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BLANCHETT AND YEOH FILMS TOP INDIE SPIRIT AWARD NOMINATIONS

Michelle Yeoh's "Everything Everywhere All At Once" and Cate Blanchett's "Tar" led the Spirit Awards nominations Tuesday, underlining their credentials as the indie films to watch this awards season. The Film Independent Spirit Awards, which consider only low- and mid-budget movies, gave eight nods to Yeoh's hit sci-fi about surreal parallel universes, and seven to Blanchett's drama set in the cut-throat world of classical music. Both were nominated for best feature, along with Sarah Polley's "Women Talking," which will receive the prestigious Robert Altman Award for a film's director, casting director and overall cast.



In this file photo Malaysian actress Michelle Yeoh arrives for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' 13th Annual Governors Awards at the Fairmont Century Plaza in Los Angeles.

All three movies are widely tipped to feature at next year's Oscars, which take place in March, just one week after the Spirit Awards winners are revealed in an annual ceremony by a Los Angeles beach. "Everything Everywhere All At Once" has grossed over \$100 million worldwide, making it leading indie distributor A24's biggest hit.

The absurdist film portrays a Chinese-American immigrant family undergoing a tax audit, who are quickly drawn into an inter-dimensional battle to save the multiverse from a powerful villain. "Tar" follows the rise and fall of a fictional, globally renowned conductor who will stop at nothing to succeed in her high-flying career.

"Women Talking," a drama about women in an ultraconservative religious colony debating how to deal with systemic sexual abuse, features an ensemble cast including Claire Foy, Rooney Mara and Frances McDormand. Rounding out the Spirit Awards' best feature category were Timothee Chalamet's cannibal love story "Bones and All," and African refugee drama "Our Father, the Devil."

But Chalamet was among several eligible A-listers who notably missed out on acting nominations, along with Jennifer Lawrence ("Causeway") and Brendan Fraser, whose acclaimed film "The Whale" earned zero nominations. Double Oscar-winner Blanchett and Yeoh both received lead actor nominations, while Mark Rylance ("Bones and All") and Jamie Lee Curtis ("Everything Everywhere All at Once") earned supporting nods.



In this file photo taken on July 12, 1999, moviegoers watch the classic film "Casablanca" on a 20-by-40-foot outdoor screen on the Washington Monument grounds in Washington DC.

Films with budgets over \$30 million are not considered for the Spirit Awards, which aim to celebrate independent filmmaking. Film Independent president Josh Welsh said Tuesday the nominations had looked for "uniqueness of vision, original provocative subject matter, economy of means, and diversity both on screen and off." For the first time, the awards have opted for gender-neutral acting awards. The Spirit Awards take place in a giant tent by Santa Monica beach on March 4. Oscars voting ends three days later, and the season-capping 95th Academy Awards take place March 12. — AFP

Zimbabwe releases gospel-singing protesters

Zimbabwe has released a group of Christian sect members arrested in July for singing protest gospels after a court handed down suspended sentences, their lawyers said on Wednesday. Police arrested 34 worshippers from the apostolic sect as they walked in the centre of Harare, clad in colorful church regalia, singing "(Lord) please deliver us from our suffering", the lawyers said. Most of the group were young women linked to the small opposition Zimbabwe Transformative Party (ZTP).

A Harare court on Tuesday found the 34 guilty of criminal nuisance over the peaceful demonstration and handed each a three-month suspended sentence and a 12,000 Zimbabwean dollar (\$33) fine. Authorities said their action obstructed the passage of people and vehicles and the protesters did not comply with police orders to stop.

The group spent four months behind bars after refusing to ask for bail. "We just came out of prison and are still deliberating on our next move," ZTP's deputy head Simon Goshomi, who was among those held, told AFP on Wednesday. Lawyer Evans Moyo said his clients were "not happy" with the verdict and could appeal.

Rights groups and opposition parties have complained of an increased government clampdown on dissent as the country heads towards general elections next year. ZTP's leader Kanyenzura Parere, who was also arrested during the July protest, is being tried separately on different charges of breaching the peace and remains in jail.

Parere is a bishop with the Mirirai Jehovha Apostolic Church. There is rising discontent in Zimbabwe as President Emmerson Mnangagwa, who replaced long-time ruler Robert Mugabe in 2017, struggles to ease entrenched poverty, end the country's chronic power cuts, and rein in inflation. Rights groups have complained of repeated arbitrary detentions and often exceptionally harsh custody under Mnangagwa. — AFP



France's Marcel Proust

A bluffer's guide to Proust 100 years after his death

France's Marcel Proust, who died 100 years ago on Friday, is regarded as one of the greatest novelists of all time-but few can truthfully claim to have read his 2,400-page masterpiece "In Search of Lost Time". For those waiting for another lockdown to curl up with his magnum opus, here are five fun facts you can drop into a conversation that will make you sound like an expert.

Unwanted masterpiece

In 1909 Proust launched himself into what would become his masterpiece, a novel about memory and the essence of art. The project grew from one book to a second in 1912 and a third the following year. "In Search of Lost Time" eventually grew into seven volumes, four published in Proust's lifetime and three after his death at the age of 51 in 1922. But finding a publisher was not easy.

After receiving three rejections for the first volume "Swann's Way", Proust decided to self-publish, with the help of Grasset publishing house. Nobel-winning novelist Andre Gide, who was an editor at the time at NRF publishing house (which later became Gallimard), was among those who passed on Proust's dense prose. "The rejection of this book will remain the NRF's greatest mistake," Gide later wrote to Proust, calling it "one of the most bitter regrets of my life". Gallimard managed to lure Proust back with his second novel in 1916, "In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower", which won the Goncourt Prize, France's top literary award.

'Oh': on winning top prize

When the Goncourt jury announced Proust as the winner in 1919, Gallimard rushed to give the author the good news.

Arriving at his home near the Champs-Elysees, Gallimard found Proust, an inveterate snoozer, asleep in a room filled with steam treatments for his asthma.

"Oh?" said the author flatly, on hearing he had won the literary equivalent of the jackpot.

His win sparked an outcry by the French left which backed Roland Dorgeles' epic account of life in the

trenches in World War I over what they characterised as Proust's self-indulgent ruminations on the passage of time.

Proust's critics further argued he was too old-he was 48 at the time-and too rich to win the award which came with 5,000 francs in prize money.

On and on and on

"For a long time, I went to bed early...", is how "In Search of Lost Time" begins, and it's also how the story ends for many a reader, who find Proust's prose to have soporific qualities. Poetic and dreamy, sprinkled with dashes and parentheses, his sentences are exceptionally long-on average 30 words, twice that of most novelists.

The madeleine was nearly toast

The madeleine or mini sponge cake that has become the most famous detail in all seven volumes makes its appearance early in the first book. For the protagonist, Marcel, tasting the little cake releases a flurry of vivid memories, giving him access to the "lost time" he is searching for.

"As soon as I had recognized the taste of madeleine dipped in lime-blossom tea that my aunt used to give me...", he swoons. And yet the mighty madeleine was nearly a humble piece of toast, as early drafts of the scene discovered in Proust's notebooks reveal.

Maternal mollycoddling

Proust suffered most of his life with severe asthma, and although he liked to socialise he also spent long stretches in bed, writing with a tray on his knees. His neurologist father urged his sickly son to get out in the fresh air and play sport, noting that asthma was not contagious.

But Proust's mother was prone to mollycoddling, and from 1906 he followed her counsel, staying cloistered inside like a hermit, with a steady supply of caffeine and aspirin. His respiratory problems would finally get the better of him. He died after pneumonia that turned into bronchitis and then an abscess on the lungs. — AFP

Netflix doubles production capacity in Spain

Online video streaming giant Netflix on Tuesday opened new film studios in Spain, doubling its production capacity in the country that has become a hub of audiovisual creation in Europe. The new facilities include five film sets and around 30 editing suites in La Ciudad de la Tele, a vast production complex in the town of Tres Cantos, north of Madrid. Netflix has now doubled its production capacity in Spain with 10 sets in total including spaces for production, make-up, hairstyling and a changing room, the US company said in a statement.

The entertainment platform inaugurated its first studios outside the United States on the same site in 2019, shortly after Spanish series "La Casa de Papel" became its first global hit in a language other than English. The Tres Cantos hub has since become Netflix's main produc-

tion site in the European Union, with more than 30 films and series shot there in 2022 including "Welcome to Eden" and "Elite".



Spanish Culture Minister Miquel Iceta welcomed the news, saying he wanted to encourage major platforms and producers to set up in the country. Audiovisual producers are increasingly choosing Spain for the filming of series, with the southern European nation's landscapes resembling the American West and attracting Hollywood from the 1960s. The Spanish government aims to increase audiovisual production in the country by 30 percent by 2025. — AFP

Grammy Awards 2023 nominations

65th annual ceremony on February 5 in Los Angeles

Major categories

ALBUM OF THE YEAR

- ABBA Voyage
- ADELE 30
- BAD BUNNY Un Verano Sin Ti
- BEYONCE Renaissance
- BRANDI CARLILE In These Silent Days
- COLDPLAY Music of the Spheres
- HARRY STYLES Harry's House
- KENDRICK LAMAR Mr. Morale & the Big Steppers
- LIZZO Special
- MARY J. BLIGE Good Morning Gorgeous (Deluxe)

RECORD OF THE YEAR

- ABBA Don't Shut Me Down
- ADELE Easy on Me
- BEYONCE Break My Soul
- BRANDI CARLILE FEATURING LUCIUS You and Me on the Rock
- DOJA CAT Woman
- HARRY STYLES As It Was
- KENDRICK LAMAR The Heart Part 5
- LIZZO About Damn Time
- MARY J. BLIGE Good Morning Gorgeous
- STEVE LACY Bad Habit

SONG OF THE YEAR

- ADELE Easy on Me
- BEYONCE Break My Soul
- BONNIE RAITT Just Like That
- DJ KHALED, R. ROSS, L. WAYNE, JAY-Z, J. LEGEND & FRIDAYY - God Did
- GAYLE abcdefu
- HARRY STYLES As It Was
- KENDRICK LAMAR The Heart Part 5
- LIZZO About Damn Time
- STEVE LACY Bad Habit
- TAYLOR SWIFT - All Too Well (10 Minute Version) (The Short Film)

BEST NEW ARTIST

- ANITTA
- DOMI & JD BECK
- LATTO
- MANESKIN
- MOLLY TUTTLE
- MUNI LONG
- OMAR APOLLO
- SAMARA JOY
- TOBE NWWIGWE
- WET LEG



MOST NOMINATED

- BEYONCE 9
- KENDRICK LAMAR 8
- ADELE 7
- BRANDI CARLILE 7

Source: grammy.com AFP Photos