

TOM'S TOMFOOLERY OF CINEMA

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The Aviator *****

Miramax films presents a film directed by Martin Scorsese. Written by John Logan. Starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Cate Blanchett, Kate Beckinsale, Alec Baldwin, Alan Alda, and Ian Holm. Running time 166 minutes. Rated PG-13 (for thematic elements, sexual content, nudity, language, and a crash sequence).

Martin Scorsese, arguably one of the greatest directors in recent history, responsible for such classics and masterpieces as Taxi Driver, Raging Bull, The Last Temptation of Christ and Gangs of New York, has now created the most visually stunning and captivating film of his career. The film tells the story of

multi-millionaire Howard Hughes (DiCaprio) and his visionary insanity with his film Hell's Angels and his huge passion for aviation. The film progresses in the second and third acts when Hughes designs and builds planes not only for personal pleasure, but for spying, transportation, and the most infamous plane, the Spruce Goose. The Spruce Goose could carry battalions and weaponry, with its 200 yard body and eight turbo engines, anywhere in the world. Hughes was also the mastermind behind Trans World Airlines and the huge scandal between TWA and Pan AM president Juan Trippe (Baldwin). Along the path of his aviation financial success, Hughes meets and falls in love with Katharine Hepburn (Blanchett). Throughout the film nuances are revealed about his severe obsessive compulsiveness about germs and cleanliness. Writer John Logan smartly

kept the screenplay in the time period between Hell's Angels and the flight of the Spruce Goose, a time period where Hughes was strong and determined; where people could respect him.

Scorsese was not the original director lined up to do this picture. Fellow veteran film-maker, Michael Mann was originally given the screenplay, however after directing the bio-pics The Insider and Ali, Mann only stayed on as one of the producers, passing the film on to Scorsese. The point to be made is that this film could not have been made as successful and triumphant by anyone other than Scorsese. Everything was perfect with this film. The casting of the actors was tremendous; DiCaprio and Blanchett are both nominated for Academy Awards. One of the brightest performances was by Jude Law in his cameo as classic actor Errol Flynn. The art

department created some of the greatest recreations of sets, costumes and Hughes' planes. The sound and visual effects departments created the most accurate sounds and realistic visual effects ever conceived for a film, and most importantly, besides the directing, the music and editing were superb. Howard Shore's music brought cinema back into the 1940s with subtle hints of jazz influence. Finally, Thelma Schoonmaker, who has edited all of Scorsese's films, was given this challenge and emerged victorious over the endless reels of footage that needed to be edited.

In what is quite possibly the toughest year for the Academy to decide the winners, Scorsese just made the competition that much closer. However, Mr. Scorsese's curse may be broken, and this film may just give him his first win in the Best Director category.



Photo courtesy of Yahoo Images

From left, director Martin Scorsese offers instruction to Leonardo DiCaprio as he recreates the story of multi-millionaire visionary Howard Hughes in *The Aviator*.

Forget Oscar: The Tommys are coming to town



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Along with the announcements of the nominees for the 77th annual Academy Awards come this humble critic's picks for the winners, as well as who will most likely end up with the Oscar. These are my picks, and they are purely in the interest of entertainment. If these guesses are incorrect this critic is not libel for any discrepancies. Overall, this was the hardest year to pick a winner out of the nominees because everyone nominated this year was deserving of the award. There were also a few upsets involving people who were not nominated. It is unfortunate that Paul Giamatti once again was not nominated; he had a great performance with American Splendor a couple years ago, and his performance in Sideways was excellent. The same can be said for Uma Thurman and David Carradine in Kill Bill, Vol. 2. So without further ado, it is my pleasure to give you my picks for winners of the 77th annual Academy Awards. A "T" designates who I think deserves the award, A * indicates who I think will actually get it.

For best performance by an actor in a leading role:

T Leonardo DiCaprio - The Aviator

* Jamie Foxx - Ray

For best performance by an actor in a supporting role:

T Thomas Haden - Church Sideways

* Morgan Freeman - Million Dollar Baby

For best performance by an actress in a leading role:

T Annette Bening - Being Julia

* Hilary Swank - Million Dollar Baby

For best performance by an actress in a supporting role:

T Natalie Portman - Closer

* Cate Blanchett - The Aviator

For best animated feature:

T Shrek 2

* The Incredibles

Achievement in art direction:

T The Aviator - Art Director:

Dante Ferretti Set Decorator:

Francesca Lo Schiavo

* Finding Neverland - Art

Director: Gemma Jackson Set

Decorator: Trisha Edwards

Achievement in cinematography:

T The Passion of the Christ -

Caleb Deschanel

* The Aviator - Robert

Richardson

Achievement in costume design:

T Lemony Snicket's A Series of

Unfortunate Events - Colleen

Atwood

* Finding Neverland -Alexandra

Byrne

Achievement in directing:

T The Aviator -Martin Scorsese

* Ray -Taylor Hackford

Achievement in film editing:

T Collateral -Jim Miller and Paul

Rubell

* Ray -Paul Hirsch

Achievement in make-up:

T The Passion of the Christ -

Keith Vanderlaan and Christien

Tinsley

* Lemony Snicket's A Series of

Unfortunate Events -Valli

O'Reilly and Bill Corso

Achievement in music written

for motion pictures:

T Harry Potter and the Prisoner

of Azkaban -John Williams

* The Passion of the Christ -

John Debney

Achievement in song written

for motion pictures:

T and * "Learn to Be Lonely" -

Phantom of the Opera Music:

Andrew Lloyd Webber Lyric:

Charles Hart

Best motion picture:

T The Aviator

* Ray

Achievement in sound editing:

T and * Spider-Man 2 -Paul N.J.

Ottossen

Achievement in sound mixing:

T Ray -Scott Millian, Greg

Orloff, Bob Beemer, and Steve

Contamessa

* Spider-Man 2 -Kevin

O'Connell, Greg P. Russell,

Jeffrey J. Habboush, and Joseph

Geisinger

Achievement in visual effects:

T Harry Potter and the Prisoner

of Azkaban -Roger Guyett, Tim

Burke, John Richardson, and

Bill George

* Spider-Man 2 -John Dykstra,

Scott Stokdyk, Anthony La

Molinara, and John Frazier

Best-adapted screenplay:

T Sideways -Alexander Payne &

Jim Taylor

* Million Dollar Baby -Paul

Haggis

Best original screenplay:

T The Aviator -John Logan

* Hotel Rwanda -Keir Pearson &

Terry George

Congratulations on all of the

nominations, and good luck to all

the nominees. From how the

nominations look, this has the

potential to be an exciting

evening. There are so many

good films and performances

that the Academy must have

really close voter tabulations for

the winners. The 77th Annual

Academy Awards will air Sunday,

February 27th on ABC.

Coverage begins at 7 p.m. EST.

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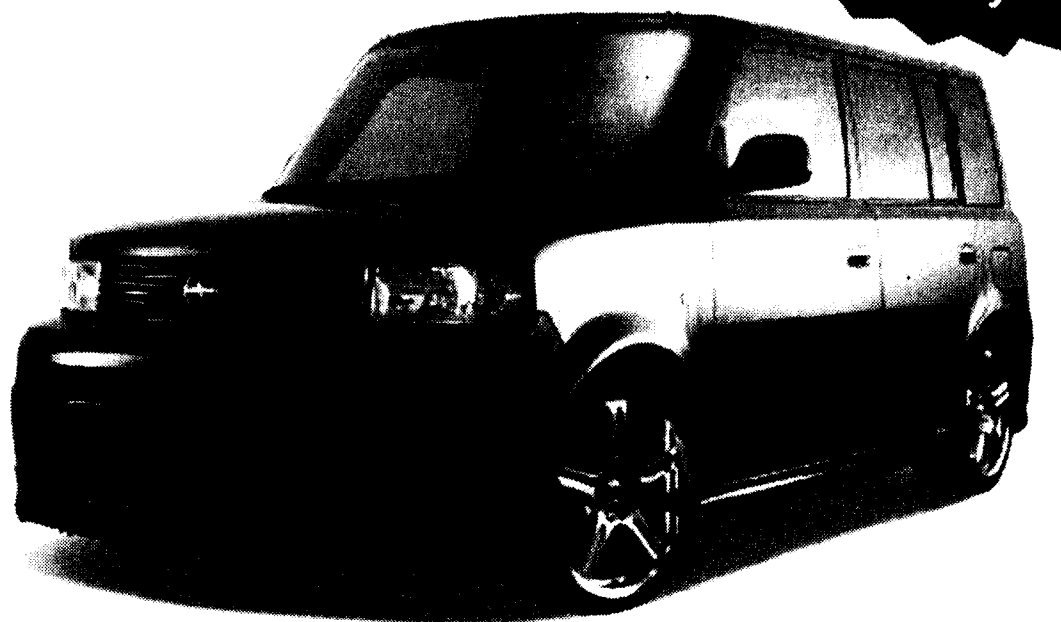
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