



# THE FILM ENTREPRENEUR:

A Newsletter for Independent Filmmakers and Investors

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## INDIES WIN BIG AT THE OSCARS!

Out of 24 total awards, independent feature films took 16. *Spotlight* was the tenth independent film in the last 11 years to win the Best Picture Oscar. The others were *Crash* (2005), *The Departed* (2006), *No Country for Old Men* (2007), *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008), *The Hurt Locker* (2009), *The King's Speech* (2010), *The Artist* (2011), *12 Years a Slave* (2013) and *Birdman* (2015).

There were a variety of records set and surprise wins this year. Three of eight nominees for Best Picture had women in the lead roles, while in 2015 all eight nominees had men in the lead roles. In addition, *Ex Machina*'s Sara Bennett is only the second woman to win for Visual Effects and the first VFX supervisor to win. *Spotlight*, which also won for Best Original Screenplay, was the second Best Picture winner only to receive one other Oscar at the same ceremony since *The Greatest Show on Earth* won two in 1952. Alejandro González Iñárritu is the third person ever to win the Best Director honor two years in a row. The other two were Joseph L. Mankiewicz (1950 and 1951: *A Letter to Three Wives* and *All About Eve* and John Ford (1942 and 1942: *The Grapes of Wrath* and *How Green Was My Valley*). Iñárritu's two wins also made it three years in a row that the award went to a Mexican director (Alfonso Cuarón won for *Gravity* in 2014). *Mad Max: Fury Road* ruled the technical categories with six Oscars, setting an Australian record for Oscars win since Jane Campion's *The Piano* won 3 in 1997.

When the nominations were announced with a large number of indie films, studio execs were quoted yet again as saying that a film's box office should be a measure for eligibility. In that case, the Academy for Motion and Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS), which sets the rules, could have saved money and declared *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* the winner in a press conference and saved money on a telecast. In 2009, AMPAS changed the number of nominees for Best Picture from 5 to 10 and put a preferential voting system in place. Independent films *The King's Speech* and *The Artist* then won Best Picture in 2010 and 2011 respectively.

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The Academy then updated the system again for the 2012 Oscars to require a minimum of five percent of first-place votes in order to receive a Best Picture nod with the goal to have more than five nominees but less than ten. *Argo*, a studio film, won the Best Picture Oscar in 2012. In the last three years, however, independent films have won again. Pundits and some industry people like the blame awards for indie films for any fall off of the television audience. It seems to *TFE* that new technology and the length of the both have more to do with a low audience measurement. Sixty years ago the television show was a way to promote the films across the world; now social media gets the job done. ABC, which is owned by the Disney-ABC Television group, thinks it can do a better job than AMPAS. Hopefully, they won't keep tinkering with the voting system. Making the Oscars more relevant to the diverse groups in the world is a good idea. Perhaps the real problem, however, is that the Oscar program itself has "jumped the shark." ■

## DIVERSITY IN FILM

The absence of *Straight Outta Compton* from the Oscars noms except for *Best Writing, Original Screenplay* brought attention to what we have known for a long time — the industry is white, male-centric. "It's clear we have an inclusion crisis," said Stacy L. Smith, Co-author of the Annenberg report. "Everyone deserves to see their stories seen and heard." I have summarized three of the studies on the subject. Filmmakers should note that along with some of the dismal data, the reports also include stats that are useful for business plans.

"Diversity sells. Diverse audiences are buying the tickets. As a nation, we're becoming half a percent more diverse every year and by 2042, minorities will be the majority," said Dr. Darnell Hunt of UCLA's study "Flipping the Script" (based on 2014 films) prepared for the Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies. "Ratings and box office peak when the cast is 30 to 40 percent minority. That's the sweet spot," he told *The Hollywood Reporter*. The study states, "People of color purchased 46 percent of all movie tickets sold in the United States. Latinos were particularly well represented among minority ticket buyers. Though the group constituted only 18 percent of the U.S. population in 2014, they accounted for 25 percent of all frequent moviegoers." <http://www.bunchecenter.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/2016-Hollywood-Diversity-Report-2-25-16.pdf>

In a recent study at San Diego State University on female characters in the top 100 films in 2015 shows, "Females comprised 22 percent of *protagonists* featured in the top 100 domestic grossing films of 2015. This represents an increase of 10 percentage points from 2014, which was an exceptionally poor year for women in these roles. The figure for 2015 is six percentage points higher than in 2002 and represents a recent historical high. Last year, females accounted for 34 percent of *major characters*. . . It is also a recent historical high. Women comprised 33 percent of all *speaking characters*, an increase of 3 percentage points from 2014, and an increase of 5 percentage points from 2002. This is another recent historical high." [http://womenintvfilm.sdsu.edu/files/2015\\_It%E2%80%99s\\_a\\_Man%E2%80%99s\\_Celluloid\\_World\\_Report.pdf](http://womenintvfilm.sdsu.edu/files/2015_It%E2%80%99s_a_Man%E2%80%99s_Celluloid_World_Report.pdf)

A more comprehensive 2014 study, “Inclusion Or Invisibility? Comprehensive Annenberg Report on Diversity in Entertainment,” states: “Across the 11,306 speaking characters evaluated, 66.5 percent were male and 33.5 percent were female. This calculated into a sample wide gender ratio of seeing 2 males to every 1 female on screen, which varied by media platform. Female characters fill only 28.7 percent of all speaking roles in film. For scripted series, less than 40 percent of all speaking characters were girls and women (broadcast=36.4 percent, cable=37.3 percent, streaming=38.1 percent). . . it is clear that females are still underrepresented on screen across the ecosystem of popular fictional content.”

“Of those speaking or named characters with enough cues to ascertain race/ethnicity, 71.7 percent were White, 12.2 percent Black, 5.8 percent Hispanic/Latino, 5.1 percent Asian, 2.3 percent Middle Eastern and 3.1 percent Other. Thus, 28.3 percent of all speaking characters were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups, which is below (-9.6 percent) the proportion in the U.S. population (37.9 percent). The percentage of underrepresented speaking characters did not meaningfully vary by media platform . . . Clearly, most stories fail to reflect or match the demographic composition of the U.S.”

“As prestige or power of the title increases, we see fewer women at the top,” said Dr. Katherine Pieper, who co-authored the study with Smith and Marc Choueiti. “Film still has a prestige to it, so we see fewer women filling those positions.”

<http://annenberg.usc.edu/pages/~-/media/MDSCI/CARDReport%20FINAL%2022216.ashx> 

## **BERLIN AWARDS**

The 66<sup>th</sup> Berlin International Film Festival, a combination of the Berlinale film fest and the European Film Market (EFM), took place February 11<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>. On the nine days of the EFM, there were 543 exhibitors from 73 countries, and 8,500 accredited professionals from more than 100 countries including 1,500 buyers. They saw 1,090 market screenings, of which 532 are market premieres. Unlike Sundance where Netflix and Amazon Prime picked up multiple films, Berlin appeared to be a “digital backlash,” as screendaily.com called it. Both companies picked up additional Sundance titles at Berlin: *White Girl* (Netflix) and *NUTS!* (Amazon). They also pursued non-Sundance films at EFM but lost out to Focus Features, Paramount and Fox Searchlight. . . Overall, U.S. theatrical deals were important in the 2016 international sales mix, after years where they were relegated to the background, *Variety* reported.

The Film Festival Competition included 23 films, 19 of which were world premieres. The Panorama had 51 films from 33 countries, of which 17 screened in Panorama Dokumente and 34 fiction films in the main program. Gianfranco Rosi, whose documentary is about migrants on the island of Lampedusa, said in his acceptance speech, “For the first time, Europe is considering making certain policies and I’m not happy with what I see. It is not acceptable that people die crossing the sea to escape from tragedy.”

**AND THE WINNERS ARE . . .**

<b>AWARD</b>	<b>FILM</b>	<b>FILMMAKER</b>
Golden Bear	<i>Fire At Sea</i>	Gianfranco Rosi
Silver Bear - Grand Jury	<i>Death in Sarajevo</i>	Danis Tanović
Silver Bear - Alfred Bauer Prize (for feature film that opens new perspectives)	<i>A Lullaby To The Sorrowful Mystery</i>	Lav Diaz
Silver Bear: Best Director (tie)	<i>Things To Come</i>	Mia Hansen-Love
Silver Bear: Best Actress	<i>The Commune</i>	Trine Dyrholm
Silver Bear: Best Actor	<i>Inhebbek Hedi</i>	Majd Mastoura
Silver Bear: Best Script	<i>United States Of Love</i>	Tomasz Wasilewski
<b>Silver Bear: Outstanding Artistic Contribution</b>	<i>Crosscurrent</i>	Mark Lee Ping-Bing, Cinematographer
Best First Feature	<i>Inhebbek Hedi</i>	Mohamed Ben Attia
Golden Bear: Best Short Film	<i>Balada De Um Batráquio</i>	Leonor Teles
Silver Bear Jury: Short Film	<i>A Man Returned</i>	Mahdi Fleifel
<b>Audi Short Film Award</b>	<i>Jin Zhi Xia Mao</i>	Chiang Wei Liang
Panorama Audience Award: Fiction	<i>Junction 48</i>	Udi Aloni
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	<i>Fukushima, Mon Amour</i>	Doris Dörrie
3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	<i>Shepherds And Butchers</i>	Oliver Schmitz
Panorama Audience Award: Documentary	<i>Who's Gonna Love Me Now</i>	Tomer & Barak Heymann
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	<i>Strike A Pose</i>	Reijer Zwaan, Ester Gold
3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	<i>Weekends</i>	Lee Dong-ha
<b>Europa Cinemas Label: Best European Film in Panorama Section</b>	<i>The First, The Last</i>	Bouli Lanners

Special Mention	<i>On the Other Side All of a Sudden</i>	Zrinko Ogresta Asli Ozge's
<b>GENERATION KPLUS (Crystal Bears selected by youth jury; other prizes by international jury of adult voters)</b>		
Crystal Bear: Best Film	<i>The Trap</i>	Jayaraj Rajasekharan Nair
Special Mention	<i>Miss Impossible</i>	Emilie Deleuze
Crystal Bear: Best Short Film	<i>Fabrizio's Initiation</i>	Mariano Biasin
Special Mention	<i>Ninnoc</i>	Niki Padidar
<b>Grand Prix for Best Film</b>	<i>Rara</i>	Pepa San Martín
Special Mention	<i>Young Wrestlers</i>	Mete Gümürhan
<b>Special Prize: Best Short Film</b>	<i>Semele</i>	Myrsini Aristidou
Special Mention	<i>Aurelia And Pedro</i>	Omar Robles, José Permar
<b>GENERATION 14PLUS</b>		
Crystal Bear: Best Film	<i>Mellow Mud</i>	Renārs Vimba
Special Mention	<i>Plants</i>	Roberto Doveris
Crystal Bear: Best Short Film	<i>Balcony</i>	Toby Fell-Holden
Special Mention	<i>The Body Is A Lonely Place</i>	Ida Lindgren
<b>Grand Prix for Best Film</b>	<i>Plants</i>	Roberto Doveris
Special Mention	<i>Zhaleika</i>	Eliza Petkova
<b>Special Prize: Best Short Film</b>	<i>A Night In Tokoriki</i>	Roxana Stroe
Special Mention	<i>The Body Is A Lonely Place</i>	Ida Lindgren



## FILM INDEPENDENT SPIRIT AWARDS

The 31st annual Film Independent Spirit Awards were hosted by Kate McKinnon and Kumail Nanjiani on Saturday, February 27, 2016. Film Independent president Josh Welsh hailed the Spirits for “talent on-screen and talent on-camera look[ing] somewhat like the world we actually live in.” The \$20 million limit for budgets kept many of the Oscar films from being eligible for these awards.

### AND THE WINNERS ARE...

AWARD	FILM	WINNERS
Best Feature	<i>Spotlight</i>	Blye Pagon Faust, Steve Golin, Nicole Rocklin, Michael Sugar
Best Director	<i>Spotlight</i>	Tom McCarthy
Best Screenplay	<i>Spotlight</i>	Tom McCarthy, Josh Singer
Best Female Lead	<i>Room</i>	Brie Larson
Best Male Lead	<i>Beasts Of No Nation</i>	Abraham Attah
Best Supporting Female	<i>Tangerine</i>	Mya Taylor
Best Supporting Male	<i>Beasts Of No Nation</i>	Idris Elba
Best First Feature	<i>The Diary of a Teenage Girl</i>	Marielle Heller
Best First Screenplay	Room	Emma Donoghue
Best Documentary	<i>The Look Of Silence</i>	Joshua Oppenheimer
Best Cinematography	<i>Carol</i>	Ed Lachman
Best Editing	<i>Spotlight</i>	Tom McArdle
Best International Film	<i>Son of Saul</i>	László Nemes
John Cassavetes Award (Best Feature made for under \$500,000)	<i>Krishna</i>	Writer/Director/Producer: Trey Edward Shults
Robert Altman Award (Best Ensemble)	<i>Spotlight</i>	Director: Tom McCarthy Casting Directors: Kerry Barden and Paul Schnee

<b>Awards with \$25,000 unrestricted grant</b>		
Piaget Producers	—	Mel Eslyn
Kiehl’s Someone To Watch	<i>King Jack</i>	Felix Thompson
Truer than Fiction Award	<i>Incorruptible</i>	Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi



## COMINGS AND GOINGS

Cassian Elwes and Armory Films Executive Producers Chris Lemole and Tim Zajaros have launched the production and finance venture **Zeal Media Co.** The company aims to produce up to eight films a year with the focus on “sophisticated, thought-provoking and talent-driven material in an effort to make high quality films that will be remembered.” The first project is distribution of the *Billionaire Boys Club* which recently wrapped production. Elwes jointly represents U.S. rights with CAA and produced the film with Holly Wiersma. Crystal Lourd and Jere Hausfater were Executive Producers along with the Armory duo.

Independent releasing specialist **Gravitas Ventures** and **Incognito Pictures** have signed a licensing agreement for North American distribution, *Variety* reported. Incognito Pictures has established a “Film Finishing Fund” for independent films and documentaries in need of completion and distribution. It will use the funds to acquire and complete the projects while Gravitas will release these films in theaters and/or VOD. The companies have already been teaming on the March 25 release of baseball documentary *Fastball* narrated by Kevin Costner. The companies have not indicated how many films the agreement will cover.

Jessica Chastain, Juliette Binoche, Freida Pinto and Queen Latifah are among a collective of women announcing the formation of **We Do It Together** (WDIT), a non-profit production company created to finance and produce films, documentaries, TV and other forms of media dedicated to the empowerment of women. Working with male and female internationally acclaimed directors, actors, and producers who share its vision and values, the company will develop a slate of inspiring gender-led films. They intend to ensure a future of opportunities for known and emerging voices within the industry. The organization plans to raise capital from grants, governments, corporate sponsors and individual donations to invest in the production of films and reinvest the proceeds from the movies in a self-sustaining fund to produce additional films. WDIT will be announcing its first film at the 2016 Cannes International Film Festival. ■

## NUMBERS! NUMBERS! NUMBERS!

### LOW-BUDGET INDEPENDENT FILMS (\$9.0 M and under)

FILM	DISTRIBUTOR	REVENUE	COST
		thous. \$	thous. \$
<i>99 Homes</i>	Broad Green	11,412	8,000
<i>Anomalisa*</i>	Paramount	2,598	8,000
<i>DUFF, The</i>	Lionsgate Films	34,030	8,500
<i>Fifty Shades of Black*</i>	Open Road	11,410	6,000
<i>Gift, The</i>	STX Entertainment	43,787	5,000
<i>Goodbye, Mr. Loser</i>	China Lion	1,292	800
<i>Grandma*</i>	Sony Pictures Classics	6,980	600
<i>Green Inferno, The</i>	High Top Releasing	7,193	6,000
<i>Lady in the Van, The*</i>	Sony Pictures Classics	5,823	5,500
<i>Lazarus Effect, The</i>	Relativity Media	25,801	5,000
<i>Lazer Team*</i>	Amplify	1,186	2,400
<i>Letters, The</i>	Freestyle	1,647	1,000
<i>Mustang*</i>	Cohen Media	725	1,400
<i>Race*</i>	Sony Pictures Releasing	14,000	5,000
<i>Room*</i>	A24	13,474	6,000
<i>Truth</i>	Sony Pictures Classics	2,542	8,100
<i>Unfriended</i>	Universal	32,482	1,000
<i>Walk in the Woods, A</i>	Broad Green Pictures	29,504	8,000
<i>War Room</i>	Sony Pictures Releasing	67,790	3,000
<i>Witch, The*</i>	A24	17,103	3,500

\*Still in North American distribution as of February 29,, 2016. Revenues are from boxoffice.com and boxofficemojo.com. Negative costs (production prior to prints and ads) are approximate, based either on industry estimates, published interviews with filmmakers or personal conversations with filmmakers.



**MORE NUMBERS! NUMBERS! NUMBERS!**  
**HIGH-BUDGET INDEPENDENT FILMS (Over \$9.0M)**

FILM	DISTRIBUTOR	REV.	COST
		thous. \$	thous.
<i>Big Short, The</i> *	Paramount	68,601	28,000
<i>Boy, The</i> *	STX Entertainment	34,587	10,000
<i>Bridge of Spies</i> *	Buena Vista	72,264	40,000
<i>Brooklyn</i> *	Fox Searchlight	36,593	10,000
<i>Burnt</i>	The Weinstein Co.	13,652	20,000
<i>Carol</i> *	The Weinstein Co.	12,519	11,800
<i>Choice, The</i> *	Lionsgate	18,072	10,000
<i>Danish Girl, The</i> *	Focus Features	11,011	15,000
<i>Eddie the Eagle</i> *	20 <sup>th</sup> Century Fox	6,085	23,000
<i>Forest, The</i> *	Gramercy	26,493	10,000
<i>Gods of Egypt</i> *	Lionsgate	14,124	140,000
<i>Hateful Eight, The</i> *	The Weinstein Co.	53,585	44,000
<i>Hunger Games, The: Mockingjay-Part 2</i>	Lionsgate/Summit	281,724	160,000
<i>Kung Fu Panda 3</i> *	DreamWorks Animation	128,780	120,000
<i>Norm of the North</i> *	Lionsgate	16,827	18,000
<i>Point Break</i> *	Warner Bros.	28,782	105,000
<i>Pride, Prejudice and Zombies</i> *	Screen Gems	10,907	28,000
<i>Revenant, The</i> *	20 <sup>th</sup> Century Fox	171,171	135,000
<i>Risen</i> *	Sony Affirm	23,024	20,000
<i>Spotlight</i> *	Open Road Films	39,289	20,000
<i>Triple 9</i> *	Open Road	6,109	20,000
<i>Trumbo</i> *	Bleeker Street	7,851	15,000
<i>Youth</i> *	Fox Searchlight	2,674	13,000

\*Same references as Low-Budget Table

## LARGE FORMAT FILMS

FILM	DISTRIBUTION	REV.	COST
		thous. \$	thous. \$
<i>Air Racers 3D</i>	3D Entertainment	1,310	5,000
<i>Apollo 13: The Imax Experience</i>	IMAX	1,737	n/a
<i>Born To Be Wild 3D*</i>	Warner Bros./IMAX	24,520	n/a
<i>Bugs!</i>	SK Films, Inc.	18,114	9,000
<i>Deep Sea 3D</i>	Warner Bros.	46,188	1,000
<i>Galapagos: The Enchanted Voyage*</i>	IMAX	18,352	7,000
<i>Ghosts of the Abyss</i>	Buena Vista	17,041	13,000
<i>Haunted Castle</i>	nWave	13,652	n/a
<i>Hubble 3D*</i>	Warner Bros.	51,230	n/a
<i>Island of Lemurs: Madagascar*</i>	Warner Bros.	10,546	n/a
<i>James Cameron's Deepsea Challenge</i>	DisruptiveLA	236	n/a
<i>Jerusalem 3D</i>	National Geographic	7,880	n/a
<i>Journey to the South Pacific</i>	IMAX/MacGillivray	7,106	n/a
<i>Magnificent Desolation</i>	IMAX	34,109	3,000
<i>NASCAR 3D</i>	Warner Bros./IMAX	21,337	10,000
<i>Ocean Wonderland 3D</i>	3D Entertainment	11,035	3,000
<i>Roving Mars</i>	Buena Vista	10,408	1,000
<i>Sea Monsters 3D: A Prehistoric</i>	National Geographic	23,746	n/a
<i>Sea Rex: Journey to a Prehistoric</i>	3D Entertainment	6,097	n/a
<i>Space Station 3D*</i>	IMAX	93,166	1,000
<i>Thrill Ride</i>	Sony Classics	18,795	9,000
<i>To the Arctic 3D*</i>	Warner Bros.	14,415	n/a
<i>T-Rex: Back to the Cretaceous</i>	IMAX	53,347	14,500
<i>U2 3D</i>	National Geographic	10,362	13,000
<i>Under the Sea 3D*</i>	Warner Bros.	34,863	n/a
<i>Wildest Dream: Conquest of Everest</i>	National Geographic	898	n/a
<i>Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill</i>	Shadow	3,058	n/a
<i>Wild Safari 3D</i>	nWave	16,621	4,500

\* Same references as Low-Budget table ■

**NEED MONEY FOR A MOVIE? DON'T GO IN EMPTY-HANDED. HAVE A BUSINESS PLAN.**

The benefit of using a reliable business plan to raise financing for a film is that it allows the investors and the filmmaker to gauge the potential success of a film. A polished business plan with projections based on the worldwide results of other films and with clear explanations about the industry, markets and production personnel attached to the film is far more effective than an incomplete document that leaves prospective investors wanting more information. Contact Louise Levison at [louisel@earthlink.net](mailto:louisel@earthlink.net) to find out how you can put her 27 years of experience as a Film Business Consultant to work creating a business plan for your film.

Levison, the President of Business Strategies, is a highly respected financial consultant in the entertainment industry, specializing in creation of film business plans. Her clients have raised money for low-budget films including *The Blair Witch Project*, the most profitable independent film in history, and for companies raising as much as \$300 million. She is the author of *Filmmakers & Financing: Business Plans for Independents*, currently in its revised and expanded seventh edition (Focal Press, 2013). The sixth edition of the book continues to be available in Mandarin from [www.hindabook.com](http://www.hindabook.com) in Beijing, China. Levison also is editor of the online newsletter *The Film Entrepreneur: A Newsletter for the Independent Filmmaker and Investor*. Among other clients' projects are *The Prophet* (Kahlil Gibran's), *Unlimited* (Nathan Frankowski), *The Redemption of Henry Miller*, *Emoticon* ;), *Moving Midway*, *Redemption Road*, *Haunted* (2012), *The First of May*, *The Open Road*, *Aluna*, *Yak: The Giant King*, *Visual Acoustics: The Modernism of Julius Shulman*, *My Father and the Man in Black* and *Michael Winslow Live*. Among her corporate clients are Danny Glover's Louverture Films (2008 nominee for Best Documentary Academy Award *Trouble the Water*), The Pamplin Film Company (*Hoover*), Hurricane Film Partners, LLC and Tokuma International Ltd (*Shall We Dance*, *Princess Mononoke*). Levison is an Instructor in the Extension Program at UCLA. She also has been a Visiting Professor at the Taipei (Taiwan) National University of the Arts, Chapman University (Orange County, CA) and the University of Montana (Missoula). Levison has presented seminars and/or been on panels at festivals and markets around the world. (Additional information is available at <http://www.moviemoney.com>).

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