

Red-Carpet Interview: Mark Ruffalo Honored by Gene Siskel Film Center

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CHICAGO – He is one of the hottest movie actors on the market right now, but Mark Ruffalo will tell you he’s not an overnight success. Building his resume with a series of character roles, Ruffalo struck gold as Dr. Bruce Banner/the Hulk in “The Avengers” film series. On June 6th, 2015, the Gene Siskel Film Center in Chicago honored his career.

The Siskel Center gave Ruffalo the Renaissance Award, which celebrated his accomplishments as an actor, director and producer, and gave attendees at the downtown Ritz-Carlton Hotel the opportunity to hear Ruffalo’s insights on his film and theater journey, from his hometown Kenosha, Wisconsin, to portraying The Incredible Hulk. Chicago Tribune film critic Michael Phillips was the moderator for the event, which was also a fundraiser for the Film Center, one of the best film screening outlets in Chicago, dedicated to the late Gene Siskel, one of the most influential film critics in history.



Actor Mark Ruffalo, Gene Siskel Film Center Renaissance Award Honoree

Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com

Mark Ruffalo was born in Kenosha, Wisconsin – or “K-town” as he likes to call it – but moved all around the country. After graduating from high school, he followed his family to the West Coast, and began taking acting classes in Los Angeles, eventually founding the Orpheus Theater Company there. After nine years of working as a bartender, doing theater and taking minor film roles, he began a collaboration with writer/director Kenneth Lonergan, and broke through with Lonergan’s film “You Can Count on Me” in 2000. What followed was a steady stream of character roles in films, including “Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind,” “Zodiac,” Martin Scorsese’s “Shutter Island” and “The Kids Are All Right.” He first made his first appearance as Dr. Bruce Banner/the Hulk in 2012’s “The Avengers,” and was in the second film this summer, “Avengers: Age of Ultron.”

In May of 2015, Ruffalo blew up the internet when he reprinted – as a Tumblr post – a pro-feminism advocacy written by Libby Anne Bruce. The short piece included all the social victories that feminism had won, and was finished by Bruce with a message to all the political forces that disparage feminism, “kiss my ass, you ignorant jerks.” The statement was misinterpreted as a quote from Ruffalo himself.

HollywoodChicago.com spoke to Mark Ruffalo on the Red Carpet, and photographer Joe Arce captured this Exclusive Portrait.

HollywoodChicago.com: I admire your progressive activism. To what do you attribute your roots in that activism and what did you learn through your latest cyber experience?

Mark Ruffalo: Which one is that? [laughs] I’ve had a lot of them. Did I get an ass kicking for that? Sometimes you have to stand up for what

you believe, even though you get your ass kicked. My progressive roots began in Catholic school. I took it to heart what that Dude had to say, even though three quarters of the rest of it wasn't lining up with my experiences. Social justice, fighting for the poor, love and tolerance – those things resonated with me as a child. I bought into it. That is where it started for me.

HollywoodChicago.com: Since you are such a consummate actor, garnering praise on how you interpret characters, what advice do you give younger actors who ask for it?

Ruffalo: What people love about actors are their unique qualities. So the more an actor can live authentically within their own individuality, that's what people are looking for. So I say put down all the magazines that just emphasize fame, and maybe pick one or two actors that you can steal from, and then make it all yours. Then run like hell. [laughs]

HollywoodChicago.com: Who do you steal from?

Ruffalo: Marcello Mastroianni, Marlon Brandon, Joaquin Phoenix, Philip Seymour Hoffman and Jerry Lewis.

HollywoodChicago.com: What is the greatest piece of advice you've ever received in the practice of the acting, and how do you apply that advice when you approach a role?

Ruffalo: 'Stick around,' because eventually they run out of people. [laughs] Everyone will have died off, so you'll finally get your shot.

HollywoodChicago.com: [Laughs] How does that apply to character approach?

Ruffalo: Stella Adler used to say, 'the young actor feels that they have a greatness inside of them, that they want to give back to the world.' That was a big, important truth for me, and kept me going when things were not so great. So maybe looking for the greatness in the people that I play is something I hold onto as an ethos.

The Gene Siskel Film Center is located at 164 N. State Street Chicago. [Click here](#) [21] for more information, screening schedules, show times and to purchase tickets.



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