

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

DESPITE DIVERSITY CONTROVERSY, HOLLYWOOD WILL CELEBRATE

Oscar, are you ready for your closeup?

Tomorrow night is the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences annual public display of self-aggrandizement for all of the great work they've done over the year — otherwise known as the Oscars.

The Academy has come under fire this year for the lack of diversity in its nominees over the years, especially the last two. A review of the Academy's history on its website, Oscars.org, shows that it has historically been dominated by white males.

Of course, part of the reason for this is the time period it has operated in. The Academy was established



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InSites

in 1927. Opportunities for minorities and women then, and for decades after, were much more limited than today. It wasn't just or fair, but that's the way it was.

It's much harder to explain the lack of diversity in key

roles in the motion picture industry today. I'm not a Hollywood insider, so I can only guess that it's a combination of organizational sclerosis, dynastic tendencies in studio management structures and, probably, some prejudice.

But this isn't a column on all that's wrong with the industry. Motion pictures are probably the most potent form of storytelling we have. Movies and television can captivate a viewer through the combination of images, dialogue, music and sound in a way that can't be replicated with a book or spoken word. When it's done well, it's a magical experience.

That's not to say that it's always done well. Like all media, there's much more material created that is best forgotten than there are masterpieces. Browse through the catalogs of art, literature, music, movies and television and you'll find only a small percentage of the huge amount of work that's been done is really well done.

Of course, that's why we have awards ceremonies, to separate works worthy of recognition from those that didn't quite make it, or those that shouldn't

have been made at all. The arts are a subjective endeavor, so picking the best work is as much a matter of the heart as it is the mind.

That's entertainment

The Oscars' website is a celebration of moving pictures. Naturally, the focus of the site currently is tomorrow night's Academy Awards show. The home page features a slide show of images and links about the ceremony and related events. There's a rail down the right side of the page that lets you choose between constantly updating social media feeds, highlighted features from inside the site, and a video and photo gallery of movie history. The rail can be hidden if you like.

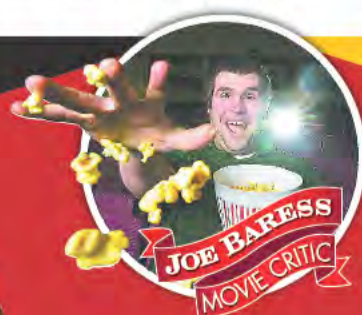
The design of the site is somewhat understated. There's a small logo at the top of the page in the center. It's a classy, gold, capital letter A with a silhouette of the Oscar statue forming the knocked out space in the letter. Below that is a navigation strip with the five main sections of the site listed in small, grey type. Hovering over any of the section links brings up a dropdown menu of all the subsections in the site.

Behind the scenes

Oscars.org functions as both a public face for the Academy and a resource for members. As a result, some of the sections are of less interest to the "civilian" browser than they are to those in the business. For instance, there's a section called the Margaret Herrick Library that lists many interesting items in its collections, such as oral histories and archival films. Unfortunately, many of them can't be accessed through the site. You have to be an Academy member, or, in some cases, visit the library in person to access them.

But there's still a lot for the casual browser to enjoy. There are several photo and video galleries featuring photos and clips of scenes, behind the scenes, actors, props and other memorabilia from many films, actors and directors. The list of past Oscar winners and nominees was enough to start an engaging conversation with my co-workers about days gone by.

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COMING TOMORROW!

Staff writer Joe Baress shares his Oscar predictions in The Sunday Times People section.