

Restaurant review

Check out the pub grub on Indy's Massachusetts Avenue.

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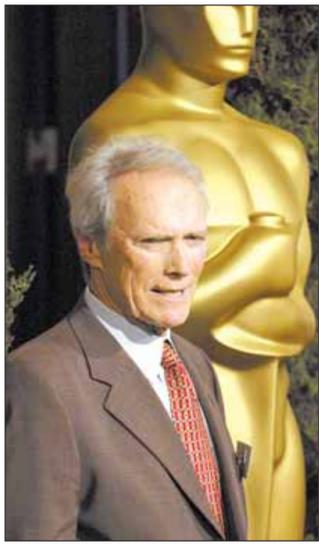


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SECTION **C**

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Clint Eastwood received the best-director Academy Award for "Million Dollar Baby." Will this year be Martin Scorsese's turn?

Director Oscar up for grabs

Veteran Scorsese might finally get recognition

By CHRISTY LEMIRE
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES

Looking at winners of the best-director category at the Academy Awards over the past decade is a study in extremes.

The filmmakers have crafted either visual spectacles (Anthony Minghella's "The English Patient," James Cameron's "Titanic," Steven Spielberg's "Saving Private Ryan") or intimate character-driven dramas (Sam Mendes' "American Beauty," Clint Eastwood's "Million Dollar Baby," Ang Lee's "Brokeback Mountain").

INSIDE

The best-director award isn't the only hotly contested Oscar.

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There is no in-between.

Not that looking back is necessary for predicting this year's winner. Martin Scorsese should finally capture the prize that has eluded him for decades, despite having been nominated for such classics as "Raging Bull" and "GoodFellas."

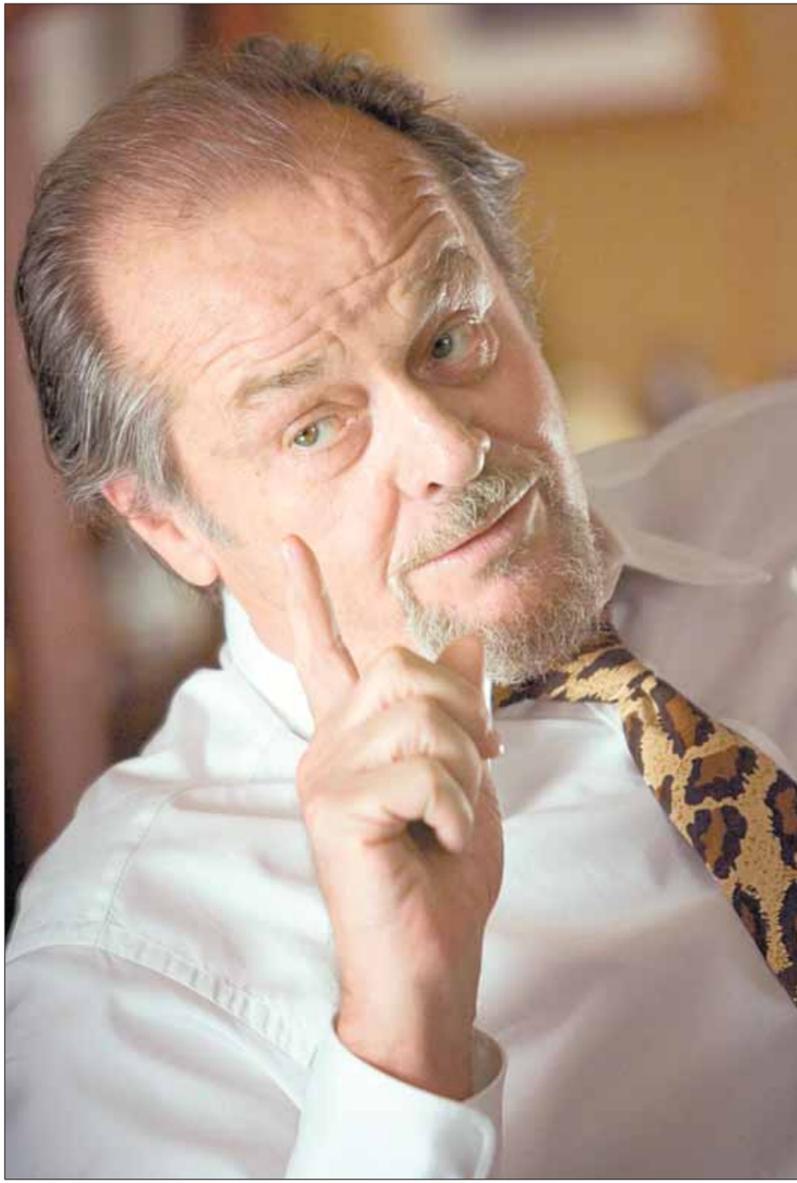
Scorsese's "The Departed," about cops and mobsters outsmarting each other in Boston, is a return to the gritty material that made him legendary. Come Oscar night, the sixth time should be a charm.

Honoring Scorsese also would uphold a longtime Oscar trend, says Tom O'Neil, a columnist for the Los Angeles Times' awards site TheEnvelope.com.

"The single most powerful factor at the Oscars is the overdue director syndrome," said O'Neil, who's written several books about awards shows. "We saw this happen a few years ago when Roman Polanski managed to surmount all his bad PR problems and woes to win best director (for 'The Pianist') over Rob Marshall, who directed the best picture of the year, 'Chicago.' ...

"When they gave it to Ang Lee last year, it was partly the same thing. He was an overdue director," he added, noting that Lee directed 2000's foreign-film Oscar winner in "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon," which also was up for best picture that year.

(SEE DIRECTOR, PAGE C3)



Jack Nicholson stars as Boston crime boss Frank Costello in the Oscar-nominated film "The Departed." Costello uses a mole in the police force to try to uncover the police agent within his own ranks.

Best pictures on the big screen

Movie marathon heralds awards

By ANNETTE JONES

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Greenwood Park 14 is one of 78 AMC theaters across the county to show the five movies nominated for the best-picture Oscar in a marathon screening session before this weekend's Academy Awards.

Admission for the Saturday mini-film festival is \$30. Tickets allow movie-goers unlimited refills of soda and popcorn during the shows.

The 10½ hours of film time does not include 15-minute breaks between movies and a longer dinner break.

The five movies are "Babel," "The Departed," "Little Miss Sunshine," "Letters from Iwo Jima" and "The Queen."

AMC scheduled the movie bonanza for people who haven't see all the films or want to see them again on the big screen before the Oscars, according to a corporate spokeswoman.

The films will be shown in one theater auditorium, so seating is limited. Tickets can be purchased in advance at the Greenwood AMC Theater, off Fry Road behind Greenwood Park Mall. Individual tickets will not be sold.

All films are rated R, except for "The Queen," which is rated PG-13.



Helen Mirren stars as Elizabeth II in "The Queen." The film is up for a best-picture Oscar.

BEST-PICTURE SHOWCASE

What: A film festival showing the five best-picture Oscar nominations back to back

When: Saturday; 11 a.m., "Babel"; 1:45 p.m., "The Queen"; 3:45 p.m., "The Departed"; 7 p.m., "Letters from Iwo Jima"; 9:45 p.m., "Little Miss Sunshine"

Where: AMC Greenwood 14, off Fry Road behind Greenwood Park Mall

Admission: \$30 for five films and a large drink and popcorn with unlimited refills. Tickets are nontransferable and can't be sold for individual films.

Tickets: Seating is limited; tickets can be purchased in advance at the theater

THE FILMS

'Babel'

Stats: Starring Brad Pitt and Cate Blanchett, 143 minutes, drama, directed by Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu

Synopsis: A rifle shot rings out in a Moroccan desert, detonating a chain of events that will link an American tourist couple's frantic struggle to survive, two Moroccan boys involved in an accidental crime, a nanny illegally crossing into Mexico with two American children and a Japanese teenage rebel whose father is sought by the police in Tokyo

The film explores the barriers and misunderstanding that separate mankind.

'The Queen'

Stats: Starring Helen Mirren, James Cromwell and Michael Sheen, 97 minutes, drama, directed by Stephen Frear

Synopsis: "The Queen" is a revealing and occasionally humorous glimpse into the lives of the British royal family following the untimely death of Princess Diana. Mirren stars as Queen Elizabeth II, Cromwell plays Prince Philip, and Sheen co-stars as British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

'Letters from Iwo Jima'

Stats: Starring Ken Watanabe and Kazunari Ninomiya, 141 minutes, war drama, directed by Clint Eastwood

Synopsis: The battle of Iwo Jima, one of the bloodiest campaigns of World War II, is examined from the point of view of the Japanese soldiers defending the island. A cache of letters found years later provides the perspectives of several soldiers as they prepare for the coming American attack, knowing they face almost certain death.

'Little Miss Sunshine'

Stats: Starring Greg Kinnear, Toni Collette, Abigail Breslin and Steve Carell, 102 minutes, comedy, directed by Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris

Synopsis: Seven-year-old Olive dreams of winning a children's beauty pageant and persuades her family to drive her from their home in New Mexico to California for the Little Miss Sunshine competition.

Along for the ride are Olive's father, a failed motivational speaker; her grandfather, who was kicked out of his retirement home for snorting heroin; her silent brother; a suicidal uncle; and her increasingly frustrated mother.

'The Departed'

Stats: Starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Matt Damon, Jack Nicholson and Mark Wahlberg, 151 minutes, crime drama, directed by Martin Scorsese

Synopsis: Crime boss Frank Costello has placed a mole in the ranks of the Massachusetts State Police. Meanwhile, the police succeed in infiltrating Costello's organization, providing a credible criminal background for an undercover cadet, who manages to gain Costello's trust.

Despite series of brooding fantasy sequences, Carrey thriller doesn't add up

By CHRISTY LEMIRE
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

One of the many mysteries about the number 23 is why Jim Carrey and director Joel Schumacher thought audiences would share their fascination over the mysteries about the number 23.

Their thriller "The Number 23" (admit it, you're already sick of hearing that number after just two paragraphs) is a one-note — or one-number — affair, straining to build an engaging story around a man's conviction in the mystically diabolical power of that digit.

The lore behind the number includes such factoids as human parents each contributing 23 chromosomes to their offspring and Shakespeare being born and dying April 23.

Schumacher and screenwriter Fernley Phillips just pound this number



Jim Carrey stars as a man who becomes obsessed with a number in "The Number 23."

into viewers' brains, laying out those tidbits and many others, along with overloading the scenery with instances of the number (a clock that reads 9:14,

an apartment bearing the number 959, which both add up to 23).

Frankly, the number wears out its welcome in the opening credits, a headache-

inducing splash of text and figures with an avalanche of instances of the 23 enigma.

Reuniting with his "Batman Forever" director, Carrey plays easygoing animal-control officer Walter Sparrow, whose encounter with a strange dog creates a fateful delay in meeting his wife, Agatha (Virginia Madsen).

While waiting, Agatha browses a bookstore, picking out a tattered, self-published novel called "The Number 23" as a gift for her husband.

Walter becomes obsessed with the book, a pulp murder mystery about a private eye named Fingerling, whom Carrey also plays in dreamy fantasy segments.

For Walter, the novel holds eerie parallels to his own life, and he begins to think

that the number also controls his destiny.

With a lot of visual flair but little suspense and a prolonged series of predictable plot twists, "The Number 23" spells out a murder tale in Walter's life that engulfs his wife, their son (Logan Lerman) and a family friend (Danny Huston).

Carrey's performance is energetic but lightweight as Walter progresses from pleasant family guy to raving paranoid.

Some of the Fingerling fantasy sequences highlight the movie, Schumacher crafting a dark, brooding world whose brutishness clashes with the cozy life Walter has made for himself.

Even those sequences grow tiresome, though.

"You're looking for 23, so you're finding it," Agatha tells her husband.

MOVIE REVIEW

'The Number 23'

Rating: R for violence, disturbing images, sexuality and language
Stars: Two out of four