

ACCENT

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THIS WEEKEND'S BEST BETS

Movie marathon of Oscar-nominated films

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, includes a drink and popcorn with unlimited refills; advance tickets are available at the theater

'Shawshank Redemption' on the big screen

When: 2 and 7:30 p.m. today, 7:30 p.m. Saturday

Where: Artcraft Theatre, 57 N. Main St., Franklin

Admission: \$5; \$4 for students and seniors, \$3 for children

Boat, sport and travel show

When: 3 to 9:30 p.m. today, 10 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday

Where: Indiana State Fairgrounds, 1202 E. 38th St., Indianapolis

Admission: \$10; \$9 for seniors, \$7 children, \$18 for two-day tickets

Information: renfroproductions.com

Web extra: Find more events and activities at www.thejournalnet.com.

AT THE MOVIES



AP PHOTO

Bridget Moynahan and Tom Cavanaugh star in "Gray Matters."

'Gray Matters'

If you've heard of this movie at all, it's probably because of its hyped-up girl-girl kiss between Heather Graham and Bridget Moynahan.

And it is hot, probably the best scene in a movie that's otherwise sitcommy, forced and forgettable.

Graham and Tom Cavanaugh play brother and sister who both fall for the same woman in this homage to 1940s screwball comedies.

The first film from writer-director Sue Kramer is crammed with quick banter, elaborate dance sequences and cut-aways to the Manhattan skyline.

Trouble is, Kramer left out the chemistry that made those movies so great.

But aside from Graham's character's anguish over coming out, very little is believable about these people.

Rating: PG-13 for language and sexual content

Stars: 1.5 out of four

— The Associated Press

ON TOUR



AP PHOTO

The Dixie Chicks cleaned up at the recent Grammys. They have the fifth-highest grossing tour in North America.

Top 10

Concerts are ranked by average box office gross per city. The average ticket price for shows in North America is listed, along with the previous week's ranking in parentheses.

- (1) **Bob Seger & The Silver Bullet Band;** \$1.06 million; \$61.05
- (2) **Aerosmith/Motley Crue;** \$953,294; \$76.98
- (3) **The Who;** \$846,557; \$92.46
- (5) **High School Musical;** \$696,612; \$52.71
- (4) **Dixie Chicks;** \$623,183; \$62.26
- (8) **Trans-Siberian Orchestra;** \$490,332; \$39.13
- (7) **Guns N' Roses;** \$489,677; \$60.36
- (9) **Dancing With the Stars;** \$368,931; \$55.23
- (10) **Blue Man Group;** \$356,817; \$51.80
- (12) **The Cheetah Girls;** \$328,802; \$35.90

— Pollstar.com



May the best picture win



AP PHOTOS

"Little Miss Sunshine" explores the lives of the Hoover family, from left, Toni Collette, Abigail Breslin, Alan Arkin, Paul Dano, Steve Carell and Greg Kinnear. The family treks from Albuquerque, N.M., to the Little Miss Sunshine pageant in Redondo Beach, Calif., to fulfill the deepest wish of 7-year-old Olive (Breslin), an ordinary little girl with big dreams.

Funny-film business slowly gaining on dramas at Oscars

By DAVID GERMAIN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES

The Academy Awards typically are a gloomy Sunday, ending with a heavy drama crowned as best picture.

Yet there's good news for this year's exhilarating romp, "Little Miss Sunshine": Over the past decade, academy voters have lightened up and handed the top trophy to the occasional comic frolic rather than a big, tragic pageant.

Granted, the Oscars went down with the ship on 1997 awards king "Titanic," died in the arena with Russell Crowe in 2000's champion "Gladiator," and reveled in wholesale carnage in 2003's victor "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King."

But they also caroused with the Bard in 1998's best-picture recipient "Shakespeare in Love," wisecracked through stifling suburbia with Kevin Spacey in 1999's winner "American Beauty," and tapped their toes along with Renee Zellweger and Catherine Zeta-Jones in 2002's triumphant "Chicago."

OK, so Spacey gets blown away by a neighbor in the end, and Zellweger and Zeta-Jones are conniving killers in prison. They're *fun* victims and perps, though.

Do Oscar voters need to lighten up more often?

"Absolutely. This has been a sticking point for me as long as I've been a fan of movies," said critic Richard Roeper of the Chicago Sun-Times and TV's "Ebert and Roeper and the Movies."

"People in the industry know better than anyone else that comedy is incredibly hard to do," Roeper said. "(Stuff) like 'Norbit' can make millions of dollars, and it's absolute garbage, but people still don't want to reward a good action film or comedy."

In their early decades, the Oscars

Rinko Kikuchi is a member of the ensemble cast of "Babel." The film was nominated for a best-picture Academy Award, and Kikuchi received a best supporting-actress nod for her role in the movie.



MELANCHOLY MOVIES

With comedy-tinged films winning three of the past 10 times, the Oscars are looking cheerier than they have in decades.

Here's the gloomy-vs.-sunny scorecard for best-picture winners over the past decade:

"The English Patient," 1996: Gloomy. Ralph Fiennes' lover dies alone in a cave, and he gets most of his skin burned off before croaking in an act of assisted suicide. On the sunny side, his nurse, Juliette Binoche, gets a new boyfriend.

"Titanic," 1997: Gloomy. Everybody dies (except Kate Winslet and some insignificant others). On the sunny side, girls and women are hooked on heartthrob Leonardo DiCaprio to the tune of \$1.8 billion in worldwide grosses.

"Shakespeare in Love," 1998: Sunny. Gwyneth Paltrow wears a fake mustache to make good in a man's world and gets to sleep with the playwright (Joseph Fiennes). On the gloomy side, Shakespeare's a married man, and Paltrow winds up hitched to a mercenary creep.

"American Beauty," 1999: Partly sunny. Kevin Spacey goes from tubby to buff while mercilessly mocking everything in his life. On the gloomy side, a homophobic military man puts a bullet in him, but Spacey lives on in eternity as a disembodied narrator.

"Gladiator," 2000: Gloomy. Good soldier Russell Crowe is forced into gladiatorial slavery, and his wife and son are burned and hanged by Rome's wicked new ruler. On the sunny side, before dying, Crowe gets to butcher the sniveling emperor in front of a full house.

"A Beautiful Mind," 2001: Gloomy. Good mathematician Russell Crowe loses his marbles and hangs out with sinister imaginary friends. On the sunny side, he wins a Nobel Prize.

"Chicago," 2002: Sunny. Renee Zellweger and Catherine Zeta-Jones sing, dance, beat murder raps then take their act on the road. On the gloomy side, it's curtains for the no-good, two-timing men of the world.

"The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King," 2003: Gloomy. Probably the biggest body count ever in a best-picture winner, even if most of them are digitally crafted fantasy creatures. On the sunny side, good kicks evil's butt.

"Million Dollar Baby," 2004: Gloomy. Spunky Hilary Swank overcomes the odds to become a star boxer, only to be paralyzed and have Clint Eastwood pitch in with another act of assisted suicide. On the sunny side, Eastwood winds up at a diner that has really good pie.

"Crash," 2005: Gloomy. Seemingly everyone in Los Angeles interacts with everyone else over one tragedy-filled 36-hour stretch. On the sunny side, it's the funniest movie ever in which an off-duty policeman kills a hitchhiker, a vengeful store owner nearly shoots a little girl and a bigoted white cop terrorizes a black woman then rescues her from a car wreck.



Mike Redmond

A frugal bunch of ringers

I used to work with a guy who could not pass a vending machine without sticking a finger into the coin return to see if there was any change in there.

I'm not kidding. Pay phones, soda machines, cigarette machines, newspaper boxes, you name it, and he was constitutionally incapable of walking past one without going fishing.

I think it was hard-wired into his DNA.

He didn't stop there. When he wasn't looking for spare change, he was making sure he didn't spend a cent more than he absolutely had to.

I thought he was the biggest cheapskate in the world until I logged my computer onto AOL the other day.

There I found (under "Money and Finance," or as I like to call it, The Whipping Page) a compilation of cheapskatery that almost made me snort hot chocolate though my nose I was laughing so hard.

I had no idea there were people this desperate to save a few cents.

For example:

- A guy who cut the elastic waistbands off his old underpants to use as sweatbands. Oh, yeah. Nothing says athletic like a man coming up the basketball court in a dingy, stretched-out headband that says, "Fruit of the Loom."

- A guy who filled his horse-shoe pits with used cat litter. Ew. "Ringer! OK, pick 'em up." "You pick 'em up." "All right, I'll pick ... oh, my. Let's go bowling."

- A guy who invited a date out for dinner and a concert. Dinner turned out to be a free promotional feed (although they *did* leave before the sales pitch) and the concert was standing outside an amphitheater while the band played.

I think I heard about this guy from a reader who told me she once dated a guy who made a big production out of giving her flowers ... that he got from the grocery store as they were being thrown away.

- A two-toilet family that saved water by designating one toilet for numero uno, and flushing it only once a day, in the evening.

El Segundo could be flushed as needed, but the paperwork was collected in a plastic bag to avoid additional flushing.

File with the horseshoe pits, under Ew.

- A woman who used a single bolt of cloth to make curtains, chair pillows, tablecloths, bedspreads and pajamas. Actually, this would be good for a kid working on his camouflage skills. Not that I've ever known anyone who needed to blend in with the tablecloth.

And finally, the biggest example of cheapskatery I have ever seen:

- A couple who "celebrated" their anniversaries by going to the store and selecting greeting cards for one another. They would hand each other the cards, read them, and then replace them in the rack.

And they say there's no such thing as romance anymore.

Compared to these folks, my old acquaintance who went fishing in the coin returns seems like such an amateur, a real nickel-and-dime, you might say. Which is not to say he was a bad guy, because he wasn't.

And I'll bet these people aren't either, deep down where it counts.

I'm sure they'd all make good friends and neighbors, not to mention co-workers.

I just wouldn't want to play horseshoes with them.

Mike Redmond is the author of "Six of One, Half-Dozen of Another" and "The Night the Wheels Fell Off." Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.