

RULE BRITANNIA

Meet the people BAFTA/LA will celebrate at its 22nd annual awards

By Madeleine Collins

Think BAFTA/LA's best claim to fame is its annual garden party? Think again.

The Anglo-American organization that promotes and advances original work in film, television and interactive media does like its tea parties — even if last year's nearly was doomed by the hour-plus wait for valets — but it also works hard to honor good filmmaking. Nowhere is that clearer than in its annual Britannia Awards, which Nov. 4 celebrates its 22nd edition in Century City.

Who gets the awards seems hard to fathom — what are Americans Betty White and Jeff Bridges doing at this largely U.K. affair? But let's not be churlish. We'll put it down to British eccentricity.

This year's honorees:

MICHAEL SHEEN

British Artist of the Year

Roots "I grew up watching middle-aged men with too much makeup," Sheen says, referring to his actor father Meyrick, a Jack Nicholson look-alike. Maybe the makeup had something to do with his hometown's acting tradition: Port Talbot, Wales, also spawned Anthony Hopkins and Richard Burton. "It's a bit of mystery," Sheen says. "People aren't singing in the streets and dancing on tops of cars like in *Fame*, which is sort of what you'd imagine. It's an old steel townnothing glam at all."



CHRISTOPHER NOLAN

John Schlesinger
Britannia Award
for Artistic Excellence
in Directing

Worth a Bundle Nolan still clings to some British habits, like the overcoat he seems to wear even when it's warm in L.A.

He might have to shed it for a tuxedo if *Inception* can pull off what *The Dark Knight* didn't and get nominated for best picture at next year's Oscars. It's no secret that *Dark Knight's* absence helped lead the Academy to change its rules and boost the number of top noms from five to 10. A

man who shuns interviews and especially photo ops, he edits at home and makes movies more than promotes them.

What You Don't Know The English native, who once called the country "a very clubby place," was rejected from the London Film School and the Royal

College of Art before making America take notice with *Memento* in 2000. "In Hollywood, there's a great openness, [an] almost a voracious appetite for new people," he has said.

Up Next Helming the follow-up to *The Dark Knight* and supervising a Superman reboot.



What You Don't Know "Wales is known as the land of song, and I would like to do a musical one day," Sheen admits. He has yet to do one, but cousin Caroline is touring the U.S. as Mary Poppins.

Up Next *Tron Legacy*, *Jesus Henry Christ*, Woody Allen's *Midnight in Paris* and playing Jesus in an ambitious, three-day continuous play for the National Theatre of Wales at Easter time, which Sheen will direct as well.

FROM LEFT: GETTY IMAGES; HENNY GARFUNKEL/RETNA LTD.; JEROD HARRIS/POLARIS; GETTY IMAGES (3)

BETTY WHITE

Charlie Chaplin Britannia Award for Excellence in Comedy

Next New Thing White scored the most spectacular comeback of recent times with her Snickers Super Bowl commercial, proving that a woman really can get ahead by mud wrestling — though she sees it somewhat differently: "People keep saying 'comeback.' I've never been away," she says. Maybe not, but how else do you explain her recent ranking as No. 4 in a *60 Minutes/Vanity Fair* poll to find the Most Eligible Single Woman in the World? White, 88, a seven-time Emmy winner, is unruffled about such things, but she seems to worry that audiences these days know too much. "The audience has heard all the jokes and seen all the stories. It's a tough audience to surprise."

What You Don't Know Animal lover White served as a Los Angeles Zoo commissioner for eight years.

Up Next CBS' Hallmark of Fame presentation *The Lost Valentine*, plus two novels and a 2011 calendar.



JEFF BRIDGES

Stanley Kubrick Award for Excellence in Film

Patience Rewarded Bridges finally won his Oscar for *Crazy Heart* after four previous nominations and might be back for another with *True Grit*, the Coen brothers' remake of the 1969 John Wayne film. Curiously, he expresses little desire to direct

himself despite having a visual eye that has led to critical acclaim for his on-set photography. "Maybe it'll be nice to do at some point, but I know the hard work involved," he says with a laugh. "I have some resistance and some attraction."

What You Don't Know

Acting may be his day job, but Bridges plans to lobby in Washington in the not-too-distant future and has been focused on End Hunger Network, the nonprofit organization he founded in 1983 to fight child hunger. "We're currently working on a project called No Kid Hunger," he says. "Government programs are already in place that people aren't

taking advantage of, and we're trying to get schools activated."

Up Next *Tron Legacy*, opening Dec. 17, will be followed by *True Grit* on Christmas Day. "The Coen brothers have a completely different take and a unique presentation of stories," Bridges says, "but our version is pretty faithful to the book."

SCOTT FREE PRODS.

Worldwide Contribution to Filmed Entertainment

Band of Brothers The filmmaking partnership of Ridley (below right) and Tony Scott began in the early '60s when Ridley cast younger brother Tony in his Royal College of Art graduation film *Boy and Bicycle*. It solidified after they joined forces in Ridley's commercials venture, RSA Films. They went back to their English roots by heading a consortium that bought Britain's Shepperton Studios in 1995. Today, Scott Free Prods. — behind such movie hits as *Gladiator* and *American Gangster* and such TV shows as *The Good Wife* — is keeping it in the family, employing several of the Ridley and Tony Scotts' children as directors.

What You Don't Know Ridley is responsible for one of Hollywood's most enduring unions: Back in the 1970s, he directed the former Miss Guyana, Shakira Baksh, in a Maxwell House coffee commercial. When actor Michael Caine saw the ad, he was so besotted he tracked Baksh down. They've been married 37 years.

Up Next Tony's *Unstoppable*, with Denzel Washington, comes out Nov. 12. He next directs *Emma's War*, with Ridley producing. **THR**

