

Hollywood Holds Its Breath for Academy Awards



AP

Max Muehlen hangs a microphone on a light stand overlooking the red carpet arrivals area outside the Kodak Theatre in preparation for the 84th Academy Awards

This is IN THE NEWS, in VOA Special English.

Hollywood is making final preparations for its biggest night of the year. The Academy Awards show takes place on Sunday. The awards, known as Oscars, are the American film industry's highest honors.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences organizes the event each year. The Academy has almost six thousand members. They work in the film industry as actors, writers, directors and so on. Members from each group choose their group's award nominees. All Academy members take part in choosing the nominees for Best Picture.

The nominations for the eighty-fourth Academy Awards were announced last month. There are five nominees each for best actor and best actress. There are nine nominees for best picture.

(SOUND: "Hugo")

"Hugo" leads all films with eleven nominations, including best picture. The film is set in nineteenth century Paris. It tells the story of a boy who lives hidden inside a train station and keeps its clocks working.

(SOUND: "The Artist")

"The Artist" is a French-made silent film about old time Hollywood. It tells about an actor who loses popularity with the end of silent films. "The Artist" received ten nominations, including best actor for its star, Jean DuJardin.

Movies from five nations are competing for the Best Foreign Language Oscar this year.

(SOUND: "A Separation")

"Will you come," asks the wife. "No, I will not," he says. She wants to leave Iran. He wants to stay.

That is a scene from the film "A Separation." Writer and Director Asghar Farhadi has collected many awards for the film, including a Golden Globe.

American George Clooney has been nominated for best actor for his starring role in the film "The Descendants." Mr. Clooney was also nominated for his work on the screenplay for "The Ides of March."

Octavia Spencer received a best supporting actress nomination for her work in "The Help." The film tells the story of African-Americans who worked for whites in the American south during the nineteen sixties. The actress says she is excited about the awards ceremony.

OCTAVIA SPENCER: "This is my first time to the party, and I'm going to enjoy every aspect of it. So I am. This smile is real."

Earlier this month, the Academy recognized some of the inventors and engineers who make movies possible.

One award went to Uwe Weber. He and Jurgen Noffke were honored for creating sensitive low-distortion lenses. These devices helped to make the imaginary world seen in the "Lord of the Rings" movies.

Bob Nettmann and his team were honored for creating stabilizers for cameras and special lenses for shooting while moving. The Academy said the lenses made it possible to shoot movies from helicopters, cars and boats.

Finally, Jonathan Erland received a special medal for his service to the film industry. He says digital technology provides new ways to make and watch movies, even on computers and mobile devices. However, he says he still likes to watch them the traditional way -- in a theater.

JONATHAN ERLAND: "Even though we have lots of ways to look at movies at home, the preferred way is still to go to a theater just the way we've been doing it for 100 years."

And that's IN THE NEWS in VOA Special English. I'm Steve Ember.