

December 10, 2007

Jack's Pix for Best Pix

I dropped out of the New York Film Critics Circle a few years back because I thought its awards voting process was corrupt. Many of its winners are compromise candidates that score third or fourth on the first ballot and, after several more politically-motivated ballots, come in first.

In fact, as many critics vote AGAINST movies as vote for them. Let's say that Joe Wright's "Atonement" is leading after the first ballot but doesn't have the majority of votes needed to win outright. On the second ballot, those critics who may have had "Atonement" second or third will leave it off, depriving it of points in order to strengthen their No. 1 choice. When it gets to a point where a critic doesn't like either of the leading vote getters, he or she will pick the lesser of two evils, vote for it at No. 1 and leave the other off the ballot. And, of course, various cliques get together and throw their weight behind or in front of movies gaining steam.

The New York Times doesn't allow its critics to belong to critics groups and I think that's the right policy. Why would a Times critic who is given the opportunity to name his favorite films in the paper want to dilute his opinion in a cluster vote with critics they may not even know?

Anyway, out of habit, I always create the list of how I would vote if I were voting. And now that I have seen all of the awards-buzzed films, I've got my ballot. Here it is, apropos of nothing:

BEST PICTURE:

1. No Country for Old Men
2. Away From Her
3. Ratatouille
4. The Assassination of Jesse James By the Coward Robert Ford
5. Lust, Caution
6. Grindhouse
7. Michael Clayton
8. Before the Devil Knows You're Dead
9. Interview
10. Eastern Promises

BEST ACTOR

1. Viggo Mortensen, Eastern Promises
2. Daniel Day-Lewis, There Will Be Blood
3. Benicio del Toro, Things We Lost in the Fire
4. Frank Langella, Starting Out in the Evening
5. Adam Sandler (yes, I'm serious), Reign Over Me

BEST ACTRESS

1. Julie Christie, Away From Her
2. Ellen Page, Juno
3. Sienna Miller, Interview
4. Tang Wei, Lust, Caution
5. Katherine Heigl, Knocked Up

SUPPORTING ACTOR

1. Tom Wilkinson, Michael Clayton
2. Javier Bardem, No Country for Old Men
3. Casey Affleck, The Assassination of Jesse James

4. John Travolta, Hairspray
- 5 Ethan Hawke, Before the Devil Knows You're Dead

SUPPORTING ACTRESS

1. Kate Winslet, Romance & Cigarettes
2. Grace Fulton, Badland
3. Amy Ryan, Gone, Baby, Gone
4. Marisa Tomei, Before the Devil Knows You're Dead
5. Ruby Dee, American Gangster

DIRECTOR

1. The Coen brothers, No Country for Old Men
2. Tim Burton, Sweeney Todd
3. Sidney Lumet, Before the Devil Knows You're Dead
4. Sarah Polley, Away From Her
5. David Cronenberg, Eastern Promises

ANIMATED FEATURE

1. Ratatouille
2. Persepolis
3. Beowulf

By the way, here's how the New York Film Critics Circle voting went today:

Foreign Film: The Lives of Others

Animated Film: Persepolis

First Film: Away from Her

Non-fiction Film: No End in Sight

Cinematography: There Will Be Blood

Screenplay: No Country for Old Men

Supporting Actress: Amy Ryan, Gone Baby Gone

Supporting Actor: Javier Bardem, No Country for Old Men

Actress: Julie Christie, Away From Her

Actor: Daniel Day Lewis, There Will Be Blood

Director: Coen Brothers, No Country for Old Men

Picture: No Country for Old Men

Honorary awards: Charles Burnett; Sidney Lumet