

Razzies: Saluting the best of the bad

by David L. Coddon

As the scamps behind the Golden Raspberries Awards, better known as the Razzies, recently quipped on their Web site's home page (www.razzies.com): Oscars Schmoscars.

The anti-Academy Awards will be handed out Saturday, Feb. 23, the day before the Oscars ceremony, at Magicopolis, a Santa Monica, Calif., magic shop. It's a fitting locale for the Golden Raspberry Award Foundation, which has been giddily giving the Hollywood establishment the finger for 28 years. And going strong.

"The Razzies are making fun of the whole genre that is the self-congratulating, pompously self-important awards shows - specifically the Oscars, which just ask for it," said John B. Wilson, who dreamed up the Golden Raspberries three decades ago. Why have the Razzies, an idea that Wilson "started in my living room alcove," endured so long?

"(For) anybody who sees even a dozen movies a year, the odds are they're going to see at least one stinker - or three, or 10," said Wilson. "Hollywood does not make mostly good movies. Anybody who pays attention knows that."

Wilson also cites the ever-growing media fascination with celebrity "as an entity unto itself."

"That kind of person has become a predictable target of our awards."

The Razzies, which are voted on by an online membership of about 750 people in 44 states and 18 foreign countries, have far more credibility, says Wilson, than do the Golden Globes, whose Hollywood Foreign Press voters number less than 100.

Yet, "Hollywood takes the Golden Globes awfully seriously," Wilson said. "The general response is they treat us like the (breaking wind) that happened in church."

It's easy to see why. The Razzies, rather than celebrate Hollywood's supposed grandeur, poke fun at its constant, indiscriminate grinding out of garbage.

This year is no exception.

"In 2007, there was practically nothing but Razzie movies," said Wilson. And by "Razzie movies," he isn't referring simply to films that stink; rather, a Razzie movie is one made for the sole purpose of making money and as much of it as possible, with no regard for artistic quality or the hard-earned dollars of customers.

Worst of the worst?

This year's heavy Razzies favorite is Lindsay Lohan's "I Know Who Killed Me," with nine ignominious nominations.

"It has elements of teen torture porn, of 'Showgirls' (an all-time Razzies dog), of the Blue Man Group, of 'Battlefield Earth' (another Razzies all-timer) ... it's just every bad idea ever put on film, all in one movie," said Wilson. "It doesn't matter how many times you see it - you don't understand at the end what happened. Are they actually twins separated at birth? Are they (here, Wilson references the old 'Patty Duke Show') those cousins from Brooklyn Heights? Does a hot dog make them lose control? "The day I went to see it there were maybe 15 people there. Fourteen were there to laugh at it."

All the scorn for "I Know Who Killed Me" aside," Wilson acknowledges that Lohan, who got a worst actress Razzie nomination, "does have some talent," even if she doesn't get the chance to show it off in this torture-filled turkey.

"I think the smartest thing Lindsay Lohan could do if she wins - and that's not a terribly big if - would be to show up, sober, and accept this award, make fun of herself and attempt to move on."

Lohan's showing up wouldn't be unprecedented in Razzies ceremony lore. "Showgirls" director Paul Verhoeven was there to accept his worst director Razzie in '95 - and he got a standing ovation. More recently, Halle Berry attended three years ago when she earned a Razzie for her purr-fectly putrid "Catwoman."

"When somebody has the guts to show up and admit they blew it, like Halle did," Wilson said, "the public loves that. It's very endearing."

Not all bad

In spite of what you might hear from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences, John Wilson does not despise the movies. "I would not have spent 28 years of my life doing this if it was all about hate," he said. "I would not derive the enormous pleasure from doing this if it was all about being nasty. "When I see a good movie, I will say so."

Name one, John.

"I loved 'Cloverfield.' My son said it was the best monster movie he'd ever seen. I thought, with the originality and intensity of it, it was close to being brilliant. I am happy to say that."

Of this year's Oscar nominees for best picture, "the only one that I actually liked was 'Juno.' It was about issues that mattered. They were people who were sympathetic human beings." Wilson is even willing to cite a past Razzies winner that, in retrospect, he believes wasn't that bad.

"I think that one of the most unfair winners in our history was (in 1988) Bill Cosby for 'Leonard Part 6.' It's a lame movie, but that same year, Ryan O'Neal appeared in 'Tough Guys Don't Dance.' " A scene in the latter, in which O'Neal reads a suicide note, is "one of the best bad movie moments ever," pronounced Wilson.

Another example: "The year that 'Battlefield Earth' won everything (2001). Not that it isn't an epically awful film, but I personally think Adam Sandler's 'Little Nicky' is worse. 'Little Nicky' is just excruciating."

In retrospect, was "Showgirls," the "Plan 9 From Outer Space" of soft-porn, as bad as the Razzies - and critics the world over - made it out to be?

Yes, an emphatic Wilson said. "Put it in your DVD player with closed captioning. You'll see."

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