

Del Toro celebrates his immigrant heritage

Mexicans hail Oscars as sign of cultural sway despite Trump

MEXICO CITY, March 6, (RTRS): Mexican director Guillermo del Toro's Oscars triumph and a win by animated film "Coco" were hailed by Mexicans on Monday as a sign of their nation's cultural sway in the United States despite growing tensions under US President Donald Trump.

Del Toro's best director win for his "The Shape of Water", a fable about the mistreatment of the powerless, marked the fourth time a Mexican had taken home the award in the last five years, following the success of Alfonso Cuarón and Alejandro González Iñárritu.

The accolades from Hollywood for Mexican filmmakers stands in contrast to Trump's repeated attacks on the United States' southern neighbor, which began when he launched his campaign by saying Mexican immigrants were rapists and murderers.

In Mexico, news headlines boasted "Mexico sweeps the Oscars", "Oscar 2018: Mexico's Night" and "Del Toro Paints the Oscars Green, White and Red", the colors of the Mexican flag.

In his acceptance speech, Del Toro celebrated his immigrant heritage and took a veiled dig at Trump, who wants to build a wall on the US-Mexico border to stem illegal immigration.

"The greatest thing our art does and our industry does is to erase

the lines in the sand", del Toro said. "We should continue doing that when the world tells us to make them deeper".

Latinos in the United States and Mexicans back home cheered his win.

"It was exhilarating to see", said Gaz Alazraki, a Mexican filmmaker who produces Mexican Netflix series "Club de Crows".

"Guillermo spoke on behalf of all dreamers. With his success, he is a symbol of what the United States has meant for foreigners for ever", Alazraki told Reuters.

Dreamers

Mexicans make up about four-fifths of the so-called Dreamers — hundreds of thousands of young people whose parents brought them to the United States illegally and whose fate is now uncertain after Trump moved to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.

Former Mexican president Vicente Fox, who has blasted Trump's plan for a border wall, took to Twitter after del Toro's win to needle the US president.

"The Mexican Power at the #Oscars is raw talent, which is not there illegally or stealing jobs, as @realDonaldTrump claims. You see, Donald, talent is not limited by borders", Fox said.

"The Shape of Water" had 13 nominations and won a total of four Academy Awards, including best picture.

The success of animated feature "Coco" was also celebrated as a breakthrough for putting Mexican traditions and life in poor villages at the center of the Disney pantheon.

The Disney-Pixar film was a box office smash, raking in more than \$700 million worldwide.

The film follows a boy named Miguel who finds himself in the land of the dead during the Mexican celebration of the Día de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead.

"With 'Coco' we tried to take a step forward toward a world where all children can grow up seeing characters in movies that look and talk and live like they do", Lee Unkrich, one of the film's directors, said in accepting the award.

When del Toro and his fellow "Three Amigos" directors Cuarón and González Iñárritu began making films in Mexico in the 1990s, the local industry was nearly dead, churning out a handful of films a year.

Now, Mexico's industry produces around 150 films a year. Starting next weekend, the county's up-and-coming talent will compete at the Guadalajara Film Festival, a showcase for local productions.

Variety



A model presents a creation for Sacai during the 2018/2019 fall/winter collection fashion show on March 5 in Paris. (AFP) — See Page 21

Film

Frances McDormand's Oscar briefly stolen

'Shape' and monster movies tradition

LOS ANGELES, March 6, (AFP): In the charm stakes, he's hardly Cary Grant, but the goofy-looking amphibian in "The Shape of Water" upholds a tradition of monster movies that has captured the public's imagination since the early days of cinema.

Guillermo del Toro's genetically-modified story of love blossoming between his merman-like star and a mute human underscored the popularity of the genre on Sunday, with Oscars wins for best picture and director.

The old Universal creature features, modern Japanese ghost stories and innumerable gore-fests involving the undead in various states of decay might trouble even the sturdiest constitution.

But the monster movie straddles numerous genres other than horror — from comedy and fantasy to science fiction — and Del Toro is capitalizing on cinema's love affair with the cuddly, lovable end of the market.

"Monsters aren't always frightening or evil. The monsters of Pixar's 'Monsters Inc.' and certainly the title character of 'Harry and the Hendersons' were charming and sweet", writes John Landis, director of "An American Werewolf in London" (1981), in his book "Monsters in the Movies".

"Even the most famous monster of them all, the Frankenstein Monster as portrayed by Boris Karloff in 'Frankenstein', is vulnerable and sympathetic".

Paul Wegener's 1915 German silent film "The Golem" is widely regarded as the first creature feature, while "Nosferatu", still one of Germany's most iconic horror films, came along seven years later.

US filmmakers got the bug in the 1930s, producing a series of German-influenced gothic tales about Dracula, Frankenstein, the Mummy and the Invisible Man.

Spool forward a few decades and "Jurassic Park" (1993), "Cloverfield" (2008), "Troll Hunter" (2010) and Del Toro's own "Pacific Rim" (2013) have all proved critical and commercial hits.

"King Kong" (1933), perhaps the most popular behemoth of them all, has become a cultural icon through various Japanese and US movies, with the most recent iterations, "King Kong" (2005) and "Kong: Skull Island" (2017), recouping more than \$1 billion worldwide.

Other milestones include the stop-motion monsters of visual effects guru Ray Harryhausen, from "Mighty Joe Young" in 1949 through "Jason and the Argonauts" (1963) and "Clash of the Titans" (1981).

Harryhausen's dinosaur flick "The Beast from 20,000

Fathoms" (1953) ushered in the wave of 1950s creature features capitalizing on the nuclear paranoia of the age.

"The Creature from the Black Lagoon" (1954) provided the inspiration for the look of Del Toro's amphibian humanoid in "The Shape of Water".

Kendall Phillips, a Syracuse University professor and author of the recently published "A Place of Darkness: The Rhetoric of Horror in Early American Cinema" said the "otherness" of monsters frightens us.

Empathy

But it also provokes empathy, he maintained, because "deep down inside, all of us sometimes feel a little bit like a misfit and a monster".

"King Kong is a horrible threatening monster that does dangerous things, and yet one cannot help — whether it's the 1933 version or the most recent version — to have a certain level of sympathy", he told AFP.

Demons from the deep aren't always cinematic gold, of course, and among the failures Phillips highlighted Universal's "The Mummy" (2017).

The Tom Cruise actioner was supposed to launch the studio's "Dark Universe" franchise, rebooting all its classic monsters, but it flopped spectacularly, scoring a 16 percent approval rating on Rotten Tomatoes and losing an estimated \$95 million.

"It's funny that the same year, Guillermo del Toro releases a movie that is a beautiful love letter to that era, that really captures the spirit of all of those monsters beautifully", Phillips told AFP.

The academic said "The Shape of Water" proved to be the perfect antidote to America's divisive culture wars, with their unrelenting message from certain politicians and other public figures to "fear the other".

"Here we have this movie that tells a beautiful love story really, about two entities who feel disconnected and not part of the world, and are somehow able to bridge that gap", he said.

Not all resonant movies win Oscars, of course, and one of the main strengths of "The Shape of Water", according to many critics, is its middle-of-the-road inoffensiveness.

While it may not have been as beloved as the best picture favorite "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri", it wasn't hated either, and likely didn't rack up last place rankings on voters' ballots.

"Three Billboards", was acclaimed by critics but is likely to have garnered as many last-place votes as top rankings

due to a backlash over how it appears to absolve one of its main characters, a violent, racist police officer.

Daniel Montgomery, of awards website Gold Derby, said he had expected "The Shape of Water" to win best picture despite its "unorthodox interspecies romance".

"Granted, films don't always need to feel good to win Oscar. Just look at gritty best picture winners like "The Departed" (2006), "No Country for Old Men" (2007) and "The Hurt Locker" (2008)", he wrote.

"Three Billboards" would have fit that darker mold. But on a preferential ballot, it might help to be hugable".

Also:

LOS ANGELES: Oscar-winner Frances McDormand had her statuette stolen at a post-show party by a man who allegedly snatched it from her table before he was arrested, police and witnesses said on Monday.

McDormand, 60, won best actress at Sunday's awards for her role as a rage-filled mother seeking justice for her murdered daughter in **Martin McDonagh's** "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri".

"Security at the Governors Ball are looking for this guy, who grabbed Frances McDormand's Oscar and ran out with it", said New York Times writer **Cara Buckley**, who was at the event and live-tweeted the drama.

She said a photographer working for celebrity chef **Wolfgang Puck** — who was providing the catering — stopped the man and seized the Oscar, before the thief disappeared back into the ball.

The actress "had set it down and was chatting" when it disappeared, according to Buckley, who added that the actress had said to "let him go".

"We can confirm that an incident occurred at the Governor's event. There was an arrest made of a **Terry Bryant** for grand theft", a spokeswoman for the Los Angeles Police Department told AFP.

She wasn't able to give further details, except to confirm that the 47-year-old suspect had a ticket for the party.

Variety magazine reposted a Facebook Live video it said showed the suspect brandishing the golden statuette he says he won "for music" and joking: "Got this tonight! This is mine. We got it tonight, baby".

The man, dressed in a tuxedo with hair held back in hairpins, is seen in the 165-seconds of footage posted to the page of a Terry Bryant Djmatari kissing the trophy and allowing bystanders to touch it.

LOS ANGELES: Dwayne Johnson will save the world a week earlier than planned as Warner Bros moves up his video game adaptation "Rampage" from April 20 to April 13.

The studio announced the shift Monday, five days after Disney-Marvel moved its tentpole "Avengers: Infinity War" forward a week from May 4 to April 27. The schedule change gives "Rampage" a full two weeks again before the latest Avengers adventure arrives.

Warner Bros, which is releasing the movie through its New Line division, has high hopes for "Rampage". Johnson has underlined his status as a box office superstar through "Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle". The action-comedy overperformed during the past two months for Sony with \$930 million in worldwide grosses. (RTRS)

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LOS ANGELES: "Doraemon the Movie: Nobita's Treasure Island", the 38th feature installment in the Doraemon anime franchise about a blue robot cat from the future and his boy companion, topped the Japanese box office for the March 3-4 weekend.

With Toho releasing on 381 screens, the film earned \$8 million on 717,000 admissions in its opening frame. This was 22% better than the first weekend of the previous entry, "Doraemon the Movie 2017: Great Adventure in the Antarctic Kachi Kochi", which went on to set a series record with \$42 million last year. (RTRS)

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LOS ANGELES: The last time there weren't rumors that **Jay-Z** and **Beyonce** will be touring or doing an album together was 2014, when the pair hit the road for the six-week "On the Run" North American tour.

Well, apparently "On the Run 2" is coming soon: Shortly after **Childish Gambino** announced his tour dates this morning, Beyonce's Facebook and Ticketmaster pages announced a date for a Jay/Bey tour, on July 30 at Philadelphia's Lincoln Financial Field — and then both posts were quickly deleted. Complex captured a screen shot of the Facebook page.

Reps for both artists did not immediately respond to Variety's request for confirmation or more

information. (RTRS)

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LOS ANGELES: Fox has bought move rights to **Christian Cantrell's** short story "Epoch Index", with "San Andreas" and "Rampage" director **Brad Peyton** attached to produce and helm.

Justin Rhodes is attached to write the story of a CIA analyst



Johnson



Beyonce

tracking an assassin whose targets are being sent from the future by the analyst herself. "War for the Planet of the Apes" director **Matt Reeves** is producing through his 6th and **Idaho** company with producing partner **Jeff Fierston**. (RTRS)

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RIYADH: A "No dancing or swaying" instruction on tickets to

Egyptian pop sensation **Tamer Hosny's** upcoming concert in **Saudi Arabia** has triggered an avalanche of mockery and ridicule on social media.

Thousands of fans were taken by surprise when tickets for Hosny's first-ever Saudi concert in the western city of **Jeddah** on March 30 came with the edict that dancing was "strictly prohibited".

"Ladies and gentlemen, please fasten your seat belts," one Twitter user said.

"The corridors and seats will be equipped with sway detectors. Anyone who thinks about swaying will be kicked out."

Another tweeted: "No dancing or swaying in a concert! It's like putting ice under the sun and asking it not to melt." (AFP)