

# Beatty stars in 'Romancing the Critics'

By Bob Strauss  
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The Los Angeles Film Critics Association awards luncheon was a rare, cordial gathering of, as "Bugsy" star Warren Beatty put it, "Those who make movies and those who complain about them."

The gathering Tuesday at the Bel Age Hotel in West Hollywood drew together a variety of local film critics, major studio executives and talent. Attendees included, besides Best Picture co-producer Beatty, his co-star Annette Bening (stunningly slim after recently giving birth to her and Beatty's child); "Bugsy" director Barry Levinson and screenwriter James Toback (both winners); Best Actress winner, "The Fisher King's" Mercedes Ruehl; and the supporting-acting winners, "Barton Fink's" Michael Lerner and "Life Is Sweet's" Jane Horrocks.

While practically every presentation and acceptance speech was drenched with good cheer — a marked difference from last year's luncheon, held on the eve of the Persian Gulf War — by far the king of the event was veteran actor Vincent Price.

Sharing the association's Life Achievement Award with composer Elmer Bernstein this year, a noticeably frail and bent Price followed the younger music writer to the podium, where he announced in his famous, mellifluous voice, "Did you see Elmer Bernstein jump on this stage? To hell with the golden years!" With perfect sharpness, Price continued in that

delightful vein, often to a degree hilariously unprintable.

The luncheon's one tense moment came when David Ehrenstein, critic for the national gay newspaper the Advocate, included an attack on Oliver Stone's "JFK" in his presentation of the Independent/Experimental Film Award to director Jon Jost. Gay advocacy groups have criticized the way Stone portrayed gay char-

acters.

You could almost hear the Hollywood power players present stop breathing. But even that provided grist for a gag later on, when Levinson quipped that "I hope that these awards will help open the 'Bugsy' files and we can get to the truth," referring to Stone's oft-stated justification for fictionalizing aspects of the Kennedy assassination.