

TAIKA WAITITI TO RECEIVE TIFF EBERT DIRECTOR AWARD AT TRIBUTE GALA

TORONTO — Joana Vicente and Cameron Bailey, Co-Heads of TIFF, today announced that Academy Award–nominated New Zealand filmmaker **Taika Waititi** will be honoured with the **TIFF Ebert Director Award** at this year’s new TIFF Tribute Gala awards event. The award recognizes and honours a distinguished filmmaker for their outstanding contribution to cinema. Taking place on Monday, September 9 at Fairmont Royal York, during the 44th Toronto International Film Festival, the Gala is an annual fundraiser to support TIFF’s year-round programmes and core mission to transform the way people see the world through film, and to celebrate the film industry’s outstanding contributors.

“Taika Waititi is one of the most innovative, bold, and exciting filmmakers working in the industry right now,” said Vicente. “TIFF is thrilled to honour his extraordinary talent with the inaugural TIFF Ebert Director Award.”

“Taika Waititi is the rock star cinema needs right now,” said Bailey. “His films are full of razor-sharp humour, faultless style, and boundless generosity. Somehow he manages to stuff both indie hits and massive crowd-pleasers with big, radical ideas. We’re thrilled to be premiering his latest, *Jojo Rabbit*, at the Festival and to hand over the inaugural TIFF Tribute Award for direction to this 21st-century master.”

Waititi directed the superhero film *Thor: Ragnarok*, which made over \$850 million at the box office worldwide, and will write and direct the upcoming *Thor: Love and Thunder*. His films as writer-director also include *Boy* and *Hunt for the Wilderpeople*, and he co-wrote, co-directed, and co-starred in *What We Do in the Shadows* with Jemaine Clement. He was nominated for an Academy Award for his short *Two Cars, One Night*. Waititi’s upcoming anti-hate satire *Jojo Rabbit*, starring Roman Griffin Davis, Thomasin McKenzie, Rebel Wilson, Stephen Merchant, Alfie Allen, Sam Rockwell, Scarlett Johansson, and Waititi himself, will have its world premiere at TIFF and will be released by Fox Searchlight on October 18, 2019.

The **TIFF Ebert Director Award** is an evolution of the organization’s former Roger Ebert Golden Thumb Award, which celebrated a remarkable filmmaker who reflected renowned film critic Roger Ebert’s passion for cinema. Past recipients include Claire Denis, Martin Scorsese, Ava DuVernay, Agnès Varda, and Wim Wenders.

TIFF previously announced that three-time Academy Award–winning actor **Meryl Streep** will

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receive the **TIFF Tribute Actor Award**, sponsored by RBC, and that **Participant Media** will receive the **TIFF Impact Award** at the Gala, accepted by Founder and Chairman Jeff Skoll and CEO David Linde. One other recipient of the **TIFF Tribute Actor Award** will be announced in the coming weeks, in addition to the recipient of the inaugural **Mary Pickford Award**, honouring a female emerging talent in the industry in celebration of United Artists' 100th anniversary.

The 44th Toronto International Film Festival runs September 5–15, 2019.

For information on purchasing a table for the TIFF Tribute Gala, please contact development@tiff.net.

TIFF prefers Visa.

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About TIFF

TIFF is a charitable cultural organization whose mission is to transform the way people see the world through film. An international leader in film culture, TIFF projects include the annual Toronto International Film Festival in September; TIFF Bell Lightbox, which features five cinemas, major exhibitions, and learning and entertainment facilities; and innovative national distribution program Film Circuit. The organization generates an annual economic impact of \$189 million CAD. TIFF Bell Lightbox is generously supported by contributors including Founding Sponsor Bell, the Province of Ontario, the Government of Canada, the City of Toronto, the Reitman family (Ivan Reitman, Agi Mandel and Susan Michaels), The Daniels Corporation and RBC. For more information, visit tiff.net.

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For more information, contact Emma Kelly, Senior Manager, Communications and Brand, at ekelly@tiff.net or the Communications Department at 416.934.3200, or email proffice@tiff.net.

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