

The 2010 Academy Award Nominees

Written by Mike Schulz

Tuesday, 02 February 2010 11:39

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Granted, I was in Illinois when I watched this morning's announcement of the 82nd Annual Academy Award nominees. But I'm still reasonably sure that, as Anne Hathaway finished reading the list of 10 Best Picture nominees, I could hear Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Science President Sid Ganis sigh with relief - along with the Academy's Board of Governors, Oscar-telecast producers Adam Shankman and Bill Mechanic, and everyone at ABC.

For it looks as though the Academy's decision to up the number of Best Picture contenders from five to 10 did exactly what everyone involved *wanted* it to do: extend some major love to the sorts of box-office smashes that have been slighted in the past (cough cough ...

Dark Knight

! ... cough cough), and prove that the Academy isn't

entirely

out-of-touch with the tastes of the masses. So in a year that would've, under usual circumstances, seen the five nominations all but assuredly going to

Avatar, The Hurt Locker, Inglourious Basterds, Precious,

and

Up in the Air,

the expanded Best Picture field also found room for a trio of titles that might boost rooting interest and secure trajectory-reversing ratings for ABC: the \$115-million-grossing

District 9

, the \$292-million-grossing

Up

, and the \$240-million-and-counting-grossing

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The Blind Side

. (The announcement of this Best Picture nominee, somewhat surprisingly, received the biggest cheers from the assembled press corps, and I'm looking forward to the movie's new publicity

push: "Nominated for

two

Academy Awards - including Best Picture!")

Still, the bigger news of the morning involved the impending duel that's been dubbed "David and Goliath" by just about every media outlet under the sun: the eventual Best Picture battle between James Cameron's *Avatar* and Kathryn Bigelow's *The Hurt Locker*. Just when you thought this story couldn't possibly get more dramatic (Ex-spouses up for rival films!

Unprecedented box office versus staggering critical acclaim! The current number-one theatrical release and the current number-one DVD release!), the nominations announcement added an extra layer of excitement, as the sci-fi phenomenon and the Iraq War thriller managed to lead the list of Oscar contenders with nine nominations apiece. For those who've been following this year's Academy Awards race through such entertaining blogs as

AwardsDaily.com

and

InContention.com

- and I have ... although, ahem,

never

during office hours ... - you'll know that this tie was not only dramatic but somewhat unanticipated, as Cameron's movie was thought to have the clear advantage in terms of its final tally. (The Oscar-blog visitors among us also know that, as a result of the tie, the

Avatar

and

Hurt Locker

haters out there will no doubt be incited to even further degrees of pseudonymous pissed-off-edness.)



In the acting categories, though, the only shock lay in how little imagination voters exhibited. Excepting Supporting Actress nominee Maggie Gyllenhaal, the performers cited were repeats of those recently up for Screen Actors' Guild Awards (the

Crazy Heart

performer replaced

Inglourious Basterds

' SAG-nominated Diane Kruger), and the Supporting Actor contenders were actually

three

-peat nominees - the same quintet nominated for Golden Globe Awards. (I was really hoping

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that

Me & Orson Welles

' Christian McKay and

The Hurt Locker

's Anthony Mackie would garner the Supporting Actor nods that went to Matt Damon and Stanley Tucci. But I can more easily accept this duo's recognition for

Invictus

and

The Lovely Bones

by imagining it as

de facto

acknowledgment of their other 2009 performances - in

The Informant!

and

Julie & Julia

-

that were actually much, much better.)

Where *did* the other surprises stem from? Well, I thought that the inclusions of *The Messenger* and

In the Loop

among the Screenplay nominees were nice bits of outside-the-box thinking. (I'm hoping to finally catch both titles prior to the March 7 Oscar ceremony, along with the nominated

Crazy Heart, *A Single Man*, *The Last Station*, *The White Ribbon*, *The Imaginarium of Dr.*

Parnassus

...

man

, I'm behind this year) Four of the five Best Animated Feature nominees were expected ones, but in favor of such recognizable titles as

Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs

or

A Christmas Carol

or

Ponyo,

voters opted for the hand-drawn foreign film

The Secret of Kells

, which was a

huge

shocker.

(Even the Internet Movie Database doesn't provide much information on this mystery guest to Hollywood's Big Party, though one passage of

Secret of Kells

,

dialogue did make me chuckle out loud: "You can't find out everything from books, you know." "

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think I read that once.") The ever-nutty voters for Best Original Song didn't embarrass themselves this year, ignoring that god-awful

Avatar

ballad in favor of something called "Loin de Paname" from something called

Paris 36 -

I hadn't previously heard of either the number or the film, but it's

got

to be the preferable choice, right?

As far as my own favorite nominations are concerned, I have to list *A Serious Man's* Best Picture nod as the most personally satisfying; I was all but sure that the Coen brothers' latest masterpiece was going to be dissed in every category except Best Original Screenplay. (And I should apologize for the earlier

Blind Side

crack, as the Coens' comedy - available on DVD and Blu-ray on February 9, by the by! - is

also

"Nominated for two Academy Awards - including Best Picture!") I was just a

little

worried that my favorite leading performance of the year - Jeremy Renner's in

The Hurt Locker -

was in danger of being overlooked, but the Best Actor nominees landed exactly the way nearly everyone thought they would. I would've loved to have seen a better overall showing for

Fantastic Mr. Fox,

but I was at least happy to see Alexandre Desplat's playful Original Score make the lineup.

(Even though it'll probably lose out to

Up

... just as it will in the Animated Feature category.)



And truly, I couldn't be more excited about *The Hurt Locker* managing to score as many nods as *Avatar*, and for it to be facing off against the sci-fi behemoth in a full seven of the nine categories they're each nominated in - most of which are sure to be real nail-biters. Bigelow's Best Director victory might be as done a deal as *Avatar's* eventual Best Visual Effects triumph, but I think you could make a more-than-solid case for either film in Cinematography, Film Editing, and the two Sound categories. As for the night's final contest, the producers of

Avatar

's and

Hurt Locker

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's eight fellow nominees should just sit back and enjoy this legitimately historic match-up, as the climactic champion will either be the highest-grossing film of all time, or the lowest-grossing Best Picture winner in decades. It's definitely David versus Goliath, folks.

And we all know how *that* story ended, don't we ... ?

BEST PICTURE

Avatar

The Blind Side

District 9

An Education

The Hurt locker

Inglourious Basterds

Precious: Based on the Novel Push by Sapphire

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A Serious Man

Up

Up in the Air

BEST DIRECTOR

Kathryn Bigelow, *The Hurt Locker*

James Cameron, *Avatar*

Lee Daniels, *Precious: Based on the Novel Push by Sapphire*

Jason Reitman, *Up in the Air*

Quentin Tarantino, *Inglourious Basterds*

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BEST ACTOR

Jeff Bridges, *Crazy Heart*

George Clooney, *Up in the Air*

Colin Firth, *A Single Man*

Morgan Freeman, *Invictus*

Jeremy Renner, *The Hurt Locker*

BEST ACTRESS

Sandra Bullock, *The Blind Side*

Helen Mirren, *The Last Station*

Carey Mulligan, *An Education*

Gabourey Sidibe, *Precious: Based on the Novel Push by Sapphire*

The 2010 Academy Award Nominees

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Meryl Streep, *Julie & Julia*

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR

Matt Damon, *Invictus*

Woody Harrelson, *The Messenger*

Christopher Plummer, *The Last Station*

Stanley Tucci, *The Lovely Bones*

Christoph Waltz, *Inglourious Basterds*

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS

Penélope Cruz, *Nine*

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Vera Farmiga, *Up in the Air*

Maggie Gyllenhaal, *Crazy Heart*

Anna Kendrick, *Up in the Air*

Mo'Nique, *Precious: Based on the Novel Push by Sapphire*

BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY

Mark Boal, *The Hurt Locker*

Alessandro Camon, Oren Moverman, *The Messenger*

Joel Coen, Ethan Coen, *A Serious Man*

Pete Docter, Bob Peterson, Thomas McCarthy, *Up*

Quentin Tarantino, *Inglourious Basterds*

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BEST SCREENPLAY ADAPTATION

Jesse Armstrong, Jesse Blackwell, Armando Iannucci, Tony Roche, *In the Loop*

Neill Blomkamp, Terri Tatchell, *District 9*

Geoffrey Fletcher, *Precious: Based on the Novel Push by Sapphire*

Nick Hornby, *An Education*

Jason Reitman, Sheldon Turner, *Up in the Air*

BEST ANIMATED FEATURE

Coraline

Fantastic Mr. Fox

The Princess & the Frog

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The Secret of Kells

Up

BEST ORIGINAL SONG

"Almost There," *The Princess & the Frog*

"Down in New Orleans," *The Princess & the Frog*

"Loin de Paname," *Paris 36*

"Take It All," *Nine*

"The Weary Kind," *Crazy Heart*

BEST FOREIGN-LANGUAGE FILM

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Ajami, Israel

The Milk of Sorrow, Peru

Un Prophète, France

El Secreto de Sus Ojos, Argentina

The White Ribbon, Germany

BEST DOCUMENTARY FEATURE

Burma VJ

The Cove

Food, Inc.

The Most Dangerous Man in America: Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers

Which Way Home

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BEST ORIGINAL SCORE

Avatar

Fantastic Mr. Fox

The Hurt Locker

Sherlock Holmes

Up

BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY

Avatar

Harry Potter & the Half-Blood Prince

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The Hurt Locker

Inglourious Basterds

The White Ribbon

BEST FILM EDITING

Avatar

District 9

The Hurt Locker

Inglourious Basterds

Precious: Based on the Novel Push by Sapphire

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BEST ART DIRECTION

Avatar

The Imaginarium of Dr. Parnassus

Nine

Sherlock Holmes

The Young Victoria

BEST COSTUME DESIGN

Bright Star

Coco Before Chanel

The Imaginarium of Dr. Parnassus

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Nine

The Young Victoria

BEST SOUND EDITING

Avatar

The Hurt Locker

Inglourious Basterds

Star Trek

Up

BEST SOUND MIXING

The 2010 Academy Award Nominees

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Tuesday, 02 February 2010 11:39

Avatar

The Hurt Locker

Inglourious Basterds

Star Trek

Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen

BEST VISUAL EFFECTS

Avatar

District 9

Star Trek

The 2010 Academy Award Nominees

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BEST MAKEUP

Il Divo

Star Trek

The Young Victoria

BEST DOCUMENTARY SHORT

China's Unnatural Disaster: The Tears of Sichuan Province

The Last Campaign of Governor Booth Gardner

The Last Truck: Closing of a GM Plant

Music by Prudence

Rabbit à la Berlin

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BEST LIVE-ACTION SHORT

The Door

Instead of Abracadabra

Kavi

Miracle Fish

The New Tenants

BEST ANIMATED SHORT

French Roast

Granny O'Grimm's Sleeping Beauty

The Lasy & the Reaper (La Dama y la Muerte)

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Logorama

A Matter of Loaf and Death