of Feature Films* that uphold film history for future generations. Read about all of these programs and more at AFI.com, and follow us on social media at Facebook.com/AmericanFilmInstitute, youtube.com/AFI, twitter.com/AmericanFilm and Instagram.com/AmericanFilmInstitute.

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