

Oscars urged to push the envelope

Mark Van Hook
Columnist

It's confession time. I'm an award show junkie. The Oscars, the Golden Globes, the AFI Awards; it doesn't really matter. While legions voice their annoyance over the seemingly endless list of award shows, I'm in secret and uncontrollable bliss. As someone who values movies as an art form, I'm probably supposed to scoff at the very nature of films being thrust into competition like football teams at playoff time, but I just can't help it. I'm addicted.

However, after watching Ridley Scott's inferior "Gladiator" take the Best Picture prize at last year's Oscars, I came to one inescapable conclusion.

Award shows suck.

I guess I knew it all along, but the Gladiator travesty was the straw that broke the camel's back. The Academy, comprised of actors, directors, writers and just about everyone else working in the business, just loves to shy away from tougher, edgier material in favor of safer,

more audience-friendly fare. And it's about to happen again.

With four wins at the Golden Globes (including Best Picture) this past January, "A Beautiful Mind" looks poised to pull off a similar feat at the Oscars in late March.

I have no real problems with the film, but it seems like a been-there, done-that choice.

The fledgling AFI Awards, held two weeks ago, did a much better job in choosing the extraordinary achievement of "The Fellowship of the Ring."

But because many of

the winners failed to show up for the ceremony, the show has generally been considered an embarrassment by the entertainment media, and seems to have hurt "Fellowship's" Oscar chances, rather than helped them.

When did these award shows become the industry's great judge of quality filmmaking? And why do we keep tuning in each year, knowing full well that our choices won't end up with their justly deserved rewards?

I think I've got it figured out.

It all boils down to immediacy.

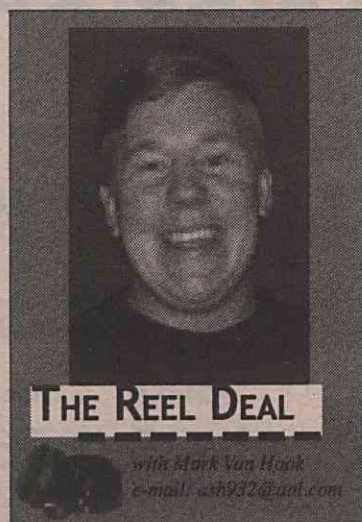
While human beings are competitive by nature, we're also impatient. We simply loathe waiting. We don't want to see our favorite films of the past year recognized in a half hour, in two weeks or in 10 years. We want to see it happen now.

What we fail to realize is that the film industry has never worked this way. Greatness in cinema has always emerged with time, patience and reevaluation. When I look at the list of filmmakers who have won Best Director, I'm shocked by the names that don't appear: Martin Scorsese, Alfred Hitchcock, Stanley Kubrick, Akira Kurosawa, Orson Welles... the list goes on.

Even when examining the last decade, we see that the Academy has a history of bad, sometimes downright laughable choices. "Forrest Gump" over "Pulp Fiction" in '94. "Titanic" over "L.A. Confidential" in '97. "Shakespeare in Love" over "Saving Private Ryan" in '98.

Everyone knows that the Oscars are rarely remembered by anyone but historians, the Academy itself and uptight movie geeks like me. When "A Beautiful Mind" takes the Best Picture prize in March, I won't cry about it.

I'll simply throw in my copy of "The Seven Samurai," knowing it was never nominated for Best Picture. Then slowly, but surely, the healing process will begin.



Remixing old tracks to make new sounds

Jessica Vitak
Managing Editor

From a mix of jungle, trip hop, Meat Beat Manifesto and Bjork influences emerges Wiremny's latest CD, "Fresh Cold Cuts: The Delicatessen Remixes." In a collaborative effort with Bare Wire artist Simone Grey, the annals of electronica are explored in an attempt to create a sense of serenity.

The man behind Wiremny, artist Jeffrey Barnes has taken new steps in producing this album, using lyrics from Grey's last album

and remixing them to create an eerie, wailing sound throughout that is virtually unrecognizable from the original track.

Barnes, a firm believer in music as expression, says that it serves multiple outlets for him.

"The function of music is twofold," he said. "

The first is to create a rhythmic groove that affects a person physically, and the second is to present an emotion or idea that can affect psychologically."

Critics compare Wiremny most often to electronic artists Orbital and Coldcut for his mixing of deep

jungle and smooth trip hop. The album has its redeeming qualities, and it is refreshing to see an artist willing to stretch his talents and delve into the world of experimental music.

However, "The Delicatessen Remixes" sound much closer to a Bjork album, but with a steady stream of high, unintelligible vocals that may leave the listener with more of a headache than peace of mind.

To sample some tracks from this album, go to www.mp3.com/wirmny, or check out the artist's record label, Eristikos.

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