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Academy Members Don't Care About Animation: 2017 Edition

By [Amid Amidi](#) | 03/01/2017 9:34 pm | [67 Comments](#)

Disney's *Zootopia* won the Academy Award for best animated feature this year, marking the ninth time in ten years that the Walt Disney Company has won the award.

Is there some kind of conspiracy that keeps allowing Disney to win the award? Probably not, at least not in our opinion.

The more likely culprit is good old-fashioned ignorance. Giving the award to the company with the biggest footprint in the industry is an unsurprising choice for voters who have no passion for animated filmmaking and no knowledge of the craft.

The Academy, at last count, had 6,687 members. There's ballpark 500-600 people

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so many others, I've felt hugely discouraged about much more important things, and frankly I just didn't want to spend my time doing this.

Voted: [Abstain]

Anonymous member of the actor's branch:

On animated features:

I watched them all and liked several of them, but I loved *The Red Turtle*, which was the most profound of the group.

Voted: *The Red Turtle*

On visual effects:

I like the effects in *Rogue One*, but I voted for *The Jungle Book* because I thought that one, with the animals and everything, was absolutely stunning.

Voted: *The Jungle Book*

On animated shorts:

The two that I liked the best were *Piper*, which is so adorable, and the one with the cigarettes where that crazy guy goes to China [*Pear Cider and Cigarettes*], which I voted for because it is very intriguing and different.

Voted: *Pear Cider and Cigarettes*

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for it.

But, even setting all that aside — oh, man, I'm embarrassed about this one — I really liked that silly little *Piper*. I had to ignore that it was Pixar because that's like the anti-Viagra: you see Pixar's name and you know it's all gonna be the same — probably great, but just the same. But that little bird? I could have spent an hour-and-a-half watching that f—ing bird. I really loved his energy. I guess I'm just mushier than normal this year.

Voted: *Piper*

Anonymous member of the public relations branch:

On animated features:

I didn't see any of them. I'm not that interested in animated films, to be honest with you.

Voted: [Abstain]

On visual effects:


I can barely remember *The Jungle Book*, it came out a long time ago. *Doctor Strange* was fine. The effects in *Deepwater Horizon* were really amazing — the highlight of the film, for me. But I didn't vote because I didn't see all of the films — I didn't see *Kubo and the Two Strings*, and I tried but didn't get to see *Rogue One* in theaters and really didn't want to watch it on DVD.


Voted: [Abstain]


On animated shorts:


This was a year when my interest in the Oscars was not as strong as it has been in the past because of the political situation at the moment — like


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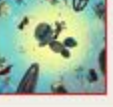
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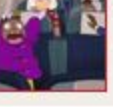
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On animated features:

I'm not big on animation or animators. I know a girl who only has sex with animators — she works over at Disney. In any event, my least favorite was *Moana* — just typical Disney fare. I really, really liked *Kubo and the Two Strings*, *My Life As a Zucchini*, and *Zootopia*. But I loved *The Red Turtle* — it was so simple and it spoke about life and it looked like a watercolor painting to me. Plus I have a fetish for turtles — I've just written a project about a turtle.

Voted: *The Red Turtle*

On visual effects:


The first one I knocked out was *Rogue One*. Then *Deepwater Horizon* — run of the mill, sorry. The director [Peter Berg] is a really talented guy, but he should be careful or he's gonna end up being the Oliver Stone of less important films. *Kubo [and the Two Strings]* was brilliant animation, but I just didn't buy into it. *Doctor Strange* was my first runner-up. But because I was a softie this year, I loved *The Jungle Book*, which I also nominated for best picture.


Voted: *The Jungle Book*


On animated shorts:


I really didn't like *Borrowed Time* — there was no point and the whole Western theme didn't work for me, period. I did not like *Blind Vaysha* — I couldn't figure it out. *Pearl* was really sweet and I liked it — that message about what we pass on to our children. And then it was between *Pear Cider [and Cigarettes]* and *Piper*. I have a bunch of years sober from my drug of choice, so watching *Pear Cider* hit a little bit close to home for me. Plus, it was much too long, and also, while I like the graphic novel approach, the movie was so infrequently animated that it's hard to vote for it.


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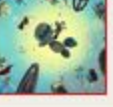
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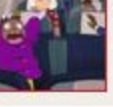
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one with *[The] Jungle Book*? [The voter is informed that *The Jungle Book* was eligible and is nominated in the best visual effects category.] Well that, I understand, is really, really good.

Voted: [Abstain]

On animated shorts:

I just don't have the time to see them. I'd rather see as many of the feature films as I can.

Voted: [Abstain]

Anonymous member of the executives branch:

On animated features:

I saw *Kubo [and the Two Strings]* and don't really remember it. I loved the music in *Moana*. I think *The Red Turtle* is very strong. I loved everything about *My Life As a Zucchini* — I was very taken with the idea of making a movie about a zucchini. But I voted for *Zootopia* because it has something important to say about the world. Basically, we all have to be nicer to each other.

Voted: *Zootopia*

On animated shorts:

The only one that really stood out in my memory from when I watched them until when I voted was *Piper*, which I loved. It was sweet, that little tiny bird. Family stories always get me.

Voted: *Piper*

Anonymous member of the producers branch:

On animated features:

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While some European countries already have film awards, like the U.K.'s BAFTAs, France's César Awards, and Spain's Goyas, the Emile Awards have the potential to build real prominence because they allow submissions from all of those countries, plus the rest of Europe. Further, the voting is guaranteed to be done by people who actually have an appreciation and understanding about the films that they're judging.

The Academy may be a group of industry professionals, but they have proven themselves to be anything but professional when it comes to judging animation. Their flippant attitude and outright disdain for the art form has led to a crisis of confidence in the organization's abilities to judge animation, and there is no indication that the Academy plans to implement new procedures that addresses their general membership's disinterest in animation craft.

Below are the opinions of six more Academy members from this year's "[Brutally Honest](#)" ballots feature of *The Hollywood Reporter*:

Anonymous member of the director's branch:

On animated features:

I don't watch the animated movies.

Voted: [Abstain]

On animated shorts:

I saw them all, but they all blurred together in my memory, so I abstained.

Voted: [Abstain]

Anonymous member of the actors branch:

On animated features:

Sometimes I watch these, but I didn't this season. But I hear — is this the

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The Academy, at last count, had 6,687 members. There's ballpark 500-600 people who are members of the Academy's short films and feature animation branch. The remaining 6,000-plus members who decide the winner of the feature animation Oscar have little connection to the animation field. It has proven itself to be a recipe for disaster.

For the last few years, *The Hollywood Reporter* has interviewed members of the Academy anonymously to find out how they voted in various categories. Each year (see [2014](#) or [2015](#)), the "Brutally Honest Oscar Voter Ballot" participants have shown a dismissive attitude toward animation, but more than mere attitude, they've also shown themselves uniquely unqualified to judge animated filmmaking, often expressing contempt for the art form and viewing it as a lesser craft than what they produce in live action.

Such views echo the stories that I have personally heard from reliable sources about how some Academy members outsource the animated feature voting process to their children, allowing their kids to watch the nominated films and report back with their favorites. The *Reporter* interviews make clear that such situations may be more widespread than anyone could have imagined.

The non-animation Academy members in these interviews are often openly hostile to the art form, and even when they try to discuss the films, they talk about them in terms of personal preference, not through discussing the creative and artistic merits of the productions.

If the feature animation Oscar hasn't yet lost its prestige in the public's eye, I can attest that many in the international animation community no longer view the Academy Award as a legitimate indicator of excellence in animated filmmaking. Rewarding the same corporation with an award for nearly an entire decade has had a clear and pronounced effect on how the award is perceived by the animation world outside of Los Angeles.

In fact, across the Atlantic, major animation producers have banded together and are preparing to launch a Pan-European alternative, the [European Animation Emile Awards](#).