

Film

## Tacon plays a vital role in landmark film

# On 'Irishman', teaching De Niro and Pacino to act younger

By Jake Coyle

Would you have the gumption to tell Al Pacino to act his age? That was the unique position Gary Tacon, the movement coach of "The Irishman", found himself in on the set of Martin Scorsese's crime epic. On Pacino's first day shooting, the scene called for the 79-year-old actor, playing a 40-something Jimmy Hoffa, to jump out of a chair as he screams at a television showing the election results for John F. Kennedy.

In the first take, Pacino didn't exactly leap up. Scorsese, who had waited decades to direct Pacino, wasn't inclined to start off by telling Pacino to get younger, fast. He turned to Tacon for help.

"What's funny about that story is I hadn't been introduced to Al yet. So, when I said to Marty that he's supposed to be much younger, he said, 'Well you tell him.'" Tacon recalls. "I said, 'You gotta tell him. I haven't met him yet. Who am I to tell him?'"

Yet Tacon, a longtime stuntman and yoga instructor, was repeatedly in the ears of the stars of "The Irishman", playing a small but vital role in a landmark film that was up for 10 awards at the Oscars including best picture and supporting actor nods for Joe Pesci and Pacino. It wasn't an easy job. When Tacon first met Robert De Niro, the actor was dubious. "You're going to help me with my spine?" said De Niro. "Old dog, no new tricks."

The extensive "de-aging" computer-generated effects of "The Irishman" have been much analyzed since the movie was unveiled. But the arguably more challenging task of the film may have been to get De Niro and Pesci — both 76 — and Pacino to move like they were four decades younger, and to match their physicality to their digital faces. Computers could remedy their wrinkles. Tacon had to fix their walks.

Actors frequently don prosthetics and makeup to age up. Aging down, though, is far less mapped territory. Tacon may be the movies' first movement analyst tasked with shedding years off of a film's stars. And they happened to be a few of the greatest actors alive.

"For them to invite me to participate the way I did at that level, it's like being asked to be a backup singer on an original Beatles song," Tacon said in a recent interview at his apartment along the Hudson River in Nyack, New York.

### Credits

Being part of such a production, Tacon figured he would, at most, receive a small notice in the credits. He didn't expect to become one of Scorsese and De Niro's favorite talking points throughout the film's march through awards season.

At the film's premiere at the New York Film Festival, Scorsese told the same story about Tacon and Pacino. Talking to Seth Meyers, De Niro said: "We had — I don't know what you call him — a movement

coach named Gary Tacon who would come behind and tap me on the shoulder and go, 'You're 39. Sit up straight.'" Appearing on "Jimmy Kimmel Live", Scorsese and the host joked that Tacon was like a superhero named "Posture Man".

Tacon, 68, isn't a superhero, nor is he even an orthopedist. But he's an ardent advocate for physical therapy who will in minutes have you thinking about improving your posture. "Flexibility is everything," he says. One of his favorite tools is a patented cushion designed to improve slouching. He urged the actors to spend five minutes every morning with the it to help straighten their spine.

"After working with him, you're a few inches taller," said "Irishman" producer Jane Rosenthal. "Bob in particular spent a lot of time with him. He made everyone on Bob's hair and makeup team work with him. It was just part of his morning routine. It was an extension of how they prepared their roles and embodied those characters."

Part of Tacon's usefulness also came from his decades of experience on film sets. He knew when to step in and when to step aside. Tacon began as an actor. His big screen debut was in "The Muppets Take Manhattan". It's Tacon who steals Miss Piggy's pocketbook and then takes off through Central Park.

After that film, Tacon fell in with famed stunt director Victor Magnotta. Without injury, he has spent 35 years doing stunt work, from "Miller's Crossing" to "The Bourne Ultimatum". (AP)

## Variety



This image released by Neon shows Yejoeng Jo in a scene from 'Parasite'. 'Parasite' made history as the first non-English best picture winner in Academy Awards history. (AP)

Film

'Don't be afraid of subtitles'

# Barriers fall in Oscars for 'Parasite'

By Jake Coyle

**BEVERLY HILLS, Calif:** Brad Pitt, tux still on but tie gone and best supporting actor Academy Award stowed away somewhere, stepped out of a car with a few friends at the quiet back entrance to Vanity Fair's annual post-Oscars party.

"Do you want to go to the red carpet?" an attendant asked.

"Nah," Pitt said. "Let's go right in."

He'd had enough of red carpets, cameras and questions after a long awards season that culminated in a very long Oscars on Sunday and a victory in the best supporting actor category for his role in "Once Upon a Time ... in Hollywood". It was time to party.

Pitt and his crew slid in through an unmarked entrance near the men's room, joining the party where uniformed employees handed out In-N-Out burgers overflowing from boxes as nominees and presenters in fitted gowns and tight tuxes let loose.

Eighteen-year-old Billie Eilish and her brother-producer-pianist Finneas walked arm-in-arm into the same side of the soiree minutes later. (AP)

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**NEW YORK:** In the strongest defense testimony yet, a Mexican model on Monday denied a Harvey Weinstein accuser's claim that she stood by and did nothing while the once-powerful movie mogul sexually assaulted the woman at a Beverly Hills hotel in 2013.

"Never happened," Claudia Salinas told jurors Monday at Weinstein's rape trial in New York City, forcefully repudiating model Lauren Marie Young's testimony last week.

Young testified that Salinas closed the door behind her and Weinstein as they went into the bathroom, where she alleges he stripped off his clothes, grabbed her breast and masturbated. Once it was over, Young said she found Salinas standing outside the bathroom and shot her an evil look before leaving as quickly as she could.

"If I had done that, I would remember that," Salinas testified. "I would never close the door on anybody."

Salinas, now working as a

Before Bong Joon Ho's "Parasite" made history as the first non-English best picture winner in Academy Awards history, he made a modest plea to American moviegoers: Don't be afraid of subtitles.

Accepting the award for best foreign-language film at the Golden Globes last month, the South Korean filmmaker, who has worked in both Seoul and Hollywood, said: "Once you overcome the 1-inch-tall barrier of subtitles, you will be introduced to so many more amazing films."

Reflecting on those words backstage at Sunday's Oscars while he clutched several of his statuettes, Bong wondered whether those boundaries were already breaking. He had good reason to. In a thrilling and raucously applauded upset, the revolutionary win for "Parasite" ended a more than nine-decade English-language monopoly on cinema's top prize.

"People were already overcoming these barriers through streaming services, YouTube, social media," said Bong through his translator. "In the environment that we currently live in, I think we're all connected. Naturally we will come to a day when a foreign language film or not, it doesn't really matter."

Hollywood's reach has long extended to all corners of the globe, but it has less frequently returned the favor. It's an exporter, not an importer. Even though the American film industry was built largely by immigrants, on Oscar night, its gaze has usually been turned inward.

But that's changing, and nothing showed it more than the weekend's incredible double-feature of winners. Before "Parasite" won over several Oscars, Chinese-American director Lulu Wang's "The Farewell" triumphed at Saturday's Film Independent Spirit Awards. Wang's family drama stars an all-Asian cast and was filmed in both Mandarin and English.

"The Farewell", one of the most successful indie films at the box office last year, also won best supporting performance by a female actor, for Chinese actress Zhao Shuzhen. Wang thanked Film Independent for "honoring a woman from China who a lot of people

earlier in the year could barely pronounce her name."

"Parasite" was, in many ways, an extraordinary exception to the norm. The film, a ferocious tragicomedy about a family of grifters who leech onto a wealthy family, inspired nearly universal praise for its cunning construction and for the utter command of Bong, whose last two films ("Okja", for Netflix; "Snowpiercer", for The Weinstein Company's Radius label) were largely English. Its mastery was simply too much for voters to deny.

And the affable Bong, a filmmaker whose genre manipulations owe much to the American filmmakers he has frequently praised on his way to Oscar glory, was already widely respected throughout Hollywood — just as he is in Korea, where his films are regularly blockbusters.

### Response

Bong was appreciated, too, for successfully staring down Harvey Weinstein in a battle over the final cut of "Snowpiercer". When "Parasite" made its debut at the Cannes Film Festival in May, the response was so overwhelming that Alejandro Inárritu's jury said its choice for the Palme d'Or was unanimous. The indie distributor Neon, led by Tom Quinn, prepared "Parasite" for an underdog, multi-category Oscar campaign, one aided by a historic win at the Screen Actors Guild Awards.

But "Parasite" is also part of a continuum. It was only the 11th foreign-language film ever nominated for best picture but the third in the last decade, following "Amour" and "Roma", which last year narrowly missed defeating "Green Book". The silent 2012 winner "The Artist" was also a French production. And before Bong took best director on Sunday, only two of the last 10 directing winners were American-born.

At a time when the national discourse often signals different attitudes about national borders, the Oscars have pushed in the other direction. On Monday, the Asia Society said of the win for "Parasite": "Without question, this is a bridge-building moment." The film's victory resonated worldwide but especially in its native country. A headline in South Korea's biggest

newspaper, Chosun Ilbo, blared: "Can you believe that 'Parasite' won the Academy best picture? It rewrote the Academy's 92-year-old history."

Yet some were less enthusiastic about the film academy's newly global purview. A widely discussed post on Mother Jones on Monday lamented reading film subtitles. Conservative BlazeTV host Jon Miller on Twitter criticized Bong's acceptance speech, spoken largely in Korean and translated by an interpreter. "These people are the destruction of America," wrote Miller.

But few films have inspired the kind of celebration that "Parasite" did at the Dolby Theatre, where the crowd greeted the film's best picture win with thunderous applause. For some, the film's win was a tremendous relief and a much-needed counterpoint to an Oscars field that was otherwise notably lacking in diversity. "Parasite" also followed the much-debated win last year for "Green Book", a film many saw as racially retrograde.

"The world is big and it is beautiful and films from everywhere deserve to be on that stage winning the academy's highest honor," said Ava DuVernay.

The lack of acting nominations for DuVernay's "Selma" led, in part, to the #OscarsSoWhite backlash of 2015. Since then, the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences has worked to diversify its largely white and male ranks, a process that's led to the induction of many more international members.

"These awards should be global and that happens within the academy," said Antonio Banderas, a best actor nominee for Pedro Almodóvar's Spanish language drama "Pain & Glory", on the red carpet before Sunday's ceremony. "These past two years, joining the academy have been 1,500 members. This is a very powerful injection of international members, which give power to the academy, which pretends to be global."

The movie business has never been more global. Overseas ticket sales last year exceeded \$30 billion for the first time. Hollywood's largest productions are deliberately crafted to appeal to movie audiences worldwide. China is expected to surpass the US at the world's top movie market this year. (AP)

social media influencer, took the witness stand as the defense called witnesses for a third day after more than two weeks of prosecution testimony. Among the prosecution witnesses were six women, including Young, who say the once-powerful Hollywood boss subjected them to vile sexual behavior. (AP)

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Pitt



Eilish

**ATLANTA:** A documentary filmmaker who refused to sign Georgia's required oath involving Israel is suing the state, saying the law is in violation of free speech rights guaranteed by the US Constitution.

A Georgia law passed in 2016 requires some people to sign an oath pledging not to boycott the Israeli government in order to do

business in the state.

In her federal lawsuit, Abby Martin says she refused to sign the oath, and her scheduled appearance this month at a Georgia Southern University media conference was then cancelled.

"I will not forfeit my constitutional rights by signing this pledge," Martin said at a Monday news conference to an-

ounce the lawsuit.

Spokespeople within Georgia's university system referred questions to Georgia Southern spokesman John Lester. He said Georgia Southern hasn't yet seen the lawsuit.

"Ms Martin's concerns appear to be related to requirements of a state law enacted in 2016," Lester said in a statement. (AP)