

## ENTERTAINMENT

### That's credible: Oscar movies grounded in reality

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LOS ANGELES (Hollywood Reporter) - Hollywood is not exactly known for its grip on reality, but the experts have given an "A" for authenticity to the 10 contenders for the best picture Oscar on Sunday

"AVATAR"

"It is extremely unlikely the life forms would be so close to those on Earth; on the other hand, I'm sure at some point in the future we will be able to use our brainwaves to drive avatars, at least in the virtual world. The next step -- to use (brainwaves) to drive actual representatives of ourselves in the real world instead -- is probably a very long way off, but you can't say it cannot be done. It's a new area of engineering and biological engineering that hasn't been explored yet."

-- Piet Hut, professor of astrophysics, Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton University

"THE BLIND SIDE"

"If you look at success rates of staying in school, tendencies toward violence, drugs and alcohol (abuse), teen pregnancies and acting out in school, one-on-one mentoring will significantly reduce those risk behaviors. While the movie portrays a significant and deep mentoring relationship, it's a Hollywood idealized dream. The family in the movie is wealthy, but we all have to struggle every day. I also saw all the young boys who were left behind. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we had more African-American male mentors?"

-- Karen Mathis, CEO, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America

"DISTRICT 9"

"The way that the MNU people are portrayed and the kind of Afrikaans English they speak (are) reminiscent of the way in which the police (in the days of apartheid) treated black South Africans. The (aliens, known as Prawns) have a language with a click element in it, which is suggestive that they are representative of Xhosa or Zulu speakers. The Prawn metaphor is very effective in confronting (the issue of race) by making that difference more radical."

-- Vivian Bickford-Smith, professor of comparative metropolitan history, University of Cape Town

## "AN EDUCATION"

"What we see in the film is very much the idealism of the time, when women believed they could reach their sexual liberation without giving up all the other things that make us fully human. They could be valued for being intelligent, articulate and going off to university, as well as finding their sexuality. I'm not going to minimize the battles that have been won, but we've veered too far (in) another direction now, where girls are valued so much for being sexual beings, they're not valued as much as they should be for everything else."

-- Natasha Walter, British feminist author ("Living Dolls: The Return of Sexism") and TV commentator

## "THE HURT LOCKER"

"Mark Boal is being careful in that he didn't want to compromise unnecessarily any of the techniques the U.S. servicemen are using to defeat devices. So, using a little bit of artistic license, (the filmmakers) made a very accurate, gritty representation. I'm an experienced operator and I was literally sitting on the edge of my seat, sweating when I was watching the film in anticipation of what was going to happen next, reliving all my own memories."

-- Maj. Chris Hunter (ret.), former senior IED intelligence analyst for the British Ministry of Defense

## "INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS"

"There was a thing called the Jewish Brigade, which was part of the British Army, and they did go around bumping off Nazis after the war. Now (in the movie) they're called the 'Real Inglourious Basterds,' as if they were walking around with their flip knives and removing people's scalps. You could make an awesome film about the Jewish Brigade and you could make it true, violent and exciting, and it would be extremely cathartic if you were a Jew."

-- Guy Walters, author of "Hunting Evil: The Nazi War Criminals Who Escaped and the Quest to Bring Them to Justice"

## "PRECIOUS"

"They did an excellent job portraying the effects of sexual abuse on the victim. Every two minutes, someone in the U.S. is sexually assaulted. One in six women will become a victim and half the victims are under 18. This is an issue that's extremely prevalent in our society. Our telephone and online hotlines are all anonymous; we don't record transcripts of sessions or IP addresses -- however, I have heard anecdotally from some volunteers that they have spoken with people who have referenced the movie."

-- Katherine Hull, spokeswoman for RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network)

## "A SERIOUS MAN"

"I grew up in exactly the neighborhood (in St. Louis Park, Minn.) at exactly the time, with exactly the people the film depicts. The Coen brothers and I graduated from the same high school a few years apart. The Lebowskis lived down the street from me. Clearly, they're dealing with stereotypes to some degree, but they're based on reality. The Hebrew School was that boring. The teachers were that old. It was that stifling. The old rabbi was sort of that mysterious and scary. They got a lot right."

-- Steve Z. Leder, Senior Rabbi, Wilshire Boulevard Temple in Los Angeles

## "UP"

"You'd have to have about a 2 million-cubic-foot balloon to lift a house like that. There are cluster balloons that do operate with small balloons. Only a handful of people are doing it. When they want to come down, they just pull a balloon on the cord and pop it, and it starts their descent. When they start coming down close to the ground, they'll throw out a little bit of sand to even out that descent. The way they did that in the movie (by tossing off the contents of the house) was pretty realistic."

-- Don Kissack, president, Southern California Balloon Assn.

"UP IN THE AIR"

"If you get on a plane -- particularly a jet flight of the type Ryan Bingham (George Clooney) flew -- the chance you'll get killed is about 1 in 10 million, and that takes into account all kinds of hazards, including the risk of terrorism. In the movie, he tended to take short flights. But supposing it was 800 miles, which is the typical jet flight in the U.S., if there's a 1 in 10 million risk every 800 miles, the risk of dying (while) flying 10 million miles is about 1 in 800. It is very safe."

-- Arnold Barnett, professor of statistics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; expert on aviation safety

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