

UNKNOWN "OLDER" ACTOR UPSETS OSCAR RACE by Darby Yost

A DIY film made & marketed for less money than the food budget of its competitors is the best acting performance. Studios try to stop buzz of longshot candidate

HOLLYWOOD, CA, UNITED STATES, February 11, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Oscars pundits are perplexed and puzzled.

A 57 year-old unknown actor was put down by pundits exhibiting ageism by calling the underdog an "older actor, a long-shot curiosity" for emerging as a favorite for [Best Actor](#) 2021 nomination when awards insiders polled each other online. The question was "Who gave the best performance in a lead role out of the 200 films in the Academy Screening Room for consideration?"

"This isn't supposed to happen," an awards insider said. "The favored candidates have spent millions buying ads in the trades and TV, copious amounts of money on swag and expensive wine and dinners to buy the race. They distract film writers from looking at indie gems that don't have the budget to seduce critics and voters. Harvey Weinstein exacerbated the corruption of Oscar campaigns, changing the culture for the worse."

"Big studios locked up other awards indicators like the Golden Globes. No one saw this coming. It defies insurmountable odds for an actor with no marketing budget, in a faith-based indie, a niche film, to come out as a possible nominee. Members think he gave the best performance."

"Unknown actors usually don't have a prayer when it comes to snagging an Oscar nomination. Minister-turned-moviemaker [Richard Rossi](#) may get a miracle on the strength of his portrayal of con man preacher Brother Billy in [Canaan Land](#)," CBS reporter Vanessa Farraday said.

Rossi is competing for an Oscar with his controversial film "Canaan Land" about Bible bunco artist Brother Billy (played by Rossi) who falls in love with a sincere Christian (Rebecca Holden).

"Rossi's portrayal lays bare Billy's secrets. His performance as an aging grifter who lives off the kindness of women is a master class on acting. It is the greatest acting performance of the year," Tom Greenberg, an Oscar prognosticator said.

PAST UPSETS

Although it is rare, Best Actor Oscar upsets have happened before:

1975 — Art Carney wins Best Actor for Harry and Tonto

The Best Actor class of 1974 featured an all-star lineup. Dustin Hoffman for Lenny. Albert Finney for Murder on the Orient Express. And then the two best performances of the year: Jack Nicholson in Chinatown and Al Pacino in The Godfather: Part II. Defying every pundit prediction to the contrary, the statuette went to Art Carney for Harry and Tonto, a road trip movie about a man and his cat. This was the year when the contender ranked last won.

1940 — And the winner is...Robert Donat?

1939 has been called the Greatest Year in Hollywood History. Laurence Olivier in Wuthering Heights, Jimmy Stewart in Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, and Clark Gable in Gone With the Wind, to name a few. All were nominated. None of them won. That honor would go to Robert Donat for the weepie Goodbye, Mr. Chips. Frankly, my dear, no one saw that coming.

2002 — Jim Broadbent wins Best Actor over Ben Kingsley as Don Logan?

Oscars pundits said there was no better male acting performance in 2002 than Ben Kingsley as the chrome-domed, hair-trigger Cockney psycho Don Logan in Sexy Beast. No one else had a prayer. The winner was announced... "Jim Broadbent...."

"Canaan Land is an outsider climbing ranks," Kelly Tabor said, a school teacher who runs a fan club for Rossi's work. "Like a Kentucky Derby homestretch, on the bit with full strides, pulling with momentum, pushing out, ahead, clearing it's rivals to the Winner's Circle for the prize, there's the late-breaking indie newcomer, Canaan Land."

Veteran actors inspired by Rossi's longshot turning into possibility wrote scores of online comments on the movie's Facebook page.

Actress Valerie Schranz wrote: "Absolutely love this! It is such a terrific reminder that there is fantastic acting out there in the world that goes unrecognized by Hollywood."

"This gives me hope," actress-playwright Gigi Hodges wrote.

"I hope any attention I've received is a victory for older actors who have labored in the trenches," Richard Rossi said. "They call us a curiosity, a long-shot. But one never knows. Nothing is impossible with God."

"Canaan Land" can be seen on Vimeo.com here: <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/canaanland>

Academy members can see the film free in the Academy Screening Room on the Oscar website.

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