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The Behrend Beacon

# 'Chicago' a sure thing on Oscar night



by Daniel J. Stasiewski  
a&e editor

Short of a voting debacle the likes of the 2000 election, the cynical and sassy "Chicago" should steamroll the competition at the 75th annual Academy Awards on Sunday. With more than \$125 million in the bank just before the big show, "Chicago" has proved to be an audience favorite like no Best Picture since "Forrest Gump" ("Titanic's" teen-girl factor just doesn't cut it). But with the Academy's recent share-the-wealth attitude, a "Chicago" sweep could be out of the question.

#### Best Picture

"Chicago"—"Gangs of New York"—"The Hours"—"Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers"—"The Pianist"

Murder, mayhem, and music. What more could you want from a Best Picture? With a huge audience appeal and almost every Oscar precursor, "Chicago" looks to pick up where "Oliver!" left off in 1968. Let's not forget it has the Miramax publicity machine behind it, leaving Miramax's other nominees, "Gangs" and "The Hours," out cold.

The only threat is Roman Polanski's "The Pianist." It won the British Academy Award for Best Picture and France's César, but this is Hollywood. "Chicago's" courtroom circus and media hype just fit. Oh, and for the superstitious, the only other Best Picture with a city for its title was "Casablanca." Not a musical, but it does begin with "c."

#### Prediction: "Chicago"

Close second: "The Pianist"

#### Best Director

Martin Scorsese, "Gangs of New York"—Rob Marshall, "Chicago"—Stephen Daldry, "The Hours"—Pedro Almodóvar, "Talk to Her"—Roman Polanski, "The Pianist"

Harvey Weinstein seems hell-bent on getting Martin Scorsese, often considered the greatest living filmmaker, his first Oscar. With three previous nominations for direction, Scorsese's work has always needed time to ingrain itself into cinema history before receiving his much deserved accolades (he wasn't even nominated for "Taxi Driver"). Despite all of the Miramax chief's campaigning, the "Gangs" nod could go the same way as his other three. Especially with his main competition being "Chicago's" Rob Marshall.

A first-time director, Marshall's work as choreographer outshines the otherwise uninspired direction.

Still, if the Academy can't give the Oscar to a Hollywood director like Spielberg, they like to reward a huge debut. Scorsese has lost to debut directors twice before (Robert Redford and Kevin Costner). Even as a sentimental favorite, Scorsese chances have diminished.

#### Prediction: Rob Marshall, "Chicago"

Close Second: Martin Scorsese, "Gangs of New York"

#### Best Actor

Jack Nicholson, "About Schmidt"—Daniel Day-Lewis, "Gangs of New York"—Adrien Brody, "The Pianist"—Michael Caine, "The Quiet American"—Nicholas Cage, "Adaptation"

But "Gangs of New York" will get its reward in the Best Actor category. Daniel Day-Lewis's performance as Bill the Butcher is unforgettable. Sure he's a villain, but wasn't Denzel Washington a baddie last year? With Day-Lewis' retirement looming, Hollywood's only chance to keep this talent from going away again will be to recognize his amazing contributions.

"The Pianist," however, can't go unrewarded, and Adrien Brody's performance has been called the strongest aspect of Polanski's Holocaust epic. Being the only nominee without an Oscar, the Academy may be compelled to honor a new generation.

At 29 years old, Brody may be too much of a new generation for the voters' taste. Day-Lewis is a veteran with the Screen Actors Guild award and has every major critic award already on his mantle. He has this one in the can.

#### Prediction: Daniel Day-Lewis, "Gangs of New York"

Close Second: Adrien Brody, "The Pianist"

#### Best Actress

Renée Zellweger, "Chicago"—Nicole Kidman, "The Hours"—Julianne Moore, "Far From Heaven"—Salma Hayek, "Frida"—Diane Lane, "Unfaithful"

If any a category is completely up in the air, it's this one. While Hayek should stay happy with her nomination, Moore, Zellweger, Kidman, and Lane each have big chances to take home the golden boy. Zellweger has a Golden Globe, the Screen Actors Guild award, and "Chicago's" momentum in her favor, giving her a slight lead. Julianne Moore's performance in "Far From Heaven" has won practically every critic award and she's long overdue for a win.

A big competitor, Kidman has been the Hollywood "It" girl since "Moulin Rouge!" and has given a performance some, but not all, have admired. She also

has a Golden Globe in her favor, but "The Hours" isn't exactly drawing universal praise like "Chicago" and "Far From Heaven."

Then there's Lane, whose performance was the crowning moment of a long Hollywood career. Plus, Lane is drawing more buzz lately than any other nominee. With Miramax's publicity, it's best to stick with Zellweger and Kidman as the top contenders. Just wait. Next year, these two will have to share the screen in Miramax's Oscar-bait, "Cold Mountain."

#### Prediction: Nicole Kidman, "The Hours"

Close Second: Renée Zellweger, "Chicago"

#### Best Supporting Actor

Chris Cooper, "Adaptation"—Christopher Walken, "Catch Me If You Can"—John C. Reilly, "Chicago"—Paul Newman, "Road to Perdition"—Ed Harris, "The Hours"

At one point, Cooper's toothless orchid hunter was a considered lock. Then another Chris walked into the picture. Cooper's quirky performance, now pitted against Walken's tear-jerk sentimentality, has enough competition to make any actor nervous. Walken took home the Screen Actors Guild award, but he has history working against him.

No actor has ever won an Oscar being directed by Steven Spielberg. Still, Cooper may be a little too off-beat for the older Academy voters. It's Walken, just barely.

#### Prediction: Christopher Walken, "Catch Me If You Can"

Close Second: Chris Cooper, "Adaptation"

#### Best Supporting Actress

Catherine Zeta-Jones, "Chicago"—Meryl Streep, "Adaptation"—Kathy Bates, "About Schmidt"—Julianne Moore, "The Hours"—Queen Latifah, "Chicago"

The same thing goes for Streep. "Adaptation" is a movie the Academy likes to nominate, but not award. Sure, Streep has the Golden Globe and she hasn't won an Oscar in years, but she's just not in the right movie for an Oscar. Zeta-Jones on the other hand has the Screen Actor's Guild Award and the (potential) Best Picture winner in her favor. Rarely, does a Best Picture go without an acting award. If Zellweger stumbles, Zeta-Jones becomes the favorite. Even the Oscar darling, Meryl Streep, won't stop her.

#### Prediction: Catherine Zeta-Jones, "Chicago"

Close Second: Meryl Streep, "Adaptation"

#### Best Original Screenplay

Pedro Almodóvar, "Talk to Her"—Nia Vardoulas, "My Big Fat Greek Wedding"—Alfonso and Carlos Cuarón, "Y Tu Mamá Tambien"—Todd Haynes, "Far From Heaven"—Jay Cocks, Kenneth Lonergan, and Steven Zaillian, "Gangs of New York"

Two foreign language films, two independents, and one New York studio film. Who says Hollywood has no original ideas? The nominees should not be a surprise because the Original Screenplay Oscar is usually used to award a film that has no chance in the big show. Sorry, "Gangs." As for the other four, there are no real stand-outs and no buzz. Only Almodóvar's Best Director nomination gives him a slight lead.

"Far From Heaven," however, is too much a critical favorite to go without an award, and it's in English. No foreign language screenplay has won this award since the 60s, so Haynes may just grab this one. Still, Almodóvar is an Oscar favorite. His "All About My Mother" won Best Foreign Language Film three years ago, and he'll probably take Oscar back to Spain for "Talk to Her"

#### Prediction: Pedro Almodóvar, "Talk to Her"

Close Second: Todd Haynes, "Far From Heaven"

#### Best Adapted Screenplay

David Hare, "The Hours"—Charlie and Donald Kaufmann, "Adaptation"—Bill Condon, "Chicago"—Ronald Harwood, "The Pianist"—Peter Hedges, Chris Weitz, and Paul Weitz, "About a Boy"

"The Hours" screenplay is bad, just bad. Still, this film has enough supporters to steal this award from the Kaufmanns. The people who like "The Hours" got it nine nominations, so winning a couple of Oscars (Kidman for Actress) isn't hard to believe. And let's not forget the Miramax factor.

It just doesn't look good for what is easily the most creative screenplay since "Pulp Fiction." Of course, "Adaptation" is no "Pulp Fiction." And the inroads made by independent film in the mid-90s seem long gone. I hope "Adaptation" pulls this one off; it just doesn't seem likely.

#### Prediction: David Hare, "The Hours"

Close Second: Charlie and Donald Kaufmann, "Adaptation"

The 75th Annual Academy Awards, hosted by Steve Martin, will air live Sunday at 8 p.m. on ABC.

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## Get out of the way, Ms. Dynamite has arrived

by Olivia Page  
staff writer

"It Takes More" is the hit single from the United Kingdom blowout artist Ms. Dynamite. This video is often seen on MTV. Previously she was on heavy rotation on the underground charts. With her debut album "A little deeper" she has won the best R&B album at the "Top of the Pops" award show in the UK. Some people may not have heard of Ms. Dynamite because she has only recently made her mark in the United States with the video "It Takes More."

Ms. Dynamite is very personal when it comes to her songs. They show her emotional views and are about herself. This build up of character is well developed. Avid music listeners like to know about the artist who they are listening to and sing along with. She sounds like a rapping, singing Nelly Furtado. She also has her own very unique singing style.

She is a different type of hip hop/singer. Her song lyrics are more poetic than you hear with other singers. She has

even been called the UK's Lauryn Hill. Her lyrics are good and play a crucial part in listening to her songs. She tells a story of morals.

The "It Takes More" lyrics are about how she is the complete opposite of Destiny Child's "Bills, Bills Bills." She sings, "Now who gives a ... about the ice on your hand/ if its not too complex/ tell me how many Africans died for the baguettes on your Rolex/ So what, you pushing a nice car/ don't you know, there's no such thing as superstars/ we leave this world alone/ so who gives a ... About the things you own."

"Seed Will Grow" is a reggae-inspired song that features Kymani Marley. The song is about a man who sells drugs, even to children. He then comes home to find his mother crying because his brother had died. His brother died because of the drugs that he sold to him. The man then began to think of "And they mothers cries/ every child is someone's child/ you outta mind what you do/cause Karma gonna bring the drama back to you."

"Dy-Na-Mi-Tee" has a fast paced beat and the way that she sings her rap name is the most noticeable and catchiest part of the song. Her real name is Niomi Mclean-Daley.

With "Watch Over Them," she shows her Lauryn Hill poetic style abundantly with "Everyday I wake I feel like crying/ Every second I feel like praying/ Everywhere I turn my people dying/ brothers and sisters now listen what I'm saying/ I don't really feel like writing/ and I don't really feel like singing/ cause every where I look my people fighting/ and its our own that we're killing."

She goes on to sing about her relationship with her brother with the aptly titled song "Brother."

"Put Him Out" is about telling a woman the man that she has a baby with is not any good. He treats the woman badly and the point of the lyrics are: "Look what you showing her/ by letting him disrespect you/ you just growing her to think that it is something that all men do/ you owe it to yourself and your daughter/ cause she thinks its all right/

When she get older/ follow the footsteps you showed her/ how you gonna look her in the eye."

In "Natural High" she feels that life is full of pain and stress. The lyrics say that you have to put away the bad things, such as drugs.

Sometimes it is not about the singer's voice but the message that she brings. She brings morals into her songs.

Ms. Dynamite portrays herself as a woman with morals and respect. This sets her apart from other female rappers. She is no Little Kim. She is no Trina or Foxy Brown. She does not sing or rap about the topics of those rappers. She is a lyricist, a poet and a woman who wants to spread the truth.



out of  
4 stars

## International Women's Film Series

Continues this week with 'Ouch'



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"Ouch" is a quirky comedy about a middle-aged man who is hung up on his ex-girlfriend. When he finds out she's pregnant, but he's not the father, he questions his ability to have a meaningful relationship. Soon, the man meets a bulimic waitress with a passion for life. The waitress and the lovelorn mid-lifer have an affair, giving the man the chance to finally learn about romance. In French with English subtitles.--DS

"Ouch," directed by Sophie Fillieres, will be shown on Tues. at 7 p.m. in Reed 117.