Pan African Film Festival 2017 presents Alfre Woodard with Lifetime Achievement Award

When it first started out in 1992, known simply as the African Film Festival of Los Angeles, it was neither rare nor of its identity nor its longevity. Yet the three founders — Actors Danny Glover and Ja’net Dubois, and Executive Director Ayuko Babu — were committed to bringing the vast output of little-known black films and other works of black creative artists from out of the shadows around the globe and into the light of movie screens and exhibit halls for all the world to see.

Twenty-five years later, the Pan African Film and Arts Festival has become the largest black media and cultural arts event of the world. And it keeps growing each year. PAFF 2017 will screen 124 feature-length and 78 short films at the 15-screen Rave Cinema Complex in Los Angeles Feb. 9-20, from 56 countries on six continents. In addition, a major arts and exited four runs concurrently with the film exhibits, along with a number of seminars and live exchanges, with outstanding performers and industry professionals.

Famed actress Alfre Woodard will be presented the festival’s Lifetime Achievement Award, an unprecedented honor for a woman or more than 30 years of stage, screen and television performances, “all reflecting strong yet flawed black women,” says a PAFF press notice.

PAFF Co-founder Ja’net Dubois will present the award at the February 9 opening night gala at the Director’s Guild Headquarters in Los Angeles. Woodard has been one of the greatest supporters of the festival over its 25-year reigns and has received a number of other awards for her work.

Alfre Woodard—Lifetime Achievement Award honoree

“I get excited every year about this time,” Woodard said in late January just weeks before the opening night of PAFF 2017, “because I know the Pan African Film Festival is coming. This means that I have felt this exhibition 25 times. This festival always delivers artfully crafted entertainment and information in diverse genres. This year I’m particularly thrilled that they have invited me to represent the legacy of bringing engaging stories from film-makers from the African Diaspora to Los Angeles. As always, Feb. 9-20 promises stimulating conversations and lively celebrations; you won’t!”

The honored guest will share her life’s journey with the PAFF audience in a “Conversations With Alfre Woodard,” on February 19. Director Neema Barnett will be the host.

Woodard’s long list of noteworthy performances include the film “Freedom Road” (1983); “Miss Evers Boys,” (1997); “Steel Magnolias” (1989); “Mississippi Grind” (2015); “Bill Street Blues,” “Selma’s Fire,” and “The Practice.”

Since PAFF has established the Academy of Motion Pictures (The Oscars), several of the 200-plus films and shorts scheduled for screening at the festival will be under consideration for possible Oscars in late February.

Four of the most anticipated films are the feature length documentaries “August Wilson: The Ground We Stand On,” the life story of the late playwright whose masterpiece “Fences” is a nominee for best Picture 2017; “Forward Ever: The Assassination of Grenada’s Prime Minister Maurice Bishop in 1983” in the 113-minute documentary “Forward Ever: The Kiling of a Revolution.”

The idea of black exploitation in films come late to the 1970s, while Italy was notorious for its portrayal of black people in films dating back to the very beginning of the industry.

The documentary “Blaxploitation: 100 Years of Blackness in Italian Cinema” will come in Italian circles.

African-Italian star Danny Mendez is featured in Blu-ray documentary “Blaxploitation: 100 years of Blackness in Italian Cinema.” Mendez is featured in this work as a revelation to many view-

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