

Lutz bags best actor award

Legrand's 'Custody' wins best film at 44th Cesar Awards

LOS ANGELES, Feb 23, (RTRS): Xavier Legrand's feature debut "Custody", a tense portrait of a family torn by domestic violence, won best film, actress (for Lea Drucker), original screenplay at the 44th Cesar Awards, which took place at the Salle Pleyel in Paris. The awards are France's highest film honors.

"Custody", which marks Legrand's follow up to his Oscar-nominated short, tells the story of a boy named Julien (Thomas Gioria), who is forced by a court ruling to split his time between his mother (Drucker) and estranged father (Denis Menochet), whom he regards as a violent monster, amid his parents' bitter divorce. "Custody" world-premiered in competition at the Venice Film Festival, where it won two awards, and went on to play at Toronto in the competitive Platform section.

In her speech, Drucker paid homage to all the feminists, brave women who have inspired her and also dedicated the award to all the women who are suffering from domestic abuse every day and desperately need help.

Jacques Audiard won best director for "Sisters Brothers", a western-style drama starring Joaquin Phoenix, John C. Reilly and Jake Gyllenhaal. Audiard previously won best director at the Venice Film Festival. The movie also won three prizes at the Lumieres Awards.

Jean-Bernard Marlin's "Sheherazade" which world premiered at Cannes's Critics Week, was the surprise winner of this year's Cesar Awards. The film won best first film and earned its cast best male and female newcomers for Kenza Fortas and Dylan Robert, both non-profession-

als. "Sheherazade" tells the story of Zachary, a 17 years old who gets out of jail and faces his mother's rejection. Zachary ventures into the criminal underworld of Marseille where he meets Sheherazade, a teenage prostitute.

Andrea Bescond's feature debut "Little Tinkles" won best actress for veteran thesp Karin Viard and best adapted screenplay for Bescond and Eric Metayer. Based on Bescond's autobiographical play, "Little Tinkles" is about a funny, intense and wild young woman who comes to term with the abuse she suffered as a child through dancing.

The best actor prize was handed out to Alex Lutz, who stars in his second feature, "Guy", which is about a man who discovers he is the son of an on-the-road French crooner.

Nominated for 10 Cesar Awards, Gilles Lellouche's "Sink or Swim" won the best supporting actor prize for Philippe Katerine.

Kristin Scott Thomas, who presided over this year's Cesar ceremony, presented Robert Redford with the honorary Cesar Awards and paid homage to his legacy as an activist, filmmaker and actor.

Redford, who attended the ceremony with his wife, was greeted on stage with a long standing ovation. In his speech, Redford spoke about his love for France and said he first came to Paris when he was 18 and penniless, and spent time drawing sketches of people, trying to figure out what was going through their minds. He then reminisced about a trip he took to Cannes. As he slept by the beach just above a Croisette place, he could hear people celebrating and laughing. When he returned to Cannes 17 years, he returned

to the same palace and contemplated with emotion the beach where he had slept. Hailed as an icon in France, the legendary American actor and director received France's elite Legion of Honour in 2010.

Winners

- Best Film: Custody, Xavier Legrand
- Best Director: Jacques Audiard, The Sisters Brothers
- Best Actor: Alex Lutz, Guy
- Best Actress: Lea Drucker, Custody
- Best Supporting Actor: Philippe Katerine, Sink or Swim
- Best Supporting Actress: Karin Viard, Little Tinkles
- Best Foreign Film: Shoplifters, Hirokazu Kore-Eda
- Best Animated Film: Dilili in Paris, Michel Ocelot
- Best First Film: Sheherazade, Jean-Bernard Marlin
- Best Documentary Film: Ni Juge, Ni Soumis, Jean Libon, Yves Hinant
- Best Cinematography: Benoit Debie, The Sisters Brothers
- Best Production Design: Michel Barthelemy, The Sisters Brothers
- Best Original Screenplay: Custody, by Xavier Legrand
- Best Adapted Screenplay: Little Tinkles, by Andrea Bescond, Eric Metayer
- Best Costumes: Pierre-Jean Larroque, Mademoiselle de Jonquieres
- Best Editing: Yorgos Lamrinos, Custody

Variety



This image released by Fox Searchlight Films shows Olivia Colman in a scene from the film 'The Favourite'. The film is nominated for an Oscar for best picture. The 91st Academy Awards will be held on Sunday. (AP)

Film

A bumpy road to Oscars could end in triumph for Netflix

Oscars vow untraditional winners

By Jake Coyle

The most tumultuous Oscar season in memory might pale in comparison to the aftermath.

The best picture race to Sunday's 91st Academy Awards remains unpredictable, but odds makers peg Alfonso Cuaron's "Roma" as the film most likely to triumph at the end of the night. That would hand Netflix, the insurgent streaming service, the most prestigious honor in a movie business it has thoroughly disrupted.

Change is everywhere at this year's Academy Awards, from the nominees to the show, itself. For the second time in 30 years, there will be no host at Sunday's show, which begins airing live on ABC at 8 pm EST. The lead-up to the Oscars has been dominated by dispute over the academy's own attempts at innovation to counter last year's record-low ratings. But after uproar from academy members, those plans — not showing some awards live, introducing a "best popular film" category — were abandoned.

Even if the Oscars end up proceeding more conventionally, the winners promise to be untraditional. Marvel stands to win its first Oscar for either "Black Panther" (up for six Oscars including best picture) or the animated favorite, "Spider-Man: Into the Spider Verse". Spike Lee, aiming for his first competitive Oscar, could become the first black filmmaker to win best director.

"Roma", which comes in with a co-leading 10 nominations, is favored to win best picture, best director, best cinematography and best foreign language film. If "Roma" won best picture, it would be the first foreign language movie ever to do so.

For Hollywood, the most significant milestone would be Netflix triumphing at the Academy Awards, an achievement the streaming giant has fervently pursued. Netflix, which has previously only won one feature-length film Oscar (in 2018 for the documentary "Icarus"), has spent more than

\$25 million on a lavish campaign to propel "Roma". It hired veteran Oscar campaign strategist Lisa Taback. It even purchased a Los Angeles billboard company to help promote its many films and series, including "for your consideration" ads along the Sunset Strip for "Roma".

"I'm very grateful for Netflix," Cuaron said in an interview ahead of the Oscars. "On paper, this is a film that wouldn't have this life. It's a Mexican film in Spanish and Mixtec with no recognizable actors when it was done. Black and white. A drama. What I'm so appreciative is that they saw through all those filters to the core of what the film was about and they saw the potential and they really believed in the film."

Played

Cuaron noted that "Roma" has played for months in theaters, longer than it might otherwise have done. Major theater chains, however, have refused to screen Netflix releases since the company won't adhere to the traditional 90-day theatrical exclusivity window. Netflix altered its own policies for "Roma", playing it exclusively in theaters in limited release for three weeks before streaming it. The company declined to release box-office results.

"Roma" would be the first best picture winner ever to be primarily streamed, something some in Hollywood vehemently oppose. Steven Spielberg has said Netflix movies are really "TV movies" that should be eligible for Emmys, not Oscars.

After "Roma" won best picture at the British Academy Film Awards, J. Timothy Richards, the founder and chief executive of Vue, one of Europe's largest theater chains, criticized the British film academy for "choosing to endorse and promote a 'made for TV' film." France's Cannes Film Festival, where "Roma" was set to make its world premiere, also refused to enter any film without theatrical distribution into competition, causing Netflix to pull "Roma" from the festival.

"I think this kind of exclusivity for the theater and theatrical experience is actually disconnecting people from movies, in a way," Ted Sarandos, Netflix's chief content officer said in December. "I have not found it to be very consumer-friendly that consumers who live nowhere near a theater are waiting ... to see a movie so that the theater can have it exclusively for a period of time — a movie that they paid to produce with their subscription money."

Winning best picture would prove to the filmmakers Netflix is trying to attract that their releases can garner just as much respect as traditional ones. Netflix, which last year spent \$12 billion on original content for its 139 million subscribers, will this year release (among many other films) Martin Scorsese's much-anticipated "The Irishman".

Oscar producers, though, are looking to emphasize box-office hits like "Black Panther" and "Bohemian Rhapsody". The show will start with a performance by Queen and Adam Lambert.

"(The nominations) kind of go to the heart of what we were trying to do with this show, which was put a spotlight on films with worldwide success that have had a cultural impact," Oscars co-producer Donna Gigliotti said Thursday, citing best-picture nominees "Black Panther", "Bohemian Rhapsody", "BlacKkKlansman" and "Green Book".

More streaming services are coming. Disney, WarnerMedia and Apple are all set to launch their own streaming platforms this year. In some ways, Netflix has already been welcomed into the fold. On the same day of Oscar nominations, Netflix became the first streaming service to join the industry lobbying group the Motion Picture Association of America. The only other members of the MPAA are the six major studios, soon to be five when Disney absorbs 20th Century Fox.

"The platforms are part of our conversation but soon they're not going to be part of the conversation," said Cuaron, "because it's going to be the norm." (AP)

LOS ANGELES: "How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World" is soaring toward a \$53 million launch weekend at 4,259 North American locations, early estimates showed on Friday.

That estimate is well above Universal's forecast in the \$40 million range at 4,259 sites — and ahead of its predecessors, 2010's "How to Train Your Dragon", which made \$43.7 million for Paramount, and 2014's "How to Train Your Dragon 2", which earned \$49.4 million for Fox.

The third entry in the franchise is the first DreamWorks Animation title to be released by Universal since it acquired the animation studio for \$3.8 billion in 2016. If the estimate holds, "How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World" will become the top three-day domestic opener of 2019, eclipsing the \$40.2 million reeled in by Universal's "Glass" on Jan 18-20. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: Tessa Thompson and Nnamdi Asomugha are set to star in the feature film "Sylvie".

Eugene Ashe has written the screenplay and will direct with production currently underway.

The film is described as a love story set in the cool jazz era of New York City in the late 1950's/early 1960's. Sylvie (played by Thompson) meets aspiring saxophonist Robert (played by Asomugha) when he takes a job at her father's record store in Harlem. After a summer romance comes to an end, the two fatefully reconnect several years later and find that their feelings for each other have never disappeared.

Asomugha will produce through his iAm21 Entertainment banner alongside Jonathan Baker ("The Banker"), Gabrielle Glor ("Dirty Laundry"), and Matthew Thurm ("Crown Heights"). (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: Golden Globe nominee David Oyelowo is set to join the cast of Sony Pictures' "Peter Rabbit 2", the live-action hybrid sequel to the 2018 family hit, sources tell Variety.

He joins Rose Byrne and Domhnall Gleeson, who are

returning from the first film, as James Corden in the voice of the mischievous Peter Rabbit. Writer-director Will Gluck is back at the helm of the sequel, and is also producing through his Olive Bridge Entertainment banner, along with Animal Logic's Zareh Nalbandian. The screenplay is by Gluck and Patrick Burleigh. Plot details are vague other



Wilson



Thompson

than following the adventures of Peter as he continues to stir up trouble with his fellow furry friends. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: Luke Wilson is set to join the ensemble of the upcoming "Zombieland" sequel, sources tell Variety.

Wilson will star alongside

Woody Harrelson, Jesse Eisenberg, Emma Stone, and Abigail Breslin in "Zombieland 2". As previously reported, Zoey Deutch, Thomas Middleditch, and Rosario Dawson are also boarding the cast.

In the sequel, the zombie slayers must face off against new kinds of living dead that have evolved since the first movie, as

well as new human survivors. They have to also deal with the growing pains of their own makeshift family.

It's unknown who Wilson will be playing in the pic.

Original "Zombieland" filmmaker Ruben Fleischer, who most recently helmed Sony's "Venom", is returning to direct the follow-up. (RTRS)