

The New York Post

Oscar Goes to Hollywood Market

June 26, 2009

By HOLLY SANDERS WARE

No matter who takes home the Oscar for best picture, the bigger pool of nominees is bound to put pressure on studios to step up their marketing efforts for the award.

The decision by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to double the number of best-picture nominees, from five to 10, will heighten competition and give popular films with more marketing muscle a better shot at the top prize.

The Hollywood studios already spend millions campaigning for Oscar, hoping a nomination will broaden the audience for a film, boost DVD sales or even increase the bankability of a film star.

Although some Hollywood marketers groan at the idea of more awards-season jockeying and maintain they will exercise restraint when it comes to spending, marketing experts predict film execs will have a hard time resisting a run at best picture.

"It will absolutely mean more direct promotion of these films," said Peter Sealey, an adjunct marketing professor at Claremont Graduate University and a former head of marketing and distribution at Columbia Pictures. "It is doubling the number of films and the marketing effort."

Although some top-grossing films make their way into the mix, most best-picture contenders tend to be smaller films with a perceived artistic bent as opposed to bigger-budget crowd pleasers. Last year, for instance, Disney and Pixar mounted an aggressive best-picture campaign for "Wall-E" after a warm reception from critics – only to be passed over for a nomination.

The campaigning begins in November with an onslaught of awards ads – often titled "For Your Consideration" – directed at Oscar voters, although some studios start touting their contenders as early as September. After the nominees are announced, film studios slap their nominee accolades on ads that appear in newspapers, magazines and Web sites.

The entertainment trades – namely, Variety and the Hollywood Reporter – have been the biggest beneficiaries of Oscar ads, which by some estimates account for as much as half their ad revenue.

"The trades are salivating over the plethora of 'For Your Consideration' ads," said Howard Bragman, founder of public relations firm Fifteen Minutes. "It's a huge chunk of change for them. Not only will there be more ads but there will be bigger studio films with bigger marketing budgets."

(c) 2009 The New York Post. Provided by ProQuest LLC. All rights Reserved.
A service of YellowBrix, Inc.