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The Washington, D.C. Area Film Critics Association

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D.C.'s Critics Find Much to Praise Across Time and Space "12 Years a Slave" wows DC critics; "Gravity" also flies high

Washington, D.C. — The Washington, D.C. Area Film Critics Association (WAFCA) announced their winners for 2013 this morning, lavishing the lion's share of their praise on one of the most difficult, and critically acclaimed, films of the year.

"12 Years a Slave," about a free black man ripped from his family and sold into more than a decade of bondage, won six awards including Best Film, Best Actor (Chiwetel Ejiofor), Best Supporting Actress (Lupita Nyong'o), Best Ensemble, Best Adapted Screenplay (John Ridley) and Best Original Score (Hans Zimmer). Only the lauded sci-fi juggernaut "Gravity" dented its momentum, snatching the coveted Best Director award for Alfonso Cuarón, as well as two sought-after technical wins for Best Cinematography and Best Editing.

"This story of perseverance and the triumph of the human spirit over degradation and misery appealed to our members in a powerful way," said WAFCA President, Tim Gordon, "and I'm proud of the choice that we collectively made."

Cate Blanchett, who turned in a riveting performance in Woody Allen's "Blue Jasmine," as a woman whose life unravels after it is discovered her husband is enmeshed in real estate fraud, won the Best Actress award. Best Supporting Actor went to Jared Leto, who has been absent from film for nearly five years, for his role as a transgendered AIDS patient in "Dallas Buyers Club." The award for Best Youth Performance, which highlights the best performance from an actor under 20, went to 17-year-old Tye Sheridan, for "Mud."

Writer-director Spike Jonze won the Best Original Screenplay award for "Her," the story of a man who falls in love with an artificially intelligent operating system, and Best Art Direction went to "The Great Gatsby." Disney's "Frozen" iced the competition in the Best Animated Film category and Best Foreign Language Film went to "The Broken Circle Breakdown," from Belgium. Best Documentary honors were awarded to "Blackfish," for its harrowing, behind-the-scenes glimpse into SeaWorld's treatment of its animal performers.

"This year's lineup of contenders is arguably one of the strongest groups since Hollywood's golden year of 1939," gushed Gordon. "In a year full of bonafide contenders, '12 Years a Slave's' expert storytelling, painful subject matter and extraordinary performances made it the undeniable choice for our group. But it was just one of many films that floored our members this year."

"Lee Daniels' The Butler" won The Joe Barber Award for Best Portrayal of Washington, DC, an award instituted last year in honor of the late, beloved D.C. film critic and WTOP's longtime arts editor, Joe Barber.

"This was one of those films Joe would have adored," said Tim Gordon. "He loved this city and he loved movies and his absence is still keenly felt."

The Washington, D.C. Area Film Critics Association is comprised of 58 DC-VA-MD-based film critics from television, radio, print and the Internet. Voting was conducted from December 6-8, 2013.

THE 2013 WAFCA AWARD WINNERS:

Best Film:

12 Years a Slave

Best Director:

Alfonso Cuarón (Gravity)

Best Actor:

Chiwetel Ejiofor (12 Years a Slave)

Best Actress:

Cate Blanchett (Blue Jasmine)

Best Supporting Actor:

Jared Leto (Dallas Buyers Club)

Best Supporting Actress:

Lupita Nyong'o (12 Years a Slave)

Best Acting Ensemble:

12 Years a Slave

Best Youth Performance:

Tye Sheridan (Mud)

Best Adapted Screenplay:

John Ridley (12 Years a Slave)

Best Original Screenplay:

Spike Jonze (Her)

Best Animated Feature:

Frozen

Best Documentary:

Blackfish

Best Foreign Language Film:

The Broken Circle Breakdown

Best Art Direction:

Production Designer: Catherine Martin, Set Decorator: Beverley Dunn (The Great Gatsby)

Best Cinematography:

Emmanuel Lubezki, ASC, A.M.C. (Gravity)

Best Editing:

Alfonso Cuarón, Mark Sanger (Gravity)

Best Original Score:

Hans Zimmer (12 Years a Slave)

The Joe Barber Award for Best Portrayal of Washington, DC:

Lee Daniels' The Butler

The 2013 WAFCA AWARD NOMINEES WERE:

Best Film:

American Hustle
Gravity
Her
Inside Llewyn Davis
12 Years a Slave

Best Director:

Alfonso Cuarón (Gravity)
Spike Jonze (Her)
Baz Luhrmann (The Great Gatsby)
Steve McQueen (12 Years a Slave)
Martin Scorsese (The Wolf of Wall Street)

Best Actor:

Leonardo DiCaprio (The Wolf of Wall Street)
Chiwetel Ejiofor (12 Years a Slave)
Matthew McConaughey (Dallas Buyers Club)
Joaquin Phoenix (Her)
Robert Redford (All Is Lost)

Best Actress:

Cate Blanchett (Blue Jasmine)
Sandra Bullock (Gravity)
Judi Dench (Philomena)
Meryl Streep (August: Osage County)
Emma Thompson (Saving Mr. Banks)

Best Supporting Actor:

Daniel Brühl (Rush)
Michael Fassbender (12 Years a Slave)
James Franco (Spring Breakers)
James Gandolfini (Enough Said)
Jared Leto (Dallas Buyers Club)

Best Supporting Actress:

Scarlett Johansson (Her)
Jennifer Lawrence (American Hustle)
Lupita Nyong'o (12 Years a Slave)
Octavia Spencer (Fruitvale Station)
June Squibb (Nebraska)

Best Acting Ensemble:

American Hustle
August: Osage County
Prisoners
12 Years a Slave
The Way, Way Back

Best Youth Performance:

Asa Butterfield (Ender's Game)
Adèle Exarchopoulos (Blue Is the Warmest Color)
Liam James (The Way, Way Back)
Waad Mohammed (Wadjda)
Tye Sheridan (Mud)

Best Adapted Screenplay:

Julie Delpy, Ethan Hawke & Richard Linklater (Before Midnight)
Billy Ray (Captain Phillips)
Michael H. Weber & Scott Neustadter (The Spectacular Now)
John Ridley (12 Years a Slave)
Terence Winter (The Wolf of Wall Street)

Best Original Screenplay:

Eric Warren Singer & David O. Russell (American Hustle)
Woody Allen (Blue Jasmine)
Nicole Holofcener (Enough Said)
Spike Jonze (Her)
Joel Coen & Ethan Coen (Inside Llewyn Davis)

Best Animated Feature:

The Croods
Despicable Me 2
Frozen
Monsters University
The Wind Rises

Best Documentary:

The Act of Killing
Blackfish
Leviathan
Stories We Tell
20 Feet from Stardom

Best Foreign Language Film:

Blue Is the Warmest Color
The Broken Circle Breakdown
The Hunt
The Past
Wadjda

Best Art Direction:

Production Designer: Andy Nicholson, Set Decorator: Rosie Goodwin (Gravity)
Production Designer: Catherine Martin, Set Decorator: Beverley Dunn (The Great Gatsby)
Production Designer: K.K. Barrett, Set Decorator: Gene Serdena (Her)
Production Designer: Jess Gonchor, Set Decorator: Susan Bode Tyson (Inside Llewyn Davis)
Production Designer: Adam Stockhausen, Set Decorator: Alice Baker (12 Years a Slave)

Best Cinematography:

Emmanuel Lubezki, ASC, A.M.C. (Gravity)
Simon Duggan, ACS (The Great Gatsby)
Hoyte Van Hoytema, F.S.F., N.S.C. (Her)
Bruno Delbonnel, AFC, ASC (Inside Llewyn Davis)
Sean Bobbitt, BSC (12 Years a Slave)

Best Editing:

Alfonso Cuarón, Mark Sanger (Gravity)
Eric Zumbrunnen, A.C.E., Jeff Buchanan (Her)
Dan Hanley, A.C.E., Mike Hill, A.C.E. (Rush)
Joe Walker (12 Years a Slave)
Thelma Schoonmaker, A.C.E. (The Wolf of Wall Street)

Best Original Score:

Christophe Beck (Frozen)
Arcade Fire (Her)
Steven Price (Gravity)
Thomas Newman (Saving Mr. Banks)
Hans Zimmer (12 Years a Slave)

The Joe Barber Award for Best Portrayal of Washington, DC:

Lee Daniels' The Butler
The East
Olympus Has Fallen
Philomena
White House Down