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Hunger strikes movie cleans up at Irish film and TV awards night

Monday, 16 February 2009

A film based on the final days of hunger striker Bobby Sands has swept the boards at the Irish Film and Television Awards.

Hollywood actor Michael Fassbender stole the judge's hearts on St Valentine's night in Dublin's Burlington Hotel.

The young up-and-coming star swept judges off their feet with his extraordinary portrayal of Sands in *Hunger*, directed by artist Steve McQueen. The Kerry-born actor took home the best film actor award for his spellbinding performance ahead of a host of Irish and international stars at the glitzy awards ceremony.

The win makes it two in a row for the rising star after he scooped the actor of the year award at the London Critics' Circle Awards this month.

Hunger was the big winner on Valentines night, taking away six awards for its dramatisation of the last days of the IRA hunger strikes. It was named best film, and also notched up an IFTA for Liam Cunningham, who was named best supporting actor. It also won awards for original score (David Holmes), production design (Tom McCullagh) and sound (Ronan Hill and Mervyn Moore).

Another big winner was *The Tudors*, which took six awards. The show, broadcast on BBC, was named best drama series. Director Ciaran Donnelly also won an award, as did Peter O'Toole and Maria Doyle Kennedy, who won best supporting actor and actress gongs respectively. The show also picked up awards for costume design (Joan Bergin) and make-up and hair (Sharon Doyle and Dee Corcoran).

And what would St Valentine's Day be without Kisses? The beautiful urban masterpiece won Lance Daly the award for best film director, while Hollywood sweetheart Saoirse Ronan collected the gong for best supporting film actress for her performance in *Death Defying Acts*. Also in the acting categories, Eileen Walsh secured the prize for best film actress for *Eden*.

The best TV actor award went to Aidan Gillen for his performance in *The Wire*, and Charlene McKenna scooped the best TV actress gong for her performance in *Raw*.

Other winners included *In Bruges*. Martin McDonagh won for best film script and also best international film.

Irish voters chose *Mamma Mia!* star Meryl Streep for the best international actress award for her performance in the hit musical.

Among the 900 guests opting out of an intimate evening with their loved ones in return for a seat at the hottest ceremony in town were directors Neil Jordan and Jim Sheridan and actors Brendan Gleeson and Aidan Quinn.

Broadcaster Miriam O'Callaghan looked stunning in a floor-length emerald green gown. Keeping with the times, the RTE star said she bought her dress in the sale in *Diffusion*.

Another star who bought in her "local shop" was comedienne Deirdre O'Kane, who wore a black feather knee-length ensemble.

Amy Huberman turned heads in a cream crystal-encrusted dress by Joanne Hynes. Her Valentine's date was her father, as boyfriend Brian O'Driscoll was in Rome for Ireland's match against Italy.

Assembly Notes, Page 18

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