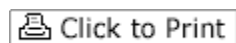




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'Hurt Locker,' 'Big Fan' score Gotham noms

'A Serious Man,' 'Amreeka,' 'The Maid' up for best picture

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The Gotham Awards are going particularly indie for their 2009 edition, nominating three festival favorites with limited distribution exposure for their best feature prize.

Cherien Dabis' immigrant tale ["Amreeka,"](#) Robert Siegel's rabid-fan pic [""Big Fan""](#) and Sebastian Silva's working-class drama ["The Maid"](#) all drew noms in the Gothams' top category, joining awards season frontrunners ["The Hurt Locker"](#) and ["A Serious Man."](#)

Kathryn Bigelow's "Locker" and "Fan" received the most noms overall, drawing three (both earned best feature and best actor noms, while Siegel landed a spot for breakthrough director and "Locker" scored a nom for best ensemble performance).

Best doc noms went to Robert Kenner's expose ["Food, Inc.,"](#) Jeff Stilson's tonsorial exploration ["Good Hair,"](#) Anne Aghion Rwandan-war pic ["My Neighbor, My Killer,"](#) Michael Almereyda's experimentally minded "Paradise" and James Toback's boxing profile ["Tyson."](#)

Not appearing on the list in any category were Lee Daniels' "Precious" and Michael Moore's "Capitalism: A Love Story," both of which have elicited early awards-season buzz.

The Gothams require that movies come from U.S.-born or U.S.-based interests and are also "independently distributed films made with an economy of means."

But the contours of that definition remain, as they are with so many things during awards season, murky, and it was unclear if pics such as "Precious" and "Capitalism" were not eligible or simply not preferred by the committee.

Seventeen voters -- critics, journalists and others -- helped choose the Gotham nominees.

"Amreeka," which tells of a Palestinian immigrant's travails in rural Illinois, earned raves when it played Sundance last January before getting a small release from National Geographic Films.

"Big Fan," in which Patton Oswalt plays a New York Giants-obsessed fan with a penchant for calling sports radio, was similarly feted at Sundance before getting a platform release from First Independent. The Spanish-language "The Maid," about a veteran maid trying to hold on to her job, appeared at Sundance though drew less attention in Park City. It was released this weekend by sales company Elephant Eye, earning \$18,000 on a single screen in New York.

The Gothams have run into controversy for including studio pictures as nominees; in 2006, for example, the committee created a stir when Warner Bros. "The Departed" and Sony's "Marie Antoinette" both landed best feature slots.

But it has gone in the opposite direction this year. Of the 30 spots, only three are occupied by pics produced by a studio or specialty division ("A Serious Man," the Focus Features coming-of-age story from Joel and Ethan Coen, and "Adventureland," Miramax's dramedy directed by Greg Mottola), while nearly half were released by a micro-distributor.

Part of that is certainly a function of the reduced output of the studios and specialty divisions, leaving many indie pics to be handled by smaller companies.

But the awards committee also, according to some observers, seemed to purposefully choose lower-budget and, in some cases, lower-profile, pics. Best feature winners in the past have tended to come from more established ranks. Specialty juggernauts such as "Sideways" have occasionally walked away with the prize, while in nearly every year the winner has come from the ranks of movies with loud buzz, with pics such as "Frozen River" and "Half Nelson" taking the top prize.

While the awards rarely serve as a meaningful forecast of other awards shows, the absence of "Precious," one of the biggest indie darlings in this year's awards contest (the pic also is set in the Gotham's hometown of New York) is likely to be noted by some awards watchers.

And observers are likely to draw comparisons between the Gothams' choice of lesser-known pics for best feature and the Academy's perceived difficulty in finding ten worthy nominees for best pic this year.

The breakthrough director category saw a similarly lower-profile list as Cruz Angeles ("Don't Let Me Drown") Frazer Bradshaw ("Everything Strange and New") Noah Buschel ("The Missing Person") joined more prominent helmers such as Derick Martini (fest fave "Lymelife") and Siegel ("Big Fan").

Breakthrough actor noms went to Ben Foster ("The Messenger"), Patton Oswalt ("Big Fan"), Jeremy Renner ("The Hurt Locker"), Catalina Saavedra ("The Maid") and Soulemane Sy Savane in ("Goodbye Solo").

Miramax coming-of-age tale "Adventureland," Samuel Goldwyn's metaphysical comedy "Cold Souls," "Locker," "Man" and Sony Pictures Classics' "Sugar" all landed on the best ensemble list.

The Gothams, mounted by the Independent Filmmaker Project, will be handed out November 30 at Cipriani Wall Street in New York. The committee hands out prizes in six categories, including breakthrough actor and breakthrough director, best doc, best feature, best ensemble performance and best film not playing at a theater near you.

"Everything Strange and New," "Guy and Madeline on a Park Bench," "October Country," "You Won't Miss Me" and "Zero Bridge" were all nominated for best film not playing at a theater near you.

Bigelow, Natalie Portman, Stanley Tucci and Working Title's Tim Fellner and Eric Bevan will be given career tributes at the awards.

Links referenced within this article

"Amreeka,"

<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/hr/film-reviews/film-review-amreeka-1003931653.story>

"Big Fan"

<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/hr/film-reviews/film-review-big-fan-1003934186.story>

"The Maid"

<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/hr/film-reviews/the-maid-film-review-1004020369.story>

"The Hurt Locker"

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"A Serious Man."

<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/hr/film-reviews/a-serious-man-film-review-1004011405.story>

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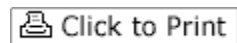
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