

People & Places

Couch slouch

'Rambo' series in works at Fox

'Wolf Hall' wins Judges' Award at Royal Society

LOS ANGELES, Dec 2. (Agencies): Company Pictures and Playground Entertainment's "Wolf Hall" was honored with the Judges' Award at the craft and design awards of the Royal Television Society, which is an organization that represents senior executives in the UK television industry.

The costume drama, which chronicles the life of Thomas Cromwell and is based on the books by Hilary Mantel, was praised by the judges for its overall devotion to craft skills.

"Director Peter Kosminsky and director of photography Gavin Finny embraced the darkness of the times and with unerring confidence slowly unfurled this captivating political intrigue in a series of beautiful and bejeweled scenes reminiscent of Vermeer and Rembrandt," the judges said.

"The attention to detail in every aspect of production was immaculate and the jury felt this drama was highly creative, distinctive and a demonstration of expert craft skills across all production disciplines."

The Lifetime Achievement Award went to Dennis De Groot, who was described as "the go to production designer on many of TV's most successful and revered sitcoms, entertainment shows and comedy dramas." His credits include "Alan Partridge," "French and Saunders," "Black Books," "Little Britain," "That Mitchell and Webb Look," "The IT Crowd" and "Bad Education."

The judges said: "He constantly dreams original and fresh ideas for the most demanding of genres. His creative flair and unerring eye for detail have offered up the most fabulous and evocative habitats for our most talented comedy performers to shine on for over three decades."

The Design and Craft Innovation award went to "Pets — Wild at Heart," which was produced by John Downer Productions. It was praised for its "visual flair and technical wizardry." The judges said, "This was an eye-popping series filled with innovative photography and scientific revelation."

The director of fiction prize went to Julian Farino for "Marvellous" from Fifty Fathoms and Tiger Aspect Productions. "The director brought both fictional and real versions of the same character to our screens as if it was the most natural thing in the world," the judges said, and added that it was "a bitter sweet, but ultimately heart-warming story where the characters and overarching human positivity were the stars of the show. The piece was grounded yet inspirational, a joy to judge."

The best director for a non-fiction show was Colette Camden for "What Do Artists Do All Day?," which was produced by Sue Webster at BBC Arts. It was "beautifully shot and constructed as well as a great example of wonderful storytelling," the judges said.

Asian-Canadian cop drama series "Blood And Water" has been green-lighted for a second season, while the first shows are still on the air.

Shot in English, Mandarin and Cantonese, and directed by veteran Canadian director John L'Ecuyer, the first 8 episodes of the series play in the prime time Sunday night slot on Rogers Media's OMNI Television in Canada.

Breakthrough Entertainment, Rogers Media, and the Canadian Media Fund have now completed financing for the second season. Shooting is expected to start in Spring, 2016. Producer and distributor Breakthrough Entertainment will pitch the second series this week at the Asian Television Forum, part of the Singapore Media Festival.

The Vancouver-set series give a dramatic voice to the Chinese diaspora in North America and speaks authentically about their experiences as new immigrants and as Asian Americans in North America. The story follows a female cop who probes the murder of a wealthy Chinese businessman.

The procedural elements, however, are largely secondary to a deeper examination of character, making the crime story essentially a framework for a look at family values and what it means to be Asian in contemporary society. The detective discovers the corrosive effect of the murder not only on the man's relatives, but also on her own assumptions about family and heritage.

The cast is headed by Malaysian-born, Canadian actress **Steph Song** ("Dragon Boys," "Everything's Gone Green"), **Peter Outerbridge** ("Nikita," "Orphan Black"), and **Osrice Chau** ("Supernatural," "2012").

"I'm ecstatic to be involved in a series that showcases Asians in North America," Song told Variety. "But really this is story-telling at its best, regardless of ethnicities involved."

Song had her twin acting breaks in Australian feature film "The Long Lunch" and in Singapore TV series "Achar," from MediaCorp. Since moving to Canada she has been nominated for five Gemini and Leo awards.

Fox is suiting up for a reboot of "Rambo," ordering a script for a one-hour drama based on the iconic

Sylvester Stallone film franchise.

The long-gestating project, which is executive produced by Stallone and Avi Lerner, plans to pay homage to the movies. Titled "Rambo: New Blood," it will explore the complex relationship between Rambo and his son, J.R., an ex-Navy SEAL.

Jeb Stuart ("The Fugitive," "Another 48 Hrs.") penned the script and is also exec producing the project, which hails from Entertainment One in partnership in Millennium Films. EOne TV exec v.p. of global production **Carrie Stein** is overseeing the project for the studio. Stuart is repped by UTA, **Kaplan Perrone** and attorney **John Meigs**.

Deadline suggests that Stallone might reprise his role of the former Green Beret on screen. This strategy worked well for the CBS adaptation of the **Bradley Cooper** film "Limitless," as episodes that featured the Oscar nominee gave the freshman drama ratings boosts. The series got a full-season order in October.

Fox, however, has not been as lucky with film-to-TV adaptations this season. It's version of **Steven Spielberg's** "Minority Report" saw its episode order slashed from 13 to 10 after three under-performing episodes.

Stallone is at work on his fifth "Rambo" movie, titled "Rambo: Last Blood." He also currently appears as another one of his famous characters, Rocky Balboa, opposite **Michael B. Jordan** in the **Ryan Coogler**-directed "Creed."

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MTV's new fantasy series "The Shannara Chronicles" is set in the future but features elves and gnomes and promises plenty of old-fashioned adventure.

Best known for its reality shows, MTV hopes the new series will become its flagship scripted show after its Jan 5 premiere. The network granted The Associated Press exclusive access during filming earlier this year in the town of Kumeu, in New Zealand's scenic wine country. Here's what some of the cast and crew said:

■ **Poppy Drayton** (who plays Ameberle Elesedil and whose previous credits include "Downton Abbey"): "Well in Downton I wasn't head-to-toe in leather, for one. It's a lot more action-packed. There's sword-fighting and there's running through the woods and there's trekking through mountains and through treacherous terrain and fighting demons and fighting gnomes. It's all this sort of wonderful fantasy stuff."

■ **Austin Butler** (who plays Wil Ohmsford): "After finishing filming here I would have spent a year of my life in New Zealand, which is pretty wild. It's just such a magical place. Whenever I Skype with friends back home or anything, I'm always just going, 'The locations that we're filming on, I'm swimming in a waterfall today, or I'm looking at this majestic landscape.'"

■ **John Rhys-Davies** (who plays Eventine Elesedil): "The casting is wonderful. Real eye-candy, and real young actors with an ability to act ... The question mark for me is, since it is a new venture for MTV, can they find the audience and can the audience find them? If they can do that, then this is going to be a real hit show."

■ **Brad Turner** (co-executive producer and director of four episodes): "We've focused entirely on making the show cinematic. We're shooting with lenses you'd normally shoot for a movie, in a movie theater. We're using huge cranes, we're going to distant locations that normal television shows wouldn't want to because the logistics are so complex."

■ **Ivana Baquero** (who plays Eretria, and who spoke by phone): "It's rare to be able to act and see on film such courageous, capable female characters. She (Eretria) is this really resourceful, feisty badass, who's also struggling emotionally throughout the show."

The show is based on a series of books written by Seattle-based author **Terry Brooks**. "I grew up in a time when boys read science fiction. No one read fantasy," he said. "I didn't get to Tolkien until I was 21. It was transformative."

He said reading **J.R.R. Tolkien's** "The Lord of the Rings" opened up the possibility for him of writing in another world, one that was reminiscent of the fairy tales many people read growing up.

He said he was still a raw author when he began writing the series and for that reason is glad MTV chose to focus on the second book, "The Elfstones of Shannara." He said he considers it better than the first installment. For one thing, he said, he introduced two strong female characters after readers wrote to him complaining about the lack of women.

Brooks said movie studios have optioned his books over the years but have never followed through by making a movie, perhaps because technology hadn't caught up with the story's complexity.



In this May 13, 2015 photo, actor Austin Butler visits the set of MTV's new fantasy series 'The Shannara Chronicles' during filming in Kumeu, New Zealand. Best known for its reality shows, MTV hopes the new series will become its flagship scripted show after its Jan 5 premiere. (AP)

Film

Damon named best actor by Board of Review

'Mad Max' best film of '15

NEW YORK, Dec 2. (RTRS): Action adventure "Mad Max: Fury Road" was named the best film of 2015 on Tuesday by the National Board of Review, a surprise choice by the New York-based body whose list traditionally kicks off the annual Hollywood awards season.

Space drama "The Martian" won a best actor award for Matt Damon and best director for Ridley Scott and was also named one of the nine top films of the year.

But Oscar hopefuls were left empty handed by the Board of Review, which has a history of going against the mainstream. These included "Steve Jobs," a film about Apple Inc.'s co-founder, Irish immigrant saga "Brooklyn" and Jennifer Lawrence's much anticipated "Joy."

Instead, the 100-year-old organization, which comprises academics, filmmakers, students and professionals, chose popular fare such as boxing movie "Creed," rap music film "Straight Outta Compton," Catholic Church sex abuse tale "Spotlight" and psychological thriller "Room" among its top films of the year.

Sylvester Stallone was named best supporting actor for his role in "Creed," a sequel to his hit "Rocky" movies, while Brie Larson took the best actress award for playing an abducted mother in "Room."

Quentin Tarantino's yet-to-be-released drama "The Hateful Eight" also fared well. It was included in the best-of-the-year list and won best screenplay as well as supporting actress for Jennifer Jason Leigh.

Independent

The Board of Review is known for its sometimes idiosyncratic picks.

Last year it chose the small independent drama "A Most Violent Year" as its best film of 2014.

This year's winner "Mad Max: Fury Road," directed by Australian George Miller, starred Charlize Theron as a rebel leader in a post-apocalyptic future. The movie won warm reviews and has made some \$376 million at the box office worldwide but it has not been seen as a likely contender for major awards such as the Oscars or Golden Globes.

The honorees will pick up their statues at the NBR dinner on Jan 5, 2016 in New York at Cipriani 42nd Street. "Today's" Willie Geist will return as the evening's emcee.

Winners

■ **Best Film:** "Mad Max: Fury Road" Best Director: Ridley Scott, "The Martian"

■ **Best Actor:** Matt Damon, "The Martian" Best Actress: Brie Larson, "Room"

■ **Best Supporting Actor:** Sylvester Stallone, "Creed" Best Supporting Actress: Jennifer Jason Leigh, "The Hateful Eight"

■ **Best Original Screenplay:** Quentin Tarantino, "The Hateful Eight"

■ **Best Adapted Screenplay:** Drew Goddard, "The Martian" Best Animated Feature: "Inside Out"

■ **Breakthrough Performance:** Abraham Attah, "Beasts of No Nation" and Jacob Tremblay, "Room"

■ **Best Directorial Debut:** Jonas Carpignano, "Mediterranea" Best Foreign Language Film: "Son of Saul"

■ **Best Documentary:** "Amy" William K. Everson Film History Award: Cecilia De Mille Presley

■ **Best Ensemble:** "The Big Short" Spotlight Award: "Sicario" for outstanding collaborative vision NBR Freedom of Expression Award: "Beasts of No Nation" and "Mustang"

Also:

LOS ANGELES: For the first time ever, Pixar is getting awards competition from itself. The studio's inventive summer blockbuster "Inside Out" and its warm-hearted recent release "The Good Dinosaur" led the nominees for animated feature at the 43rd annual Annie Awards slated for Feb 6 at UCLA's Royce Hall, with 14 and 10 bids, respectively.

Rounding out the field are the adult-themed stop-motion film "Anomalisa" from Paramount, Blue Sky's nostalgic 3D reboot "The Peanuts Movie" and Aardman Animations' "Shaun the Sheep the Movie," a film based on the popular British TV series. All have five nominations.

LOS ANGELES: The Directors Guild of America has tapped **Mary Rae Thewlis** ("The Americans") and **Tom McDermott** ("The Young and the Restless") for special awards at the 68th Annual DGA Awards on Feb 6 at the Century Plaza.

Thewlis will receive the DGA's 2016 Frank Capra Achievement Award, given to an assistant director or unit production manager in recognition of career achievement in the industry and service to the DGA.

McDermott will receive the DGA's 2016 Franklin J. Schaffner Achievement Award, given to an associate director or stage manager in recognition of service to the industry and to the guild.

It is not known whether Australia's immigration department ultimately denied Brown a visa, and a spokesman saying it could not comment on the case "for reasons of privacy."

After the prospect of his Australia ban was first raised, Brown said he would use the tour to raise awareness about domestic violence. (AFP)

LOS ANGELES: Once again demonstrating superb instincts for knowing when to fold 'em, multiplatinum country star **Kenny Rogers** looks to make a graceful exit from show business over the next year, kick-starting a farewell tour after receiving CMT's Artist of a Lifetime award. The veteran — who currently stands as the eighth bestselling male artist of all time — espouses a number of motivations for his retirement, but the chief among them is simple self-awareness.

"I think country music is whatever country people will buy," Rogers says, when asked of the genre's current health. "And I think people don't buy certain kinds of country anymore. So what happens is that in their efforts to do something different, to set themselves apart from me and the other guys before me, they took it to a different place. Country is very healthy right now — they're bringing in a lot of kids. But it's not a type of music that I prefer or that I would want to do, and that's why I'm getting out." (RTRS)



Shah Rukh Khan (left), and Kajol pose for photographers during the photo-call for the film 'Dilwale' in a central London hotel on Dec 1. (AP)



Hara

Brown

Variety

TOKYO: Precisely in keeping with her zeal for privacy, news of actress **Setsuko Hara's** death on Sept 5 was kept quiet until recently. The star of director **Yasujiro Ozu's** "Tokyo Story" and many other Japanese classics was 95.

Japanese fans laid flowers and other memorials outside Hara's former studio after relatives disclosed news of her death last week, prompting an outpouring of affection for the reclusive actress.

Hara's poise and beauty endeared her to fans who viewed her as a role model for modern Japanese women in the years after the country's defeat in World War II.

She starred in many other Ozu films, such as "Early Summer" and "Late Spring." Hara withdrew from public life after she retired at age 42, spending the next 53 years in the quiet seaside city of **Kamakura**, near her birthplace, **Yokohama**.

Her family told media that Hara had not wanted a fuss, so they kept quiet for more than two months after her death. Shunning public appearances and interviews, she chose to regain her private life after her last film, in the early 1960s. Hara's early retirement meant her public image remained forever youthful. (AP)

SYDNEY: American R&B singer **Chris Brown** has cancelled a planned tour to **Australia** and **New Zealand**, his promoter said Wednesday, after officials indicated he would be denied a visa over his conviction for assaulting pop star **Rihanna**.

Australia suggested in September it would block Brown's entry due to his criminal record, disrupting plans to bring his "One Hell of a Nite" tour Down Under. Brown's 2009 conviction for assaulting his then-partner pop star Rihanna also meant he could be refused entry to New Zealand, where he was to perform in **Auckland**.

"Chris Brown's December 2015 tour in both Australia and New Zealand will not take place," Ticketek Australia said in a

statement from Brown's promoter on its Facebook page.

It gave no reason why shows in **Perth, Melbourne, Sydney** and **Brisbane** were cancelled.

But it said: "Mr Brown and the promot-

ers both remain positive that the tour will take place in the near future.

"Mr Brown wishes to express his deepest gratitude to the fans for their support and looks forward to a successful tour in the near future," it added.



Argentinean actor Rodrigo de la Serna poses during a photo-call of the movie 'Chiamatemi Francesco, il Papa della gente' (Call me Francis, the Pope of the People) on Nov 26, in Rome. The movie of Italian director Daniele Luchetti on Jorge Bergoglio's life will be released in Italy on Dec 3. (AFP)