



AUSTIN FILM FESTIVAL TO HONOR DEDE GARDNER WITH THE POLLY PLATT AWARD FOR PRODUCING AND STEPHEN MERCHANT WITH OUTSTANDING TV WRITER AWARD AT FESTIVAL

Gardner will also participate in a special screening of Oscar-nominated Sarah Polley's 'Women Talking' based on the best-selling novel by Miriam Toews

Austin, TX – (August 2, 2022) – Austin Film Festival & Writers Conference (AFF), the premier festival that champions the writers' contributions to film, television, and new media, announced today two distinguished awardees to be honored at this year's festival from October 27 – November 3. Academy Award-winning producer **Dede Gardner** will receive AFF's Polly Platt Award for Producing, and Emmy, BAFTA and Golden Globe winner **Stephen Merchant** will receive AFF's Outstanding Television Writer Award.

Gardner is an Academy Award-winning producer and co-president of the production company, Plan B Entertainment. Throughout her career she has produced both Academy Award and Golden Globe-nominated and winning films, including Lee Isaac Chung's *Minari*, Barry Jenkins' *If Beale Street Could Talk* and *Moonlight*, Adam McKay's *The Big Short* and *Vice*, Ava DuVernay's *Selma*, Steve McQueen's *12 Years a Slave* and Terrence Malick's Palme d'Or winner *The Tree of Life*. Gardner's recent features include Gaz Alazraki's *Father of the Bride* and Miranda July's *Kajillionaire*, as well as the forthcoming features *Blonde*, *She Said*, *Women Talking* and *Landscape With Invisible Hand*. Her recent television releases include the HBO/Sky limited series "The Third Day," created by Dennis Kelly, the Amazon Prime series "The Underground Railroad," created by Barry Jenkins and "Outer Range" created by Brian Watkins.

In addition to accepting the Polly Platt Award for Producing during this year's Writers Conference, Gardner will participate in a special screening of *Women Talking*. The new film by Oscar-nominated writer and director Sarah Polley. Based on the best-selling novel by Miriam Toews, *Women Talking* follows a group of women in an isolated religious colony as they struggle to reconcile their faith with a series of sexual assaults committed by the colony's men.

Polley will also attend the Festival to present Gardner's award and participate in a post-screening discussion.

Stephen Merchant is an Emmy, BAFTA and Golden Globe-winning actor, comedian, writer, director and producer and one of the most versatile talents in TV and film. He first shot to prominence as co-creator (alongside Ricky Gervais) of BBC's "The Office" and "Extras," both of which were critically acclaimed, earning multiple comedy series awards, including three BAFTA Awards, two British Comedy Awards, two Golden Globe Awards, a Primetime Emmy Award, and a Peabody Award. Merchant also served as an executive producer on the long-running US adaptation of "The Office," which received five Primetime Emmy Awards and 42 nominations during its run on NBC. Merchant also received a British Comedy Award for "Best TV Comedy Actor" for his role in "Extras," which he also co-created and executive produced alongside Gervais. In 2004, they won the "Writers' Guild of Great Britain Award" for the series. In 2013, he served as a star, co-creator, co-writer and director of HBO's "Hello Ladies," a sitcom based on his live stand-up show of the same name. The series ended with a feature-length HBO special and received two nominations at the 67th Primetime Emmy Awards.

Merchant currently serves as creator, executive producer, writer, director and star of BBC/Amazon's "The Outlaws," which premieres its second season on August 5. He co-created the series with Elgin James, which follows a group of misfit lawbreakers in a community service group.

Gardner and Merchant will be recognized at the 2022 Awards Luncheon on Saturday, October 29, and will participate in Festival and Conference programming. Additional panelists confirmed to speak at the



Writers Conference, held the first four days of the Festival, October 27-30 include **Max Borenstein** (“Winning Time”), **Nkechi Okoro Carroll** (“All American”), **Edward Neumeier** (*RoboCop*), **Vanessa Taylor** (*The Shape of Water*), and many more.

Badges and passes are available for purchase online at www.austinfilmfestival.com or by phone at 1-800-310-FEST. For media credentials, please contact Travis Broughton at marketing@austinfilmfestival.com. All attendees and events are based on permitting schedules and are subject to change and/or cancellation without notice.

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About Austin Film Festival

Austin Film Festival (AFF) is a non-profit organization dedicated to furthering the art, craft and business of writers and filmmakers and recognizing their contributions to film, television, and new media. AFF champions the work of aspiring and established writers and filmmakers by providing unique cultural events and services, enhancing public awareness and participation, and encouraging dynamic and long-lasting community partnerships. AFF is supported in part by the Cultural Arts Division of the City of Austin Economic Development Department and the Texas Commission on the Arts.

About Polly Platt Award for Producing

Introduced in 2019, the Polly Platt Award is given to producers with a keen sense of story and who have a history of fostering new talent. Named after the legendary Polly Platt who was instrumental in the early years of Austin Film Festival and was an ardent champion of writers. Past award recipients include Stephanie Allain (2021) and Sarah Green (2019).

About Outstanding Television Writer Award

Introduced in 2000, the Outstanding Television Writer Award highlights the artistic achievements and contributions of television creators and their importance in shaping the landscape of serialized storytelling. Past award recipients include David Chase (2000), Marta Kauffman (2016), Norman Lear (2015), and Keenen Ivory Wayans (2017).

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