Bergmans accept Lifetime Achievement Award

by Katie Wall

After a day full of class visits, panel discussions and sharing their unique creative process with SCAD students, Emmy-, Grammy- and Oscar-winning song writers Alan and Marilyn Bergman accepted another honor to add to their collection: the Savannah Film Festival Lifetime Achievement Award.

“Alan and Marilyn Bergman provided the soundtrack to some of the most transformative moments in film,” said SCAD President Paula S. Wallace.

“This city brings a lot of memories back to me. My mentor was Johnny Mercer,” said Alan as he accepted the award. Marilyn added, “From the moment we walked into SCAD’s classrooms and met the performing arts students, [Savannah had] such a commitment to arts excellence and a passion about it.” Their warm acceptance speech earned them a standing ovation.

Following the tribute to the Bergmans, SFF Executive Director Danny Filson announced that recent SCAD graduate Reinaldo Ortiz (M.A., animation, 2008) and his team just won MTV and Hewlett Packard’s competition, “The Engine Room.” Ortiz stood from his place in the audience for another vigorous round of applause from the crowd.

Studio filmmakers share industry insights

by Monique Bos

With representatives from a variety of filmmaking roles, the panel “A Look into Studio Filmmaking from Every Angle” lived up to its title, providing a comprehensive, multifaceted overview of the industry.

Screenwriter Aline Brosh McKenna (“The Devil Wears Prada” and “27 Dresses”), writer and director Thomas Bezucha (“The Family Stone”), and former Paramount president and producer Karen Rosenfelt (“The Devil Wears Prada,” “Alvin and the Chipmunks” and “Marley and Me”) joined Fox 2000 President Elizabeth Gabler and Executive Vice President Carla Hacken in the Red Gallery Oct. 27, 9:30 a.m., to share insights and tips.

The panelists discussed a variety of factors that come into play when studio executives decide whether or not to produce a film: originality, marketability, casting, timing, other films the studio has in production and probable box-office performance. Because most of these elements are beyond an aspiring filmmaker’s control, the panelists agreed that persistence and passion are crucial for anyone hoping to break into the industry—and so is building relationships within the filmmaking community.

“You have to create every unique opportunity for yourself,” said Bezucha.
Laughter from the screening of Mike Leigh’s “Happy-Go-Lucky” spilled over to Jazz’d Tapas Bar for the after-party, where industry professionals mingled with SCAD faculty, students and Savannahians. A live jazz band played a mix of Frank Sinatra and Billy Joel, while revelers dug into the Savannah-style smorgasbord of tapas. “Recount” writer Danny Strong snagged a corner table with friends before making his way to the bar and chatting with students and locals. He said he was looking forward to the screening of his movie on Wednesday and was enjoying being a juror for the film festival. Producer and ice cream guru Stratton Leopold also made his way around the room and dished with a table of fans, while SCAD supporters Ken and Jackie Sirlin took in another night of film festivities. The clear and chilly night did nothing to cool down the spirits of the fest fans heating up the room.

CRAZY - Inspired by legendary guitar player Hank Garland, Crazy is a story of musical genius, passion and betrayal.

CITY OF CRANES - London is a city in constant transformation—its skyline animated by “a ballet of cranes.” City of Cranes offers a unique and mesmerizing view of London from high up in the sky through the eyes and words of crane drivers.

ELITE SQUAD - After serving on the front lines of violence his entire career, Captain Nascimento is planning to retire from the meticulously trained and widely feared super-elite Rio de Janeiro police force and spend time with his wife and soon-to-be-born baby. First though, he needs to find a replacement.

I’VE LOVED YOU SO LONG - Juliette spent 15 years in prison. Confronted with the unexpected kindness of her younger sister Léa, who makes Juliette a part of her family, the ice and bitterness in Juliette’s heart slowly breaks and she carefully opens up. But a huge question hangs over Juliette’s renaissance. What terrible thing did she do 15 years ago and why?

LAKE CITY - In this searing Southern drama, a mother and son reunite under desperate circumstances years after a family tragedy drove them far apart.

MY OLYMPIC SUMMER - Set against the historical backdrop of the hostage crisis at the 1972 Olympic games, My Olympic Summer chronicles the subterranean currents of the filmmaker’s parents’ young marriage. Their story indirectly parallels and comments on the filmmaker’s own recent failed marriage in this exploration of how home movies are perceived.

THE SUITCASE - Jeanne and Michel have been married for 50 years. When Jeanne prepares to leave for a three-week holiday on her own, Michael locks her in the bathroom.

SYNECDOCHE, NEW YORK - Theater director Caden Cotard stages a new autobiographical play in a massive warehouse amid a life-size replica of Manhattan. Meanwhile, Caden must contend with the many women in his life – including a box-office worker, an actress and a shrink.

WHO DOES SHE THINK SHE IS? - Featuring five bold women who navigate some of the most problematic intersections of our time: mothering and creativity, partnering and independence, economics and art, Who Does She Think She Is? demonstrate that creativity and caregiving are not mutually exclusive but deeply connected.

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