Written by Mike Schulz
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Movies are made of moments, and after some consideration, I can't think of a single Best Picture lineup that has provided more memorable moments than the one competing at this year's Academy Awards ceremony, airing on ABC affiliate WQAD on February 27.

Sure, having 10 contenders for the big prize, as opposed to the previously traditional five, doubles your chances (at least in theory) of being knocked out by some magical bit of filmmaking. But what's astonishing about the nominees for the 2011 Best Picture Oscar, at least for me, is that any five you could name feature a greater number of sensationally effective, thematically resonant flourishes – compositions, line readings, examples of visual or aural technique – than in any of the anointed five over the past several decades. Nearly across the board, I was knocked out by the Big Picture in this year's crop of Best Picture candidates, but I was even more floored by their many, *many* little snapshots.

So in praising this terrifically inspired roster, I thought I'd borrow from a discontinued feature in *Film Comment* magazine called "Moments Out of Time," and celebrate the year's contenders through a series of individual mentions that help explain why, for my money, 2011's Best Picture lineup is one for the ages. Moment for moment, it was a helluva year.

The haunting echo of *Toy Story 3*'s "You've Got a Friend in Me" as Randy Newman's lyrics trail off, and 10 years pass in a blackout ... .

A man's hand fumbles for, and doesn't find, a Swiss-army knife on a closet shelf – someone's *127 Hours* just got a lot more challenging ... .

"You would *do* that for me?": a seemingly benign question asked twice in *The Social Network*, and both times as an Aaron Sorkin way of saying "I freaking *hate* you" ... .

The first public address by the future King George VI (Colin Firth), his stammer reverberating through the air, suggesting that the whole world can hear his humiliation – *The King's Speech* ... .

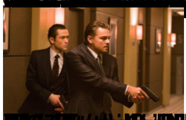
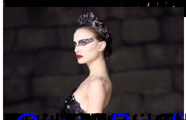
The Fighter's Dicky Eklund (Christian Bale) on the couch, schmoozing the HBO crew – so animated, so magnetic, so ... . Hey, how long has brother Micky (Mark Wahlberg) been sitting there? ... .

Lingering discomfort as platonic pals (Mia Wasikowska and Kunal Sharma) react to the suggestion that they "just do it and get it over with": We would never ... or *would* we ... ? – *The Kids Are All Right*
... .

Early montage of neon-lit fast-food signs, less product placement than a foreshadowing of regret ("I should've stopped for a burger ... ") in *127 Hours* ... .

Architect Nash (Lukas Haas) being dragged away by hired goons as the helicopter departs: Do the job right or never be heard from again – *Inception* ... .

The dozens of miniature stuffed animals in *Black Swan*, keeping silent watch over their owner, ensuring that she'll never grow up ... .

"And here is what I have to say about the saddle ... .": *True Grit*'s Mattie Ross (Hailee Steinfeld) bartering with a horse-trader, her tenacity wearing down the first of many adults who'll cross her ... .

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