

# CUT CINEMA



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**A day without  
laughter is a day  
wasted.**



**CHARLES SPENCER  
CHAPLIN**

# EDITORIAL

This year's Academy Awards (Oscars) were charged with political and anti-racist voices, a reflection clearly seen in the awarded films. Yet no one can say these films are undeserving. On the contrary, the winners truly express deep thought and artistic endeavor. There is no doubt that the Oscars remain one of the most glamorous ceremonies in the world. Naturally, Cut to Cinema has focused on this current moment. We hope you enjoy our curation.

On the other hand, Bangladeshi audiences are enjoying the festival releases. The number of films this time is probably the highest compared to the past few years. This is a very positive sign that, after a period of political uncertainty, the Bangladeshi film industry is gradually recovering. Best wishes to both the films and the audience.

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# A NIGHT OF FOCUSED STORYTELLING AT THE OSCARS 2026



*US filmmaker Paul Thomas Anderson and producer Sara Murphy accept the award for Best Picture [Patrick T Fallon/AFP]*

**T**he 98th Academy Awards, held in March 2026, unfolded as a composed and engaging celebration of cinema, placing emphasis on storytelling and craft rather than spectacle. The ceremony progressed with clarity and restraint, allowing the winners and their work to remain at the centre of attention.

The evening was led by *One Battle After Another*, which secured six awards, including Best Picture. The film's team received a standing ovation while accepting the top honour, reflecting on the collective effort behind the project and its engagement with themes of conflict and resilience. Their remarks set a thoughtful tone that carried through much of the night.

The Best Director award went to Paul Thomas Anderson for *One Battle After Another*. In his acceptance speech, Anderson highlighted the collaborative nature of filmmaking, acknowledging the cast and crew whose contributions shaped the film. He spoke about the persistence required to sustain a creative vision and recognised the many individuals in the industry who continue working without visibility. His speech, measured and sincere, drew strong appreciation from the audience.

In the acting categories, Jessie Buckley won Best Actress for her performance in *Hamnet*. She appeared visibly moved, speaking about the emotional depth of the role and expressing gratitude to her collaborators and family. Her remarks reflected on the internal journey of the character and the process of inhabiting it.

Michael B. Jordan received the Best Actor award for *Sinners*. Composed and confident, he reflected on the broader responsibility of storytelling, noting that cinema can both mirror society and shape its imagination. He also acknowledged audiences, particularly younger viewers, as central to the continued vitality of film.

The ceremony maintained a measured tone throughout. A musical tribute celebrating iconic film scores drew strong appreciation, while the in memoriam segment offered a solemn pause, honouring those the industry lost over the past year. The programme avoided excessive diversions, keeping its focus firmly on the films and the people behind them.

Moments of lightness were present but restrained. A brief exchange between presenters brought laughter and eased the formal atmosphere without shifting attention away from the awards themselves.

By the end, the Oscars 2026 stood out for its clarity and restraint, letting the winners and their work take centre stage. It reaffirmed cinema as a collaborative art shaped by shared effort and enduring cultural significance. 🌍

# 98th Oscars 2026

## Full list of winners and nominees

### Best picture

- WINNER: One Battle After Another
- Bugonia
- Frankenstein
- F1
- Hamnet
- Marty Supreme
- The Secret Agent
- Sentimental Value
- Sinners
- Train Dreams

Review of *One Battle After Another*, first published in C2C November 2025 issue.



Scan me

### Best actress

- WINNER: Jessie Buckley - Hamnet
- Rose Byrne - If I Had Legs I'd Kick You
- Kate Hudson - Song Sung Blue
- Renate Reinsve - Sentimental Value
- Emma Stone - Bugonia

### Best actor

- WINNER: Michael B Jordan - Sinners
- Timothée Chalamet - Marty Supreme
- Leonardo DiCaprio - One Battle After Another
- Ethan Hawke - Blue Moon
- Wagner Moura - The Secret Agent

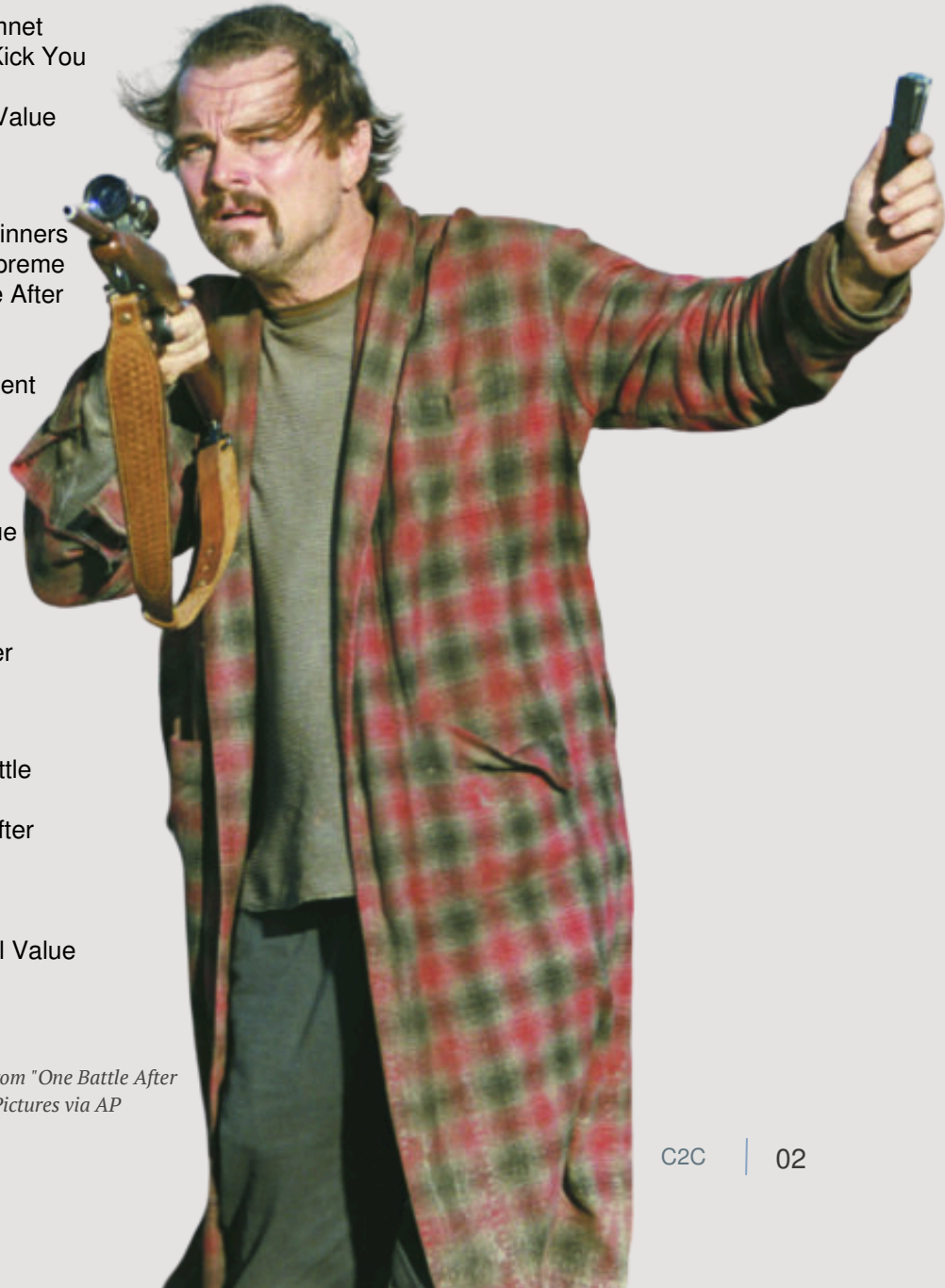
### Best supporting actress

- WINNER: Amy Madigan - Weapons
- Elle Fanning - Sentimental Value
- Inga lbsdatter Lilleaas - Sentimental Value
- Wunmi Mosaku - Sinners
- Teyana Taylor - One Battle After Another

### Best supporting actor

- WINNER: Sean Penn - One Battle After Another
- Benicio del Toro - One Battle After Another
- Jacob Elordi - Frankenstein
- Delroy Lindo - Sinners
- Stellan Skarsgård - Sentimental Value

*Leonardo DiCaprio in a scene from "One Battle After Another." Photo: Warner Bros. Pictures via AP*





Michael B. Jordan in the press room of the 2026 Oscars.  
Photo: Mike Coppola/Getty Images

*Review of Sinners,  
first published in C2C  
June 2025 issue.*



#### Best international feature

- WINNER: Sentimental Value
- It Was Just an Accident
- Sirât
- The Secret Agent
- The Voice of Hind Rajab

#### Best documentary feature

- WINNER: Mr Nobody Against Putin
- Come See Me in the Good Light
- Cutting Through the Rocks
- The Alabama Solution
- The Perfect Neighbor

#### Best original screenplay

- WINNER: Sinners - Ryan Coogler
- Blue Moon - Robert Kaplow
- It Was Just an Accident - Jafar Panahi
- Marty Supreme - Ronald Bronstein and Josh Safdie
- Sentimental Value - Eskil Vogt and Joachim Trier



*KPop Demon Hunters. Photo: Netflix*

#### Best director

- WINNER: Paul Thomas Anderson - One Battle After Another
- Ryan Coogler - Sinners
- Josh Safdie - Marty Supreme
- Joachim Trier - Sentimental Value
- Chloé Zhao - Hamnet

#### Best animated feature

- WINNER: KPop Demon Hunters
- Arco
- Elio
- Little Amélie or the Character of Rain
- Zootopia 2

#### Best adapted screenplay

- WINNER: One Battle After Another - Paul Thomas Anderson
- Bugonia - Will Tracy
- Frankenstein - Guillermo del Toro
- Hamnet - Chloé Zhao and Maggie O'Farrell
- Train Dreams - Clint Bentley and Greg Kwedar

#### Best original score

- WINNER: Sinners - Ludwig Goransson
- Bugonia - Jerskin Fendrix
- Frankenstein - Alexandre Desplat
- Hamnet - Max Richter
- One Battle After Another - Jonny Greenwood



*Review of Hamnet,  
first published in C2C  
March 2026 issue.*



*Jessie Buckley Makes Oscars History as First Irish Best Actress Winner. Photo: Rich Polk*

#### Best original song

- WINNER: Golden - KPop Demon Hunters (by EJAE, Mark Sonnenblick, Joong Gyu Kwak, Yu Han Lee, Hee Dong Nam, Jeong Hoon Seo and Teddy Park)
- Dear Me - Diane Warren: Relentless (by Diane Warren)
- I Lied to You - Sinners (by Raphael Saadiq and Ludwig Goransson)
- Sweet Dreams of Joy - Viva Verdi! (by Nicholas Pike)
- Train Dreams - Train Dreams (by Nick Cave and Bryce Dessner)

### Best cinematography

- WINNER: Sinners - Autumn Durald Arkapaw
- Frankenstein - Dan Laustsen
- Marty Supreme - Darius Khondji
- One Battle After Another - Michael Bauman
- Train Dreams - Adolpho Veloso

### Best film editing

- WINNER: One Battle After Another - Andy Jurgensen
- F1 - Stephen Mirrione
- Marty Supreme - Ronald Bronstein and Josh Safdie
- Sentimental Value - Olivier Bugge Coutté
- Sinners - Michael P Shawver

### Best sound

- WINNER: F1 - Gareth John, Al Nelson, Gwendolyn Yates Whittle, Gary A Rizzo and Juan Peralta
- Frankenstein - Greg Chapman, Nathan Robitaille, Nelson Ferreira, Christian Cooke and Brad Zoern
- One Battle After Another - José Antonio García, Christopher Scarabosio and Tony Villaflor
- Sinners - Chris Welcker, Benjamin A Burt, Felipe Pacheco, Brandon Proctor and Steve Boeddeker
- Sirât - Amanda Villavieja, Laia Casanovas and Yasmina Praderas



Avatar: Fire and Ash. Photo: 20th Century Studios



Frankenstein. Photo: Ken Woroner/Netflix



F1. Photo: primevideo

Review of Frankenstein,  
first published in C2C  
December 2025 issue.



### Best visual effects

- WINNER: Avatar: Fire and Ash - Joe Letteri, Richard Baneham, Eric Saindon and Daniel Barrett
- F1 - Ryan Tudhope, Nicolas Chevallier, Robert Harrington and Keith Dawson
- Jurassic World Rebirth - David Vickery, Stephen Aplin, Charmaine Chan and Neil Corbould
- Sinners - Michael Ralla, Espen Nordahl, Guido Wolter and Donnie Dean
- The Lost Bus - Charlie Noble, David Zaretti, Russell Bowen and Brandon K McLaughlin

### Best production design

- WINNER: Frankenstein - Tamara Deverell and Shane Vieau
- Hamnet - Fiona Crombie and Alice Felton
- Marty Supreme - Jack Fisk and Adam Willis
- One Battle After Another - Florencia Martin and Anthony Carlino
- Sinners - Hannah Beachler and Monique Champagne

#### Best casting

- WINNER: One Battle After Another - Cassandra Kulukundis
- Hamnet - Nina Gold
- Marty Supreme - Jennifer Venditti
- Sinners - Francine Maisler
- The Secret Agent - Gabriel Domingues

#### Best make-up and hairstyling

- WINNER: Frankenstein - Mike Hill, Jordan Samuel and Cliona Furey
- Kokuho - Kyoko Toyokawa, Naomi Hibino and Tadashi Nishimatsu
- Sinners - Ken Diaz, Mike Fontaine and Shunika Terry
- The Smashing Machine - Kazu Hiro, Glen Griffin and Bjoern Rehbein
- The Ugly Stepsister - Thomas Foldberg and Anne Cathrine Sauerberg

#### Best costume design

- WINNER: Frankenstein - Kate Hawley
- Avatar: Fire and Ash - Deborah L Scott
- Hamnet - Malgosia Turzanska
- Marty Supreme - Miyako Bellizz
- Sinners - Ruth E Carter

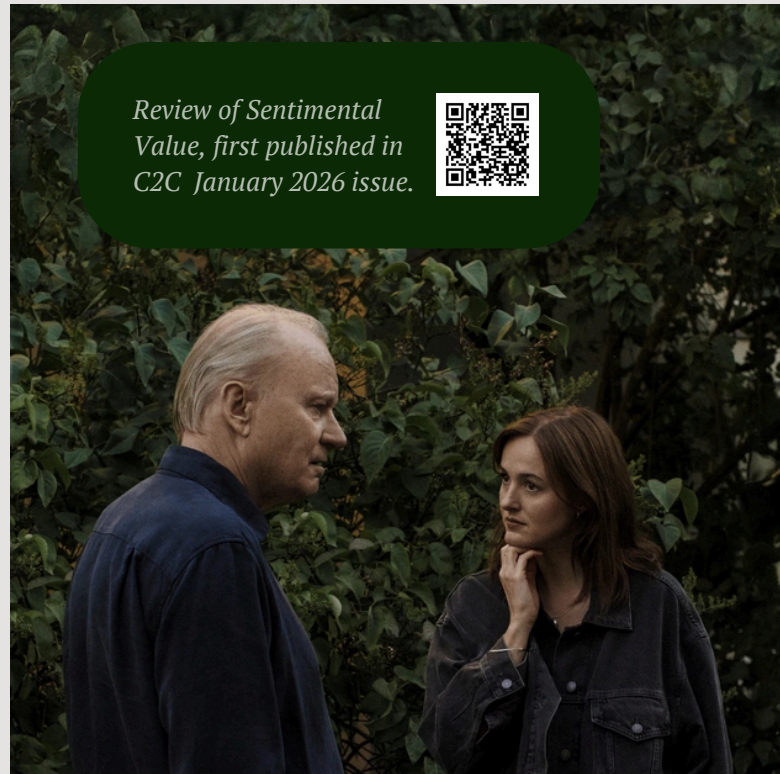


#### Best live action short

- WINNER (TIED): The Singers
- WINNER (TIED): Two People Exchanging Saliva
- A Friend of Dorothy
- Butcher's Stain
- Jane Austen's Period Drama



*All the Empty Rooms. Photo: Netflix*



*Review of Sentimental Value, first published in C2C January 2026 issue.*



*Sentimental Value. Photo: MUBI*

#### Best documentary short

- WINNER: All the Empty Rooms
- Armed Only with a Camera: The Life and Death of Brent Renaud
- Children No More: Were and Are Gone
- The Devil Is Busy
- Perfectly a Strangeness

#### Best animated short

- WINNER: The Girl Who Cried Pearls
- Butterfly
- Evergreen
- Retirement Plan
- The Three Sisters

*The Girl Who Cried Pearls.  
Photo: The NFB*

# Oscars 2026 highlight

## Bardem Voices Anti-War Message at Oscars

Amid the glamour of the 98th Academy Awards, Javier Bardem used his moment on stage to deliver a clear political message. Presenting Best International Feature alongside Priyanka Chopra, the Spanish actor spoke against ongoing global conflicts, including the recent U.S.-Iran war. Wearing a red patch reading “No a la guerra,” Bardem voiced opposition to war and expressed support for Palestine, adding a sharp note of urgency to the ceremony.



Javier Bardem, right, and Priyanka Chopra present the award for best international feature film during the 98th Academy Awards at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles on March 15, 2026. Photo: Yahoo News



Autumn Durald Arkapaw accepts the cinematography award. Photograph: Kevin Winter/Getty Images

## Historic Cinematography Win for Autumn Durald Arkapaw

Autumn Durald Arkapaw made history at the 98th Academy Awards, becoming the first woman and first Black cinematographer to win Best Cinematography for *Sinners*. In an emotional speech, she thanked her collaborators and asked all women in the room to stand, acknowledging their role in her journey. Her win marks a significant moment for representation in a category long dominated by male cinematographers.

## Oscars Ratings Dip to 17.86 Million

The 98th Academy Awards drew 17.86 million viewers on ABC and Hulu, down 9% from last year's 19.7 million and the lowest since 2022. The telecast posted a 3.92 rating among adults 18-49, below last year's 4.54 but above 2024's 3.82, still leading the 2025-2026 season.



Academy awards. Photo: collected

ALBUM

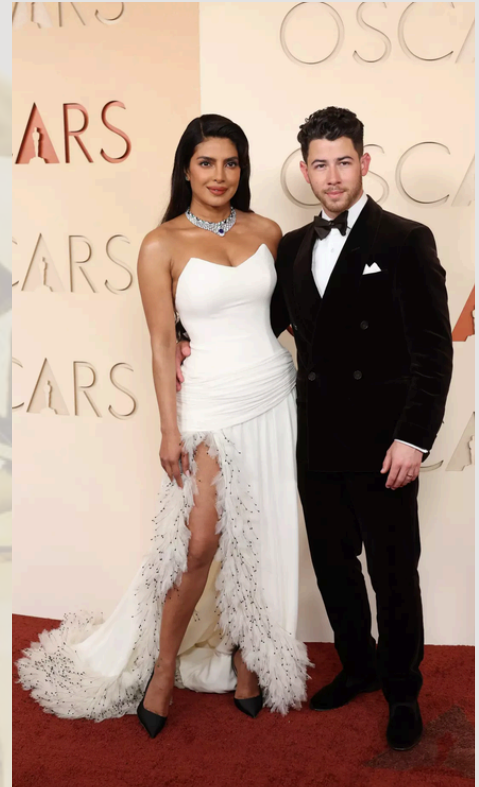
# The best looks from the 2026 Oscars



Gwyneth Paltrow is the epitome of effortless chic in Armani Privé. Photo: Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times



Leonardo DiCaprio debuts a mustache at the Oscars. Photo: Myung J. Chun / Los Angeles Times



Priyanka Chopra Jonas and Nick Jonas pose on the red carpet. Photo: Myung J. Chun / Los Angeles Times



Michael B. Jordan looks sharp in an all-black Louis Vuitton look. Photo: Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times



Anne Hathaway wears florals for spring. Photo: Myung J. Chun / Los Angeles Times



Benicio del Toro was among the stars in an all-black tux. Photo: Christina House/Los Angeles Times



Adrien Brody, last year's best actor winner, and designer Georgina Chapman arrive at the Oscars. Photo: Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times



Wagner Moura ditches his tie at the Oscars. Photo: Christina House / Los Angeles Times.



Emma Stone is sleek and stylish in Louis Vuitton. Photo: Myung J. Chun / Los Angeles Times

# EID BECOMES BATTLEGROUND FOR BIG-SCREEN COMEBACK

**B**angladesh's film industry typically regains momentum during the two Eid festivals each year, as audience interest in cinemas remains relatively low otherwise.

Filmmakers consistently compete for these

festive release windows, a pattern that has held for years. Last year saw six films released during each Eid, totalling 12. This Eid-ul-Fitr, however, this year the number exceed. According to the media 16 films have been released so far. Many of them came up with their promotions just few days prior to release.

As usual, Shakib Khan dominates the Eid conversation. He stars as a 1990s gangster in Prince: Once Upon a Time in Dhaka, directed by Abu Hayat Mahmud, alongside Tasnia Farin and Jyotirmoyee Kundu. The Shakib Khan film is doing well in box office, as expected. Audience usually wait for Shakib Khan movie during the Eid.

Afran Nisho also returns with Domm, directed by Redwan Rony. Based on real events and structured as a survival story, the film was largely shot in Kazakhstan and features Chanchal Chowdhury and Puja Cherry.



Prince: Once Upon a Time in Dhaka. Photo: IMDB

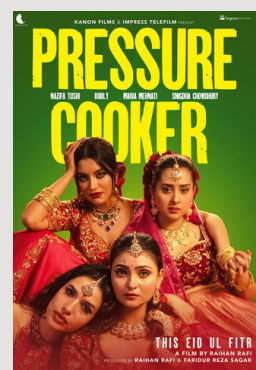
Siam Ahmed joins the lineup with Rakkhosh, directed by Mehedi Hasan Hridoy and co-starring Sushmita Chatterjee. The film was shot across Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

Other announced titles include Bonolota Express by Tanim Noor, Pinik by Zahid Jewel, Bonolota Sen by Masud Hasan Ujjal, Rongbazar by Rashid Polash, Tribunal by Raihan Khan, Hangor by Tanmoy Surya, Malik by Saif Chandan, Durbar by Kamrul Hasan Fuad, Cut Piece by Iffat Jahan Momo, Dodor Golpo by Reza Ghatak, Toshnosh by Badiul Alam Khokon, and Officer, starring Mahiya Mahi. Raihan Rafi's Pressure Cooker is also being speculated as a Eid release.

With an ongoing shortage of cinema halls, it remains uncertain how many of these films will ultimately perform well, given the limited number of screens. 🌐



Domm. Photo: IMDB



Poster of Rakkhosh and Pressure Cooker. Photo: Local Media

# IS OUR CINEMA'S BIGGEST CELEBRATION ALSO ITS GREATEST BARRIER?

*This short write-up on the deep connection between Eid and cinema in Bangladesh is written by Md Rabbi Islam. It explores how Eid releases sustain the industry while also creating congestion and imbalance, arguing for a more balanced, year-round film culture beyond the festive dependency.*

In Bangladesh, Eid and cinema are inseparable. For decades, the festive season has been the “oxygen tank” for our film industry. It is the only time of the year when the entire country, from the

bustling streets of Dhaka to the smallest village, turns its eyes toward the local silver screen.

This rush is the lifeblood of our theaters. For many cinema halls, the ticket sales from a single Eid week are enough to keep their doors open for the next six months. It creates a rare, collective energy where watching a Dhallywood film becomes a national ritual, giving our stars and stories a massive stage they wouldn't get on a random Tuesday in November.

However, this “all-or-nothing” strategy has a dark side. When we squeeze ten or fifteen films into a single week, we create a massive “logjam”. In a country with a dwindling number of screens, these films end up cannibalizing each other.

Usually, one or two big-budget “superstar” movies sweep the boards, while smaller, more thoughtful, or experimental films are suffocated within days. It turns the industry into a “winner-takes-all” gamble. Even worse, it creates a “content desert” for the rest of the year.

Producers often hold completed films for months, waiting for the Eid window. This teaches the audience to only care about cinema twice a year, making them lose the habit of going to the movies during the other forty-eight weeks.

For our cinema to truly thrive, we need to treat Eid as a celebration, not a survival tactic. A constructive path forward would be to spread major releases across other holidays, like Pahela Baishakh or the February long weekends, to build a year-round movie-going culture.



*The whole team at a press meet before the Eid 2026 release of Bonolota Express.  
Photo: Buriganga Talkies*

If we stop relying solely on the festive craze, we give every film a fair chance to breathe and find its audience. Cinema should be a constant flame that warms the industry all year, not just a seasonal firework that shines bright for a week and then leaves us in the dark. 🌟

*Writer: Student of Film and Television department, Jagannath University*

# PROJECT HAIL MARY

## SCIENCE, COMEDY AND A TOUCH OF PATHOS

AXEL TIMO PURR

*Phil Lord and Chris Miller adapte Andy Weir's bestseller 'Project Hail Mary' with Ryan Gosling and Sandra Hüller as a grand science fiction adventure – somewhere between a cosmic Robinsonade and a light-hearted family film.*

It begins with one of the oldest motifs in literature: A man awakens alone, cut off from the world, forced to make sense of where he is, who he is, and what he must do to survive. In *Project Hail Mary*, Ryland Grace - played by Ryan Gosling - opens his eyes to find himself not on an island, but on a spaceship somewhere in the Tau Ceti system, light years away from Earth, with no memory, no context, two dead crew members at his side and only a vague inkling that his existence might have something to do with the possible end of humanity.

Thus, the film continues a narrative that has worked perfectly since Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* was published in 1719: the Robinsonade, the literary experiment in which man is thrown back on himself and in which it becomes clear that civilization is ultimately just a fragile layer that has to reinvent itself at any time. Andy Weir's novel *Project Hail Mary* is just such a Robinsonade, except that the island here is interstellar and the tools are not axes and sails, but molecular biology, mathematics, physics and patience. The fact that this material, of all things, was sold before the book was even published - Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer secured the rights more than a year before publication and paid a seven-figure sum for them - tells a second story: saving the world has once again become a central narrative of our present, a fantasy that occupies Hollywood and literature alike, perhaps because we have had the vague feeling for years that this is exactly what we are dealing with - trying to save a world whose disintegration has long since begun, not only through the destruction of our environment, but also politically.

Andy Weir's novel became an instant bestseller in 2021, following on from the success of *The Martian*, with whose film adaptation Ridley Scott showed that science fiction can also be a genre of scientific thought as blockbuster cinema. In Scott's film - as in Weir's literary model - space was a radical experimental set-up: man is alone, and if he survives, it is only because he understands, calculates, experiments, makes mistakes and starts again. A universe almost reminiscent of the sober science fiction of Stanisław Lem, of those stories about Commander Pirx and a godforsaken universe in which knowledge alone is the real heroic deed.



The Martian is also a Robinsonade, but Project Hail Mary is even more so, as it is not just the individual that is put to the test here, but humanity as a whole. Perhaps this is why the film adaptation by Phil Lord and Chris Miller, a directing duo who have proven their mastery of pop culture and narrative rhythm with The Lego Movie and Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse, takes a different path to the one taken by Ridley Scott. Instead of the cosmic tragedy that the literary source material is based on, this is an adventure film with repeated, hearty comedic interludes that are reminiscent of predecessors such as the Guardians of the Galaxy films of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. And in places, it is almost a science fiction family film spectacle that is closer to Steven Spielberg's E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial than to Christopher Nolan's Interstellar, although the initial situation - a mission to save the Earth - would certainly have provided the material for an existential reflection of our present in the style of Christopher Nolan.

Perhaps this is precisely where the first irritation of this film adaptation lies. Weir's novel thrives on details: experiments, trains of thought, technical monologues, dead ends and the almost childlike joy of trying to understand the world. Many of these moments are missing or only appear as quick hints. The screenplay by Drew Goddard, who had already adapted Weir's The Martian, often seems to opt for referencing events rather than acting them out. Scenes that fill entire chapters in the book sometimes seem like summaries in the film, as if someone was afraid that the audience might lack patience or concentration. As a result, the narrative always seems extremely accelerated, almost like a synopsis of a much richer text - and yet this approach also works and the film remains strangely exciting.

Perhaps this is due to the atmospheric choices, such as the music. The film surprisingly draws on pieces such as Pata Pata by Miriam Makeba or - as a small ironic homage to the novel - Two of Us by the Beatles, although the Beatles have a much stronger presence in the book. And then there's the wonderful, improvised karaoke scene in which Sandra Hüller interprets Harry Styles' Sign of the Times and talks about its creation with Ryan Gosling and Sandra Hüller in an behind-the-scenes interview - a scene that is far removed from the book and yet is one of the most beautiful moments in the film, perhaps precisely because it stops the narrative for a moment and allows the characters to simply be there. And it also includes Hüller's GDR socialization being embedded with ironic wit. But not everything that is music is good here. The pathetic orchestral score, which comments too many scenes to death emotionally, is far less convincing. The directors don't seem to fully trust their material and replace the quiet tension of scientific curiosity with musical urgency and pompous blah-blah.

Sandra Hüller's casting of Eva Stratt is similarly ambivalent. There are scenes in which Hüller is great, for example in the aforementioned karaoke scene or in the performance of her actual character as a crisis manager for the whole world: precise, dry, almost humorless. Nevertheless, here she is not the complex, "tough" Sandra Hüller that she has been allowed to be in so many other roles, think of The Zone of Interest, Anatomy of a Fall or her role in Rose, for which she was awarded the Silver Bear at this year's Berlinale. In Project Hail Mary, she comes across as surprisingly soft-spoken and always a little out of place, with alternatives

such as Cate Blanchett, Jodie Foster or Charlotte Rampling quickly coming to mind. The character in the novel is a radically functional technocrat, someone who creates moral complexity precisely through scientific clarity. The film attempts to give her additional facets, but the result remains vague and irritating, also in terms of content. In one scene, Grace asks her if she believes in God. Her answer: "It's better than the opposite." This sentence seems strangely alien in the universe of Andy Weir, whose novels show that human knowledge can also function without metaphysical instances. Perhaps this small shift is also a commentary on the present day, in which religious narratives are once again having a stronger impact on public debates, or perhaps it is just a dramaturgical safeguard.

And yet one of the central ideas of the novel remains: the encounter with the alien Rocky - who thus also gives this Robinsonade the character of a "Friday" and completes it - which in the book is a fascinating study of communication, of slowly learning a foreign language, of trying to build a bridge between completely different ways of thinking. Here, too, the film abbreviates many things, but it does not completely lose the core of this idea.

Perhaps this is why the cinematic adaptation of Project Hail Mary is best seen as a counterpart to The Martian. Ridley Scott's film showed a universe in which man is alone and only survives by thinking, a cinema of knowledge in which even the spectacular images were never an end in themselves. Lord and Miller, on the other hand, tell a different story: one in which man is no longer alone, in which encounters are more important than isolation, in which adventure and emotions are emphasized more than processes of knowledge.



*Project Hail Mary Directors Phil Lord & Chris Miller.  
Photo Getty Images*

As a film adaptation of a book, this approach only partially works. Too much of what makes Weir's novel special - his patience, his intellectual precision, his almost affectionate delight in scientific, nerdy gimmicks - is lost. But as a film, without the literary model in mind, something else emerges: a great, sometimes surprisingly tender science fiction adventure that takes its characters seriously, even if it occasionally views them with humor, and which never gets boring despite its 156-minute length. Perhaps this is precisely the peculiar, always elusive quality of this film: that it moves between two possibilities and does not completely redeem either of them - between the Robinsonade of thought and the spectacle of the blockbuster, between scientific curiosity and emotional entertainment. It is difficult to decide whether this is a failure or merely a shift in perspective, especially as the film itself seems to deliberately leave this decision open. 🤖

*Writer: Film critic, Germany*



# THE SECRET AGENT

# BRAZIL IN THE SPOTLIGHT

MARCELO JANOT

**B**y the time this article reaches readers, “The Secret Agent”, the latest film by Kleber Mendonça Filho, may already have secured yet another historic achievement

for Brazilian cinema. Winner of the Best Director award, Best Actor for Wagner Moura, and the FIPRESCI Prize at the most recent Cannes Film Festival, the film repeated a rare accomplishment previously achieved by Walter Salles’s “I’m Still Here”: a nomination not only for Best International Feature Film, but also for Best Picture in the Academy Awards’ main category. The feat underscores the remarkable moment Brazilian cinema is currently experiencing, with international recognition for films that—despite their distinct aesthetics—share a common engagement with the country’s Military Dictatorship (1964–1984), a dark chapter of Brazilian history that remains insufficiently known or openly denied by part of the population.

Wagner Moura stars as Armando, living under the alias Marcelo, a university professor and researcher who returns to his hometown of Recife only to discover that he has been marked for death by a powerful businessman in the energy sector with close ties to the government. Set in 1977, the film opens with Armando refueling his yellow Volkswagen at a roadside gas station, where a corpse lies covered in newspapers, surrounded by flies. A Highway Police patrol soon arrives, ignores the body, and focuses instead on extorting money from him. When all documents and equipment prove to be in order, the officers settle for the remains of a pack of cigarettes and drive away, leaving the decomposing body behind.

*Actor Wagner Moura in The Secret Agent.  
Photo: IMDB*

This prologue encapsulates recurring elements of Brazilian social experience—corruption, abuse of authority, and the normalization of violence—that continue to shape the relationship between the state and its citizens. Mendonça Filho consistently builds bridges between the dictatorship era and contemporary Brazil, whether through images of police dumping bodies into rivers or a scene in which a wealthy woman receives preferential treatment while testifying about the death of her maid’s child, who was under her care when he was fatally struck by a car. The reference unmistakably echoes a real and recent tragedy: the 2020 death of a young boy who fell from the ninth floor of a luxury building in Recife. The accused—his mother’s employer and the wife of an influential politician—remains at liberty.

A former film critic, Mendonça Filho never hides his cinephilia. Cinematic references permeate “The Secret Agent”, alongside an ongoing reflection on the cultural importance of traditional street cinemas, a theme previously explored in his documentary “Pictures of Ghosts”. In this new film, the historic São Luiz Cinema, located in downtown Recife and still in operation, functions as more than a mere setting for screenings of films like “Jaws” or “The Omen”: it becomes a character in its own right.

The inclusion of the urban legend of the “Hairy Leg”—a creature said to have attacked people in a public park at night, according to sensationalist newspapers of the time—opens a space for the director to incorporate elements of fantastic cinema, long present in his body of work. Beyond the gripping police-thriller narrative of a man persecuted by a dictatorial regime while attempting to reconnect with his past, “The Secret Agent” reveals an ambition to blend disparate genres and tones. Drawing on his intimate knowledge of Recife, the city where he was born and raised,

Mendonça Filho once again demonstrates a rare observational acuity in portraying distinctly Brazilian traits. This is evident in details such as a violent police chief still bearing traces of confetti and lipstick on his body—remnants of Carnival, Brazil’s most iconic popular festival—or in the recurring imagery of sharks, a real and persistent threat along Recife’s coastline.

The period reconstruction is meticulous, faithfully evoking the visual and musical textures of the late 1970s. The film is anchored by a superb cast, led by Wagner Moura and supported by a rich ensemble of performances. Robério Diógenes, as the ruthless police chief Euclides, and Tânia Maria, as an elderly woman who shelters political fugitives—following a previous appearance in “Bacurau”—frequently steal the scene.



Actor Wagner Moura in *The Secret Agent*.  
Photo: IMDB



Fans of *The Secret Agent* parade through downtown Recife with Carnival “bloco” groups, carrying a replica of the city’s infamous 1970s urban legend, the “Perna Cabeluda” (“Hairy Leg”), which makes a homicidal appearance in the dictatorship-era film.  
Photo: Brenda Alcantara for NPR

With or without an Academy Award, “The Secret Agent” has already surpassed two million admissions in Brazil, ranking among the country’s biggest box-office successes of the year. Its international reception leaves cinephiles wondering whether another Brazilian surprise may be on the horizon at festivals such as Cannes or Venice in the near future. 🍷

Writer: Brazilian film critic

BUZZ

## CHUCK NORRIS DIES AT 86 DAYS AFTER CELEBRATING BIRTHDAY



From left: Chuck Norris in 'A Force of One,' 'Walker, Texas Ranger' and with Bruce Lee in 'Return of the Dragon' Photo: Everett Collection

**A**merican action icon Chuck Norris has died at the age of 86, his family confirmed, following a recent medical emergency that led to his hospitalisation in Hawaii on March 19.

In a statement shared on Instagram, the family announced that Norris passed away on March 21. They described the loss as sudden and deeply painful, remembering him not only as a global symbol of strength and discipline but also as the emotional centre of their family. They paid tribute to him as a devoted husband, father, grandfather, and brother whose presence shaped their lives beyond his public image.

Just days before his death, on March 14, Norris had marked his 86th birthday with characteristic energy. In a social media post, he shared a video of himself sparring with a boxing trainer and working a punching bag, pairing it with a message that reflected his enduring spirit. He wrote that he does not age but "levels up," expressing gratitude for his health, another year of life, and the continued support of his fans worldwide.

Norris rose to fame in Hollywood through a series of action films and became widely recognised for his role in the television series Walker, Texas Ranger. However, his legacy extended far beyond the screen. Before entering the film industry, he built an extraordinary career in martial arts, becoming a six-time undefeated World Professional Middleweight Karate champion.

He later established his own martial arts system, Chun Kuk Do, and founded the United Fighting Arts Federation, through which thousands of black belts have been awarded globally. His contributions to martial arts were formally recognised when he was granted a 10th-degree black belt, one of the highest honours in the discipline.

From competitive arenas to global stardom, Norris leaves behind a legacy defined by discipline, resilience, and cultural impact. 🌍

## INDIA BLOCKS RELEASE OF OSCAR-NOMINATED GAZA DRAMA THE VOICE OF HIND RAJAB



The Voice of Hind Rajib Photo: The Party Film Sales - Canva

**T**he release of The Voice of Hind Rajab, a widely acclaimed docu-drama by Kaouther Ben Hania, has been blocked in India by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), despite its strong international recognition and awards momentum.

The film, which centres on the death of a five-year-old girl during the Israel-Gaza conflict, premiered at the Venice Film Festival last year, where it received an extraordinary 23-minute standing ovation. It went on to win the Silver Lion Grand Jury Prize, earn a nomination at the Golden Globe Awards, and secure a place among the five finalists for Best International Feature at the Academy Awards this year.

However, these achievements have not ensured a release in India. According to reports, distributor Manoj Nandwana of Jai Viratra Entertainment was informed that screening the film could strain diplomatic ties between India and Israel. The decision, therefore, appears to extend beyond routine certification concerns, pointing instead to broader political sensitivities under the current government led by Narendra Modi.

Nandwana strongly challenged this reasoning, noting that the film has already been released in several countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, and France, all of which maintain relations with Israel. He argued that it is unreasonable to assume that a single film could disrupt what he described as a stable and robust bilateral relationship.

The episode raises renewed questions about censorship, cultural diplomacy, and the limits of political influence over cinema in India. 🌍

# SEAN PENN SKIPS OSCARS TO VISIT ZELENSKYI IN UKRAINE



Sean Penn visiting President Volodymyr Zelenskyy  
Photo: X @ZelenskyyUa screenshot

**O**scar-winning actor Sean Penn was notably absent from this year's Academy Awards ceremony, where he secured his third acting Oscar, choosing instead to travel to Ukraine in a gesture of solidarity.

Penn won Best Supporting Actor for his performance in *One Battle After Another*, but did not attend the ceremony to accept the award. Presenter Kieran Culkin, who won in the same category last year for *A Real Pain*, accepted the honour on his behalf, joking about Penn's absence and prompting curiosity about why the actor skipped Hollywood's biggest night.

The reason soon became clear. Penn had arrived in Kyiv on March 16 for what Ukrainian officials described as a personal visit. During his trip, he met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, reaffirming his continued support for the country amid the ongoing war.

Zelenskyy publicly thanked Penn, describing him as a steadfast ally who has stood by Ukraine since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022. Penn's engagement with Ukraine has been consistent over the years, including multiple visits and vocal advocacy.

In 2022, he symbolically gifted one of his Academy Awards to Zelenskyy, promising it would remain in Kyiv until Ukraine achieved victory. That same year, Ukraine honoured him with the Order of Merit, third degree, recognising his contributions and support.

Penn also documented the conflict through his film *Superpower*, which explores both the war and Zelenskyy's leadership. The documentary premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2023, further reflecting his deep involvement with the country's ongoing struggle. 🌍

# 'DUNE: PART THREE' VS 'AVENGERS: DOOMSDAY' - SHOULD 'DUNESDAY' BE CANCELLED?



'Dune: Part Three' and 'Avengers: Doomsday'. Photo: Collected

**T**he first trailer for *Dune: Part Three* has generated strong reactions, with many viewers praising its scale and tone and questioning whether its planned release clash with *Avengers: Doomsday* should go

ahead. Directed by Denis Villeneuve, the third instalment is positioned as the final chapter of his adaptation of Frank Herbert's saga, drawing from the novel *Dune Messiah*. Early footage suggests a darker narrative, following a conflicted Paul Atreides, played by Timothée Chalamet, as he grapples with the consequences of the holy war he set in motion. Zendaya returns as Chani, while Robert Pattinson appears as the antagonist Scytale.

The film is set 17 years after the events of the previous chapter and is scheduled for a global theatrical release on December 18. On the same date, Marvel plans to launch *Avengers: Doomsday*, setting up a direct box office showdown between two major franchises.

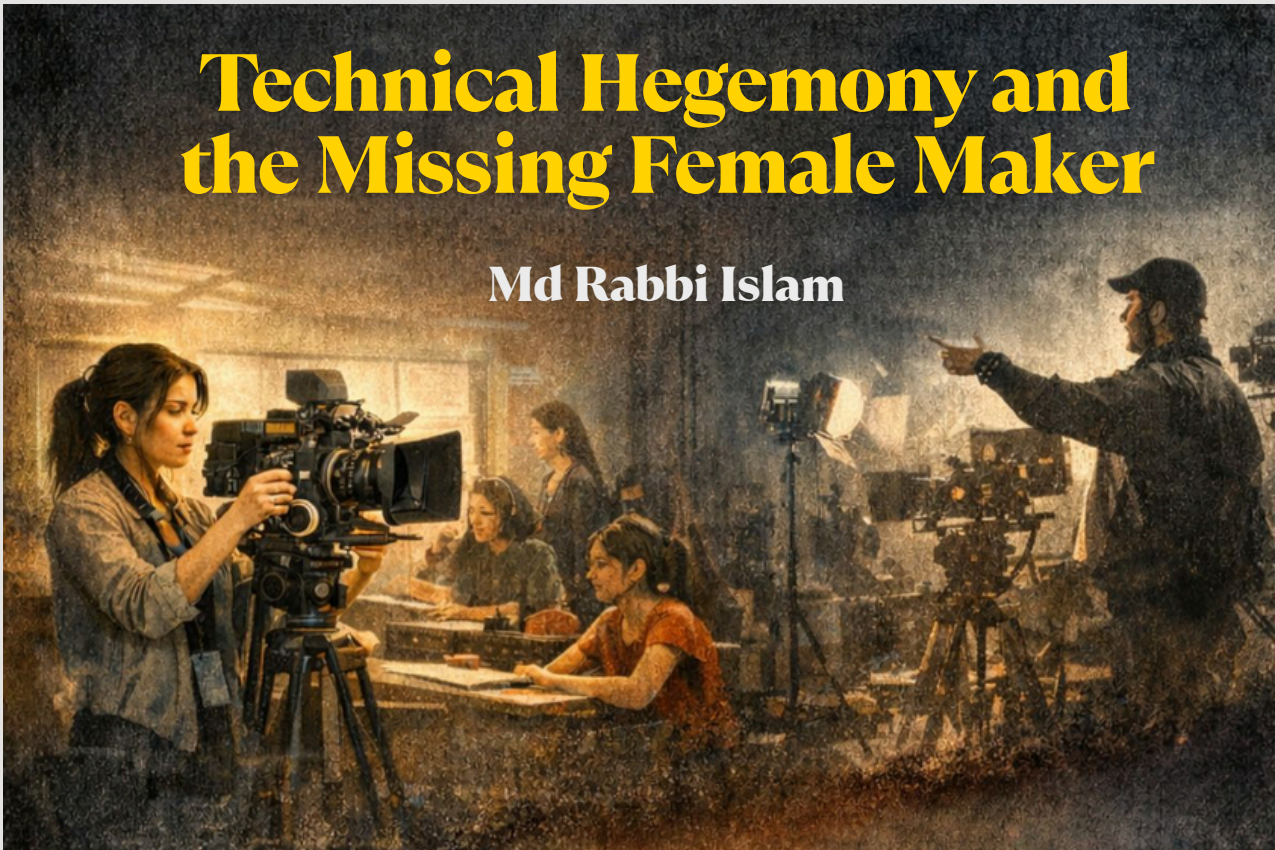
Initially, the simultaneous release was framed as a potential repeat of the "Barbenheimer" phenomenon sparked by *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer* in July 2023. The overlap was even playfully branded "Dunesday" by Robert Downey Jr., who suggested audiences could embrace both films as a double feature.

However, following the trailer's reception, sentiment appears to be shifting. Some fans now argue that Marvel should consider moving its release, concerned that *Doomsday* could struggle against the growing anticipation surrounding Villeneuve's film.

The stakes are particularly high for Marvel, whose recent releases in the post-*Infinity Saga* era have faced mixed responses. With major projects and a broader franchise reset on the horizon, the studio may need to weigh the risks of a direct confrontation at the box office. 🌍

# Technical Hegemony and the Missing Female Maker

Md Rabbi Islam



Gender gap in film industry. Photo: AI

**T**he hallways of modern film schools tell a story of equality. If you walk into a cinematography or directing class today, you will see a balanced room where women make up half of the students.

These students have the same technical dreams and creative hunger as their male classmates. Yet, a decade later, the credits of the world's top films tell a much darker story. In 2025, women made up only 13% of directors and a tiny 7% of cinematographers on the top 250 films. This missing presence is not because women lack talent. It is the result of a century old system of Technical Hegemony that pushes women away from the camera.

Cinema was not always a boys' club. In the early days between 1890 and 1920, the roles of director and technician were flexible. Pioneers like Alice Guy-Blaché were masters of the equipment. She invented narrative storytelling and experimented with sound and color long before they became common. As a secretary, she had unique access to new technology and directed the first narrative fiction film in 1896. Other pioneers like Lois Weber used cinema for social critique, and Frances Marion standardized the continuity script. The industry changed in the 1920s as it turned into a big corporate business. This period saw a deliberate move to make film a masculine field. Technical gatekeeping was done by starting professional groups that kept women out. The American Society of Cinematographers was started in 1919 and labeled the cameraman as a gentleman artist.

This professional status blocked women from the camera department. When sound films arrived in 1927, the industry brought in male technicians from the radio field, which pushed early female pioneers out even further.

This history lives on today through something called 'Technical Masculinity'. This is the idea that being good with machines is a naturally male trait. On a film set, knowing how to use complex gear is often seen as proof of leadership. Specialized jargon and strict hierarchies keep these barriers in place. Jargon works like a fence to keep people out of the group. Using terms like gaffer and best boy creates an environment that can be confusing for women who were not raised in these boys' clubs. Research shows that people often stop judging a woman by her skill and start judging her by her gender once they realize she is a woman. This forces women to deal with both professional bias and harassment at the same time.

In 1975, Laura Mulvey explained how the deep habits of a male dominated society shape how films are made. She argued that the pleasure of looking in movies is split between an active male and a passive female. The male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure. Women are styled to be looked at, which Mulvey calls 'to-be-looked-at-ness'. Mulvey also connects movies to the mirror phase, which is when a child first recognizes their image in a mirror. In the theater, the audience identifies with the main male character. This allows the viewer to feel powerful like the man on screen.

The male character is free to command the stage and lead the action. Meanwhile, the female character is often just a silent image that man uses to live out his fantasies.

The biggest problem happens after the first success. Data from 2025 shows that while women get help making their first film, they hit a wall when trying to make a second one. This is the 'Second Feature Trap'. Many female filmmakers drop out of the industry at this point. Women face smaller budgets and fewer job offers than men. Men are 39% more likely than women to write a second film. This happens because of a myth that women are a higher risk for investors. Films directed by women get less money for ads and stay in theaters for less time. This economic exile means women do not have the power to change how the industry works.

**Film schools are equal. Film credits are not. A century of gatekeeping still keeps women behind the camera.**

Some filmmakers are skipping these gatekeepers by working alone or with very small crews. This is a way to take back the power of making films. As an example, the Assamese filmmaker Rima Das works this way to bypass traditional limits. For her film Village Rockstars, she was the director, writer, cinematographer, and editor. By not using a large male crew, she kept full control and ignored the rules of technical masculinity. Other important independent filmmakers have used similar methods to stay free from industry pressure. Chantal Akerman used a tiny crew for her final work, filming with simple digital gear to tell a personal story. These small crew models let filmmakers work at their own pace and tell stories that the big industry ignores.



Village Rock stars by Rima Das.  
Photo: X social media



Film scholar Laura Mulvey. Photo: Filmtopia



First Woman Film Director Alice Guy-Blache poses for a portrait in circa 1917 in New York. Photo: Donaldson Collection/Getty Images

The lack of gender parity in filmmaking is a structural issue rather than a matter of individual skill. From the industry standards of the 1920s to the funding gaps of 2026, these barriers are embedded in the production system. Achieving a fair balance requires a fundamental shift in how financial resources and opportunities are allocated. The future of cinema depends on addressing these technical and institutional hurdles. By supporting independent models, the industry can incorporate a wider range of voices and perspectives. It is time to update the framework of filmmaking so that the screen more accurately reflects the diversity of the human experience. 🌍

Sources:

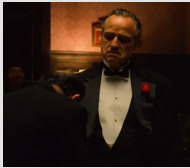
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Writer: Student of Film and Television department, Jagannath University

# Oscars Greatest

## 10 Best Picture Winners That Define Cinema

*Across Oscar history, countless films have been named Best Picture. Choosing the true greatest is impossible, yet Cut to Cinema selects ten standout winners for cinema lovers to revisit and celebrate.*



The Godfather (1972), directed by Francis Ford Coppola

A sweeping crime saga about power, family, and moral compromise. Its character depth and narrative control reshaped modern Hollywood storytelling. Won Best Picture at the Oscars in 1973.



The Silence of the Lambs (1991), directed by Jonathan Demme

A psychological thriller that delves into fear and manipulation. Notable for its performances and intense character interplay. Won Best Picture at the Oscars in 1992.



Casablanca (1942), directed by Michael Curtiz

A wartime romance set against political turmoil and personal sacrifice. Famous for its dialogue and timeless chemistry between its leads. Won Best Picture at the Oscars in 1944.



Lawrence of Arabia (1962), directed by David Lean

An epic exploration of identity set against vast desert landscapes. Renowned for its cinematography and monumental scale. Won Best Picture at the Oscars in 1963.



Schindler's List (1993), directed by Steven Spielberg

A haunting portrayal of the Holocaust through one man's moral awakening. Striking black-and-white visuals intensify its emotional weight. Won Best Picture at the Oscars in 1994.



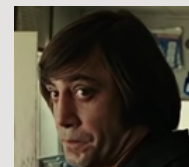
Forrest Gump (1994), directed by Robert Zemeckis

A life journey that intersects with key moments in American history. Balances innocence, humor, and emotional resonance. Won Best Picture at the Oscars in 1995.



The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (2003), directed by Peter Jackson

A grand finale that blends spectacle with emotional closure. Celebrated for its scale, craft, and narrative payoff. Won Best Picture at the Oscars in 2004.



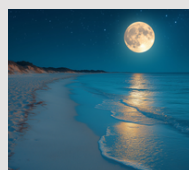
No Country for Old Men (2007), directed by Joel Coen and Ethan Coen

A bleak, tension-filled story of fate, violence, and morality. Minimalist storytelling heightens its philosophical undertones. Won Best Picture at the Oscars in 2008.



Parasite (2019), directed by Bong Joon-ho

A sharp social satire exploring class divide and hidden tensions. Its genre shifts and precise storytelling captivated global audiences. Won Best Picture at the Oscars in 2020.



Moonlight (2016), directed by Barry Jenkins

An intimate coming-of-age story told in three chapters of a man's life. Explores identity, masculinity, and vulnerability with quiet power. Won Best Picture at the Oscars in 2017.

Tell the name of the

# FILM

# GUESSING GAME



Test your knowledge

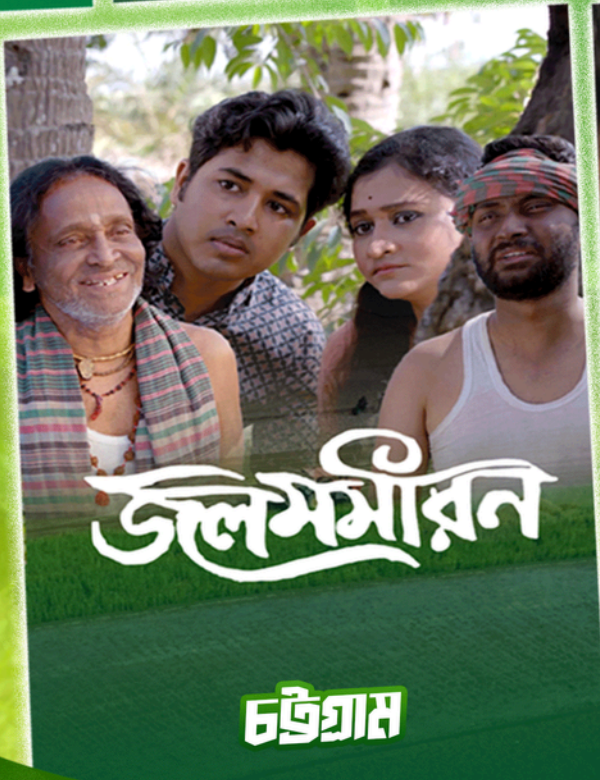


1. Which film won Best Picture at the Oscars 2026? (1 Point)
2. Who won Best Actor at the Oscars 2026? (2 Point)
3. Who won Best Actress at the Oscars 2026? (3 Point)
4. Which film won the most awards at the Oscars 2026? (4 Point)
5. Which film won Best International Feature at the Oscars 2026? (5 Point)

 <p>11-15 Gold Medal</p>	 <p>06-10 Silver Medal</p>	 <p>01-05 Bronze Medal</p>	 <p>00 Wooden Spoon</p>
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Test Your Knowledge Answers  
 1. One Battle After Another  
 2. Michael B. Jordan  
 3. Jessie Buckley  
 4. One Battle After Another  
 5. Sentimental Value

Guessing Game Answer  
 Marty Supreme (2025) directed by Josh Saffie



Local voices. Local artists. Local culture.

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