

## American Film Institute Honors Morgan Freeman at 39th AFI Life Achievement Award Gala

**SIDNEY POITIER, CLINT EASTWOOD, HELEN MIRREN, MATTHEW MCCONAUGHEY, RITA MORENO, GARTH BROOKS AND BETTY WHITE AMONG THOSE WHO PAY TRIBUTE TO MORGAN FREEMAN AT THE "TV LAND PRESENTS: AFI LIFE ACHIEVEMENT AWARD"**

**Black Tie Gala To Be Broadcast On TV Land On Sunday, June 19 At 9:00 p.m. ET/PT**

LOS ANGELES, June 10, 2011 /PRNewswire via COMTEX/ --

Tonight, acting great Morgan Freeman joined the illustrious list of film luminaries who have received the highest honor for a career in film - the 39th AFI Life Achievement Award. The gala, taped at Sony Pictures Studios this evening, will air on **TV Land on Sunday, June 19 at 9:00 p.m. ET/PT.**

Freeman's inspiration and mentor, Sidney Poitier, who was honored with the AFI Life Achievement Award in 1992, said that "the movies matter, as do their players" and continued by saying that films are stories "told through drama, comedy, epics (and) westerns...tonight we are here for a man who has mastered them all."

After a heart-felt tribute by Poitier, the beloved Betty White performed her own comical rendition of the classic show tune "Hello Dolly" entitled "Hello Morgan" accompanied by six chorus men. White shared the screen with Freeman in the 1998 feature, "Hard Rain."

"The Electric Company" alum Rita Moreno, who was moved to be back on Stage 15 where she previously performed, shared her experiences of working with Freeman and his litany of movies through a sassy self-written poem. Moreno is one of the few artists to have received the Oscar, the Emmy, the Tony and the Grammy.

One of the many highlights of the evening was legendary country music superstar Garth Brooks' stirring rendition of "Lean on Me" which was featured in the 1989 feature film of the same name. Finally, Freeman accepted the prestigious award from friend and frequent collaborator, Clint Eastwood, recipient of the AFI Life Achievement Award in 1996.

In accepting the honor, Freeman attributed his drive and passion for acting to his hero, Sidney Poitier, saying "it seems like the world is upside down when you are here in the audience watching me and I am on stage getting an award." Freeman continued saying "Everyone has his own heaven. For me, heaven has always been about acting in the movies. Acting to me means living. It's what I do...and tonight you've told me I'm pretty good at it."

Among the other guests present were: Casey Affleck, Camilla Alves, Gisele Bundchen, Hebe Carmago, Don Cheadle, Ana de la Requera, Fran Drescher, Kenny "Babyface" Edmonds, Cary Elwes, Peter Gallagher, Cuba Gooding Jr., Djimon Hounsou, Samuel L. Jackson, Kimora Lee Simmons, Virginia Madsen, Paz Vega and Ben Vereen, among others.

The evening was presented by Hewlett-Packard. American Airlines is the official airline of the American Film Institute.

"TV Land Presents: The AFI Life Achievement Award Honoring Morgan Freeman" was produced by Bob Gazzale and Chris Merrill for AFI and was directed by Louis J. Horwitz.

For photos of tonight's event, please go to [www.picturegroup.com](http://www.picturegroup.com). For video of tonight's show, please contact Wendy Coto at [wendy.coto@mtvstaff.com](mailto:wendy.coto@mtvstaff.com).

### **About the American Film Institute**

**AFI is America's promise to preserve the history of the motion picture, to honor the artists and their work and to educate the next generation of storytellers.** AFI provides leadership in film, television and digital media and is dedicated to initiatives that engage the past, the present and the future of the moving image arts.

AFI preserves the legacy of America's film heritage through the **AFI Catalog of Feature Films**, an authoritative record of American films from 1893 to the present, and the **AFI Archive**, which contains rare footage from across the history of the moving image.

AFI honors the artists and their work through a variety of annual programs and special events, including the **AFI Life Achievement Award** and **AFI Awards**. For 39 years, the **AFI Life Achievement Award** has remained the highest honor for a career in film while **AFI Awards**, the Institute's almanac for the 21st century, honors the most outstanding motion pictures and

television programs of the year. **AFI's 100 Years...100 Movies** television events and movie reference lists, as well as **AFI Night at the Movies**, have introduced and reintroduced classic American movies to millions of film lovers. And as the largest nonprofit exhibitor in the United States, AFI offers film enthusiasts a variety of events throughout the year, including **AFI Fest presented by Audi**, the longest running international film festival in Los Angeles; **AFI-Discovery Channel Silverdocs**, the largest documentary festival in the US; and year-round programming at the **AFI Silver Theatre** in the Washington, DC area.

AFI educates the next generation of storytellers at its world-renowned **AFI Conservatory**, offering a two-year Master of Fine Arts degree in six filmmaking disciplines: Cinematography, Directing, Editing, Producing, Production Design and Screenwriting. AFI also explores new digital technologies through special workshops.

Additional information about AFI is available at [AFI.com](http://AFI.com).

### **About the AFI Life Achievement Award**

The highest honor given for a career in film, the **AFI Life Achievement Award** was established by the AFI Board of Trustees on February 26, 1973. It is presented to a single honoree each year based on the following criteria as mandated through a resolution passed by the AFI Board of Trustees: "The recipient should be one whose talent has in a fundamental way advanced the film art; whose accomplishment has been acknowledged by scholars, critics, professional peers and the general public; and whose work has stood the test of time."

**2011 AFI Life Achievement Award** honoree Morgan Freeman joins an esteemed group of individuals who have been chosen for this distinguished honor since its inception in 1973: John Ford (1973), James Cagney (1974), Orson Welles (1975), William Wyler (1976), Bette Davis (1977), Henry Fonda (1978), Alfred Hitchcock (1979), James Stewart (1980), Fred Astaire (1981), Frank Capra (1982), John Huston (1983), Lillian Gish (1984), Gene Kelly (1985), Billy Wilder (1986), Barbara Stanwyck (1987), Jack Lemmon (1988), Gregory Peck (1989), Sir David Lean (1990), Kirk Douglas (1991), Sidney Poitier (1992), Elizabeth Taylor (1993), Jack Nicholson (1994), Steven Spielberg (1995), Clint Eastwood (1996), Martin Scorsese (1997), Robert Wise (1998), Dustin Hoffman (1999), Harrison Ford (2000), Barbra Streisand (2001), Tom Hanks (2002), Robert De Niro (2003), Meryl Streep (2004), George Lucas (2005), Sean Connery (2006), Al Pacino (2007), Warren Beatty (2008), Michael Douglas (2009) and Mike Nichols (2010).

### **About TV Land**

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