

NEJ 2010 Winners

National Entertainment Journalism Awards presented by Los Angeles Press Club

A. PRINT

A1. Print News

Winner: Kyle Hopkins, *Anchorage Daily News*, "E.T. go Nome?"

Judges' Comments: In this well-researched report, Kyle Hopkins takes on Hollywood by calmly but effectively debunking a supposedly "true life" thriller, "The Fourth Kind" using such high-tech innovations as his phone and keyboard. As he shows, the eerie events that took place in Nome, leading to the disappearance of several people, didn't actually happen. But real people got hurt by this film: the families of those who truly have disappeared. Hopkins calls the movie a "'Blair Witch Project' fake-out," and performs a real public service, showing that Hollywood is too quick to horribly distort real events.

A2a. Print Feature or Series over 1,000 Words

Winner: Richard Siklos, *Fortune*, "The Fight Over Michael's Millions"

Judges' Comments: Richard Siklos is a wonderful writer, but now add to that, a seer. His fascinating investigation of Michael Jackson's fiscal quagmire is populated by the gazillionaires who tried to help Jackson, from Ron Burkle to Sheikh Abdulla to Philip Anschutz. The real insight is Siklo's analysis that Jackson's posthumous comeback would dwarf Elvis Presley's. Siklos wrote that last November. A few weeks ago, Sony announced it will issue ten new Michael Jackson albums, a deal worth \$250 million. Now maybe Richard Siklos will tell us where the economy is heading!

Second Place: Anthony Effinger and Daniel Taub, Bloomberg Markets, "All Shook Up"

Honorable Mention: Martha Sarabia, *La Opinion*, "Telenovelas"

A2b. Print Feature--Personality Profile

Winner: Scott Foundas, *L.A. Weekly*, "Boxing, Sex and Madness: Mike Tyson, James Toback and the Ties that Bind."

Judges' Comments: Foundas has written a creative and highly compelling narrative sending readers into the mind and psyche of the troubled former world heavyweight champ by exploring Tyson's relationship with James Toback, director of the documentary "Tyson." Foundas, using powerful quotes and vivid examples, describes how the two men bonded over their shared experiences of "mental chaos." The story offers raw and poignant insights into both Tyson and Toback. An excellent job of probing a difficult personality without using simplified characterizations or time-worn anecdotes.

Second Place: Robert Gordon, *Playboy*, “Soul Man”

Honorable Mention: Eric Spitznagel, *Playboy*, “Andy Richter Grows Up”

A3. Print Feature under 1,000 Words

Winner: Lisa Ingrassia, *People*, “Kelly Osbourne: I knew if I didn’t get help, I would die”

Judges’ Comments: Lisa Ingrassia provides us a troubling view of the chaotic world of Kelly Osbourne. As much as we want to cheer over this young woman’s short time clean and sober, Ingrassia’s frank portrayal of an ill-fated child of celebrity who veers from drug to drug leaves you feeling certain her self-created nightmare is not over.

Second Place: Martha Sarabia, *La Opinion*, “The Venezuelan Export Gustavo Dudamel”

Honorable Mention: Jeanne Wolf, *Parade*, “Have Faith in Something Big”

A4. Print Critic of the Year

Winner: Scott Foundas, *L.A. Weekly*, body of work

Judges’ Comments:

Scott Foundas, chief film critic for the LA Weekly, is often fearless in his take on the commercial favorites of Hollywood and his appreciation of the less appreciated films of the day. His reviews are steeped in the history of cinema, just as they are carefully written for the serious filmgoer. No wonder he caught the eye of the Film Society of Lincoln Center where this year he will help organize the prestigious New York Film Festival. But it’s a serious loss for readers of the Weekly.

Second Place: John Simon, Bloomberg News

Honorable Mention: Lavender Vroman, *Antelope Valley Press*

A5. Best Entertainment Publication

Winner: Lavender Vroman, Julie Jane Rios, Steve Galbreath, *Antelope Valley Press*’ “Showcase”

Judges’ Comments: Every Friday, the *Antelope Valley Press* publishes “Showcase,” a weekly stand-alone tabloid section. It claims to cover the world of entertainment from the desert to the sea, and its Dec. 18, 2009 issue does so with great verve. Enterprising reporting and solid writing are complemented by great design and imaginative use of color. Editor Lavender Vroman reviews upcoming movies, and there’s also comprehensive attention to stage, books, music and nightlife. A stellar and surprising effort from a daily with a circulation of just over 19,000.

Second Place: Drex Heikes, Tom Christie, Scott Foundas, *L.A. Weekly* Film Issue

B. TV

B1. TV News

Winner: George Pennacchio, KABC, “Oscar Pre-Show”

Judges’ Comments: George Pennacchio exhibited his usual flare as the focused and affable ringmaster for ABC's “Oscars Pre-Show.” His ability to maintain his role as a clear-eyed journalist at the center of all the Hollywood hoopla brought an air of dignity to the proceedings and helped to anchor Tinseltown's Night of Glitz comfortably in living rooms across America.

B2. TV Feature/Series

Winner: George Pennacchio, KABC, “Crips and Bloods”

Judges' Comments: George Pennacchio is good enough to be tapped for national shows on the Oscars, because he is both smooth and down-home accessible. That comes through in his review of the documentary "Crips and Bloods: Made in America." Pennacchio is probably as far from the mean streets of L.A. as you can get and still be a journalist, but he nevertheless deftly takes us into the gangs' dark world in reviewing this film about the genesis of two vicious and dehumanized gangs.

Second Place: George Pennacchio, KABC, “Misty Upham’

Honorable Mention: Shawn Edwards, Fox 4 News, Kansas City, “Chat with the Stars”

B3. TV Critic of the Year

The judges awarded no winner and encouraged TV entertainment critics to submit their most thoughtful commentary in 2011

C. RADIO

C1. Radio News

Winner: Barbara Gasser, KroneHit, Austria, “Court decision on Chris Brown’s assault on Rihanna”

Judges’ Comments: In a crisp delivery, foreign correspondent Barbara Gasser explains to her Austrian audience the blogger reaction in the United States to the sentence received by singer Chris Brown for beating up Rihanna. In this 54-second news report produced in the U.S., she deftly uses the Internet debate to show the widespread dismay over what many saw as a light sentence following Brown’s attack on the singer.

C2. Radio Feature/Series

Winner: John DeSando and Kristin Dreyer Kramer, WCBE 90.5 FM, Columbus, Ohio, “It’s Movie Time’s Year in Review”

Judges’ Comments: Sometimes film critics far from the two coasts are said to be too distant from Hollywood and too quick to praise mediocre films to create a quotable blurb. Here, John DeSando and Kristin Dreyer Kramer rip into the 2009 film season with relish, comparing the poor crop to a frigid winter. They find 2009 to be a “Movie dead zone” filled with “lethargic adventures,” “deadly dull” features and “mind-numbing dramas.” By the end of this deliciously rude hour-long romp, in which they also praise their favorite films and the best unknown films of 2009, you’re cheering them.

Second Place: Brian Lauritzen and Gail Eichenthal, KUSC Los Angeles’ Arts Alive, “Nancy Bea Hefley”

Judges’ Special Comments: This work was such a close second that we wanted to mention the fantastic use of sound -- the ballpark alive and chattering -- and the sheer enjoyment of hearing this quirky and wonderful story about the woman who works as the house organist at Dodger Stadium.

Honorable Mention: Scott Immergut and Matt Holzman, KCRW Los Angeles’ The Business, “Disney Convention”

C3. Radio Critic of the Year

Winner: Joe Morgenstern, KCRW, Los Angeles

Judges’ Comments: With his gravelly voice and incredible savvy, Morgenstern delivers so many insights, in so few words, in such a tight time frame, you wonder if he should just chuck the print column in the Wall Street Journal and have his own damn show on primetime HBO. His description of the rail-thin Michael Jackson in “This is It,” striving to fill up his life but not his wasted body, his attack upon overrated motion-capture technology killing film after film, and his soaring rhetoric about “Precious” as a story “about unearthing buried treasure” cement his standing as the top critic on radio today. His segments on KCRW end too soon.

Second Place: Matt Holzman, KCRW, Los Angeles

Honorable Mention: John DeSando and Kristin Dreyer, WCBE 90.5 FM, Columbus, Ohio

D. ONLINE

D1. Online News

Winner: Andrew Gumbel, TheWrap.com, “The Wrap Investigates the Closure of the Motion Picture & Television Fund Long-term Care Center”

Judges' Comments: In a year of flashy entertainment shockers, reporter Gumbel digs into a quieter but disturbing story many entertainment journalists wrote about – and then dropped. Reaction was intense to the surprise announcement of the closure of a notable retirement home that had pledged to provide end-of-life care to aging superstars, retired character actors and other film industry elderly. Gumbel's excellent digging shows how the nursing home's CEO earned \$600,000 as the state-of-the-art facility mysteriously foundered. This is a fine, two-part series about the incompetence that ruined what many assumed was one of the most fiscally healthy retirement homes in the world.

Second Place: Sharon Waxman, [TheWrap.com](#), "Exclusive: Comcast in Talks to Buy Universal"

Honorable Mention: Jeanne Wolf, Parade.com, "Saying Goodbye Isn't Easy"

D2. Online Feature/Series

Winner: Zachary Pincus-Roth, [Slate.com](#), "Best Weekend Never"

Judges' Comments: In this tough look at Hollywood journalism, the writer explains the embarrassing entertainment media practice of purposely padding box office records and failing to tell the public that normal inflation makes modern films like "Titanic" seem to be pulling ahead of "Gone With the Wind" – when the reverse is true. According to Pincus-Roth, entertainment journalists wrongly toss out the basic economic rules of reporting to make it appear as if records are being broken. Clearly, the industry needs a lot more reporters like Pincus-Roth.

Second Place: Steven Mikulan, [TheWrap.com](#)

Honorable Mention: Brad Schreiber, HuffingtonPost.com, "Athol Fugard: Art Battling Apartheid and Aids"

D3. Online Entertainment Critic of the Year

Winner: Peter Rainer, CSMonitor.com, 2009 body of work

Judges' Comments: Rainer, badly missed in print, is the *Christian Science Monitor's* master at slipping the stiletto into the side of over praised directors and films. He says of James Cameron's "Avatar" that "the story thudded just as often as the imagery soared" and notes that "Inglourious Basterds" is "the least virtuosic movie Tarantino has ever made." You know you can trust Rainer not to join the mob cheer for underwhelming story lines, bad narrative and blah performances. His talent is in the intelligence that oozes from his highly readable and right-on critiques.

Second Place: Rick Warner, Bloomberg News

Honorable Mention: Desson Thomson, TheWrap.com

D4. Entertainment Website

Winner: *Detroit Free Press* and [Freep.com](http://freep.com), “Motown at 50”

Judges’ Comments: This wonderful project (at freep.com/Motown) is a mix of superb writing, 50 network-quality videos, original stories, archive photos and great web design, all in a salute to Motown as it turns 50. Twenty staff members produced this labor-intensive tribute. It’s an encyclopedic and impressive demonstration of the power of online media to tell riveting stories.

Second Place: The Wrap, TheWrap.com

Honorable Mention: Shawn Edwards and Valerie Freeman, ILoveBlackMovies.com

D5. Entertainment Blog by an Individual

Winner: Tom Tangney, MyNorthwest.com

Judges’ Comments: Tangney’s “Behind the Screens” posts are filled with wonderful insights, such as his interesting comparison of Wolverine’s transformation in “X-Men Origins: Wolverine” to the morphing of Luke Skywalker’s father into Darth Vader. But as Tangney tells us, this crucial transformative moment is frittered away in the latest “X-Men,” screwed up by a director who turns “a grand myth-making moment ... to another run-of-the-mill action sequence.” Fun, tough, excellent criticism.

Second Place: Shawn Edwards, ILoveBlackMovies.com

BEST IN SHOW, \$500 Prize:

Detroit Free Press, Freep.com, “Motown at 50.”