

The 20 Best Performances of Sundance 2016

by Kyle Buchanan, Bilge Ebiri, Stacey Wilson Hunt and Jada Yuan | February 2, 2016



The Sundance Film Festival doesn't necessarily look like paradise — it's a little too cold and buttoned-up for that — but for an actor, it's an invigorating destination. The annual trek to Park City, Utah, is great for newcomers and veteran performers alike: It provides a place for unknown actors to be discovered and anointed, while also programming the sorts of films that allow an A-list reputation to be reinvented. This year's festival had plenty of both; here, we tip a cap to the 20 famous names and new faces who delivered the best performances of Sundance 2016.

[...]

Rachel Griffiths, *Mammal*

Griffiths is one of the most subtle actresses working today, and her performance helps ground Rebecca Daly's gritty drama about a Dublin woman who learns of her estranged son's death and takes in a tough, homeless street kid almost as a way to make up for it. That's a premise that could easily go off the rails. *Mammal* isn't the kind of somber, soft movie that dances around the thorny issues at play, but rather one mired in blood, guts, anguish, violence, and sex, and it takes a couple of big, bold narrative turns. But Griffiths, with her terse, tense presence and her physicality, helps sell the melodrama.

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