

Arts & Entertainment

Jeff Bridges Talks 'Hell or High Water' With Kam Williams

By Kam Williams
For The Skanner News

One of Hollywood's most successful actors and a six-time Academy Award-nominee, Jeff Bridges' performance in "Crazy Heart" as Bad Blake, the down-on-his-luck, alcoholic country music singer at the center of the drama, deservedly garnered the iconic performer an Oscar in the Best Lead Actor category. The performance also earned him a Golden Globe, Screen Actors Guild and Independent Spirit Award.

Jeff earned his first Oscar nomination in 1971 for Peter Bogdanovich's "The Last Picture Show," co-starring Cybill Shepherd. Three years later, he received his second nomination for his role in "Thunderbolt and Lightfoot." In 1984, he landed more kudos via a Best Actor nomination for "Starman." In 2001, he was honored with his fourth Oscar nomination for his work in "The Contender," a political thriller co-starring Gary Oldman

and Joan Allen in which he played the President of the United States.

In December 2010, his reunion with the Coen Brothers in the critically-acclaimed Western "True Grit" landed him his sixth Oscar nomination. The same month he was seen in the highly-anticipated 3D action-adventure "TRON: Legacy." Jeff reprised his role of video-game developer Kevin Flynn from the classic 1982 film "TRON," with the help of state-of-the-art technology. The picture featured him as the first actor in cinematic history to play opposite a younger version of himself.

Prior to "Crazy Heart," Jeff was seen in the war comedy "The Men Who Stare at Goats," playing Bill Django, a free-spirited military intelligence officer, who is the leader of a secret group of warriors in the army. Additionally, he has starred in numerous box-office hits, including "Seabiscuit," "The Fisher King," "The Fabulous Baker Boys," "The Jagged Edge," "Tucker: The Man



Jeff Bridges, known for a variety of roles from his debut in 'The Last Picture Show' to his signature role as the Dude in 'The Big Lebowski,' spoke to Kam Williams about his newest film, the neo-noir drama 'Hell or High Water.'

and His Dream," "Blown Away," "Fearless" and "American Heart."

In 1983, Jeff founded the

End Hunger Network, a nonprofit organization dedicated to feeding children around the world. He also produced the End Hunger tel-event, a three-hour live television broadcast focusing on world hunger. The show featured Gregory Peck, Jack Lemmon, Burt Lancaster, Bob Newhart, Kenny Loggins and other

In 2013, he was the recipient of an Infinity Award, presented by the International Center of Photography in Manhattan.

The books, which have become valued by collectors, were never intended for public sale, but in the fall of 2003, powerhouse Books released Jeff Bridges: Photographs by Jeff Bridges, a hardcover book containing a compilation of his photographs taken on numerous film locations over the years, to much critical acclaim. Proceeds from the book are donated to the Motion Picture & Television Fund, a nonprofit organization that offers charitable care and support to film-industry workers.

In August of 2011, Jeff released his self-titled major label debut album for Blue Note Records. Multiple-Grammy Award-winning songwriter, musician and producer T Bone Burnett produced the album. It is an organic extension and culmination of his personal, professional and music friendship with Burnett, whom he has known for more than 30 years.

The critically-acclaimed album was a follow up to his first solo effort, "Be Here Soon," on Ramp Records, the Santa Barbara, Calif., label he co-founded with Michael McDonald and producer/

KW: I loved "Hell or High Water." I don't know why they released it in August instead of just ahead of awards season. Everything about it screams Oscars.

JB: It's an awfully good movie.

KW: Yeah, from the A-list cast to the visually-captivating cinematography to its haunting musical score to its intriguing script - featuring an unpredictable cat-and-mouse thriller as well as some decent character development. It all added up to an enchanting cinematic experience.

JB: It was a great experience for me watching it, too, and also making it, of course. It's a good one!

KW: Absolutely! What was it like working with such a talented ensemble. I was already familiar with Ben Foster and Chris Pine, but Gil Birmingham who was new to me did a great job, too.

JB: Yeah, the whole team they assembled, not only the actors, but the crew-the writer, the director, the set designer-all came together. That's a pretty rare phenomenon! It certainly doesn't happen all the time. And such a great screenplay by Taylor Sheridan. That's where it all began.

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“'The Big Lebowski' is a real masterpiece, as far as I'm concerned. I suppose I'm a bit biased because I'm in it. But even if I weren't, I'd still love that movie, it's so well done

leading film, television and music stars in an innovative production to educate and inspire action.

He is currently the national spokesman for the Share Our Strength/No Kid Hungry campaign that is fighting to end childhood hunger in America. Another of Jeff's true passions is photography. While on the set of his movies, he takes behind-the-scenes pictures of the actors, crew and locations. After completion of each motion picture, he edits the images into a book and gives copies to everyone involved.

Jeff's photographs have been featured in several magazines, including Premiere and Aperture, as well as in other publications worldwide. He has also had gallery exhibitions of his work in New York, Los Angeles, London and San Diego.

singer/songwriter Chris Pelonis. The CD features guest appearances by vocalist/keyboardist Michael McDonald, Grammy-nominated Amy Holland and rock legend David Crosby. In 2014, he released his first live album 'Jeff Bridges & The Abiders Live' and has been touring off and on when he is not working.

Jeff and his wife Susan divide their time between homes in Santa Barbara and Montana. Here, he talks about his latest outing as wily Texas Ranger Marcus Hamilton in "Hell or High Water," a cat-and-mouse crime thriller co-starring Chris Pine and Ben Foster.

Kam Williams: Hey Jeff. I'm honored to have this opportunity to speak with you.

Jeff Bridges: Why, thank you, Kam. it's good talking to you, too.

KW: And how about trusting a British director, David Mackenzie, to make a modern Western set in Texas?

JB: Yeah, he had those fresh eyes. He was so concerned about getting it right, and I think he did a brilliant job.

KW: I agree. How did you come up with your character Marcus Hamilton's persona?

JB: Well, it was definitely on the page. That was one of the things that attracted me to the project in the first place. It just rang so true. It seemed like Taylor Sheridan really knew what he was talking about. I found out that his cousin, Parnell McNamara was a Marshall down in Texas. He was made available to me, and I talked to him quite a bit. We were also very fortunate to have

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