

Celebrate the 15th Anniversary of the USA Release of the 'The Hurt Locker' Directed by Oscar-winner Kathryn Bigelow

Kathryn Bigelow became the first woman to receive an Oscar in the Best Director category, breaking through “the celluloid ceiling” & inspiring women everywhere.

BROOKLYN, NEW YORK, USA, August 1, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [International SWANs](#) is celebrating the 15th anniversary of the USA release of the The Hurt Locker today. Thought “small” at the time (July 31, 2009), The Hurt Locker slowly but surely became a barrier-buster, and, on March 7, 2010, [Kathryn Bigelow](#) made history, becoming the first woman ever to receive an Academy Award in the Best Director category.

The Hurt Locker follows an American EOD team into combat during the Iraq War. Led by risk-taking Staff Sergeant William James (Jeremy Renner), this 3-man explosive ordnance disposal team is called in to diffuse various threats – from a wire in the sand, to a car parked illegally, to a kneeling man wrapped in a locked vest – any one of which might lead to injury or death.

Shot on handheld cameras in a mock documentary style, The Hurt Locker eventually received nine Oscar nominations, winning six at the 82nd Academy Awards in 2010, including Best Motion Picture of the Year, Best Director, Best Original Screenplay, Best Achievement in Film Editing, Best Achievement in Sound Mixing, and Best Achievement in Sound Editing. (The remaining nominations were for Best Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role, Best Achievement in Cinematography, and Best Achievement in Music – Original Score.)

“It’s easy to look back in retrospect, and say, of course,” says SWAN’s founder [Jan Lisa Huttner](#), “but the fact that Kathryn Bigelow became the very first woman in the 82-year history of the Academy Awards to win an Oscar for Best Director was absolutely not a foregone conclusion.”



Kathryn Bigelow is the First Woman to Win a Best Director Oscar

The first public screening of *The Hurt Locker* was on September 4, 2008, at the Venice Film Festival, after which it was screened at various international venues in Argentina, Canada, Norway, and Poland. So, *The Hurt Locker* was a contender for the 2009 Independent Spirit Awards (although not the Academy Awards which have different eligibility requirements). How many Spirit Award nominations did *The Hurt Locker* receive on December 2, 2008? Two, one of which was for Best Male Lead Actor and the other for Best Male Supporting Actor. And how many Spirit Awards did *The Hurt Locker* win on February 21, 2009? Zero.



Jan Lisa Huttner Campaigns for Kathryn Bigelow's Film "Zero Dark Thirty" (2012)

What accounts for this dramatic change between December 2, 2008 (when the 2009 Spirit Award nominees were announced) and February 2, 2010 (when the 2010 Academy Award nominees were announced)?

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For one thing, Barack Obama became the President of the United States of America on January 20, 2009, so the American public's perception of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan began to change during Obama's first year in office. Maybe that was enough to push *The Hurt Locker* to the top?

In fact, women like Huttner stepped up. Huttner, a longtime feminist activist and film critic, was one of the women who immediately began demanding recognition

for Bigelow's work. She wrote articles specifically challenging women to see *The Hurt Locker* – invoking comedienne Joan Rivers' famous challenge “Can We Talk?” – and she organized screenings for women which ended with robust Q&A sessions, all in an effort to push *The Hurt Locker* past the \$100 million mark in domestic box office revenue. Meanwhile, several male colleagues, and even some women in her audiences, accused her of supporting *The Hurt Locker* “just because it was made by a woman,” ignoring all the times she had been critical of other female-helmed projects.

Huttner says everything was touch and go until January 30, 2010, when, after 61 consecutive ceremonies, Bigelow became the first woman named Best Director at the 62nd Directors Guild of

America Awards. But the tension was palpable when Barbra Streisand – who had not been nominated for her film Yentl even after having won the Golden Globe – took the stage at the Kodak Theatre in Hollywood on March 7, 2010 to read the list of Best Director nominees. And Streisand’s joy as she read out the name “Kathryn Bigelow” unleashed a wave of emotions in all women directors, most women film critics, and many women watching at home.

According to Huttner, Oscar campaigns are structurally similar in many ways to American political campaigns (although most viewers are oblivious because they’re not voters). “Oscars don’t just happen. People have to work really hard for attention, and that takes time, energy, and commitment. Without momentum, distributors won’t make the financial investments required to win.”



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Ironically, this 15th anniversary of the release of The Hurt Locker comes just as a major political party is about to nominate a woman for President of the United States for only the second time in our history. Suffice it to say, this was not something anyone predicated on New Years Day of 2024. Let The Hurt Locker story – from surprise, to mobilization, to success – point the way; if women mobilize in 2024 like they did in 2010, then maybe, once again, one woman will go where no woman has gone before, and then another ceiling will have been shattered forever.

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