

THE OSCARS HAVE NO RELEVANCE IN THE MODERN WORLD.

The Oscars Are An Echo-Chamber For Stupid Actors

News

#OscarsSoDull: Despite the pomp and ceremony, the 2018 awards are less relevant than ever

Call Me By Your Name is hotly tipped, but failed to make waves at the box office

Harriet Alexander, NEW YORK

24 FEBRUARY 2018 • 12:44PM

he red carpet will be there, as will the famous golden

statuettes. But, despite the traditional pomp

Tand ceremony, this year's Oscars will perhaps
be less relevant than ever before.

This year's awards, held on March 4, feature the
lowest-grossing best picture nominees in six years.

Call Me By Your Name had, as of Tuesday, taken a mere \$15
million (£12m) at the US box office, and Daniel Day-Lewis's
Phantom Thread had barely recouped half of its \$35 million
budget.

Even Dunkirk, the highest-grossing of the nine nominated
films, scarcely made it into the top 20 grossing films of 2017,
with its \$188 million US takings.

Star Wars: The Last Jedi, by contrast, brought in \$681
million, while even the critically-panned Jumanji sequel
earned \$380 million.

It all adds up to a worrying wait for television executives, with the realisation of the growing chasm between Oscar-nominated films and those that the public actually care about.

 Vicky Krieps, left, and Daniel Day-Lewis appear in a scene from Phantom Thread

Vicky Krieps, left, and Daniel Day-Lewis appear in a scene from Phantom Thread CREDIT: LAURIE SPARHAM/FOCUS FEATURES VIA AP

“The Oscars are rewarding more and more niche films,” said Jeff Bock, a box office analyst with Exhibitor Relations.

“There’s not a lot to talk about in terms of social media buzz, or pop culture significance.”

It was not always this way, of course.

Titanic made more than \$600m in 1997, on its way to being awarded best picture. The following year, Forrest Gump dominated US box offices with nearly \$330 million (over \$527m today).

But the last time a top-grossing US film went on to win best picture was in 2003, with *Lord Of The Rings: Return Of The King*.

Since then, the disconnect between the box office and Oscar glory has grown: last year's winner, *Moonlight*, took only \$28 million, despite its cult following.



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And the television ratings have taken a hit, too. Last year 32.9 million viewers watched the show – the fewest since 2008. As a result of the ever-sinking ratings, 30-second adverts during the night sold for \$2.6 million – 48 per cent less than during the Super Bowl.

Executives evidently do not blame the host, Jimmy Kimmel, who returns next week for his second year. Nor do they think it is part of the wider malaise in Hollywood, sparked by the Weinstein scandal and the wider #MeToo movement.

Instead the fall in ratings is directly matched by the separation between box office takings and Oscar glory.

Analysts point out that, in addition, the decline can be viewed as part of the general trend away from watching live television, as on-demand takes over.

“The constant influx of media and smartphones has shortened attention spans,” said Brian Hughes, head of audience analysis at Magna Global, a media strategy company.

He told Variety: “It’s harder for people to sit through a three-hour telecast.”

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