

The 2009 Academy Award Nominees

Written by Mike Schulz

Thursday, 22 January 2009 13:07

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Well before the 2009 Academy Award nominations were announced this morning, Oscar-watchers were abuzz over the potential excitement in this year's major categories. Would *Slumdog Millionaire*'s seemingly unstoppable march toward a Best Picture win be derailed by a surge of popular support for *The Dark Knight* or even - gulp! - *WALL•E*?

Would the season's continued award-splitting between *Milk*

and Sean Penn (recipient of 15 pre-Oscar citations thus far) and *The Wrestler*?

Would Mickey Rourke (14 and counting) allow Clint Eastwood to sneak in a career-achievement win for

Gran Torino

or would Kate Winslet receive her long-overdue trophy for Best Actress in *Revolutionary Road*

, or for Best Supporting Actress in *The Reader*

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... or could the performer, as she did at the Golden Globes, actually walk away with *both* awards?

The excitement was fun while it lasted, huh?

Granted, we still have the Penn/Rourke showdown to look forward to, and Winslet might now be in a better position for an Oscar victory than she was prior to 5:40 a.m. PST. But to quote the Facebook message I received minutes after the nominations were announced, this year's line-up is incredibly "meh" - no Picture or Director nods for *The Dark Knight* (despite eight nominations overall, which is nothing to sniff at);

WALL•E

(six nominations) receiving its

fait accompli

Animated Feature recognition but denied a shot at the big prize; Clint - with

Gran Torino

and

Changeling

giving him shots at Actor, Picture, Director, Score, and Original Song - completely shut out; and Winslet, in one of the morning's few pleasant surprises, getting a Best Actress citation for

The Reader

(which is the category that performance

belongs

in) instead of

Revolutionary Road.



Other surprises? Well, after being ignored by nearly every Oscar precursor under the sun, Michael Shannon received a long-shot Supporting Actor nod for *Revolutionary Road*, and the Original Screenplay category found room for Courtney Hunt's *Frozen River*

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and Martin McDonough's

In Bruges

(It was a happy morning for playwrights; in addition to McDonough, of *The Pillowman*

fame, there were nominations for David Hare, Peter Morgan, and John Patrick Shanley.)

Veteran character actors Richard Jenkins (

The Visitor

) and Melissa Leo (

Frozen River

) got an invitation to the February 22 ceremony. And while

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

was the expected leader in total nominations - 13 in all, the highest tally since 2002's

Chicago

- *Slumdog Millionaire*

racked up 10 without having any of its actors nominated.

Two of those nominations, by the by, were for Best Original Song - "Jai Ho" and "O Saya" - which begs the question: Where the hell is Bruce Springsteen's nomination for *The Wrestler*?

And why, with

WALL•E'

s "Down to Earth" filling out the roster, were only three songs nominated instead of the typical five? (You could've stocked the category with tunes from

High School Musical 3

all by

itself.

)

Other notable dissings: Golden Globe winner (and recipient of nine *other* pre-Oscar accolades)

Sally Hawkins for

py-Go-Lucky

;

Waltz with Bashir

for Animated Feature (though the cartoon documentary is among this year's Foreign Language Film nominees); Woody Allen's

Vicky Cristina Barcelona

screenplay;

The Wrestler

for anything

other

than Rourke and Supporting Actress contender Marisa Tomei;

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The Dark Knight

for Original Score (especially after the Academy tumult regarding its eligibility);

Rachel Getting Married

for anything

besides

Anne Hathaway



Instead, the Academy generally played it safe; there was no outlandishly out-there choice, and very, very little to raise the blood pressure come February 22. Another Best Director nod for the proficient, mostly unimaginative Ron Howard. Another nod - albeit a moderately surprising one - for *The Reader's* Stephen Daldry, who has now been nominated for each of the three movies he's directed. (

The Reader did quite well with five total nominations, proving that you can never underestimate the Academy's penchant for a good, middlebrow Holocaust tale.) Invitations to the ball for the combined star power of Brangelina ... though the pair deserved recognition more for

Burn After Reading

and

Wanted

than the films they were

actually

cited for. And a Best Picture and Director lineup that matched five-for-five for only the second time in more than a quarter-century. (Yet also the second time in only four years. Hmm.)

But hey, at least composer Danny Elfman - ignored since his dual nominations for 1997's *Good Will Hunting*

and

Men in Black

- was welcomed back to the club for

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Milk

, and

Hellboy II: The Golden Army

snuck in a more-than-deserved Makeup nod. And, of course, we're one step closer to watching Heath Ledger getting named Best Supporting Actor. Its collective tastes this year may have been a bit on the careful side, but at least you can't argue that the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences was

completely

out-to-lunch.

And here ... we ... *go*.

BEST PICTURE

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

Frost/Nixon

Milk

The Reader

Slumdog Millionaire

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BEST DIRECTOR

Danny Boyle, *Slumdog Millionaire*

Stephen Daldry, *The Reader*

David Fincher, *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*

Ron Howard, *Frost/Nixon*

Gus Van Sant, *Milk*

BEST ACTOR

Richard Jenkins, *The Visitor*

Frank Langella, *Frost/Nixon*

Sean Penn, *Milk*

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Brad Pitt, *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*

Mickey Rourke, *The Wrestler*

BEST ACTRESS

Anne Hathaway, *Rachel Getting Married*

Angelina Jolie, *Changeling*

Melissa Leo, *Frozen River*

Meryl Streep, *Doubt*

Kate Winslet, *The Reader*

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR

Josh Brolin, *Milk*

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Robert Downey Jr., *Tropic Thunder*

Philip Seymour Hoffman, *Doubt*

Heath Ledger, *The Dark Knight*

Michael Shannon, *Revolutionary Road*

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS

Amy Adams, *Doubt*

Penélope Cruz, *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*

Viola Davis, *Doubt*

Taraji P. Henson, *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*

Marisa Tomei, *The Wrestler*

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BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY

Dustin Lance Black, *Milk*

Courtney Hunt, *Frozen River*

Mike Leigh, *Happy-Go-Lucky*

Martin McDonagh, *In Bruges*

Andrew Stanton, Jim Reardon, Pete Docter, *WALL•E*

BEST SCREENPLAY ADAPTATION

Simon Beaufoy, *Slumdog Millionaire*

David Hare, *The Reader*

Peter Morgan, *Frost/Nixon*

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Eric Roth, Robin Swicord, *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*

John Patrick Shanley, *Doubt*

BEST ANIMATED FEATURE

Bolt

Kung Fu Panda

WALL-E

BEST ORIGINAL SONG

***Slumdog Millionaire*, "Jai Ho"**

***Slumdog Millionaire*, "O Saya"**

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***WALL•E*, "Down to Earth"**

BEST FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILM

***The Baader Meinhof Complex*, Germany**

***The Class*, France**

***Departures*, Japan**

***Revanche*, Austria**

***Waltz with Bashir*, Israel**

BEST DOCUMENTARY FEATURE

The Betrayal (Nerakhoon)

Encounters at the End of the World

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The Garden

Man on Wire

Trouble the Water

BEST ORIGINAL SCORE

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

Defiance

Milk

Slumdog Millionaire

WALL•E

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BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY

Changeling

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

The Dark Knight

The Reader

Slumdog Millionaire

BEST FILM EDITING

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

The Dark Knight

Frost/Nixon

Milk

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Slumdog Millionaire

BEST ART DIRECTION

Changeling

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

The Dark Knight

The Duchess

Revolutionary Road

BEST COSTUME DESIGN

Australia

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The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

The Duchess

Milk

Revolutionary Road

BEST SOUND EDITING

The Dark Knight

Iron Man

Slumdog Millionaire

WALL•E

Wanted

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BEST SOUND MIXING

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

The Dark Knight

Slumdog Millionaire

WALL•E

Wanted

BEST VISUAL EFFECTS

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

The Dark Knight

Iron Man

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BEST MAKEUP

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

The Dark Knight

Hellboy II: The Golden Army

BEST DOCUMENTARY SHORT SUBJECT

The Conscience of Nhem En

The Final Inch

Smile Pinki

The Witness - From the Balcony of Room 306

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BEST LIVE ACTION SHORT FILM

Auf der Strecke (On the Line)

Manon on the Asphalt

New Boy

The Pig

Spielzeugland (Toyland)

BEST ANIMATED SHORT FILM

La Maison en Petits Cubes

Lavatory - Lovestory

Oktapodi

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Presto

This Way Up