



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on March 4, 2010

Countdown to the Academy Awards

Hollywood is gearing up for the 82nd annual Academy Awards, set to take place on Sunday March 7th at Hollywood's Kodak Theatre. This year, Kathryn Bigelow's *Hurt Locker* and James Cameron's *Avatar* are expected to be the big winners, having received nine nominations each. Quentin Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds* is a close second with eight nominations. The year 2009 boasts an impressive lineup of films, and as expected, the competition is fierce. Competing for the coveted best-picture award are *Avatar*, *The Blind Side*, *District 9*, *An Education*, *Hurt Locker*, *Inglourious Basterds*, *Precious: Based on the Novel "Push" by Sapphire*, *A Serious Man*, *Up*, and *Up in the Air*. Of the 10 nominees, *Avatar* and *Hurt Locker* are considered the front-runners.



The process of selecting a winner is tedious for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. The 76-year old system is called preferential voting and involves a ballot with 10 lines, where voters are asked to make their picks in descending order. The ballots are placed in piles according to the top pick. If any stack tallies up 50.1 percent of the vote from the start, voting is over. With a lineup as impressive as this one, it's very likely the process will reach stage two, however, which involves redistributing the smallest list of ballots based on their second choice. The process ends when a 50.1 percent figure is reached.

In addition to the best-picture nomination, *Avatar* is up for best direction, best-original score, and visual effects, but no acting nominations. The Iraq War drama, *Hurt Locker*, has also been nominated for best director, and best original screenplay. Between *Avatar* and *Hurt Locker*, *Hurt Locker* is expected to win both the best-picture and best-direction award. Jeremy Renner is up for the best-leading actor award for his performance in *Hurt Locker*. Other actors vying for this acclaimed award are Jeff Bridges in *Crazy Heart*, George Clooney in *Up in the Air*, Colin Firth in *A Single Man*, and Morgan Freeman in *Invictus*.

In recent weeks, *Hurt Locker* has been the target of a smear campaign, according to *Vanity Fair's* Julian Sancton, who attributes the campaign to the film's predicted success at the Oscars. Sancton discusses the accusations against the film, first for not being accurate enough, and then for being so exact that it may have been based on a real-life non-commissioned officer, Master Sergeant Jeffrey S. Sarver, prompting Sarver to file a lawsuit against the film. The most recent controversy involves producer Nicholas Chartier campaigning for the film to win best-picture by sending emails that hype *Hurt Locker* while disparaging *Avatar*. Chartier's actions have prompted the Academy to bar him from the awards ceremony. Sancton writes, "The art of the smear is to sow just the slightest amount of doubt over a nominee's merit."



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Inglourious Basterds boasts 8 nominations, including best- director. Christoph Waltz has been nominated for best supporting actor for his role as the “Jew Hunter” in the film, and is the clear favorite for the Oscar. If you have seen *Inglourious Basterds*, you might concur with this choice, as Waltz stays true to his despicable character and successfully makes your skin crawl whenever he is on screen—a clear indicator that he is a worthy nominee. Waltz is competing against Matt Damon in *Invictus*, Woody Harrelson in *The Messenger*, Christopher Plummer in *The Last Station*, and Stanley Tucci in *The Lovely Bones*. Despite the extraordinary abilities of all the nominees, my prediction is that this award will go to Waltz.

The competition for best lead actress is intense this year: Sandra Bullock in *The Blind Side*, Helen Mirren in *The Last Station*, Carey Mulligan in *An Education*, Gabourey Sibide in *Precious: Based on the Novel “Push” by Sapphire*, and Meryl Streep in *Julie & Julia*. For me, the decision should come down to Sandra Bullock and Gabourey Sibide, with Sibide having a slight edge. Her performance was remarkable and broke the hearts of every moviegoer lucky enough to have seen her in the role of *Precious*.

Sibide is not the only actress from *Precious: Based on the Novel “Push” by Sapphire* who has captured the attention of the Academy. Mo’Nique is nominated for best actress in a supporting role as *Precious*’s mother, and much like with Waltz in *Inglourious Basterds*, Mo’Nique’s on-screen performance effectively turns your stomach. She certainly embraced her role as an enabler and child abuser. Mo’Nique is up against Penelope Cruz in *Nine*, Vera Farmiga and Anna Kendrick in *Up in the Air*, and Maggie Gyllenhaal in *Crazy Heart*. While each of these actresses is deserving of recognition, I predict Mo’Nique’s got this award in the bag.

With the number of films earning multiple nominations this year, the outcome of the evening truly is anyone’s guess. It will certainly be a must-see event, so tune in to the 82nd annual Academy Awards on Sunday, March 7th at 8 p.m. on ABC.

Photo of an Oscar statue for the 82nd Academy Awards n front of the Kodak Theatre in Los Angeles: AP Images



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