

MARK KERMODE'S 30-DAY OSCAR DIET

Here's the quick and easy way to become fitter, leaner and more (film) buff, in time for what will undoubtedly be a marathon Academy Awards night on 2 March



< DAY 1 >
BEST PICTURE
SUNRISE (1927)



Fri 31 Jan There were two best picture winners at the first Oscars ceremony on 16 May, 1929: William Wellman's *Wings*, a box-office hit which scooped the main prize; and FW Murnau's *Sunrise*, which was recognised as best "unique and artistic picture" (and received two other awards) despite failing to court large audiences. The battle for the soul of the best picture category – ticket sales v artistic clout – has raged ever since.

< DAY 2 >
BEST ACTOR
THE GODFATHER (1972)



Sat 1 Feb Settle into Saturday night with this best film big hitter. Marlon Brando stars as Vito Corleone, earning his second statuette for best actor after *On the Waterfront*. Boycotting the 45th Academy Awards, where the film won three Oscars, Brando sent Native American Sacheen Littlefeather to reject his award in protest at "the treatment of American Indians today by the film industry" and "recent incidents at Wounded Knee".

< DAY 3 >
HONORARY AWARD
SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS (1937)



Sun 2 Feb Perfect Sunday afternoon viewing for all the family! To date, no animated feature has ever won the Oscar for best picture. But Walt Disney's first feature-length animation was nominated for "music (scoring)" at the 10th Academy Awards, and the next year Walt himself was honoured with eight statuettes – one tall, seven small, in recognition of "a significant screen innovation which has charmed millions".

< DAY 4 >
BEST ACTRESS
DANGEROUS (1935)



Sun 3 Feb Having received an unofficial "write-in" nomination for her powerful lead performance in *Of Human Bondage*, the incomparable Bette Davis won her first best actress Oscar playing the tempestuous role of Joyce Heath. A second Oscar, for *Jezebel*, followed. Years later, Steven Spielberg bought both of Davis's statuettes at auction and returned them to the academy to "prevent further commercial exploitation".

< DAY 5 >
BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS
THE YEAR OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY (1982)



Mon 4 Feb Proving there is no limit to the versatility of a talented performer, American Linda Hunt earned a best supporting actress Oscar playing Chinese-Australian man Billy Kwan, becoming the first person to win an Oscar portraying a member of the opposite sex. Peter Weir's critically acclaimed political thriller, adapted from Christopher Koch's source text, remained banned in Indonesia until 1999.

< DAY 6 >
BEST PICTURE
REBECCA (1940)



Wed 5 Feb "Last night I dreamed I went to Manderley again..." Alfred Hitchcock never won an Oscar for best director (he got five nominations before finally receiving the Irving G Thalberg memorial award in 1968). But this dazzling adaptation of Daphne Du Maurier's story picked up gongs for "outstanding production" (today's best picture category) and "cinematography – black and white" (George Barnes), along with several nominations.

< DAY 7 >
BEST MUSIC
LIMELIGHT (1952)



Thurs 6 Feb Chaplin's masterpiece was released internationally in the 50s, when the US had closed its doors to the film pioneer amid allegations of communist sympathies. It wasn't until 20 years later, when *Limelight* received a belated US release, that the academy awarded Chaplin and collaborators Ray Rasch and Larry Russell the Oscar for best dramatic score. It was Chaplin's only Oscar win – his other statuettes were honorary.

< DAY 8 >
BEST PICTURE
JAWS (1975)



Fri 7 Feb When his mechanical shark failed him on screen, director Steven Spielberg turned to composer John Williams to give his drama some teeth. Williams responded with a theme now synonymous with underwater terror – two notes powerful enough to scare a generation of moviegoers out of the sea! As memorable as Bernard Herrmann's stabbing strings from *Psycho*, the score for *Jaws* earned one of its three Oscars.

< DAY 9 >
BEST WRITING
CHINATOWN (1974)



Sat 8 Feb "Forget it, Jake, it's Chinatown." Screenwriter Robert Towne was *Chinatown's* only winner at the 47th Academy Awards, his script for Roman Polanski's neo-noir masterpiece becoming a blueprint for note-perfect screenwriting; it is still used in workshops and teaching seminars today. Towne and Polanski fought over many elements of the script, including the ending, which was darkened to Polanski's taste.

< DAY 10 >
BEST PICTURE
GONE WITH THE WIND (1939)



Sun 9 Feb Nearly four hours long, this Hollywood epic, awarded several Oscars, will fill an entire Sunday afternoon. Hattie McDaniel became the first African American to win, triumphing as supporting actress in this adaptation of Margaret Mitchell's story of the old south. Recently rereleased in the UK, this "outstanding production" winner makes for uncomfortable viewing alongside this year's favourite, *12 Years a Slave*.

< DAY 11 >
BEST WRITING
THELMA & LOUISE (1991)



Mon 10 Feb A home run for screenwriter Callie Khouri for her brilliantly vibrant and defiant road movie about two women on the run from the police. "I just got fed up with the passive role of women," Khouri later said of writing the movie. Susan Sarandon and Geena Davis were both nominated for best actress, with Ridley Scott (who has yet to win an Oscar) earning the first of three best director nominations.

< DAY 12 >
BEST EDITING
THE FRENCH CONNECTION (1971)



Tues 11 Feb Key to its haul of awards (which included best picture, director, actor, and adapted screenplay) was the work of Oscar-winning editor Gerald Greenberg, who cut the celebrated car/train chase. During the shooting, stunt driver Bill Hickman ran red lights, weaved through traffic, and creased a city bus. Meanwhile, Gene Hackman was accidentally broadside by a driver – which Greenberg used in the final cut.

< DAY 13 >
BEST ACTRESS
MILDRED PIERCE (1945)



Weds 12 Feb "Please don't tell anyone what Mildred Pierce did!" begged the publicity for Michael Curtiz's adaptation of James M Cain's novel. On the night of the 18th Academy Awards, Joan Crawford lay in bed, allegedly feigning pneumonia, firmly believing that she would lose to Ingrid Bergman in *The Bells of St Mary's*. After hearing that she had won, Crawford allowed the press to photograph her holding her statuette in her sickbed.

< DAY 14 >
BEST PICTURE
MIDNIGHT COWBOY (1969)



Thurs 13 Feb John Schlesinger's tale of a hustler (Jon Voight) and his sickly friend (Dustin Hoffman) struggling to earn a living on the streets of New York remains the only X-rated feature (in the US system) to win best picture. Schlesinger won best director and Waldo Salt earned an adapted screenplay award. John Barry's theme and Harry Nilsson's version of "Everybody's Talkin'" became soundtrack standards.

< DAY 15 >
BEST PICTURE
CASABLANCA (1942)



Fri 14 Feb "Here's looking at you, kid." Celebrate Valentine's Day with the winner of the "outstanding motion picture" prize at the 16th Academy Awards. A timeless love triangle between Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman and Paul Henreid provides the vehicle for some of the most quotable lines in movie history, although debate still rages about who wrote what (Howard Koch shared the screenplay Oscar with the Epstein brothers).

< DAY 16 >
BEST PICTURE
THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS (1991)



Sat 15 Feb "I ate his liver with some fava beans and a nice Chianti." The 64th Academy Awards have earned a place in history as the only time a horror film bagged the top prize – although many insist that this grisly adaptation of Thomas Harris's novel only won because academy voters were convinced (by publicists) that "it ISN'T a horror movie!" Stars Anthony Hopkins and Jodie Foster took home statuettes. It won five in total.

< DAY 17 >
BEST ACTRESS
MARY POPPINS (1964)



Sun 16 Feb Julie Andrews was one of the very few things PL Travers liked about Disney's adaptation of her books – as viewers of *Saving Mr Banks* (which is up for several awards at tonight's Baftas) will know. Andrews took home one of five prizes for Poppins. Her rendition of *Feed the Birds* remains a matchless treat, and watching this wonderful family film is still the best way to spend any Sunday afternoon.

< DAY 18 >
BEST PICTURE
SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE (2008)



Mon 17 Feb In the history of the Oscars, only 12 films financed outside the US have won best picture, of which 11 were (in part or whole) backed by the UK. Danny Boyle's brilliant tale of Mumbai street life nearly went straight to video in the US following the closure of Warner Independent Pictures. Rescued by Fox Searchlight, it became a worldwide hit, taking more than \$360m and a total of eight Oscars at the 81st Academy Awards.

< DAY 19 >
FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILM
LA STRADA (1954)



Tues 18 Feb The academy ushered in the official foreign language film category at its 29th ceremony, with Fellini's bittersweet tale of a brutish strong man (Anthony Quinn) and the young charge (Giulietta Masina) whom he takes with him on the titular road. Although the category remains a regular source of controversy (the qualification and selection process, frankly, absurd), many subtitled films have benefited from the Oscars' attentions.

< DAY 20 >
BEST ACTRESS
ON GOLDEN POND (1981)



Wed 19 Feb Katharine Hepburn set two records at the 54th Academy Awards: the most wins for any performer (this was her fourth; all her wins were for best actress), and the longest gap between first and last wins (48 years). Hepburn generally avoided the Oscar stage, appearing only once to present the Irving G Thalberg memorial award to producer Lawrence Weingarten. *On Golden Pond* also won best actor and best screenplay.

< DAY 21 >
BEST ACTOR
LILIES OF THE FIELD (1963)



Thurs 20 Feb Sidney Poitier (who celebrates his 87th birthday today) became the first African American to win best actor, starring in "perhaps the most extraordinary story of courage, conflict and devotion ever filmed!" Poitier plays former GI Homer Smith, who helps five nuns to build a church in this oddball, upbeat affair. "Prepare yourself for something deliciously, refreshingly different," enthused the trailer.

< DAY 22 >
BEST PICTURE
IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT (1967)



Fri 21 Feb The second part of our Sidney Poitier birthday double-bill. Oscar glory in five categories, including best picture, for this broiling tale of murder and racial tension, which twinned Poitier (in the role of Mr Tibbs) with Rod Steiger, named best actor as police chief Bill Gillespie. Stirling Silliphant's screenplay was also a winner, while Hal Ashby (director of *Harold and Maude*, *Coming Home* and *Being There*) earned his only Oscar – for editing.

< DAY 23 >
BEST PICTURE
THE HURT LOCKER (2008)



Sat 22 Feb It wasn't until the 82nd Academy Awards that a woman would be recognised as best director – yet another reminder of just how archaic and slow to change these awards can be. Winning six Oscars in total, Kathryn Bigelow's brilliantly tense and gruelling Iraq war drama beat the behemoth *Avatar* in the best picture category, meaning that if *Gravity* triumphs this year, it will be the first science fiction movie to take home the top prize.

< DAY 24 >
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY
LAWRENCE OF ARABIA (1962)



Sun 23 Feb Is this the best looking film ever made? David Lean's sweeping epic (which bagged several Oscars including best picture) contains some of the most memorable images of modern cinema (Omar Sharif's arrival still dazzles), beautifully captured by Academy Award winner Freddie Young. A Blu-ray is available, but ideally this masterpiece should be viewed in a theatrical 70mm presentation.

< DAY 25 >
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY
TRAINING HEIGHTS (1939)



Mon 24 Feb Cinematographer Gregg Toland changed the face of film with his extraordinary use of lighting and deep focus on *Citizen Kane*, with many film historians crediting the revolutionary genius of that film to the director of photography rather than to Orson Welles. Before being nominated for *Kane*, Toland earned a statuette at the 12th Oscars for William Wyler's classic Bronte adaptation.

< DAY 26 >
BEST ACTRESS
WUTHERING BALL (2001)



Tues 25 Feb Halle Berry became the first African American to win the prize for best actress for her barnstorming performance in Marc Forster's powerful drama. In a historic acceptance speech, she declared that: "This moment is for Dorothy Dandridge, Lena Horne, Diahann Carroll... And it's for every nameless, faceless woman of colour that now has a chance because of this door tonight has been opened."

< DAY 27 >
BEST ACTOR
TRAINING DAY (2001)



Wed 26 Feb 38 years after Sidney Poitier made history (and on the same night that Halle Berry scooped best actress), Denzel Washington became the second African American to win the Oscar for best actor – and the first to do so under an African American director, Antoine Fuqua. Washington's portrayal of a corrupt LA cop initiating a "newbie" in the ways of the street is full-throttle and fearsome fare.

< DAY 28 >
BEST ACTOR
RAGING BULL (1980)



Thurs 27 Feb Robert De Niro performed self-taxidermy for this biopic of boxer Jake LaMotta, eating his way through northern Italy to pile on 60lb for the heavier segments of the role. He also brushed up on his boxing, entering three boxing matches, of which he won two. Director Martin Scorsese initially balked at the project, on the grounds that "even as a kid, I always thought boxing was boring." It also picked up best editing.

< DAY 29 >
BEST ACTOR
MY LEFT FOOT (1989)



Fri 28 Feb Daniel Day-Lewis earned his first best actor Oscar with this brilliant portrayal of Christy Brown (Brenda Fricker also scooped best supporting actress). Later wins for *There Will Be Blood* and *Lincoln* made Day-Lewis a record-breaker. He is also that rare thing: an Oscar winner who has been portrayed by a president. "The cosmetics were challenging," said Barack Obama, playing Day-Lewis playing Obama, in a short spoof.

< DAY 30 >
BEST PICTURE
THE ARTIST (2011)



Sat 1 Mar The first "silent film" (though it does include some synched sound-effects and fleeting end dialogue) to win best picture since the first ceremony in 1929, *The Artist* proved that it's still possible for the Oscars to provide pleasant surprises. In an age of ever-more spectacular 3D digital effects, who would have predicted that a black-and-white, French-backed film would win five awards and become the toast of Hollywood?