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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE  
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## The Oscar Nominations: What Show Will They Make?

You can look at the Oscar nominations two ways. One, you can of course look for your favorite movies, see what films got snubbed, enjoy Oscar trivia (like "Dreamgirls" being the first film in decades to get the most nods without Best Picture being one of them) and so on. Two, if you're a future producer of the Academy Awards show (like myself) you look at the nominations and immediately start thinking about what kind of show you're going to have. It gets "cast," really by the nominations, just like the Grammys get cast by who gets a vote.

First off, the ratings will be in trouble. Yes, a close race brings in viewers, but big hit films do it even better. None of the five nominated films are blockbusters. Martins Scorsese's "The Departed" is a solid hit and the biggest film of his career with \$121 million, not a stellar number for a movie that cost \$90 million to make, but that was their fault for paying that much for a Scorsese film in the first place. "Departed" also surely played much better with men, while the Oscars is a female magnet. "Babel" is a decent indie hit with \$23 million and counting. "Letters From Iwo Jima" has made \$2.4 million and follows the relative flop companion piece "Flags Of Our Fathers." "The Queen" is certainly an art house hit at \$35 million and counting, but most of its audience is decidedly older. (How many people under 30 have seen it? 30?) Only "Little Miss Sunshine" constitutes a crowd-pleasing favorite thanks to Steve Carell of "The Office" and a seriously leggy performance at the box office, with \$60 million and a DVD release just out.

In short:

The Departed -- \$120 million and few women

Babel -- \$23 million

Letters From Iwo Jima -- \$2.4 million and few women

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