

ACADEMY AWARDS® VOTING AND SPECIAL AWARDS

The Academy mailed nominations ballots on December 28, 2009, and members will have until 5 p.m. on January 23, 2010, to return their ballots to PricewaterhouseCoopers, the international accounting firm.

Secrecy is strictly maintained by PricewaterhouseCoopers; the results of nominations balloting will be revealed to the assembled press and the world at 5:30 a.m. (PT) on February 2 at the Academy's Samuel Goldwyn Theater in Beverly Hills. Final ballots will be mailed February 10 and members will have until 5 p.m. on March 2 to return them. After ballots are tabulated, only two partners of the accounting firm will know the results until the famous envelopes are opened on stage during the Academy Awards presentation at the Kodak Theatre at Hollywood & Highland Center® on March 7.

Because the Academy numbers among its members the most gifted and skilled artists and craftsmen in the motion picture world, its Awards stand alone as symbols of superior achievement.

Academy Awards will be presented for outstanding film achievements of 2009 in up to 24 competitive categories.

Up to five nominations will be made in most categories, with balloting for these nominations restricted to members of the Academy branch concerned; only actors, for instance, determine the nominees in the acting categories. Nominations in the Foreign Language Film category are made by a 30-person committee, which views 9 films: 6 that have been short-listed by a large screening group composed of members from all branches and 3 selected by the Foreign Language Film Award Executive Committee. Best Picture nominations – of which there will be 10 in 2009 – will be determined by vote of the entire membership. Best Picture nominations and final winners in most categories are determined by vote of the active membership.

In addition to the regular annual awards determined by vote of the membership, the Academy's Board of Governors is empowered to confer Scientific and Technical Awards, Honorary Awards, Special Achievement Awards and other special honors. Among these is the Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award, a bronze bust of the legendary producer, which is given to "a creative producer whose body of work reflects a consistently high quality of motion picture production." It is considered the highest accolade a producer can receive.

The Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award, an Oscar statuette, is given to "an individual in the motion picture industry whose humanitarian efforts have brought credit to the industry." The Gordon E. Sawyer Award, also an Oscar statuette, is given to "an individual in the motion picture industry whose technological contributions have brought credit to the industry."

Honorary Awards may be given for outstanding achievements not otherwise recognized within the category structure of the Academy Awards. They may be given for extraordinary distinction in lifetime achievement, for exceptional contributions to the state of motion picture arts and sciences or for outstanding service to the Academy. They have been awarded, for example, to Sidney Poitier "in recognition of his remarkable accomplishments as an artist and a human being," to choreographer Michael Kidd for his lifetime of work, and to writer Ernest Lehman in appreciation of his body of work.

The Thalberg, Hersholt, Sawyer and Honorary Awards are not necessarily given annually; each is awarded only when, in the opinion of the Board of Governors, a thoroughly deserving recipient emerges.

As of this year (2009), the Thalberg, Hersholt and Honorary Awards are referred to collectively as The Governors Awards. They were presented at their own black-tie dinner event in November. The 2009 recipients are: producer-executive John Calley (Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award), actress Lauren Bacall (Honorary Award – in recognition of her central place in the Golden Age of motion pictures), producer-director Roger Corman (Honorary Award – for his rich engendering of films and filmmakers) and cinematographer Gordon Willis (Honorary Award – for unsurpassed mastery of light, shadow, color and motion).

Special Awards
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The Board of Governors confers Scientific and Technical Awards after receiving recommendations from a committee consisting of some of the most eminent scientists and technicians in the industry. These awards recognize outstanding innovations in filmmaking equipment and technique – innovations that have proven themselves over time, not simply in connection with one particular motion picture.

Special Achievement Awards, conferred by the Board of Governors, may be given for achievements that make an exceptional contribution to the motion pictures for which they were created, but for which there is no annual award category. These awards have been given, for example, to Benjamin Burtt, Jr. for the creation of the alien, creature and robot voices in “Star Wars” (1977) and to John Lasseter for his leadership of the Pixar team that created the first feature-length computer-animated film, “Toy Story” (1995). These awards are rare. Lasseter’s, over a decade ago, was the most recently given.

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