

OSCAR GOES TO WAR FOR POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

By Don Feder

(Posted: February 6, 2005)

If you want to know what's wrong with the West Coast drive factory where our popular culture is manufactured, look no further than the 77th Annual Academy Award nominations. The Oscars are Hollywood's way of celebrating its values – the agenda of a gang of celebrity cretins who need a teleprompter to think.

The Academy Awards ceremony on February 27th, will be another orgy of political correctness – this time paying homage to a culture of death.

Garnering 12 nominations among them were “Million Dollar Baby,” “Vera Drake” and “Kinsey” – movies (respectively) promoting euthanasia, abortion and perversion.

Two were box-office bombs. “Kinsey” earned an anemic \$9 million and “Vera” \$2.3 million – one-tenth the box office of “Anacondas: The Hunt for the Blood Orchid.” “Baby” has yet to prove itself.

At the same time, “The Passion” (winner of the People's Choice Awards) will go down as one of the most popular movies of all time, grossing \$370 million in domestic box office receipts, and \$611 million worldwide. It received a backhanded compliment from the Academy -- three nominations, all of them technical.

“Spiderman 2,” the summer blockbuster (\$373.5 million) that praised virtue, also got three minor nominations. “The Village” got one nomination (also minor).

Typical of the movie-land mindset is critics' treatment of “Vera Drake” (whose title character is a sweet and saintly abortionist) and “The Passion of Christ” – which Hollywood believes was an inflammatory appeal to conservative Catholics and barefoot Baptists.

Contrast the radically different treatment of the films in The New York Times, whose reviewers share a wave-length with the Academy.

The headline in the Times review of “Vera Drake” (“When a Motherly Abortionist Gets Entangled With the Law”) was a dead giveaway.

The film is “suffused with humanity” the reviewer gushed. “Vera wants nothing so much as to support the frightened, the dismayed and the impoverished who seek her help, who come to this tender dumping of a woman (*for an abortion*) because they believe they have no other choice.”

Let’s skip the Oscars go directly to canonization.

On the other hand, Mel Gibson’s opus was “so relentlessly focused on the savagery of Jesus’ final hours that this film seems to arise less from love than from wrath, and to succeed more in assaulting the spirit than in uplifting it,” the Times reviewer inveighed.

Moreover, readers were cautioned, “The Passion of Christ” was designed to “terrify or inflame” the audience. The film was “a sadomasochistic paradox” and director Gibson “a connoisseur of violence.” A movie which millions found profoundly moving is “grim and ugly,” the Times testified.

To charges of anti-Semitism, the reviewer confessed, “To my eyes it did not seem to traffic explicitly or egregiously in the toxic iconography of historical Jew hatred, but more sensitive viewers may disagree.” Finally, the Timesman condescendingly observed that if there is anti-Semitism in the film it “does not seem to exceed what can be found in the source material” (otherwise known as the New Testament).

That the entertainment community agrees with these verdicts may be seen in this year’s Oscar nominations.

Hollywood knows how to reward what “1984” called “good thoughts.” Ask Clint Eastwood with his latest essay in groveling before establishment icons, “Million Dollar Baby.”

The feminist storyline (sweaty women pulverizing each other with body blows) aside, the screenplay could have been smuggled out of Dr. Jack

Kevorkian's prison cell. Naturally, the movie was nominated for six Oscars and named best picture of the year by the National Society of Film Critics.

Hillary Swank, who won an Academy Award for her drag of a performance in "Boys Don't Cry" (here nominated for Best Actress) plays Maggie -- a stay-hungry, aspiring pugilist. Eastwood is Frankie -- the cynical, world-weary trainer who at first resists Maggie's entreaties to guide her on the "Rocky" road to success.

He succumbs. They bond. She develops as a fighter, until an accident in the ring leaves her paralyzed. Without the roar of the crowd, Maggie feels she has nothing to live for. She longs for the cold embrace of the grave, and Frankie obliges.

Advocates for the handicapped find the flick less than inspiring. Marcie Roth, executive director of the National Spinal Cord Injury Association charges, "The movie is saying 'death is better than disability.'"

"I'm just telling a story," Eastwood testily replies. "I don't advocate. I'm playing a part."

And if he'd made a movie in which a quadriplegic, ex-boxer decided that life was too precious to throw away, had a religious experience, and decided to devote herself to providing alternatives to abortion, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences would have treated it like "Harold and Kumar Go White Castle."

Eastwood has been in the industry long enough to know exactly how to butter Hollywood's agenda bread.

With honorable exceptions, Oscar rewards negativity, nihilism, revisionism and a view of life from the bottom of a cesspool.

"Spiderman 2" was the number 2 top-grossing movie of 2004, as well as a rarity -- a sequel that exceeded the original. It was fresh, exciting, and dealt with serious subjects in a serious way. It was nominated for Sound Editing, Sound Mixing and Visual Effects -- rather like being nominated for a seat on the Burbank city council.

M. Night Shyamalan's latest movie, "The Village," was reactionary in the best sense of the word – rejecting modernity, while positing the virtues of a bygone era. It was nominated for Music (Score).

"Phantom of the Opera," a visually stunning, haunting story of love, courage, rage and redemption, was also consigned to the minor league of Oscar nominations.

While "Kinsey," an art house film whose hero is a pervert (the masochist who launched the sexual revolution – providing Hollywood with an endless source of sick material) got a Best Supporting Actress nod.

The Academy Awards are more than Hollywood thumbing its nose at those whose patronage pays for the extravagant lifestyles of actors and directors. Winners achieve recognition they rarely deserve.

Then the sheep flock to the Oscar-winning film – and in turn are indoctrinated in the industry's worldview. Thus, those adorable statuettes might be seen as an army of little soldiers marching into battle for Hollywood's favorite causes.

The spectacle that will take place three weeks hence at Hollywood's Kodak Theater has nothing to do with art and everything to do with ideology. It will be another crass display of elitist politics – slightly less edifying than the trial of Michael Jackson.

(A version of this article appeared on FrontPageMag.com)