

# And the Oscar goes to



By Gerry Beltz and Bret Schulte

Ahhh, mid-March, and the Oscars are once again upon us. After a few years of no-guess races led by lumbering giants (such as "Forrest Gump" and "Schindler's List"), 1996 seems to be a year more ready-made for neck-and-neck competition for that golden statuette.

In addition, it would seem the film industry is finally following the lead of its musical counterparts with a surge of support for independent filmmakers and their work.

However, for those movies made outside the omnipresent "Hollywood machine," nominations may be easier to come by than actual wins because of the politics involved in academy voting.

Still, this is the Academy Awards, home of the big surprises (Marisa Tomei?), so anything can happen. Two of the Daily Nebraskan's film critics already have made their choices, and if they don't match yours, hard cheese to you.

For best supporting actor and actress picks, see OSCARS on page 13.

## Best Picture

- "Secrets and Lies"
- "Jerry Maguire"
- "Fargo"
- "Shine"
- "The English Patient"

Gerry: Nobody cares about abused Australian pianists or funny murder mysteries, so "Shine" and "Fargo" go down. While nobody saw "Secrets and Lies," everybody was heading out to "Jerry Maguire," and while Cruise did give a good performance, it wasn't THAT great of an overall film. I'll stick with the tear-jerker "The English Patient."

Bret: Regardless of Gerry's obvious insensitivity to abused Australian pianists, we already have our "Piano" winner for the decade, and while quirky madcap murder-mysteries can be done with style and bravado as in "Fargo," they can rarely compete with the heavier themes that typically compose best picture films. In an indie year, "Jerry Maguire" is too bright and glossy, while "Secrets and Lies" a bit too opaque, I opt for the studio renegade "The English Patient" as well.



CAMERON CROWE (left) and Tom Cruise discuss a scene during the filming of "Jerry Maguire."

## Best Director

- Scott Hicks, "Shine"
- Joel Coen, "Fargo"
- Mike Leigh, "Secrets and lies"
- Milos Forman, "The People vs. Larry Flynt"
- Anthony Minghella, "The English Patient"

Bret: I want Milos to win — for bending PC over and spanking it with pornography, obscenity and a brilliant and pointed message about First Amendment rights in the Land of the Free. But the subject matter is far too racy and, well, real for an Oscar. I don't think Coen is as deserving, but he's my pick for his ballsy brainchild, the dark comedy "Fargo."

Gerry: Bret, you ignorant twit. Milos has already won in the past, and the academy of stingy, Anglo-Saxon males won't give it to him again. Even though he deserves it, Coen will suffer because "Fargo" was too cool for its own good. I'll go with a pairing between best picture and director, and hand the gold-plated thing to Minghella for his fantastic work with "The English Patient."



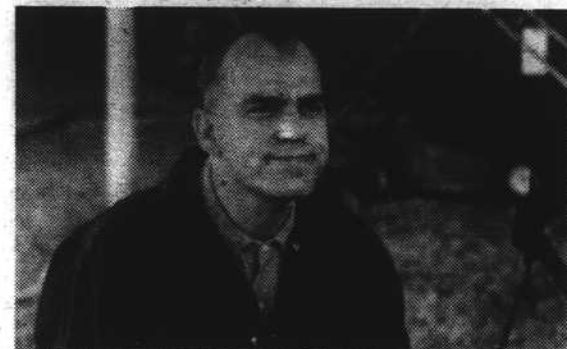
MILOS FORMAN (center) received his third Best Director nomination for his work on "The People vs. Larry Flynt."

## Best Actor

- Geoffrey Rush, "Shine"
- Tom Cruise, "Jerry Maguire"
- Ralph Fiennes, "The English Patient"
- Woody Harrelson, "The People vs. Larry Flynt"
- Billy Bob Thornton, "Sling Blade"

Bret: Although in the past Cruise has given us such memorable characters as Maverick, the American pop culture superhero who can fly a plane, drive a car real fast and make a flying cocktail, the fast-talking success story "Jerry Maguire" is a bit too easy for this uni-dimensional Hollywood personality. I'll go with Billy Bob Thornton; not only does his name strike a twang in my heart, but his portrayal of the mentally challenged in "Sling Blade" is the most endearing character of the year.

Gerry: I'd have to agree with Bret; Cruise just won't see the money. No one who has ever worn an American flag for a diaper has won best actor, and the same will go for Woody. Thornton should get it for his outstanding performance, but it will probably go to Fiennes so he doesn't think he has to portray a Nazi scumbag to win an award.



BILLY BOB THORNTON wrote, directed and starred in "Sling Blade." He received nominations for Best Actor and Best Adapted Screenplay.

## Best Actress

- Brenda Blethyn, "Secrets and Lies"
- Diane Keaton, "Marvin's Room"
- Frances McDormand, "Fargo"
- Emily Watson, "Breaking the Waves"
- Kristin Scott Thomas, "The English Patient"

Bret: Diane Keaton's tacitly banal performances invariably leave me waiting for Woody Allen to mutter his favorite catch phrase "masturbation." Kristin Scott Thomas is simply too tightly strung, and I am simply confused by Blethyn. McDormand's "Fargo" performance was a deliciously light and disturbing romp, and one for which she should be acknowledged.

Gerry: "Tacitly banal?" Guess who swallowed a dictionary last night! Still, this one will be a toughie. No one has even heard of Watson, let alone "Breaking the Waves," and Bret's confused about more than Brenda's last name. I'll go with McDormand on this one, breaking the streak of "The English Patient," while still giving a major award to a deserving film.



DIANE KEATON (left) may snag her second Oscar after being nominated for her work in "Marvin's Room."