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## The Fighter

irected by David O. Russel,

The Fighter is a remarkable docudrama about the rise of Massachusetts's own junior welterweight champion, "Irish" Mickey Ward. Determined to win, Mickey got the help of his mother, manger, Alice

Ward. In addition his half brother, Dicky Eklund helped him by being his trainer. Dicky Eklund - known as the "Pride of Lowell (Massachusetts)" had a primary claim to fame is his 1978 boxing match with Sugar Ray Leonard, where Eklund knocked down Leonard, who eventually won the match. Because of his Crack addiction later on, he proved he was unreliable Micky and his training. Both their careers are managed by their domineering mother Alice Ward who believes it better to keep it all in the family.

A move by Dicky and Alice at one of Micky's fights makes Micky come to the realization that his boxing career is being stalled and perhaps even under-minded by the two, who are only looking out for themselves. This stance is fostered by Micky's new girlfriend, college drop-out and now local bartender Charlene Fleming.

As Micky tries boxing life without Dicky and Alice - much to their anger - he has to figure out where they fit into his life, especially as they do not get along with Charlene, if at all. Micky recovered from a disheartening series of defeats to win both the WBU Light Welterweight title and the WBU Intercontinental Lightweight title, due to fiery combination of hard work and determination.

### Christian Bale on The Fighter

"It's not about another raging bull. It's about a whole raging family: bulls, cows, even raging heifers. It opens in 1993 in the blue-collar section of Lowell, Massachusetts, where the punching doesn't stop at the ropes and the air is alive with epithets," Bale expresses.

"Dicky I think was an absolute source of inspiration initially. And then I think he probably became an absolute inspiration for his younger brother, because they're...it's an immensely loyal family and they're immensely loyal brothers. But as you see in the movie, it took Charlene to convince Micky that it wasn't him abandoning his family to be able to remove himself for a little while in order to change the dynamics. And then once that had been recognized and once Dicky, who also I think had immense pressure from the family in the expectations they had

of him at such a young age, and that through his success, the whole family would have success. And, really, I think very much that's a part as well of what was drawing him to self-destruction. Once Dicky was able to initiate and say it's no longer his time, it's Micky's time now, and then convince the rest of the family of that - which took some doing - then after that, Dicky was no end of help for Micky. You know, this movie wouldn't exist without that beautiful -relationship between the two brothers."

### The Review

With the possible exception of the romantic comedy, no film genre is more strictly governed by conventions — or enslaved by clichés, if you prefer — than the boxing picture. Something similar might be said about reviews of boxing pictures, so here goes: The Fighter, directed by David O. Russell and based on the true story of the junior welterweight Micky Ward, is quick on its feet and packs a mighty punch. With solid bodywork, clever feints and tremendous heart, it scores at least a TKO, by which I mean both that it falls just short of overpowering greatness, that the most impressive thing about it is technique. By the time this film — which was written by Scott Silver, Paul Tamasy and Eric Johnson, and shepherded into existence by Mark Wahlberg, who plays Mr. Ward — reaches its rousing and brutal final rounds, it may feel a bit familiar.

Mr. Bale's performance is astonishing, in part because he so completely conquers a daunting set of physical and psychological challenges. Dicky is not only an addict but also an athlete in his own right, a former boxer who clings to, and endlessly relives, a single moment of glory. He tells everyone who will listen that he once knocked down Sugar Ray Leonard, and while the facts of the episode are in dispute, his pugilistic skill and intelligence are never in doubt. ~ Roger Ebert Suntimes

### Oscar Nominations

Best Picture ~ David Hoberman, Todd Lieberman, and Mark Wahlberg

Best Director ~ David O. Russell

Best Supporting Actor ~ Christian Bale

Best Supporting Actress ~ Melissa Leo

Best Original Screenplay ~ Scott Silver, Paul Tamasy, and Eric Johnson

Best Film Editing ~ Pamela Martin



## Black Twan

ballet, Black Swan follows the story of Nina, a ballerina in a New York City ballet company whose life, like all those in her profession, is completely consumed with dance. She lives with her retired ballerina mother Erica who zealously supports her daughter's professional ambition. When artistic director Thomas Leroy decides to replace prima ballerina Beth MacIntyre for the opening production of their new season, Swan Lake, Nina is his first choice. But Nina has competition: a new dancer, Lily, who impresses Leroy as well. Swan Lake requires a dancer who can play both the White Swan with innocence and grace, and the Black Swan, who represents guile and sensuality. Nina fits the White Swan role perfectly but Lily is the personification of the Black Swan. As the two young dancers expand their rivalry into a twisted friendship, Nina begins to get more in touch with her dark side with a recklessness that threatens to destroy her. Nina's path to perfection is not a quiet, beautiful tale, but one of brutality in a world where the line between reality and delusion is easily blurred.

psychological thriller set in the world of

### Natalie Portman on Black Swan

"Darren is a really exciting director. It was really wonderful to get to watch him work," Natalie confessed. "He's phenoenal, we were really the only ones who were there every day so I got to see him work with the different actors who came in and out and see how he tailored his approach with every actor, which was really incredible to see. Right away I think we had an early recognition that we were equally military about our approach to work, that we'd be really focused and disciplined. It was a really quick, almost telepathic, reaction between us. He also gave me one of the greatest gifts that any director has ever given me, which is after we'd try everything that we wanted to do he'd give me ten different ways to attack a scene, he would then say 'ok, now do this one for yourself.' A lot of director's say 'this one's a freebie' or 'this is a free take', but to just put it in those words gave me such a different understanding, for myself and also for the character. I learned that artistry has to do with pleasing yourself, not with pleasing someone else. Nina's key to becoming an artist is finding pleasure herself, not trying to just please her mother or Thomas Leroy. So, I was sort of stepping out of that whole world of being a child and becoming a woman."

### The Review

Darren Aronofsky's *Black Swan* is a dazzling and often intoxicating horror story. No, it's not a body count slasher picture or a supernatural spook story, but it is every bit as unnerving as the best in traditional horror. It is at the core a character study of one woman striving for perfection in a severely competitive field and the various people around her who may or may not be looking out for her best interests. But the film is told in such a dazzling fashion that it often resembles a fever dream. It is scrumptious entertainment and a remarkable bit of cinema. It also containing a remarkably full-throttle performance by Natalie Portman, one that will likely win her an Oscar this year.

Natalie Portman delivers a truly defining performance. It's a brave and passionately committed piece of acting, with a character that is in nearly every frame of the picture. Portman's talent has never been in question, but this is a shattering 'leave nothing on the table' star turn. This is not a film full of monologues or big speeches, but Portman sells a most complicated leading lady with a dynamic physical presence that none-the-less is completely at the service of the film. First and foremost, Natalie Portman delivers a truly defining performance. It's a brave and passionately committed piece of acting, with a character that is in nearly every frame of the picture. Portman's talent has never been in question, but this is a shattering 'leave nothing on the table' star turn. This is not a film full of monologues or big speeches, but Portman sells a most complicated leading lady with a dynamic physical presence that none-the-less is completely at the service of the film. ~ New York Times

### Oscar Nominations

Best Picture ~ Scott Franklin, Mike Medavoy, and Brian Oliver

Best Director ~ Darren Aronofsky

Best Actress ~ Natalie Portman

Best Cinematography ~ Matthew Libatique

Best Film Editing ~ Andrew Weisblum



## The King's Speech

n the mid 1930s, King George V of England is concerned about the immediate future of the British monarchy. His eldest son David, first in line for the throne, is in a relationship with American divorcée Wallis Simpson. Marriage to a divorcée and being King of England (and thus head of the Church of England) is incompatible. Therefore, King George V's second son, Albert, is second in line for the throne. Plagued since childhood by a paralyzing stammer, the future King George VI of England fails to capture the confidence of the public, which is paramount if Britain does enter into war against Hitler's regime.

As King George V states about living in a communications age, a king can no longer get by in life solely by looking good in a regal uniform and knowing how to battle riding a horse. Elizabeth, Albert's concerned wife, urges him to seek the help of an iconoclastic Australian speech therapist, Lionel Logue, who insists on a level of familiarity with his new patient that the royal prince is loath to permit.

Lionel does in time become Albert's confidante and friend, especially from Lionel's side as he tries to determine the psychological issues behind the speech impediment. Upon the September 1939 declaration of war with Germany, George VI summons Logue to Buckingham Palace to prepare for his radio speech to the country. The King delivers his speech as if to Logue, who coaches him through every

moment. As Logue watches, the King steps onto the balcony of the palace with his family, where thousands of Londoners, gathered to hear the speech over loudspeakers, cheer and applaud him.

A final title card explains that, during the many speeches King George VI gave during World War II, Logue was always present. It is also explained that Logue and the King remained friends, and that, King George VI made Lionel Logue a Commander of the Royal Victorian Order in 1944. This high honour from a grateful King made Lionel part of the only order of chivalry that specifically rewards acts of personal service to the Monarch.

### Collin Firth on The King's Speech

"It's very rare that you see and attempt to portray just how debilitating stuttering is. It's one of the last legitimately pastiche disabilities," Firth began. "You don't really get away with poking fun at people who are in wheelchairs, you know, or who are blind. I'm not saying we have to be po-faced about tragedy or hardship, but it's pretty rare. I think, that the issue's been dealt

with as an issue. The real magic in the movie is from the strong bond between King George and Lionel Logue."

### The Review

The film does have its attractions, notably in its two solid leads and standout support from Mr. Pearce. Mercurially sliding between levels of imperiousness and desperation, he creates a thorny tangle of complications in only a few abbreviated scenes, and when his new king viciously taunts Albert, you see the entirety of their cruel childhood flashing between them. By the time he abdicates in 1936, publicly pledging himself to Mrs. Simpson ("the woman I love"), turning the throne over to King George VI, Edward has a hold on your affections. Those would surely lessen if the film tagged after him when he and Mrs. Simpson subsequently took their post-abdication tour around Germany, where they had tea with Hitler and the Duke returned the Führer's Nazi salute. Like many entertainments of this pophistorical type, The Heighty Speech wears history lightly no matter how heavy the crown. ~ The Huffington Post

### Oscar Nominations

Best Director ~ Tom Hooper

Best Actor ~ Collin Firth

Best Supporting Actor ~ Geoffrey Rush

Best Supporting Actress ~ Helena Bonham Carter

Best Writing ~ David Seidler

Best Original Score ~ Alexandre Desplat

Best Sounds Mixing ~ Paul Hamblin, Martin Jensen, and

John Midgley

Best Art Direction ~ Art Direction: Eve Stewart

Set Decoration: Judy Fa

Best Cinematography ~ Danny Cohen

Best Costume Design ~ Jenny Beavan

Best Film Editing ~ Tariq Anwar



## Inception

and infinite world of dreams, where your mind is the scene of the crime. Dom Cobb is a skilled thief, the absolute best in the dangerous art of extraction, stealing valuable secrets from deep within the subconscious during the dream state, when the mind is at its most vulnerable. Cobbs rare ability has made him a coveted player in this treacherous new world of corporate espionage, but it has also made him an international fugitive and cost him everything he has ever loved. Now Cobb is being offered a chance at redemption. One last job could give him his life back but only if he can accomplish the impossible - inception. Instead of the perfect heist, Cobb and his team of specialists have to pull off the reverse: their task is not to steal an idea but to plant one. If they succeed, it could be the perfect crime. But no amount of careful planning or expertise can prepare the team for the dangerous enemy that seems to predict their every move. An enemy

n original sci-fi action film that travels

around the globe and into the intimate

### Leonardo Dicaprio on Inception

that only Cobb could have seen coming.

"Nolan was very passionate, and very focused on creating this emotional, cathartic back story for Cobb," the troubled thief DiCaprio plays in Inception. "So that led us to really delve deep into his past," DiCaprio says. "Because this story is set in the present, but there's obviously things from his past that keep coming about within the dreamscape."

"I tried to take a very traditional approach to researching this film and read the analysis of dreams immediately and tried to pick apart the psychology of what things represented in the dream world. But I quickly realized that this was a whole new type of preparation, that meant basically talking with Chris at great length about this cathartic therapy session my character goes on, the psychoanalysis. In doing that we created this really powerful emotional journey. As far as the analysis of the dreams in this movie, and how Chris was going to make four different states of the human subconscious interact with each other in a cohesive plot structure, I left that up to Chris. I did not want to get involved, because Chris is obviously very capable of pulling off complex narratives like this and making them emotionally engaging for an audience. It's reassuring as an actor to know you're dealing with someone who is great at accomplishing stuff like that."

### The Review

It's said that Christopher Nolan spent ten years writing his screenplay for Inception. That must have involved prodigious concentration, like playing blindfold chess while walking a tight-wire. The film's hero tests a young architect by challenging her to create a maze, and Nolan tests us with his own dazzling maze. We have to trust him that he can lead us through, because much of the time we're lost and disoriented. Nolan must have rewritten this story time and again, finding that every change had a ripple effect down through the whole fabric.

The movies often seem to come from the recycling bin these days: Sequels, remakes, franchises. "Inception" does a difficult thing. It is wholly original, cut from new cloth, and yet structured with action movie basics so it feels like it makes more sense than (quite possibly) it does. I thought there was a hole in "Memento:" How does a man with short-term memory loss remember he has short-term memory loss? Maybe there's a hole in \*\*Inception\*\* too, but I can't find it. Christopher Nolan reinvented "Batman." This time he isn't reinventing anything. I think when Nolan left the labyrinth, he threw away the map. ~ Roger Ebert Suntimes

### Oscar Nominations

Best Picture ~ Christopher Nolan and Emma Thomas

Best Original Screenplay ~ Christopher Nolan

Best Score ~ Hans Zimmer

Best Sound Editing ~ Richard King

Best Sound Mixing ~ Lora Hirschberg, Gary A. Rizzo, and

Ed Novick

Best Art Direction ~ Art Directi on: Guy Hendrix Dyas

Set Decoration: Larry Dias and

Doug Mowa

Best Cinematography ~ Wally Pfister

Best Visual Effects ~ Paul Franklin, Chris Corbould,

Andrew Lockley, and Peter Bebb



### The Social Network

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n a fall night in 2003, Harvard undergrad and computer programming genius Mark Zuckerberg sits down at his computer and heatedly begins working on a new idea. In a fury of blogging and programming, what begins in his dorm room soon becomes a global social

network and a revolution in communication. A mere six years and 500 million friends later, Mark Zuckerberg is the youngest billionaire in history... but for this entrepreneur, success leads to both personal and legal complications. From director David Fincher and screenwriter Aaron Sorkin comes "The Social Network," a film that proves you don't get to 500 million friends without making a few enemies. The film is produced by Scott Rudin, Dana Brunetti, Michael De Luca, and Ceán Chaffin and based on the book "The Accidental Billionaires" by Ben Mezrich.

### Jesse Eisenberg on The Social Network

"The movie is about the creation of something amazing and building something new – which is Facebook – the excitement of it becoming successful and then the tragedy of the people that get left behind. So that's why the movie was really unique, and then David Fincher bringing this kind of epic scope to it and shooting it in such a meticulous way added to this profound exhilaration I had while making it.

My impression of Mark was really formed more from the character in the book. I don't know the real Mark Zuckerberg, though I was like everybody else and only saw him in interviews and things like that. Yet, playing a real person you have the added advantage of being able to kind of steal from the real person. For example, in interviews you see what Mark is wearing or how he walks or if he puts his hand in his pocket in a certain way and you can use that to create a character in a way that a fictional movie you kinda have to use your imagination. And I felt that having access to those resources actually made me more creative even though it can be viewed as limiting. Knowing that he puts his hand in his pocket makes me wonder why he puts his hand in his pocket that way. I'm able to kind of use that within the character. And as I said, I developed a great affection over the course of filming and even over the course of doing the publicity tour we've done and I've been asked that. The more I think about it the greater affection I develop. In the movie the character that Aaron created is a guy that is desperately trying to fit in and doesn't have the social wherewithal to do so. I could certainly relate to that. And almost to cope creates this incredible tool to interact in a way that he feels comfortable. And because of his incredible insight, 500

million other people also feel comfortable using that tool. It's just a fascinating character and complicated in all the right ways, so even though he maybe acts in a way that would be hurtful to other characters, like you indicated, it's by the end of the movie totally understandable.

### The Review

The Social Network is clearly Eisenberg's most high-profile film to date. David Fincher's film has the rare quality of being not only as smart as its brilliant hero, but in the same way. It is cocksure, impatient, cold, exciting and instinctively perceptive. It hurtles through two hours of spellbinding dialogue. It makes an untellable story clear and fascinating. It is said to be impossible to make a movie about a writer, because how can you show him only writing? It must also be impossible to make a movie about a computer programmer, because what is programming but writing in a language few people in the audience know? Yet Fincher and his writer, Aaron Sorkin, are able to explain the Facebook phenomenon in terms we can immediately understand, which is the reason 500 million of us have signed up. The Social Network is a great film not because of its dazzling style or visual cleverness, but because it is splendidly well-made. Despite the baffling complications of computer programming, web strategy and big finance, Aaron Sorkin's screenplay makes it all clear, and we don't follow the story so much as get dragged along behind it. I saw it with an audience that seemed wrapped up in an unusual way: It was very, very interested. ~ New York Times

### **Oscar Nominations**

Best Picture ~ Dana Brunetti, Ceán Chaffin, Michael De Luca, and Scott Rudin

Best Director ~ David Fincher

Best Actor ~ Jesse Eisenberg

Best Adapted Screenplay ~ Aaron Sorkin

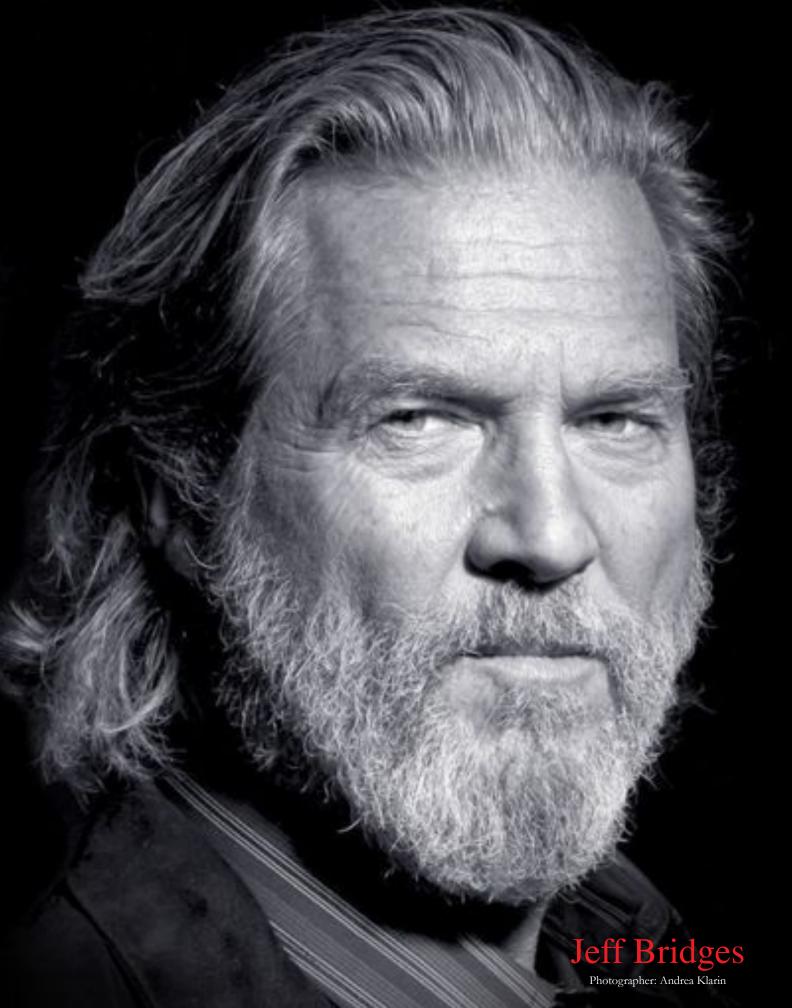
Best Original Score ~ Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross

Best Sound Mixing ~ Ren Klyce, David Parker,

Michael Semanick, and Mark Weingarten

Best Cinematography ~ Jeff Cronenweth

Best Film Editing ~ Angus Wall and Kirk Baxter





n 1880 in Yell County, Arkansas, 14-year-old Mattie Ross vows vengeance on her father's murderer, hired man Tom Chaney, who has fled into Indian Territory. Accordingly, she enlists the aid of one-eyed U.S. Marshal Rooster Cogburn and accepts the help of Texas Ranger La Boeuf, who is intent on the reward awaiting the man to 5capture Chaney for crimes committed in Texas. Despite mutual distrust, Rooster and La Boeuf unite to dissuade Mattie from accompanying them on their dangerous mission. Undeterred, she joins the manhunt. The trio tracks the assassin across the border to the refuge of outlaw Ned Pepper. During a surprise raid on Pepper's hideout, the lawmen kill four of his fellows and find a gold piece once the property of Mattie's father. Alone, Mattie encounters Chaney. Although she wounds him, Mattie is taken hostage by Pepper's band. Fearing for the girl's life, La Boeuf and Rooster pretend to retreat. Armed to the teeth, the two return unexpectedly to rescue Mattie. As Chaney bludgeons La Boeuf, Mattie shoots the fugitive a second time and falls backwards into a snakepit. After slaving Chaney, Rooster, aided by the dying ranger, pulls Mattie from the pit. Discovering that she has been bitten by a rattlesnake, the marshal, himself wounded, rushes the girl to a physician. Recovering from her injuries, the child proclaims to Rooster her wish to be buried next to him.

### Jeff Bridges on True Grit

"The Coen brothers really are great writers. They were able to incorporate some of their new ideas while still staying true to the original movie. The dialogue they write feels very real and appropriate for the story they are telling. I worked with them on "The Big Lebowski" and people often think there was a lot of improvisation on that movie, but all of those lines were scripted. They're incredible.

The first bit of direction the Coen brothers gave me, because I was curious as to why they wanted to do a remake of this classic western, was 'We're not making a remake of the western. We're referring to the book that Charles Portis wrote.' I read the book and then I knew what they were talking about. It's a wonderful book and it's not something unlike the Coen brothers might make. I could instantly see them doing it. I didn't refer to the John Wayne movie.

The character Rooster Cogburn is hard, and well, I'm that not hard. I think being hard means being gruff, mean and that

you don't like too many people. That's not me. I like people and I'm more light and airy. I'm not hard in any way. He's a wonderful character and he's fascinating. He's kind of full of himself and stand offish when you first meet him. But it turns out, he loves talking about himself, he's probably starved for company and he likes a drink.

### The Review

In the Coen Brothers' True Grit, Jeff Bridges is not playing the John Wayne role. He's playing the Jeff Bridges role — or, more properly, the role created in the enduring novel by Charles Portis, much of whose original dialogue can be heard in this film. Bridges doesn't have the archetypal stature of the Duke. Few ever have. But he has here, I believe, an equal screen presence. We always knew we were looking at John Wayne in the original "True Grit" (1969). When we see Rooster Cogburn in this version, we're not thinking about Jeff Bridges. Bridges' interpretation is no doubt closer to the reality of a lawman in those years of the West. The Coens have been surprisingly faithful to the tone and idiomatic tang of Mr. Portis's novel, perhaps because its worldview suits their ironic purposes. The whiskeysoaked Rooster still likes to "pull a cork," as he does in the book, and the Coens and Mr. Bridges get into the boozy spirit of things with slurs and pratfalls. ~ The Huffington Post

### Oscar Nominations

Best Picture ~ Ethan Coen, Joel Coen, and Scott Rudin

Best Director ~ Ethan Coen and Joel Coen

Best Actor ~ Jeff Bridges

Best Supporting Actress ~ Hailee Steinfeld

Best Adapted Screenplay ~ Ethan Coen and Joel Coen from

True Grit by Charles Portis

Best Sound Editing ~ Skip Lievsay and Craig Berkey

Best Sound Mixing ~ Skip Lievsay, Craig Berkey, Greg Orloff,

and Peter F. Kurland

Best Art Directing ~ Art Direction: Jess Gonchor

Set Decoration: Nancy Haigh

Best Costume Design ~ Mary Zophres



ames Franco, who just barely hit Hollywood's A-list of actors before landing the coveted job of co-hosting the upcoming Oscars, said in an interview he was just as surprised as anybody that he was offered the job.

### Question: Who first asked you to be a host for the upcoming Oscars?

Franco: "Oscar producer Bruce Cohen, from Milk, asked me to co-host with Anne Hathaway," he explained. "I was very, very surprised, and my initial reaction was 'No." "Then I thought about it and I thought, well, why not? Because I'll look bad? Well, I don't care."

### Q: Was your family or anyone you know really hesitant about you hosting?

Franco: "Well my family was very supportive and excited for me, but my representatives thought it might be a bad idea because I am nominated for best actor for 127 Hours. Still I really wanted the experience and I knew I would have a great time."

### Q: So are you going to be nervous when hosting the event? Are you worried what people might think about you as a host?

Franco: "Being in front of people performing or whatever it is always sparks something in me. So I said, 'Yes, of course!' Because the reaction that they have is based on conventional wisdom of what makes a good career. And that can be boring, really boring,"

## Franco on Franco Hosting the Oscars

he said. "I'm not feeling any pressure about co-hosting the upcoming Oscar ceremony. If it's the worst Oscars show ever, who cares?"

### Q: So you are really relaxed about this show, that's a first. So will their be any regrets?

Franco: "It's like, it's fine. It's one night. It doesn't matter. If I host the worst Oscar show in the history of the Oscars, like, why do I care? "You know I'll try my best," he added. "I don't see any shame in that." Hosting the Oscars is like shooting a movie, Franco said: It's all about collaboration. "If the movie comes out horrible, it's only partially my fault," he said. "It's the same thing with the Oscars. Yeah, me and Anne are the hosts, but they've been working on this thing for six months. I hope they've been putting in good work. If any of you have seen the commercials that have been going on it, it took us a couple of days to film them. so yeah the people who are apart of the

Oscars are very picky and neat and know what they wan't. Very few people are even considered to host the Oscars so I take this very seriously. The only regrets that I might have is if I fail my final exams for college, which I know I won't but still. The Oscars will be a great night and everything should go according to plan"

### Q: Any last words for the readers?

Franco: "Well this has been Franco on Franco. I hoped you enjoyed the questions I answered and the article. Well wish me luck at Oscars, hopefully my hosting skills will perfected by then. Oh, jj also with Oscar nomination. Remember to watch the Oscars on February 27th."

## REVIEW