

67th Annual Academy Awards

As the space, scale and time for epic dies a death with the growth of industrialisation man's thirst for the grandiloquence, magnanimity of vast canvas and a hero or rather a superhero bestowed with qualities quintessentially Homeric remain alive. Hollywood, over a period of 70 years or so, has become an alternative for the thirst one might call it mock-heroic, Hollywood's real life partner

In terms of prestige and glory the Oscar — eight and a half pounds gold-plated statuette — has the power to lift the image of people on the celluloid in real life with equal glitz followed by a series of raises — salary, glamour and leverage in society. This year the 67th annual Oscar dispenses its charm on "Forrest Gump."

"Forrest Gump" the Big Winner

TO paraphrase Forrest Gump, America's newest folk hero, the 67th annual Oscars ceremony wasn't anything like a box of chocolates.

Rather than surprises, the hundreds of millions of viewers around the world and the 6,000 attendees at the festivities in Los Angeles knew exactly what they were going to get — and they got it.

In an event virtually devoid of suspense, Paramount Pictures' towering hit film, *Forrest Gump* — an embracing tale of the life, times and indomitability of a sweet-tempered young man with below-average intelligence — received the lion's share of gold statuettes, including those for best picture, best actor Tom Hanks, and best director Robert Zemeckis.

In addition, its scenarist, its editor, and the creators of its talked-about, computerized visual effects gained Oscars.

In the process, even when this global favorite — which has racked up gross receipts of \$600 million worldwide — didn't win in seven other categories in which its talent had been nominated, its losses often were expected. No one, for example, expected that anyone but composer Hans Zimmer would win the trophy for best musical score, for his work on *The Lion King*, Walt Disney Pictures' latest animated film. And he did.

Similarly, veteran screen and television actor Martin Landau's glorious, on-target portrayal of drug-addicted horror film star Bela Lugosi in *Ed Wood*, a giddy depiction of the life and times of one of Hollywood's worst directors, had received five other industry and critics' awards prior to the Oscars. It wasn't at all surprising when he was invited to the podium to take home the Oscar for best supporting actor, for what he called "the part of my life."

The best actress and supporting actress honors also went according to predictions. Jessica Lange, one of Hollywood's hardest-working and most versatile actresses, won for her leading role in *Blue Sky*, where she played an emotionally troubled woman who fantasizes to escape the demand of marriage to a military officer. It was her second Academy Award. Lange received the best supporting actress award in 1982 for her role in *Tootsie*.

Like *Ed Wood*, *Blue Sky* went virtually unseen. The final film of noted British director Tony Richardson, it was shot four years ago at a studio that went bankrupt before the picture could be released. After languishing on the shelf, it finally reached America's movie screens in 1994 for brief engagements.

The best supporting actress

category also offered no suspense. Hollywood denizens, journalists and others had been predicting for weeks that Dianne Wiest — gifted, theatrically-trained — would take honors as a blowsy, alcoholic actress in Woody Allen's latest comedy *Bullets Over Broadway*, as she had in five other 1994 industry and critics' competitions. She did. It was her second such Oscar, having won previously for the 1986 movie, *Hannah and Her Sisters*.

As the evening developed, films and creative talents who might have been expected to offer what little resistance there was to a *Forrest Gump* sweep figuratively vanished in a collective fadeout. Actors Paul Newman and John Travolta, actresses Jodie Foster and Susan Sarandon, directors Robert Redford and Quentin Tarantino, and movies *Pulp Fiction* and *Quiz Show*, were mere bystanders as the Gump parade ensued.

Pulp Fiction — a steely, violent, yet ingeniously devised comedy-drama about gangsters and their milieu — was, nominally, the chief rival. Yet it mustered only one Oscar, for its brilliant original screenplay, three separate stories interwoven by its coauthors, director Tarantino and Roger A. Vary. Even this one success was in a safe category, since the screenplay for *Forrest Gump* was adapted from the novel by Winston Groom (for which screenwriter Eric Roth was duly honored).

The awards to Hanks and Zemeckis, although anticipated, were, nonetheless, warmly received. The actor, generally regarded as one of Hollywood's most talented and least egotistical figures, was a winner last year as well for his sharply contrasting depiction, in the film *Philadelphia*, of an attorney afflicted with AIDS.

"I am empowered to stand here thanks to the ensemble of actors, men and women, who I shared the screen with, who, in ways that they will never understand, made me a better actor," Hanks said in his acceptance remarks.

He is the first actor to win back-to-back awards in the lead actor category in more than a half-century. Spencer Tracy took home trophies in 1937 and 1938 for his roles in *Captains Courageous* and *Boys Town*.

Zemeckis, fittingly, received his award from 1994's winning director Steven Spielberg (*Schindler's List*). As one of Spielberg's proteges in the late 1970s and early 1980s he has distinguished himself through a series of comedies with heavy dosages of special effects, including the series of *Back to the Future* films and the combined live-action/animation feature, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*.

The evening was not with-

Michael J Bandler writes from Washington

out its modest surprise and delights. One was the naming of Russia's entry, *Burnt By The Sun*, as best foreign film of 1994. It defeated nominees from Macedonia (*Before The Rain*), Cuba (*Strawberry and Chocolate*), Taiwan (*Eat Drink Man Woman*), and Belgium (*Farinelli: Il Castrato*).

Focused on the impact of Stalinism on a Bolshevik officer, *Burnt By The Sun* was directed by Nikita Mikhalkov. Mikhalkov, twice previously a nominee, accepted the award accompanied by his young daughter, a diminutive pixie

in the early 20th century in *Legends of the Fall*, and the elegant art and set direction created by Ken Adam and Carolyn Scott for *The Madness of King George*, also were honored.

Three special awards paid tribute to film legends Michelangelo Antonioni, Clint Eastwood and Quincy Jones. Italian director Antonioni, 82, famed for such works as *L'Aventura* and *Red Desert*, received a lifetime achievement honor.

Noting that most movies celebrate connections in peo-

ple's lives, actor Jack Nicholson observed that Antonioni's films "mourn the failures to connect."

"In the empty, silent spaces of the world, he has found metaphors that illuminate the silent places of our hearts and found in them, too, a strange and terrible beauty."

Eastwood, 64, universally popular as an actor and director, took home the Irving G. Thalberg Memorial award (named for the creative studio producer of the 1930s) "for a consistently high quality of motion picture production." Composer-producer Jones, 62, described himself as "humble,

proud, cool and so thankful," as he was presented with the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award (named for the late actor) for his charitable efforts aimed particularly at benefiting youth.

For the fourth time in five years, a tune from a Disney animated film was named best original song.

Three of the five candidates in the category this year, in fact, all penned by lyricist Tim Rice and composer Elton John, both Britons, came from *The Lion King*. The winners were "Can You Feel The Love Tonight."

Ultimately, with its half-dozen statuettes, *Forrest Gump* was the story of the night, as it had been the story of the year in Hollywood.

The fourth highest-grossing movie of all time (following *E.T. Jurassic Park*, and *Star Wars*), it is the only movie of the top-ten moneymakers to receive the best picture Oscar.

As innocent and reflective as it was, with a hero who passed effortlessly and triumphantly through several critical phases of contemporary US history, it developed into a subject of mild debate among Americans as the months progressed and as its durability became evident.

Was it a celebration of naivete, or dumbness? Was it uplifting or loathsome (as one critic noted)? Was it the best or (to new York Times critic Janet Maslin) one of the worst movies of the year?

It all depends on personal taste. Perhaps director Zemeckis stated the case for the movie most accurately in his acceptance remarks.

"In historic numbers," he said to audiences around the world, "you have embraced a film that at its heart offers a human, life-affirming, hopeful story."

The author is USA staff writer.



Director Robert Zemeckis (L) holds the Oscar he won as best director for the film "Forrest Gump" as he poses with Steven Spielberg, who presented the award to Zemeckis at the 67th annual Academy Awards in Los Angeles March 27.

— AFP/UNB photo

Lifetime Achievement

Michelangelo Antonioni



The Winners

Picture: *Forrest Gump*
Actor: Tom Hanks, *Forrest Gump*

Actress: Jessica Lange, *Blue Sky*

Supporting Actor: Martin Landau, *Ed Wood*

Supporting Actress: Dianne Wiest, *Bullets Over Broadway*

Director: Robert Zemeckis, *Forrest Gump*

Original Screenplay: Quentin Tarantino and Roger A. Vary, *Pulp Fiction*

Adapted Screenplay: Eric Roth, *Forrest Gump*

Foreign Language Film: *Burnt by the Sun*, Russia

Cinematography: John Toll, *Legends of the Fall*

Editing: Arthur Schmidt, *Forrest Gump*

Sound: Speed

Sound Effects Editing: Speed

Visual Effects: *Forrest Gump*

Original Song: Tim Rice and Elton John, "Can You Feel the Love Tonight," from *The Lion King*

Original Score: Hans Zimmer, *The Lion King*

Documentary Feature: Maya Lin: *A Strong Clear Vision*

Documentary Short Subject: *A Time For Justice*

Makeup: Ed Wood

Costume Design: The Adventures of Priscilla, *Queen of the Desert*

Art Direction: *The Madness of King George*

Live Action Short Film: *Tie-Trevor*, and *Franz Kafka's It's A Wonderful Life*

Animated Short Film: *Bob's Birthday*

Honorary Award: Michelangelo Antonioni

Irving G Thalberg Memorial Award: Clint Eastwood

Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award: Quincy Jones

Politically Biased Academy Awards

A Story of Neglect and Injustice

by Nupu Chaudhuri

THE Academy Award remains the most coveted prize for recognition of achievement in film. The reality is that the achievement is not specific to the performance; there has been growing importance stressed on the film's morals, their political slant, and even their makers' relationships with Hollywood. Many critics claim this to be bordering on propaganda, and if this is true, there is no more effective a tool than the world famous news-making Oscar.

Independent films, dismissed for appealing to a marginal audience, are rarely nominated and are frequently replaced by big Hollywood studio productions, even those as shallow as *Working Girl* or *Ghost*. Any actor playing a person with a handicap has luck on his or her side. Even a film that deals with controversial issues is acknowledged a nod if it possesses more anti-tactic than reality, case in point being *Philadelphia*, the most politically incorrect film about AIDS.

The Academy will pointedly snub anyone whose politics are dissimilar to its own puritan ones. Martin Scorsese and Spike Lee are both considered mavericks, unwilling to compromise their artistic vision for mainstream wholesome American values. Scorsese, especially, has been overlooked by the Academy time and again for his undeniably provocative and powerful work.

Every critic across the globe claim *Raging Bull* (1980) to be the best film of its decade, certainly its year. The great injustice was that the Award

that year went to Robert Redford and his directorial debut *Ordinary People*. Scorsese's other masterpiece, *Goodfellas* (1990) lost to Kevin Costner and his directorial debut *Dances With Wolves*. Scorsese, a filmmaker for nearly thirty years, and considered by many to be one of the best American directors ever, was initially popular in Hollywood, despite his fascination with the dark and often despairing side of American society (best displayed in the superb *Taxi Driver*), until he fell from grace with his controversial *The Last Temptation Of Christ*.

It is possible, though, for Scorsese to win an Award in the future as the Academy is likely to soon feel as gracious as a parent who has suitable punished a child. Many awards are often distributed in this manner. The Lifetime Achievement Award is particularly notorious for going to outstanding artists who are at the end of their careers and were rarely acknowledged at the time of their accomplishments; giving Satyajit Ray an Award on his deathbed and a posthumous one to Audrey Hepburn are typical and offensive displays of this "generosity". The point which remains is not that Scorsese will eventually win an Award, but that he is not winning for his efforts now.

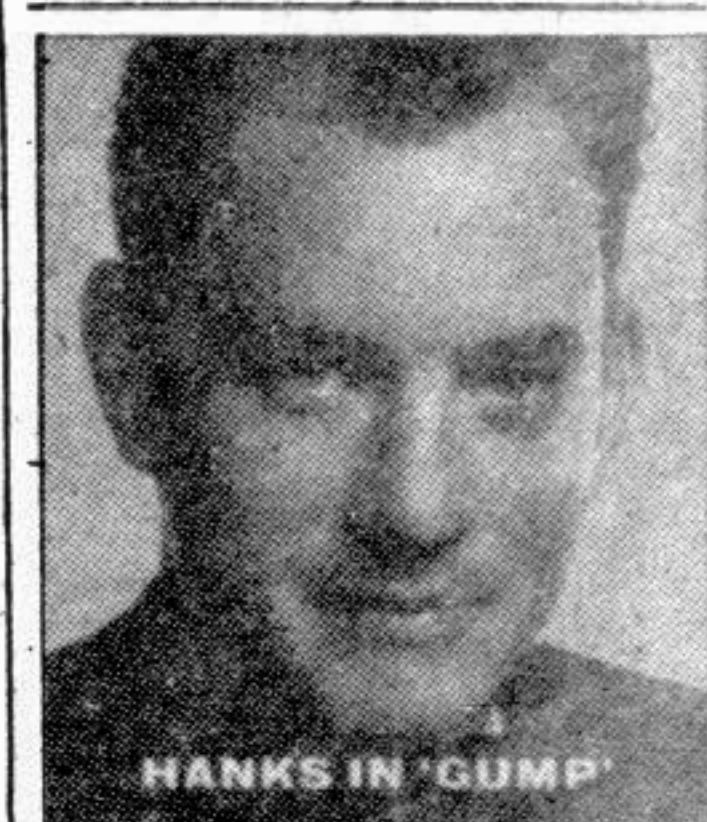
This typical pattern favoured by the Academy is perhaps best illustrated by Al Pacino, an actor who has given strong performances, and been nominated for, his roles in *The Godfather*, the original and

Part II, *Dog Day Afternoon*, and *Scarface*, among others. After twenty-three years, he gives a sound but unexciting performance as a blind man in *Scent Of A Woman*, and wins the Award. The reasons are threefold: he has been previously nominated multiple times, so it is now his due; he plays a man with a handicap; and better him than Denzel Washington who gave the best performance of the year as Malcolm X, in the namesake Spike Lee film.

Given this often flaunting prejudice, why does the Oscar remain the top accolade in the film industry, and receiving it the pinnacle of a filmmaker's career? Winning an Award translates into more fame, worldwide recognition, becoming a part of history, and a rise in salary for future projects. Tom Hanks, this year's Best Actor Award recipient, was already the top earning actor in Hollywood with 15 million dollars per picture and can surely survive without a raise.

The Academy also boasts its appreciation and acceptance of different films which they hope, in turn, shows off its diversity. This year, the Academy will have you know that it is hip (*Pulp Fiction*), has a sense of humour (*Four Weddings And A Funeral*), and is concerned about the decaying morale of American society (*Quiz Show*), but that there's hope (*Shawshank Redemption*) in the good old American dream (*Forrest Gump*). And Gump's Best Picture Award means that it is the American

NOMINATIONS



HANKS IN 'GUMP'



FOSTER IN 'NELL'



TRAVOLTA IN 'PULP'



RYDER IN 'WOMEN'



NEWMAN IN 'COOL'



US actor Tom Hanks poses with his Oscar 27 March at the 67th annual Academy Awards in Los Angeles. Hanks won as best actor for his portrayal of "Forrest Gump" in the film by the same name.

— AFP/UNB photo



US actress Jessica Lange holds the Oscar she won for her role as Carly Marshall in the film "Blue Sky" 27 March at the Academy Awards in Los Angeles. Lange starred with previous Oscar recipient Tommy Lee Jones in the film.

— AFP/UNB photo