# The Insider on the BEAUTY of the Oscars



From left: Denzel Washington in "Hurricane," Gwyneth Paltrow in "The Talented Mr. Ripley," Jim Carrey in "Man on the Moon," Tom Hanks and Michael Duncan in "The Green Mile" and Julia Roberts in "Notting Hill."

David Jané/DN

## 1999's strong films make Oscar competition fierce

**By Samuel McKewon**
*Senior editor*

*Editor's note: The nominees for the Academy Awards will be announced Tuesday, Feb. 15.*

The Academy Awards is never an exact science. It never claimed to be.

And so, every year, there are a few injustices in the nominations. A few distinct justices, too, I might add.

The year 1999 represented the best crop of movies in the decade. You may have to travel back to 1976, when "Taxi Driver," "Rocky," "Network," "All the President's Men" and "Carrie" all graced the screen in one year to find anything that compared. So the injustices might be a little higher this time around.

My predictions, then:

**Best Actor:**
**Kevin Spacey – "American Beauty"**
**Russell Crowe – "The Insider"**
**Jim Carrey – "Man on the Moon"**
**Richard Farnsworth – "The Straight Story"**
**Denzel Washington – "The Hurricane"**
**Who ought to be nominated but won't:** Matthew Broderick – "Election"

The skinny: Spacey is the favorite, but both Crowe and Carrey have strong arguments. Spacey has one statue to his name, while the other two underwent physical changes for their roles.

The dark horse is Farnsworth, who gave a beautiful performance in "The Straight Story" and ought to be recognized for it. Matt Damon might sneak in after his compelling turn in "The Talented Mr. Ripley," as might Washington for his Golden Globe-winning portrayal of a falsely jailed boxer. Tom Hanks might get a standby vote for a rather average performance in "The Green Mile."

**Who will win:** Spacey

**Who ought to win:** Spacey, for giving one of those performances that doesn't require any real physical change to go along with it. Lester Burnham is the role he was made to play.

**Best actress:**
**Annette Bening – "American Beauty"**
**Janet McTeer – "Tumbleweeds"**
**Hilary Swank – "Boys Don't Cry"**
**Sigourney Weaver – "A Map of the World"**
**And Meryl Streep,** again, because she's better than everybody else.

**Who ought to be nominated but won't:** Julia Roberts – "Notting Hill," Reese Witherspoon – "Election," Nicole Kidman – "Eyes Wide Shut"

**The Skinny:** It's anybody's guess after Bening, who is firmly locked in as the favorite. McTeer, as a roaming mother in the Southwest and Swank, as Brandon Teena, a Nebraska boy who is murdered because she is really a girl, will get nods, probably, and where the other two come from, it's hard to say. Here's a plug for Roberts, who did all she could with her movie-star role in "Notting Hill," and Kidman, whose performance fueled the best film of the year, "Eyes Wide Shut."

**Who will win:** Bening or Swank

**Who should win:** Kidman, who had a critical 10-minute confession scene to set "EWS" on its course and did it.

**Best supporting actor:**
**Tom Cruise – "Magnolia"**
**Michael Duncan – "The Green Mile"**
**Jude Law – "The Talented Mr. Ripley"**
**Haley Joel Osment – "The Sixth Sense"**
**Michael Caine – "The Cider House Rules"**
**Who ought to get nominated, but won't:** John Malkovich—"Being John Malkovich," Philip Seymour Hoffman, for any one of the five movies he seems to do each year (including "Magnolia" and "Flawless")

**The skinny:** Give it to Cruise, who got all the publicity for "Eyes Wide Shut" but delivered a stronger performance in a supporting role as the "seduce and destroy" guru. It's affecting and, well, brutally comical. Plus, he's too much of a good guy not to win. His only challenger: Osment, the boy-wonder who sees ghosts in "The Sixth Sense."

**Who will win:** Cruise
**Who should win:** Cruise

**Best supporting actress:**
**Mena Suvari – "American Beauty"**
**Angelina Jolie – "Girl, Interrupted"**
**Catherine Keener – "Being John Malkovich"**
**Chloe Sevigny – "Boys Don't Cry"**
**Gwyneth Paltrow – "The Talented Mr. Ripley"**
**Who ought to get nominated, but won't:** Leelee Sobieski – "Eyes Wide Shut." Her one look (and whatever the hell it is she whispered in Tom Cruise's ear) says more than 1,000 lines of dialogue.

**The Skinny:** Mixed bag, truly, but Jolie's talent has been begging for both this nomination and a victory. She plays crazy in "Girl, Interrupted," and the award should put her acting ability on par with her pillow lips in the minds of moviegoers. Paltrow will make the nomination trip many times in her life, if only because she looks so damn flawless.

**Who will win:** Jolie
**Who should win:** Keener, who is one of the few actresses out there that still moves with a little vavoom in her step. She's the best vamp going.

**Best Director:**
**Anthony Minghella – "The Talented Mr. Ripley"**
**Sam Mendes – "American Beauty"**
**Michael Mann – "The Insider"**
**M. Night Shyamalan – "The Sixth Sense"**
**Pedro Almodovar – "All About My Mother"**
**Who ought to get nominated, but won't:** Stanley Kubrick – "Eyes Wide Shut," Daniel Myrick & Eduardo Sanchez – "The Blair Witch Project"

**The Skinny:** Let's see who can't win it: Minghella, because he won three years ago, Shyamalan, because nobody knows he directed "The Sixth Sense," and Almodovar, because he's foreign. So give it to Mendes, the converted British theater director who hit a home-run in his first movie. Knows little about cameras, lets his people do the work, then lops off the controversial and contrived ending of "American Beauty" (hint: the boy gets framed for it). That's a director.

**Who will win it:** Mendes. Can't do any better for a debut.
**Who should:** Kubrick.

**Best picture:**
**"The Talented Mr. Ripley"**
**"American Beauty"**
**"The Insider"**
**"The Sixth Sense"**
**"All About My Mother"**
**What should get nominated, but won't:** "Eyes Wide Shut," "Election," "Three Kings," "Being John Malkovich" and "Magnolia" would replace all the above.

**The Skinny:** "All About My Mother" may be nominated for best foreign picture, thus opening up a spot. Either way, it wouldn't be a threat. "The Sixth Sense?" Not quite important enough. "American Beauty" will win, and here's why: it's original (not an adaptation), it's shorter than the rest (on video, this does matter) and right now it's hip to be cynical. It wasn't the best movie of the year, most critics agree. But it was in nearly every top 10 list. It is not a movie that will be forgotten with time, either. The sleeper is "The Insider."

Know this: it will be a lot more memorable than last year's winner, "Shakespeare in Love."

**What will win:** the "Beauty"
**What should:** "Eyes Wide Shut" or "Magnolia," I'll take these to my grave.