



**The 1st Annual Philadelphia Independent Film Awards
Is Thrilled to Announce Philly's Own Native Son
*Will Smith***

As the First Recipient of Our Trailblazer Award

*Awards Ceremony to be Held on May 22, 2016, 6-10 pm
at International House in Philadelphia*

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Philadelphia, PA (May 5, 2016) – The Philadelphia Independent Film Awards is thrilled to announce Philly's own Oscar-nominated actor and Grammy Award winning rapper Will Smith as the first recipient of our Trailblazer Award. The award will be presented on May 22, 2016 at International House at 3701 Chestnut St. in Philadelphia, PA. The awards gala begins at 6 pm with a cocktail hour. The award presentations begin at 7 pm and last until 10 pm. Tickets can be purchased through Eventbrite at <https://goo.gl/AB2hDa> and PayPal at <https://goo.gl/f886Nc>. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to the Covenant House in Philadelphia which will assist with combating teen homelessness. **For press inquiries contact: Karen Waller-Martin at 215 802-0907 or karenwallermartin@yahoo.com.**

The Trailblazer Award is bestowed upon a filmmaker or individual in the film industry who has not only achieved a high level of success but has also set a standard for their peers and others to follow. It represents the importance of acting with independent vision to create the environment that supports creativity. It is just one of the awards presented by The Philadelphia Independent Film Awards to honor independent filmmakers who are often overlooked in the crush of film competition.

From the halls of Overbrook High School, to the TV screens in living rooms across America, to the silver screens of movie theaters around the world, actor-rapper-producer Will Smith has blazed a trail of accomplishment that serves as a beacon for others to follow. He has expanded the parameters of how Hollywood defines a leading man, opening up opportunities for the actors and actresses who have come after him. With an emotive range that encompasses rip-roaring action-adventure (the “Bad Boys” film franchise), romantic comedy (“Hitch”), sci-fi/fantasy (“Independence Day,” “I Am Legend” and the “Men In Black” franchise) as well as epic and edgy drama (“Six Degrees of Separation,” “Ali,” “Concussion”), Smith has set a lofty standard of both critical and box office film success. Along the way he’s earned four Grammy Awards as a rap performer and four NAACP Image Awards for music and acting. He has been nominated twice for Academy Awards for his roles in “Ali” (2001) and “The Pursuit of Happyness” (2006).

Through his production company, [Overbrook Entertainment](#), Smith has built a reputation as a producer. Smith has served as producer or executive producer in television (“The Queen Latifah Show” and “All of Us”) as well as film (“The Secret Life of Bees,” “Karate Kid,” “Hancock,” “The Pursuit of Happyness,” “Lakeview Terrace,” “Seven Pounds,” and “Annie”). The company was founded in 1998 by Smith and his business partner James Lassiter.

To facilitate their charitable giving, Smith and his wife, actress-producer Jada Pinkett Smith, established [The Will & Jada Smith Family Foundation](#). As noted on its website, the foundation’s mission is to help “individuals and organizations advance in areas where need is great” with an emphasis on “education, empowerment, health, community development, sustainability, and the arts.” Through their foundation, the couple have supported the Baltimore School for the Arts, Habitat for Humanity, the Lupus Foundation of America, the Make A Wish Foundation, the American Red Cross, and many more. In April, the couple announced their participation in President Barack Obama’s My Brother’s Keeper initiative, which works to assist boys and young men of color achieve. They are planning a “Careers in Entertainment” tour to help youth aspiring to filmmaking learn more about the industry at all levels, from production to distribution.

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Philadelphia native Floyd Marshall founded the Philadelphia Independent Film Awards. Through his production company [Gazelle Films LLC](#), he has written and produced several films including film shorts “Compromised,” “Child of God” and “3 Women,” as well as the feature length film “Love & Litigation.” He said he founded the awards – which received more than 200 film submissions from around the world - to provide independent filmmakers with recognition that is long overdue.

"We want to reward and acknowledge the hard work by independent filmmakers that oftentimes gets overlooked," Marshall said. "This awards ceremony validates those efforts and future ones."

For more information, contact Karen Waller-Martin at 215 802-0907 or karenwallermartin@yahoo.com. Visit www.philadelphiaindependentfilmawards.com. Find us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/PhillyFilmAward>. Follow us on Twitter at [#phillyfilmawards](https://twitter.com/PhillyFilmAward) or <https://twitter.com/PhillyFilmAward>. Purchase tickets at Eventbrite: <https://goo.gl/AB2hDa> or PayPal at <https://goo.gl/f886Nc>. Note: Tickets will NOT be available at the door.

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