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Michael Giltz

Freelance writer and raconteur
Posted: March 5, 2010 09:26 PM

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RESULTS: In one of the easiest years to predict in memory, I only got 17 out of 24. I blew it on the smaller categories where you have to shine, like the live action and animated and documentary shorts where I only got 1 out of 3 right. Oh well, there's always next year.

Ok, I *won't* guarantee that you'll win your office pool. My track record is spotty -- especially during years when I passionately love a movie. (Never bet on your

favorite team; you never bet smart.) But I've spoken to friends in Hollywood who attend the screenings, studied the tea leaves and here are my picks for the winners, along with info on close races if you want to ignore my advice.

And when people tell you, "But it's been 60 years since a movie grossed so little money and won Best Picture" or "no movie that has been nominated for Best Director AND won Best Editing has ever...." Yep, all those trends are good to note. But Academy voters don't vote that way. They (or their sister or their assistant) vote spontaneously from their heart. Assuming they themselves aren't on the ballot.

So here's my ballot followed by my explanations where necessary and the favorite choice among other voters. Good luck!

- BEST PICTURE** *The Hurt Locker* YES!
- BEST DIRECTOR** Kathryn Bigelow for *The Hurt Locker* YES!
- BEST ACTOR** -- Jeff Bridges for *Crazy Heart* YES!
- BEST ACTRESS** -- Sandra Bullock for *The Blind Side* YES!
- BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR** -- Christoph Waltz for *Inglorious Basterds* YES!
- BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS** -- Mo'Nique for *Precious* YES!
- BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY** -- *Inglorious Basterds* NO.
- BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY** -- *Up In The Air* NO.
- BEST ANIMATED FEATURE** -- *Up* YES!

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BEST FOREIGN FILM -- *El Secreto De Sus Ojos* YES!
BEST DOCUMENTARY -- *The Cove* YES!
BEST DOCUMENTARY SHORT -- *Music By Prudence* YES!
BEST LIVE ACTION SHORT -- *Instead of Abracadabra* NO.
BEST ANIMATED SHORT -- *A Matter Of Loaf And Death* NO.
BEST SCORE -- *Up* YES!
BEST SONG -- "The Weary Kind" from *Crazy Heart* YES!
BEST SOUND EDITING/SOUND MIXING/ART DIRECTION -- *Avatar* NO. NO. YES!
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY -- *The White Ribbon*. NO.
BEST MAKEUP -- *Star Trek* YES!
BEST COSTUME DESIGN -- *The Young Victoria* YES!
BEST FILM EDITING -- *The Hurt Locker* YES!
BEST VISUAL EFFECTS -- *Avatar* YES!

BEST PICTURE *The Hurt Locker* (runner-up *Avatar* or could it be *Inglorious Basterds* or *Up In The Air*?) -- I'm the only one who thinks *Up In The Air* still has a shot but with this new ranking system where voters list all 10 movies in preference, anything goes. And whichever movie wins, people will point to that new voting twist rather than the simple fact that *The Hurt Locker* or *Avatar* or whatever was the most popular film among voters. Why do I pick *Up In The Air* as the dark horse? It plays very well on TV (where many voters watch the nominees), it's a film in the classic Hollywood style a la Billy Wilder and thus appeals to older voters, it stars an honest to goodness movie star and it was a strong hit (unlike *Locker*). Most importantly, the people who love *Hurt* will probably list *Avatar* last while those rooting for *Avatar* will list *Hurt Locker* last. And what will be second or third on all of their ballots? I'm betting it's *Up In The Air* and *Inglorious Basterds*. I don't love *Hurt* (it's quite good and very well directed) so I'm not passionate about this category. But since Oscar loves to frustrate me, the most annoying win would be *Avatar* and therefore that might just pull it off.

BEST DIRECTOR Kathryn Bigelow for *The Hurt Locker*. Long overdue for the gender, of course and Bigelow has come into her own.

BEST ACTOR -- Jeff Bridges for *Crazy Heart*. A career award, yes, but also a very good performance.

BEST ACTRESS -- Sandra Bullock for *The Blind Side*. The only acting category that's a close call. Meryl Streep is the dark horse here; if only her movie were better. Bullock had a career year thanks to *The Proposal* and then this wildly popular smash hit that she carried with some of her best acting yet. Not a great movie, but obviously they love it. (Best Picture nomination, anyone?) It's her year.

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR -- Christoph Waltz for *Inglorious Basterds*.

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS -- Mo'Nique for *Precious*.

BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY -- *Inglorious Basterds* by Quentin Tarantino. Hollywood loved the film (it won the SAG for Best Ensemble), it was the biggest hit of his career and this is their best chance to reward him, assuming it doesn't swoop in and win Best Picture. *The Hurt Locker* could contend but that movie was all about the direction.

BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY -- *Up In The Air* by Jason Reitman and Sheldon Turner. A model of adaptation, especially if you read the very different book by Walter Kirn. (By the way, notice how I name the movie first and then the people? I wish the Academy Awards would do this instead of naming people we've never heard of before finally telling us it was, say, *Avatar* that won Special Effects or whatever.)

BEST ANIMATED FEATURE -- *Up* by Pixar, of course. They should have won Best Picture by now and some day they will.

BEST FOREIGN FILM -- *El Secreto De Sus Ojos*. *The White Ribbon* has won everything and *Un Prophete* was my favorite film of 2009, bar none. But this category is always a crazy wild card. I'm picking this film because of its heart, whereas *White Ribbon* is cold and austere. But most people pick *White* so if you want to be conservative go with that.

BEST DOCUMENTARY -- *The Cove*. *Food Inc* also pushes the buttons the Academy loves and *The Most Dangerous Man in America* is liberal and has a Jewish angle but *The Cove* is about lovable dolphins being slaughtered and is moving them to tears.

BEST DOCUMENTARY SHORT -- *Music By Prudence*. I have NOT seen these shorts (I have in the other categories) so this is based solely on the subject matter. Heart-tuggers and anything on the



Fall

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Holocaust usually triumph. *China's Unnatural Disaster: The Tears Of Sichuan Province* is about the shoddy school buildings in China that collapsed after an earthquake and killed so many children. It's painful. *Music By Prudence* also deals with adversity but with a far more upbeat way since it's about a deformed child cast out by her society but protected by her mother and ultimately proving to have a lovely, haunting singing voice that has been her salvation. See? You're tearing up already. (I'm not being flippant about the actual issues addressed in these films, just the way Academy voters respond to them.)

BEST LIVE ACTION SHORT -- *Instead of Abracadabra*. By far the best short of the five, and it's fun and sweet with a great kicker (ie. closing gag) to boot. The others are mostly grim. *The New Tenants* has some well-known actors (always a good pull with voters), but has awkward shifts in tone and ends poorly. Nonetheless, friends report it has played well at screenings. Still, my money is on *Abracadabra*.

BEST ANIMATED SHORT -- *A Matter Of Loaf And Death*. Nick Park of Wallace & Gromit owns this category and that isn't changing this year. *French Roast* is very mild. *Granny O'Grimm's Sleeping Beauty* is very well-animated but has one joke and no ending. *The Lady And The Reaper* is not bad but also has a weak kicker that spoils the modest fun. *Logorama* is the only contender: it has a great visual look that employs logos for an entire world, not to mention advertising characters like the Michelin Man as cops, Mr. Clean as a gay tour guide and so on. Two negatives: it's not funny when EVERY character is foul-mouthed and the short is too long and goes completely off the rails with a very confusing ending. Still, it has a cool factor and could upset. But stick with Wallace & Gromit. (Note: make sure you check out [David Wallechinsky's post](#) for more on the animated shorts, including clips and complete entries available for viewing. Then you can make up your own mind and tell me how crazy I am!)

BEST SCORE -- *Up* by Michael Giacchino. You can take it to the bank. He's won every award in sight and it's a glorious work that tips a hat to classic Hollywood film scores. And it's from a movie everyone loves.

BEST SONG -- "The Weary Kind" from *Crazy Heart* by Ryan Bingham and T-Bone Burnett. Another sure shot. Bet your house on it.

BEST SOUND EDITING/SOUND MIXING/ART DIRECTION -- *Avatar* in a technical categories sweep.

BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY -- *The White Ribbon*. Why would this win Best Cinematography but *White Ribbon* not win Best Foreign Film? Because everyone can vote in this category while you have to prove you saw all five foreign films to vote for that one. *The White Ribbon* is in black and white (which Hollywood is a sucker for), it won the guild award and it looks absolutely stunning. Still, this is a toss-up. *Avatar* or *The Hurt Locker* could triumph. Personally, I'd root for *Inglorious Basterds* and the great work of Robert Richardson. If he wins, that might mean an upset in Best Picture.

BEST MAKEUP -- *Star Trek* by Barry Burman, Mindy Hall and Joe Harlow.

BEST COSTUME DESIGN -- *The Young Victoria* by Sandy Powell.

BEST FILM EDITING -- *The Hurt Locker* by Chris Innis and Bob Murawski. They won the guild award for this category so other editors love it the most. I'd vote for Sally Menke and her great, great work on *Inglorious Basterds* and if it wins that could be another sign of an upset. Obviously *Avatar* is also a factor here.

BEST VISUAL EFFECTS -- *Avatar* by Joe Letteri, Stephen Rosenbaum, Richard Baneham and Andrew R. Jones. I'd give it to *District 9*, which did the most with the least (and beat out *2012* to get nominated) and my favorite of the three is *Star Trek* but *Avatar* it is. Without a doubt.

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Cherie King 10:19 PM on 3/07/2010
38 Fans



Up In The Air or Precious.

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Halsey 01:27 PM on 3/07/2010

258 Fans



Striped Pajamas...sorry

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Couch Potato 01:26 PM on 3/07/2010

0 Fans

I think it's sometimes easier to predict the Oscar winners if you haven't seen any of the nominees, as there are so many additional factors affecting the voting. There certainly are some simple tips to winning an Oscar. I've been checking them out here: bit.ly/9GPAIQ

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Michael Giltz 03:13 AM on 3/08/2010
59 Fans



You're absolutely right. Not having a dog in the fight helps a lot. You should also never bet on your college sports team: emotion always trumps logic. Hence my inability to accept that Avatar could win Best Picture.

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Halsey 01:26 PM on 3/07/2010



258 Fans

I rented Dist.9 (not my ilk in genre..but curiosity got the best of me)..and while the "team" denies it...I kept wondering (which IS a good sign)..there MUST be a sequel..3 years...the promise... and, maybe because it was made in S. Africa...very political...uber day aparteide (sp?)... the whole Avartar thing just doesn't interest me (forget that I HATED Titanic)..I guess fantasy ..not my fav..although I have to say..I didn't see Lord of the Rings in theater..(again..didn't interest me)..and today..the Two towers is one of my favorite movies ever..so this old dog (me) CAN learn new tricks.. I can't wait until White Ribbon is on DVD...I'm guessing it may effect me like The Boy in the Stripped Pajamas (one of THEEE most powerful movies I've EVER EVER seen...)...didn't it win last year or before for best foreign?
Love Jeff Bridges...always have..always will

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Michael Giltz 03:17 AM on 3/08/2010



59 Fans

A sequel to District 9 is certain to happen. The filmmaker and talent want to see it happen and probably won't be demanding so much money that they'd make it impossible. And the film was a huge success. It could be a prequel or a sequel or they might do both and make it a trilogy. Glad to hear you're open to new things like sci-fi and fantasy movies that get a lot of praise. Two Towers is definitely a corker and the trilogy as a whole one of the major accomplishments of the decade. The Boy In The Striped Pajamas was not nominated for Best Foreign Film (which is a very complicated country by country process) nor any other Oscars.

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Couch Potato 01:24 PM on 3/07/2010

0 Fans

I sometimes think it's easier to predict the winners if you haven't seen any of the nominees, as there are so many additional factors affecting the voting. There certainly see to be some simple tips to winning an Oscar - I've been checking them out here: bit.ly/9GPAIQ

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Balzac 07:39 PM on 3/06/2010

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I gotta go with Hurt Locker.

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HUFFPOST SUPER USER

Balzac 07:33 PM on 3/06/2010

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There was a bit of the Lone Ranger and Tanto dynamic with the lead and supporting actors, but it's a solid movie.

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HUFFPOST SUPER USER

Balzac 07:32 PM on 3/06/2010

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Well, I'm finishing watching The Hurt Locker and the suicide bomber scene really won me over. I'd say yeah, this is the best picture.

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Balzac 06:15 PM on 3/06/2010

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Ok, I've seen Inglorious Basterds, and I have to say, it had its moments and also it's moments lacking in something...

I'm most of the way through The Hurt Locker, and the male-bonding aspect of it is pretty rancid.

I haven't yet seen the movie about the blue aliens, but I vote it.

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Halsey 02:23 PM on 3/07/2010

258 Fans



Balzac...I've not seen IB yet..but question..do you think Quenton has unsolved anger issues? (seriously)...I mean.. Sam Peckenpah had a pretty high body count in his movies..but there was substance...n'est pas?

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bayside 03:24 PM on 3/06/2010

64 Fans



My personal favorite Avatar..A movie you want to see again just for the effects.Never saw anything like it before.....Do hope Up gets something as it was a very good film..

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RobRob 01:50 PM on 3/06/2010

11 Fans

The anti-American movie "Avatar" had very cool special effects, but the liberalism throughout made it tough to enjoy.

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byla 09:01 PM on 3/06/2010

71 Fans



My son is a Sci-Fi fan. He made me watch District 9. While he can be political, a good movie to him is a good movie. For instance, Old Boy is one of his favorite movies. Was there a political undertone to that? No. Sometimes a movie is just a movie. In the 30'S and 40's, movies were escapism from WWII.

He didn't see political messages in that film. He saw no undertones in Avatar. He just saw a good Sci-Fi movie.

Lighten up, enjoy a film for what it is. Watch Julie and Julia. Watch Nine. Watch Up In The Air. Those are character driven movies.

Heh, I find it amusing when Liberal (or in your case, liberalism) is used as a dirty word. If this is indeed America, Land of the Free, we're free to be Liberal and you have to live with it. Maybe you and Kirk Cameron can start your own production company to put out the movies you prefer to see. Meanwhile, you can ignore what's going on in the rest of the world and the movies they produce to illustrate it.

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free-thinking 10:49 AM on 3/07/2010

88 Fans

Liberalism? So indiscriminately destroying nature while stealing land and resources from the people who live there are not bad things to do (as those pesky Liberals claim) but are actually considered good things to do from the Conservative viewpoint?

What if the Na'vi characters had simply said "Give me back my country!" Would that have

made it a Conservative movie instead?

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HUFFPOST SUPER USER

byla 12:05 AM on 3/08/2010
71 Fans



Yes, one has to wonder, is Dances With Wolves a liberal movie? It surely is as Kevin Costner rides off with his Indian bride so the "white man" won't badger the rest of the tribe.

I dare say, Conservatism is the whole reason Oklahoma exists. Oddly enough, American Indians are fairly conservative...just look at Ok's reps and senators. Yet, they do get a good healthcare plan through their respected nations which comes from the government.

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byla 01:20 PM on 3/06/2010
71 Fans



For me, I think it should be either Inglorious Basterds or Hurt Locker. I enjoyed them both. I haven't seen Avatar, that's not really my favorite genre (I did see District 9, which I thought was outstanding) I just watched Up in the Air yesterday, and while it was a good flick, it was average. Precious was a good movie, but oh my goodness, the story was bleak and painful to watch.

I love a good foreign film, so I'll be hunting the other nominees down soon. I did see The White Ribbon and enjoyed it, although the editing to me was at times a little disjointed and confusing.

If Christoph Waltz doesn't win for Best Supporting Actor, the voting was rigged. I think Mo'Nique should win her category as well. She killed in that roll!

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HUFFPOST SUPER USER

Guitarsandmore 12:32 PM on 3/06/2010
178 Fans



Best Horror Show:

Health Care Reform Debate

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ProComputer 11:07 PM on 3/05/2010

20 Fans

I've seen none of the nominees. I'd rather watch a good planet earth nature show. Sorry :)

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Michael Giltz 11:43 PM on 3/05/2010
59 Fans



Well, then I hope you've watched "The Blue Planet" and "Planet Earth" on DVD (especially BluRay). They really are head and shoulders above most nature programming I've ever seen. Great stuff. Wiki entry: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Blue_Planet

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ProComputer 01:27 PM on 3/06/2010

20 Fans

Thanks for the recommends. I'll watch them. I checked out michaelgiltz dot com.

I'm a 15-year business and e-commerce website developer. I'm certain some 'glitz' can be added to michaelgiltz dot com and get more eyeballs while keeping it fun to visit. IMDB uses same leading back-end technologies we use. I think michaelgiltz

dot com can evolve into an even more robust and busy site with a little work. It's not that expensive.

Might you write a book soon?

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free-thinking 10:58 AM on 3/07/2010

88 Fans

I love "The Blue Planet (Seas of Life)" but, unlike "Planet Earth", I don't think it's on Blu-ray hi-def yet (which is practically a crime!), so it's just on DVD.

And every David Attenborough nature documentary is an absolute must-see! (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Attenborough#Filmography). The high-quality is consistent across all of them.

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Michael Giltz 11:45 PM on 3/05/2010
59 Fans



And if you like nature shows, why not check out The Cove, nominated for Best Documentary? It's a good (not great) film about dolphins and the people striving to protect them from illegal slaughter in Japan. Not a pure nature film but should appeal to anyone interested in nature and animals.

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LMPE 10:02 PM on 3/05/2010

595 Fans



I haven't even seen most of the nominees.

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Michael Giltz 10:15 PM on 3/05/2010
59 Fans



Well, there are certainly some worthy ones. Up in The Air, Up, Inglorious basterds and A Serious Man are all on my best of the year list and District 9 is good fun. That's a drama, an art film, a war movie, an animated film and an art house movie. So hopefully one of them should be the sort of movie you like and worth a look.

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