

And The Nominees Are...

This morning, the Academy Award nominations were announced.

The big news this year: the expansion of the Best Picture Category from 5 nods to 10. As the list proves, this was done in order to pay homage to not only the “good” films but also to the popular films that everyday joes are likely to have seen. There is also another first among the nominees which I will get to.

And AWAAAAAY We Go

Best Actress In A Supporting Role:

- Penelope Cruz (*Nine*)
- 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 Actor In A Supporting Role:

- Matt Damon (*Invictus*)
- Woody Harrelson (*The Messenger* not for the other big WH movie of the year: *Zombieland*)
- Christopher Plummer (*The Last Station*)
- Stanley Tucci (*The Lovely Bones*)
- Christoph Waltz (*Inglourious Basterds*)

Best Actress In A Leading Role:

- Sandra Bullock (*The Blind Side*... the sweetheart of this year’s list)
- Helen Mirren (*The Last Station*)
- Carey Mulligan (*An Education*)
- Gabourey Sidibe (*Precious*..., the Dark horse in this race)
- Meryl Streep (*Julie/Julia*... enough said)

Best Actor In A Leading Role:

- Jeff Bridges (*Crazy Heart*)
- George Clooney (*Up in the Air*... speculation of a Bridges/Clooney battle)
- Colin Firth (*A Single Man*)
- Morgan Freeman (*Invictus*... portrayals of historical figures, hmm)
- Jeremy Renner (*The Hurt Locker*)

Best Animated Feature:

- *Coraline* (Henry Selick, director)
- *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (Wes Anderson)
- *The Princess and the Frog* (John Musker and Ron Clements... Disney's first classic animation feature since the Pixar revolution)
- *The Secret of Kells* (Tomm Moore)
- *Up* (Pete Docter... Disney/Pixar's best to date)

Best Director:

- James Cameron (*Avatar*)
- Kathryn Bigelow (*The Hurt Locker*... Mr. Cameron's ex-wife the first time a former couple has ever been nominated for the award... she could also come off as the first female Best Director winner)
- Quentin Tarantino (*Inglourious Basterds*)
- Lee Daniels (*Precious*...)
- Jason Reitman (*Up in the Air*)

Best Picture:

- *Avatar* (James Cameron and Jon Landau, Producers)
- *The Blind Side* (Nominees to be determined? Don't we know who produced it?)
- *District 9* (Peter Jackson and Carolynne Cunningham, Producers)
- *An Education* (Finola Dwyer and Amanda Posey, Producers)

- *The Hurt Locker* (Nominees to be determined?)
- *Inglourious Basterds* (Lawrence Bender, Producer)
- *Precious...* (Lee Daniels, Sarah Siegel-Magness, and Gary Magness, Producers)
- *A Serious Man* (Joel Coen and Ethan Coen, Producers)
- *Up* (Jonas Rivera, Producer)
- *Up in the Air* (Daniel Dubiecki, Ivan Reitman, and Jason Reitman, Producers)

There you have them. The MAJOR nominees for this years Oscar parties. Grab your ballots, make your choices, and watch ABC on March 7th when Alec Baldwin and Steve Martin co-host the 81st (or is it 82nd... conflicting details) Annual Academy Awards. Co-hosts? For the rest of the nominees, check them out at abc.com

Final Tally:

- *Avatar* and *The Hurt Locker* tied with 9 nods apiece
- *Inglourious Basterds* with 8
- *Precious* and *Up in the Air* with 6
- *Up* received 4 nominations

The Abyss

It took two nights, but we finally made it through the sci-fi 80's thriller, [The Abyss](#). What is with me and all the science fiction lately? Not usually my cup of tea; I guess I've just been enjoying a change of scenery. One reason for wanting to watch the Abyss is that I was very impressed by director / writer James Cameron's latest movie, *Avatar*. I enjoyed the movie in a little theater with old fashioned sound equipment, and I also got to catch it at a larger theater with awesome sound and in 3D – I REALLY enjoyed it! That doesn't mean I'm

a James Cameron fan, however, and you couldn't pay me to sit through Titanic, whose concept I always thought sold out the disaster itself. I mean, for characters in the movie, there were over 2200 real Titanic passengers from which to choose – why spend millions of dollars to bring to life fictionalized accounts of such a horrible tragedy?

But back to The Abyss, another James Cameron water movie... Overall, this winner of the 1990 Oscar for visual effects was enjoyable, but I don't even know if I can say this is a watch-again-er for me. Reading the trivia on imdb.com about how the movie was filmed was almost more interesting than the movie itself, which tells the story of a group of oil workers who are hired to go on a dive search for a missing nuclear sub. Enter some Navy SEALs and a mysterious alien species, and you have enough action for a 138 minute movie. All of the diving and talk of the oceanic pressure kinda got to me after awhile; I don't think scuba diving is something I'm ever interested in doing. But I enjoyed the story and especially the visual effects, and without risking spoiling anything, let's just say that in typical 80's fashion, the plot was predictable. If you do happen to check this one out, or if it happens to be one of your old favorites, I highly recommend reading the trivia section on imdb.com to further your enjoyment.

Chasing The Frog

When friend and fellow blogger Derek came to visit last weekend, he brought along his blu-ray player. For those of you who don't know, that's a type of movie player which plays a special kind of dvd in high definition – hope I explained that well enough; it's not like I know that much about it

myself. So anyway, we chose the movie 21 – even though I’ve seen it, it was interesting to see it in superior visual quality. I really didn’t think I’d notice a difference – it’s not my style to care about such things, but I actually did notice the clarity. I could actually see the grain on the paper of the deck of playing cards. And the opening scenes of the movie are sweeping views of the city of Boston, which were really enjoyable eye candy on the blu-ray.

So anyway, while watching the movie again, I began to wonder exactly how much of it is a true story. I have my laptop right in the living room, so I looked it up while watching the movie. It was interesting because Jeff Ma, the “real” Ben Campbell (the main character in 21) actually makes a cameo in the movie -and I found this out in enough time to be able to spot him. I found out a bunch of other interesting info as well, and [here is a cool site](http://chasingthefrog.com) called chasingthefrog.com where you can compare famous movies with the stories upon which they were based. Here I found out that Jack Dawson’s sketches in the Oscar-winning movie Titanic were actually drawn by the movie’s director, James Cameron. Not that I can stand that movie – it think it’s horribly exploitative to invent a romantic plot not even remotely based on reality about an historical disaster which claimed thousands of lives. I decided to give it a shot once, and I tried to open my mind a little, but I still didn’t like what I saw – it seemed cheesy, hokey, and unrealistic, not to mention that it almost cheapened the very horrendous event whose story it attempted to tell. Anyway, I also found out from this site that there was only one black victim of the Titanic disaster – a second class passenger named Joseph Phillippe Lemercier Laroche. As the website tells it, he loaded his wife and daughters onto a life boat and went down with the ship. Even more sadly, his wife gave birth to their son later that year. Here is a family picture:



The story of the only black man on the Titanic was revealed in 2000

The site only has a handful of movies to compare to actual events, but its comparisons are very interesting and insightful; including a picture to picture comparison of people and the actors who portrayed them – very cool, check it out!