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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE
BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

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The IRA's 2009: Spreading The Wealth Around

In 2008, the IRA movie awards were swept to an unprecedented degree by the terrific, acclaimed but generally overlooked film *The Assassination Of Jesse James By The Coward Robert Ford*. In 2009, a strong lineup of well-regarded movies and a desire to avoid another sweep guaranteed that the IRA awards were spread among a range of films from blockbusters like *The Dark Knight* to tiny flicks like *Ballast* and *Shotgun Stories*.

The IRAs is an annual get-together of movie buffs that was launched by college friends 33 years ago as a counter to the more mundane Oscars. These are film fanatics who go to Film Forum and Anthology Archives and film festivals throughout America and around the world. Members have won major Oscars and worked on Oscar-winning Best Picture winners, they've written acclaimed and best-selling Hollywood biographies like *Ed Sikov's Dark Victory: The Life Of Bette Davis*, the definitive Oscar book (indeed the definitive awards book) *Inside Oscar*, by Mason Wiley & Damien Bona; worked at major magazines and newspapers covering the industry; worked at major studios and in the independent film industry or in my case just schlepped around as a freelancer and watched a lot of movies year in and year out. In other words, IRA members range from major players to avid fans.

So here are this year's winners followed by the balloting as it happened with all the top vote-getters listed and the Bronx cheers at the end of Sominex and Dramamine movies (those that put us to sleep or made us sick) and Mechanical Actor and Actress. Watch the Best Picture honorees or the winners from past years (listed at the bottom) and you'll have a great overview of cinema in the past three decades.

BEST PICTURE: *The Edge Of Heaven*

BEST DIRECTOR: Fatih Akin - *The Edge Of Heaven*

BEST ACTOR: Michael Shannon - *Shotgun Stories*

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