

## **DAVID PUTTNAM FELLOWSHIP SPEECHES**

### **The Orange British Academy Film Awards – Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2006**

#### **Lord Attenborough:**

Good evening. As I'm sure you know, the Fellowship is the highest award that the Academy bestows on anyone. And it is to recognise distinction and honour through a period of work during our industries. The recipient – and there is an extraordinary list – can be a writer, a composer – a creative technical activity – actor, director, producer; and in fact I well remember some 36 years ago, when I was Chairman of the Academy, presenting the very first Award to Alfred Hitchcock. Tonight's recipient is David Puttnam. [applause]

BAFTA owes David an enormous debt, as a council member, as a Vice President of BAFTA, as Chairman of Trustees, indeed, I am absolutely certain that had it not been for his persistence and dedication to the Academy, the Academy would have not have reached the extraordinary stature that it now has. I would like to talk about David who I know, David the man, and I would like to do so because, as you'll probably know, about eight years ago he decided to retire from the film industry to our great, great sadness. Because he has been unequivocally the most honoured film producer in the last few decades, echoing his great hero, Mickey Balcon, in this country. David is an extraordinary creature, an extraordinary man. He cares about education; he cares desperately that our industry continues, that our industry should be forever the finest communication media in the world, as it exists now; the art form, or semi-art form, if you wish, of this century. And that the importance of training for that industry and the entry to that industry was very important. He was Chairman of the National Film and Television School for years on end. He also created Skillset, the current form of teaching young people other than actors to become members of our industries. And four years ago, he took up the position, on election, as President of UNICEF in the UK. UNICEF is the greatest organisation in the world, under the United Nations, that cares for children. And it seems to me most appropriate that his beloved Patsy, who he met when they were school children together and to whom he's been married for 36 years, should be

here with his entire family to witness this honour that we wish to do him. We wish to honour him because he is a do-er. Edmund Burke said: "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." David is a very good man, and he does a great deal. He has courage, he has devotion, he is selfless, he is loyal, he is gracious, he is kind; and a friend to so many people in this theatre tonight. That, I think, is perhaps enough, and we should see the programme – the compilation that the BBC have assembled – to honour him. [David Puttnam clips package shown]

**Lord Attenborough:**

Fellow members, distinguished guests, my Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is with a very real joy and no small measure of pride that I ask you to welcome the 2006 Fellow of the British Academy, David Puttnam.

**David Puttnam:**

I was absolutely fine until 2 minutes ago. (Referring to the clips package) Alan Parker takes direction brilliantly.

Dick, I have three things I would like to say. The first is obvious and it's been said once or twice already this evening, and this is wonderful they are acknowledging my work. My work is simply in a way the front man for hundreds, literally hundreds, maybe thousands of technicians, writers, directors, cinematographers, editors who have made me look smart. Some of them Stuart Craig, Matthew, David Strathairn, some are in the audience this evening. It is *their* award and it is the joy of working with them which gave me the 30, probably happiest years of my life. That is self evident.

The second thing I would like to say is why tonight is very important to me. Dickie, you were right. Eight years ago I did come to the point where I wasn't actually sure that the type of film that had brought me into the industry and I believed in, I believe the industry could contribute, was likely to get made any more. Tonight you have proved me *triumphantly* wrong. This group of nominated movies is *exactly* what I dreamt of.

Committed, decent films which absolutely have something to say and give the lie, once and

for all give the lie, that there is a dichotomy between informing and entertaining. It never was true. Some people allowed themselves I think, to believe it *was* true. It never was true.

Use Mr Clooney. I take my hat off to you. What you have done for this industry, what your colleagues have done for this industry is remarkable and certainly 8 years ago I didn't think it could be done and you've made me, I'm delighted to say, look stupid.

Now the last thing is the trickiest. I, as Dick has said, I passionately believe in cinema. I've seen the effect it has on people not just in this country, but all over the world I've travelled with my film. It is a vitally important medium and at its best it is utterly remarkable. I have a connection with this evening's films in an odd way. David plays Ed Murrow in 'Good Night, and Good Luck.' My Dad was a journalist and my Dad knew Ed Murrow very well. As a matter of fact, my sister who's with me this evening with us, Ed Murrow was the man who told my father that she'd been born in Italy in 1943. So there's a direct connection there.

But I want to go on to say something else. The most admirable human being I ever met *was* my Dad. My Dad was extraordinary and like a lot of kids born during the war, I didn't meet him until I was 5, so he was that much more extraordinary to me. And the only sadness I ever suffered, nothing like the sort of things that Dick and others have had to put up with, was that just a couple of weeks, 25 years ago, just a couple of weeks before I won the BAFTA award for 'Chariots' and then went on and won it in Los Angeles, won the Oscar, my Dad had died. And so this charismatic, this extraordinary man and I never had the opportunity to exchange that glance or hug each other. And that left a hole. But movies you know have got an amazing way of detecting those moments. They speak to us. Every single one of you has sat in a movie house and watched some moment of your life healed, or addressed, or touched. Something that you thought that only you knew. There are a number of films I could relate that did this but I've only got time for one.

Bear with me.

I guess a lot of you, I hope a lot of you, saw the movie 'The Sixth Sense'. It's a very fine film. Do you remember the final scene when Toni Collette is in the car with her son? She's had a very difficult life, she's a single mother who's had a tough time, and she's had to come to terms with the fact that her son can speak to the spirit world. And the little boy says to her 'Mummy, is it true, Grandma told me that shortly after she died you went and visited her graveside?'"

And Toni Collette says "Yeah, that's true." "And Grandma said you asked her a question. Is that true?"

She says "Yeah. Yes, I did ask Grandma a question."

Well, he says "Grandma wants you to know that the answer to that question is 'yes, every single day.' But Mum, what was the question?"

Toni Collette starts to cry and through her tears she says "I just asked her if she'd ever been proud of me."

I remember that hitting me like a punch in the stomach. And tonight I know absolutely for sure I never really have to ask the question again but thanks to you and your generosity my Dad's very proud, my family's very proud and I am more proud than I ever believed I could be.

Thank you so much.

ENDS