

# Academy Awards predictions

Reviewer compares Index online poll expectations for Oscar outcomes with his own predictions

BY KEN DUSOLD  
Assistant Editor

After controversy arising from anti-homosexual statements producer Brett Ratner made and the comedian Eddie Murphy's unpredictability, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences is ready for Hollywood's biggest night, under the guidance of visionary producer Brian Grazer and legendary funnyman Billy Crystal — returning for a ninth time as host.

Below are 10 of the 24 categories for which Oscars will be presented. The readers' prediction in each category was attained through a poll, in which 25 readers participated on the Index website.

## Best Actor

Ken's Pick: George Clooney in, "The Descendants."

"The Artist" picked up the Screen Actors Guild and the British Academy of Film and Television Arts awards in this category. However, Clooney never has given a better performance and is a favorite of Academy voters. This might be his chance to eke out his first Best Actor Oscar.

## Best Supporting Actor

KP: Christopher Plummer, "Beginners"

This category is absent the actual best supporting actor of the year: Albert Brooks. Brooks head-turning role in "Drive" easily was one of, if not the strongest performances by any actor during 2011.

## Best Actress

KP: Meryl Streep, "The Iron Lady"

This is likely to be the closest race for an award this year. Viola Davis' performance as a tired, but determined black maid living in 1960's Mississippi in "The Help" has earned her the SAG and Critics' Choice awards. However, Streep — who is nominated for a record 17th time — has been awaiting her long overdue third Oscar for 29 years. Plus, the Academy loves portrayals of historical figures, which Streep delivered with her usual prowess as Margaret Thatcher.

## Best Supporting Actress

KP: Octavia Spencer, "The Help"

Like the supporting actor category, this one is missing the strongest competition to the likely winner. Shailene Woodley's turn as a troubled teenager in "The Descendants" was a career-making performance. Alas, Woodley's name is missing from the Oscar ballot, leaving Spencer — who already was the favorite for her performance as a smart-mouthed and slightly clichéd maid — better positioned. Although, this reviewer would love to see Melissa McCarthy of "Bridesmaids" pull off an upset!

## Best Animated Film

KP: "Rango"

In a relatively weak year for animation, this Gore Verbinski-directed flick about a naïve chameleon's adventure in the

Mojave Desert was the most fun, original and best written.

## Best Director

KP: Michael Hazanavicius, "The Artist"  
Hazanavicius has been named best director of 2011 by the Director's Guild of America, which has a 90 percent accuracy rate for choosing the eventual Oscar winner. With that said, this could be a year they get wrong — Martin Scorsese and Alexander Payne created cinematic masterpieces in "Hugo" and "The Descendants." With these two veterans, a rare upset is far from impossible.

## Best Original Song

KP: "Man or Muppet," "The Muppets"

With only two nominations, this category will be a bit anti-climatic — the other nominated song is "Real in Rio" from "Rio." "Muppets" music supervisor Bret McKenzie has called his song "sincere but ridiculous." Academy voters with a sense of nostalgia for Kermit and crew will call it a winner.

## Best Adapted Screenplay

KP: "The Descendants"  
No one writes human beings quite like Alexander Payne. Their most personal sufferings and successes are so masterfully captured in the characters Payne creates that a viewer sees themselves or their friends in every personality shown on screen. The greatness of "The Descendants" lies predominantly in its script, which is brought to life

through inspired directing and flawless acting.

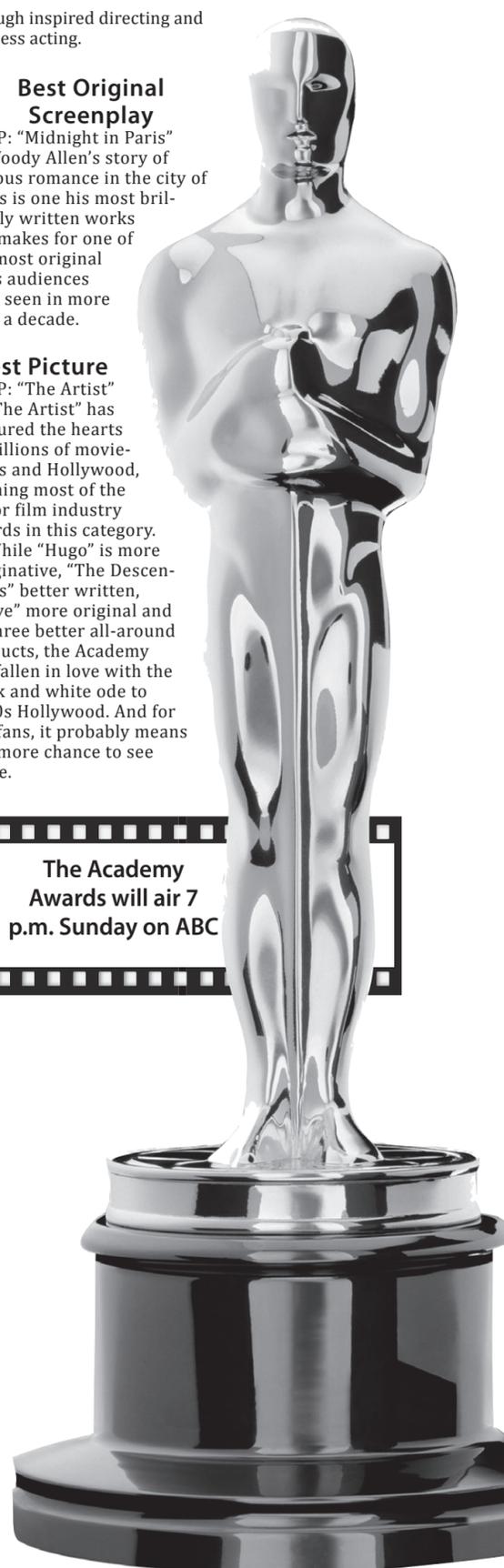
## Best Original Screenplay

KP: "Midnight in Paris"  
Woody Allen's story of curious romance in the city of lights is one his most brilliantly written works and makes for one of the most original films audiences have seen in more than a decade.

## Best Picture

KP: "The Artist"  
"The Artist" has captured the hearts of millions of moviegoers and Hollywood, winning most of the major film industry awards in this category.

While "Hugo" is more imaginative, "The Descendants" better written, "Drive" more original and all three better all-around products, the Academy has fallen in love with the black and white ode to 1920s Hollywood. And for dog fans, it probably means one more chance to see Uggie.



## Readers' picks

### Best Actor

(TIE) George Clooney, "The Descendants" and Gary Oldman, "Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy"

### Best Supporting Actor

Max von Sydow, "Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close"

### Best Actress

Viola Davis, "The Help"

### Best Director

Woody Allen, "Midnight in Paris"

### Best Original Song

"Man or Muppet"

### Best Supporting Actress

Melissa McCarthy, "Bridesmaids"

### Best Animated Film

"Rango"

### Best Adapted Screenplay

"The Descendants"

### Best Original Screenplay

"Midnight in Paris"

### Best Picture

"The Artist"

## Remembering the joys of childhood



BY JOHN O'BRIEN  
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My name is John. I like peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and chocolate milk. Two of my favorite TV shows are "Spongebob Squarepants" and "Scooby Doo" and Dr. Seuss is my favorite author. My favorite animal is the dinosaur, and I like eating ice cream and candy until my stomach hurts. I think it would be cool to walk on the moon. I honestly think my dad is a superhero and I really wish I had a bed shaped like a racecar.

Perhaps I forgot to mention I'm a 19-year-old college sophomore.

I am a child stuck in an adult's body. In many ways, I've had to grow up. I've graduated high school, applied to colleges and gotten jobs. But I feel like I am as much a child now as ever. This is OK to me.

It seems people are too ready to leave their childhood behind and dive head first into their future. But I don't understand why.

It is important to plan for the future and be responsible during certain situations. But childhood truly is the best, most carefree years of our lives and they need to be appreciated in full.

Finding a balance between work and play can make you a happier, healthier person. It's a wonder what a Saturday afternoon spent in front of a TV, watching cartoons with a bowl of Lucky Charms, can do for you.

I want you to rewind your memory a bit. If you have hit the years of diaper-wearing and bottle-sucking, you've gone too far. Think of the years between the crawling, drooling years and the hormonal, moody teenage years. The time when you got to take naps in school, finger paint and steal cookies from the cookie jar. Those were the years, right? If you think about it, those times, in many ways, show people at their best.

Perhaps we were a little wrong thinking candy for breakfast, lunch and dinner was a good idea, but we got other things right. A clenched fist was only used to hold a crayon and the middle finger was used to help the pointer finger make bunny ears. Going to school was exciting and anyone, from any background, was the perfect playmate.

As we thrust ourselves into adulthood, innocence is replaced by anger and ignorance. Like Adam Sandler said in "Mr. Deeds," the younger versions of ourselves would kick our butts if they saw the way we acted.

I'm not saying we should put children in charge and resort to some "Children of the Corn" esque government, but maybe holding onto the mindset of our inner child wouldn't be such a bad idea.

Although growing up is essential to survival and the continuation of human life, the not-so-grown-up ideas that sharing is caring and candy makes the world go round are true.

So pick up a cookie, turn on some cartoons and connect with your inner child, because who are we kidding — being a kid can be much more fun than being an adult.

## Anonymity should be used for good



BY KATHLEEN BARBOSA  
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Each week, I write about 1,200 words for the Index. At the top of each article or column, I put my name for the world to see. If I didn't want my name associated with it, I wouldn't write it.

The trend of ambiguous comments and unsigned letters are destroying the sanctity of anonymity.

The Internet, particularly social media, is contributing to a culture in which it is acceptable for people to hide behind fake profiles or post unsigned comments without fear of accountability.

Anonymity has its place. We need to protect those who report injustices so they won't fear being unfairly punished by those in power. Without the ability to voice our concerns with out being persecuted, the concept of freedom of speech is undermined.

But that's not how anonymity is used, which bothers me. The identities of these anonymous commentators are not protected because the individuals

are in danger, but instead they don't want to be associated with the comments they wrote.

If you don't want to be associated with it, why write it?

Too many instances of anonymity simply are thinly veiled references to people or direct insults from unknown authors.

These comments are not clever. They are not a way to deal with problems. They are not mature. They are petty, hurtful and pointless.

I know the temptation to anonymously comment constantly is present. Writing without signing something inspires courage, and it might seem like a chance to be honest. But this is fake bravery, and it's more like lying than honesty. True courage is being writing something you are proud to sign your name next to.

When I write, I sign my name. I write it on notes, on emails, on papers and especially on comments and stories I write. If I didn't want my name on it, I wouldn't write it. With electronic publishing, what we write will follow us forever. The Internet is written in permanent ink, so we all should censor ourselves carefully before we write anything. When we do write, we should be proud of what we are saying. If we aren't, maybe we should reconsider writing it at all.

The next time anyone considers commenting anonymously, tweeting through fake accounts or even crafting elaborate fake Facebook profiles, think twice. Each time a negative comment or a bullying remark is made anonymously, it hurts the sanctity of those who use anonymity for good.