

HISTORY OF THE OSCARS® PRESENTATION

When the first Academy Awards® were handed out on May 16, 1929, at an Academy banquet in the Blossom Room of the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, movies had just begun to talk. The attendance was 270 and guest tickets cost $5. It was a long banquet, filled with speeches, but presentation of the statuettes was handled expeditiously by Academy President Douglas Fairbanks.

The suspense that now touches most of the world at Oscar® time was not always a characteristic of the Awards presentation. That first year, the award recipients were announced to the public three months ahead of the ceremony. For the next decade, the results were given in advance to newspapers for publication at 11 p.m. on the night of the Awards. But in 1940, much to the Academy's dismay, the Los Angeles Times broke the embargo and announced the winning achievements in its evening edition, which was readily available to guests arriving for the event. As a result, the Academy adopted the sealed-envelope system the next year, and the system remains in use today.

Since the earliest years, interest in the Oscars® has run high, if not at the modern fever pitch. The first presentation was the only one to escape a media audience; by the second year, enthusiasm for the Awards was such that a Los Angeles radio station did a live one-hour broadcast from the event. The ceremony has had broadcast coverage ever since.

For 15 years, the Academy Awards presentations were banquet affairs; after the first gathering at the Hollywood Roosevelt, they were held at the Ambassador and Biltmore hotels. The custom of presenting the statuettes at a banquet was discontinued after the 1942 Awards. Increased attendance and the war had made banquets impractical, and the presentation ceremonies have since been held in theaters. The 16th Awards ceremony was held at Grauman's Chinese Theatre. It was covered by network radio for the first time and broadcast overseas to American GIs. The Awards stayed at Grauman's for three years, then moved to the

Shrine Civic Auditorium. Two years later, in March 1949, the 21st Awards ceremony took place in the Academy's own Melrose Avenue theater. For the next 11 years, the annual Awards were held at the RKO Pantages Theatre in Hollywood. It was there, on March 19, 1953, that the Oscars presentation was first televised. The NBC TV and radio network carried the 25th Oscars ceremonies live from Hollywood, with Bob Hope as master of ceremonies, and from the NBC International Theatre in New York with Fredric March making the presentations.

In 1961, the Awards moved to the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium and changed broadcasters, beginning a 10-year run with the ABC-TV network. In 1966, the Oscars were first broadcast in color. From 1971 through 1975, the NBC TV network carried the Awards. ABC has telecast the show since 1976 and is under contract through 2028.

On April 14, 1969, the 41st Oscars ceremony moved to the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion of the Los Angeles County Music Center. The Awards remained at the Music Center until 1987, then the ceremonies returned to the Shrine Auditorium for the 60th and 61st Awards. For a dozen years, the event alternated venues – the 62nd, 64th, 65th, 66th, 68th and 71st Awards were held at the Music Center, while the 63rd, 67th, 69th, 70th, 72nd and 73rd were at the Shrine. Since 2002, the Academy Awards have been held at the Dolby Theatre™ (formerly the Kodak Theatre) at Hollywood and Highland Center® in Hollywood.

In the first year, 15 statuettes were presented, including multiple awards for Directing and Writing. In the second year, the number of awards was reduced to seven – two for acting and one each for Outstanding Picture, Directing, Writing, Cinematography and Art Direction. Since then, the number of award categories has grown slowly but steadily.

The need for special awards beyond standard categories was recognized from the start. Two were awarded for the 1927/28 year: one went to Warner Bros. for producing the groundbreaking talking picture "The Jazz Singer," and the other went to Charles Chaplin for producing, directing, writing and starring in "The Circus."

In 1934, three new regular categories were added: Film Editing, Music Score and Song. That year also saw a vocal campaign to include the un-nominated Bette Davis for her performance in "Of Human Bondage" among

the Best Actress nominees, prompting the Academy to allow write-ins on the final ballot. Two years later this practice was specifically disallowed in Academy rules.

The accounting firm of Price Waterhouse signed with the Academy in 1934 and has been employed ever since to tabulate and ensure the secrecy of the results. The ballots for the 94th Awards will be tabulated by PricewaterhouseCoopers, the name adopted by the firm in 1998. This is the tenth year for online voting by the Academy membership; the last year with a paper ballot option was the 90th Awards.

In 1936, the first Oscars were presented in the Supporting Actor and Supporting Actress categories. The honors went to Walter Brennan for "Come and Get It" and Gale Sondergaard for "Anthony Adverse."

The first presentation of the Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award was made in 1937, with the honor going to Darryl F. Zanuck.

The Oscar for Special Effects was added in 1939 and was first won by Fred Sersen and E.H. Hansen of 20th Century-Fox for "The Rains Came." In 1963, the Special Effects award was split into two: Sound Effects and Special Visual Effects, in recognition of the fact that the best sound effects and best visual effects did not necessarily come from the same film.

In 1941, the documentary film category appeared on the ballot for the first time.

In 1947, even before television increased the rest of the world's interest in the Awards ceremonies, the Academy brought films from non-English-speaking countries into Oscar's sphere. That year, the first award to honor a foreign language motion picture was given to the Italian film "Shoe-Shine." Seven more special awards were presented before Foreign Language Film became an annual category in 1956. In 2019 the Board of Governors voted to change the name of the category to International Feature Film, beginning with the 92nd Awards.

In 1948, the Academy gave Costume Design a place on the ballot. The Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award was established in 1956 and presented that year to Y. Frank Freeman. A regular award for Makeup and the

Gordon E. Sawyer Award for technological contributions were established in 1981. The newest category, Animated Feature Film, was added in 2001.

There have been four circumstances that prevented the Academy Awards presentation from going off as scheduled. The first was in 1938, when destructive floods all but washed out Los Angeles and delayed the ceremony one week. In 1968, the Awards ceremony was postponed from April 8 to April 10 out of respect for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who had been assassinated a few days earlier, and whose funeral was held on April 9. In 1981, the Awards were postponed for 24 hours because of the assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan. In 2003, however, when U.S. forces invaded Iraq the Thursday before the telecast, the show did go on as scheduled but the red carpet was limited to the area immediately in front of the theater entrance, fan bleachers were eliminated, and the bulk of the world's press was not able to photograph or interview guests as they arrived. Lastly, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 93rd ceremony, originally scheduled for February 28, 2021, was moved to April 25th.

Attendance at the Oscars ceremony is by invitation only. No tickets are put on public sale.

###

OSCAR®, OSCARS®, ACADEMY AWARDS®, ACADEMY AWARD®, A.M.P.A.S.® AND "OSCAR NIGHT® are registered trademarks, and the OSCAR statuette is a registered trademark and copyrighted property, of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.