The Drink Tank 204

The Oscars: Epic Fail

Here's the problem with the Oscars: The Right People Don't Win.

When folks say that about the Hugos, Kevin Standlee usually gets pretty mad, but it's a legitimate reason to be dismissive of a set of awards if it consistently fails to give the award to the stuff you like. Why? Because that's how awards work. It's the reason different awards exist: to give people choices in which they support and believe. I for one tend to like the selections of the Independent Spirit Awards better than the Oscars, and this year especially so. The Oscars that I tend to support are the Short categories. Seldom do they give it to bad films. This year, I had totally failed to recognize two titles and backed the wrong horses in Best Animated Short and Best Live-Action Short. So, what's the trouble with this year?

Let's start with Best Score.

I've always loved movie music. It's a part of being from the generation that started with Star Wars as their first favourite movie. I've always enjoyed the film work of composers like Marks Mothersbaugh, Chris Young, Alan Silverstri, James Newton Howard, Phillip Glass, John Williams (though less of late) and especially Danny Elfman. The two greatest failures of the Oscars over the last decade were both in the area of Best Score. The first one was when Phillip Glass didn't take home the Oscar for his amazing score to The Hours. The previous two years had been great, The Red Violin, one of the all-time best scores, and Crouching Tiger, which was amazing too. The Lord of the Rings winning wasn't bad either, and then comes 2002 where you've got Frida, The Hours, Road to Perdition, Far From Heaven and Catch Me If You Can. The Hours was head and tails above all of those, and yet Frida took home the Oscar. It was a crime. One year off and you can say it's a fluke, but the next year was a return to Lord of the Rings, which was far less an amazing experience than either Big Fish or House of Sand and Fog.

Then came the worst offense in history. The Village, a very weak film that had one of those beautiful scores that nearly made the movie work. Taken separate from the film, it's an amazing orchestral experience with an amazing series of solos on violin.

There was also Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events, which also had an impressive score. Neither won. It went to a very typical score for Finding Neverland. The next year was Brokeback winning when there was a beautiful score from Memoirs of a Geisha, most different from the rest of John Williams' scores. There was Babel winning when both The Queen and Notes on a Scandal were up. Atonement beat The Kite Runner, which was criminal.

What I've heard of the winning score from Slumdog Millionaire has been good, but two of the best scores of the year, from The Dark Knight and Iron Man. In Iron Man's case. It was probably the comic book curse, and while that probably equally effected The Dark Knight, there was also the fact that the most effective piece of score, the single tone used for the Joker, could be called Sound Design. Still, there was Milk, Danny Elfman's most mainstream, and frankly breathtaking, score. Slumdog won as a part of the sweep, and again, I'm annoyed.

Let's follow that up with the win of Sean Penn over Mickey Roarke. The Best Actor award is one about transformation (which is why Stephen Rhea didn't win when he should have for The Crying Game) and both Roarke and Penn transformed themselves. Penn is an Oscar fave. Roarke...not

so much. This would have been a great story having Roarke cemented his status as a comeback kid, but remember that John Travolta didn't win for his comeback in Pulp Fiction, nor Robert Forster in Jackie Brown. It's usually just not done.

I was annoyed that Anne Hathaway didn't win for Rachel Getting Married, but at the same time I think Kate Winslet is one of the truly great actresses right now.

Slumdog Millionaire was the movie of the year, though I think that it lacked for both sheer thrill (The Dark Knight was the winner there) and for sheer emotional impact (it's much closer in that category, but I still go with The Wrestler). Milk was a strong film and should have done even better than it did, especially in score. It's a shame Iron Man didn't take more wins,

art by Genevieve

Cinequest has arrived and it's a good thing. I'm excited because it's my 9th Cinequest doing theatre announcements and it's only my second night as a part of the Opening Night. This time, I'm handling the Q&A for Wake, a film starring Bijou Phillips, Danny Masterson and Jane Seymour, among others. I'm also announcing a few films through the week, including a couple of shorts programmes.

I'm excited and I hope that one of my favourite films from the selction process, Love You More, plays well to our audince. It's a beautiful sexy story of two crazy kids and a 45 record. It's amazing, but that sort of thing can be hard on an audience.

I'm going ot try and do an issue of The Drink Tank next week, but who knows? It's Cinequest and I'm usually running myself pretty hard during the week. I'm hoping to do another issue of Claims Department all about Cinequest and have it to pass around at CorFlu.

And I'm psyched about that too, for various reasons, the best of which being that I'll get to talk to some of my British homies again! It's always good to chat with Peter Weston, Mark Plummer and Claire Brialey, and it says that Tobes is coming out too! That's always a good thing. I'm hoping that Linda and I will get a chance to talk with everyone. It's always a good thing to spend time with Fanzinistas!

Scarlet Ibis' Alien Women photo shoot. She's really not that skinny!