

## From 'Slumdog Millionaire' to 'Milk': HollywoodChicago.com Picks the 2009 Oscar Winners

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on February 19, 2009 - 11:28pm

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CHICAGO – Content director Brian Tallerico and staff writers Dustin Levell and Patrick McDonald have merged their movie-loving minds and come up with the ultimate Oscar preview. Win your office pool, impress your friends and propose a toast to the nominees that should have been when the 81st-annual Academy Awards are broadcast on Feb. 22, 2009 at 7 p.m. CST.

### BEST PICTURE



Slumdog Millionaire

*Photo credit: Fox Searchlight*

“[The Curious Case of Benjamin Button](#) [18]”

-Paramount; 13 nominations; \$123 million gross

“[Frost/Nixon](#) [19]”

-Universal; 5 nominations; \$17 million gross

“[Milk](#) [9]”

-Focus; 8 nominations; \$27 million gross; winner of New York Critics Award

“[The Reader](#) [15]”

-The Weinstein Company; 5 nominations; \$21 million gross

“[Slumdog Millionaire](#) [13]”

-Fox Searchlight; 10 nominations; \$89 million gross; winner of BAFTA, Boston Critics, National Board of Review, Producers Guild Award, SAG Ensemble Award, and Golden Globe

Nearly everyone on Earth is predicting a locked-in win for Danny Boyle's "Slumdog Millionaire" and HollywoodChicago.com is no different. It would be an absolute, jaw-dropping shock to hear "Frost/Nixon" or "The Reader" announced on Oscar night and "Milk" doesn't have the support needed to get the big win. That leaves the nomination leader - "Button" - and the little movie that could. It's a Slumdog World, and we only live here.

Dustin thinks the Academy will get it right this year and award the film that deserves the big prize but Patrick and Brian wouldn't mind seeing a win for "Milk".

As for the [already-notorious snubs](#) [20] of "Wall-E" and "The Dark Knight," Dustin says, "Twenty years from now, though people will be still be talking about Dark Knight and WALL-E as the great cinematic achievements of 2008 and how they raised the bar for their respective genres." With no explanation, Patrick throws an interesting film into the ring for what should have been nominated - Neil LaBute's "Lakeview Terrace". We love Mr. McDonald and the limb he's out on with that one.

## BEST ACTOR



Mickey Rourke in The Wrestler

Photo credit: Fox Searchlight

[Richard Jenkins](#) [21], "[The Visitor](#) [16]"

-1st nomination

[Frank Langella](#) [22], "Frost/Nixon"

-1st nomination

[Brad Pitt](#) [23], "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button"

-2nd nomination (no wins)

[Sean Penn](#) [24], "Milk"

-5th nomination (one win); won Boston (tie) and LA Critics Awards and Screen Actors Guild Award

[Mickey Rourke](#) [25], "[The Wrestler](#) [17]"

-1st nomination; won BAFTA, Boston (tie) and Chicago Critics Awards and Golden Globe

This may be one of the tightest races in the history of Best Actor. Eliminating the possibility of a shocking split vote letting a third candidate sneak in, it's going to be one of two '80s icons - Sean Penn as Harvey Milk or Mickey Rourke as Randy 'The Ram' Robinson. Langella, Pitt and Jenkins just got picked in the wrong year.

The SAG win for Penn and universal acclaim seems to give him the edge but Rourke has been nearly as lauded during precursor season and won the Golden Globe. It doesn't hurt Mickey that Sean has won before. It's a lot harder to get a second prize. But that doesn't stop Brian from saying Sean's going to be one of the few and that he deserves it. Dustin and Patrick are going with Mickey and all three think their choice to win is also the one that should.

There may be solid agreement that either Mickey Rourke or Sean Penn will and should win but there's no consensus pick on the HollywoodChicago.com staff as to who should have been nominated.

Dustin points to the most financially successful film in Clint Eastwood's history, "Gran Torino," and what could be the legendary star's final performance and finds it surprising that the Academy didn't throw the old man a bone on his last go round as an actor.

Patrick goes back further in the year and picks the underrated Sam Rockwell and his excellent work in David Gordon Green's "Snow Angels".

Finally, Brian thinks no one worked as hard or embodied a character quite as completely as Benicio Del Toro in "Che". Sadly, all three men have as much of a chance of winning an Oscar on Sunday night as you do.

## BEST ACTRESS



Kate Winslet in The Reader

Photo credit: The Weinstein Company

[Anne Hathaway](#) [26], "[Rachel Getting Married](#) [27]"

-1st nomination; won Chicago Critics Award and National Board of Review

[Angelina Jolie](#) [28], "[Changeling](#) [29]"

-2nd nomination (one win)

[Melissa Leo](#) [30], "[Frozen River](#) [31]"

-1st nomination

[Meryl Streep](#) [32], "[Doubt](#) [4]"

-15th nomination (two wins, none since Sophie's Choice); won Screen Actors Guild Award

[Kate Winslet](#) [33], "The Reader"

-6th nomination (never won); won BAFTA for lead; won Chicago Critics, Golden Globe, and SAG Award for supporting

The transition from supporting actress to lead throws this category into disarray. Either Kate Winslet will walk home with her first prize after six nominations or Meryl Streep will take home her third Oscar but first in a quarter-century. Arguably one of the best actresses that ever lived hasn't won since "Sophie's Choice".

They may be dusty, but Meryl has two Oscars already and dozens of other trophies, and we all agree that Kate Winslet will be career-honored, over Streep who has tons of gold. Harvey Weinstein's aggressive strategy with "The Reader" will pay off with at least one major Oscar and one of the best actresses of her generation will finally have "Oscar-nominated" next to her name on future previews.

Brian would rather see Ms. Hathaway take home the trophy for her searing, raw work in "Rachel Getting Married" but Patrick and Dustin think that if the Academy goes with Streep for a third time, they'll be getting it right. Sadly, even though Meryl Streep consistently delivers, we seem to just expect that from her.

As for who's missing out on the party, there are a number of good candidates, but Dustin and Brian agree that Sally Hawkins got incorrectly snubbed for her amazing work in "Happy-Go-Lucky". Patrick wishes a former winner was in there for an early-year comedy - Frances McDormand in "Miss Pettigrew Lives For a Day".

## BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR



Heath Ledger in The Dark Knight

Photo credit: Warner Brothers



[Josh Brolin](#) [34], "Milk"

-1st nomination; won National Board of Review and New York Critics Award

[Robert Downey Jr.](#) [35], "[Tropic Thunder](#) [36]"

-2nd nomination (no wins)

[Philip Seymour Hoffman](#) [37], "Doubt"

-3rd nomination (one win)

[Heath Ledger](#) [38], "[The Dark Knight](#) [39]"

-2nd nomination (no wins); won BAFTA, Boston Critics, Chicago Critics, Golden Globe, LA Critics, and SAG Award

[Michael Shannon](#) [40], "[Revolutionary Road](#) [41]"

-1st nomination (no wins)

Like the rest of the world, there's nothing but agreement here, as the staff at HollywoodChicago.com thinks the Academy will get it right and give Mr. Ledger his last Oscar for his amazing work in "The Dark Knight".

There's even a bit of agreement on who should have been nominated to be another category bridesmaid for Mr. Ledger. Both Dustin and Brian would have liked to hear James Franco's name read on nomination morning, although Mr. Levell would have voted for him for "Milk" and Mr. Tallerico for "Pineapple Express". It makes one wonder if the split at HC wasn't in the Academy too, causing neither performance to make the final five.

Once again, Mr. McDonald digs back deeper into early 2008, praising Haaz Sleiman's work in "The Visitor," a film that we would all agree wasn't nominated enough by Oscar 2009.

## BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS



Viola Davis in Doubt

*Photo credit: Miramax*

[Amy Adams](#) [42], "Doubt"

-2nd nomination (no wins)

[Penelope Cruz](#) [43], "[Vicky Cristina Barcelona](#) [44]"

-2nd nomination (no wins); won BAFTA, Boston Critics, Los Angeles Critics, National Board of Review, and New York Critics

[Viola Davis](#) [45], "Doubt"

-1st nomination

[Taraji P. Henson](#) [46], "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button"

-1st nomination

[Marisa Tomei](#) [47], "The Wrestler"

-3rd nomination (one win)

This is that rare category where everyone nominated is just as deserving of the win. The category that is arguably most up in the air has nearly no online consensus, but both Brian and Patrick think the smallest supporting role will be the big winner and Viola Davis' work in "Doubt" will take home the Oscar. It's the toughest category but Davis made the most of her screen time over Tomei's ultimate "exposure" as a stripper.

Dustin goes with Nate Silver (the notorious election prognosticator of [fivethirtyeight.com](#) [48]) and picks Taraji P. Henson for her touching work in "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button".

Dustin and Patrick would like to see Marisa Tomei take home a second trophy for her daring work in "The Wrestler" and Brian certainly wouldn't be disappointed by that win, but he'd love to see the critic's darling win the Oscar and Penelope Cruz hear her name early in the Oscar telecast. She should have won for "Volver" anyway.

Only Amy Adams doesn't register as a "will win" or "should win," indicating the range of support for this category, but Patrick still finds a way to praise her, noting that she should have been nominated for "Miss Pettigrew Lives For a Day".

Brian wishes the Academy would have recognized the title character of "Rachel Getting Married" and walked Rosemarie DeWitt down the Oscar aisle while Dustin longs for the days when Kate Winslet was still in this category for "The Reader". At least it would be an easier pick.

## BEST DIRECTOR



Danny Boyle for Slumdog Millionaire

*Photo credit: Fox Searchlight*

[Danny Boyle](#) [49], "Slumdog Millionaire"

-1st nomination; won BAFTA, Chicago Critics, DGA, Golden Globe, and LA Critics Award

[Stephen Daldry](#) [50], "The Reader"

-3rd nomination (no wins)

[David Fincher](#) [51], "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button"

-1st nomination; won National Board of Review

[Ron Howard](#) [52], "Frost/Nixon"

-2nd nomination (one win)

[Gus Van Sant](#) [53], "Milk"

-2nd nomination; won Boston Critics Award

Danny Boyle has been clearing shelf space for months to make room for every new trophy and we're sure he's got a prominent spot saved for the nearly inevitable Best Director prize that everyone HollywoodChicago.com agrees he will and should win for the brightest, best-looking and most "feel-good" directorial effort.

Like a lot of people, Brian and Dustin wish that Christopher Nolan would have been recognized for his 8-time nominated "The Dark Knight". Look at where the Batman Franchise was 10 years ago. Look at how far-fetched and complicated a shooting script the Dark Knight had. Look at the final product. Chris Nolan is an amazing artist and craftsman.

Patrick spends time on that limb again and suggests that Neil LaBute was snubbed for his work on "Lakeview Terrace".

## BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY



Slumdog Millionaire

Photo credit: Fox Searchlight

"The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" by Eric Roth

"Doubt" by John Patrick Shanley

"Frost/Nixon" by Peter Morgan

"The Reader" by David Hare

"Slumdog Millionaire" by Simon Beaufoy

Both Dustin and Patrick think that the lauded playwright John Patrick Shanley should win for "Doubt" while Brian thinks there was a bit too much blatant talk of changing winds and burned-out bulbs to merit even a nomination for the weakest element of that film. He thinks the Academy will get it right and give Simon Beaufoy the prize for taking an anecdotal novel and weaving it into the most beloved film of the year. Patrick agrees.

Perhaps more surprisingly than any pick, Dustin is going with a huge shocker in this category and telling you to put your money on Peter Morgan for "Frost/Nixon," despite the film's lack of critical or precursor awards. If "Frost" has any real chance, it's probably here, but it's also likely that the box office bust will go home empty-handed.

Brian and Dustin wish the Academy would have recognized "Let the Right One In" even if it wasn't eligible for Best Foreign Language Film while Patrick goes back to a clear favorite of his - "Snow Angels" by the great David Gordon Green.

#### **BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY**



Milk

Photo credit: Focus

"Frozen River" by Courtney Hunt

"Happy-Go-Lucky" by Mike Leigh



"In Bruges" by Martin McDonagh

"Milk" by Dustin Lance Black

"WALL-E" by Andrew Stanton

Once again, there is harmony and agreement in the HollywoodChicago.com office as we all agree Dustin Lance Black better polish his "thank yous" for an acceptance speech on Sunday night.

Brian and Patrick agree that "Milk" gets honored here, and the screenplay did the man right, but Dustin would like to see a not-impossible "WALL-E" win. The idea that someone wrote "WALL-E," such an amazing movie targeted heavily for kids that had such little dialogue but such a beautiful story, makes us all feel warm inside.

Finally, Brian and Dustin are shocked that Woody Allen didn't land his 15th nomination for "Vicky Cristina Barcelona," a film much more widely acclaimed than many of his previous nods and Patrick makes it an "out on a limb trifecta" and suggests "Lakeview Terrace" for Best Original Screenplay.

What did we get right? What did we get wrong? Tell us what you think will win, should win, and should have been nominated in the space below.



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