

Daily Nebraskan

Since 1901

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Buying Power Marketing increases chance of winning an Oscar

The wrong movies won the Oscars last night at the Academy Awards. The wrong actors and actresses, too.

Now that's a subjective statement, and, according to who you might ask, it isn't particularly accurate, either. Awards ceremonies are subjective. Always have been. Always will be.

Yet, the Academy Awards, more than other awards, are particularly strange because marketing is more important than quality. Furthermore, the Oscars game becomes a question not of what is best but what has been seen at all.

The nomination process for films is shaky, at best. Basically, it's this: you can't vote for what you haven't seen. And for Academy voters, even the great movie lovers of the bunch, many of them haven't seen some of the year's

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And unlike the Grammys, where the myriad of categories allows lesser-known acts — even people who might be playing at the local bar — to sneak their way into a golden record player, there is but one award for best American picture: Best Picture. The Academy Awards don't even have a comedy category like the Golden Globes.

And so, in the process, the Oscars night was once again taken up by long-winded speeches, host jokes and technical awards that belong in a separate ceremony the night before. If viewers, or voters, had a choice between watching the acceptance speech of a costume designer — who most certainly worked on a film that

had enough money to buy ornate costumes — or the winner of best comedy, which would they choose?

So much is made out of the number of awards any certain film can accrue. Special effects, sound and costume awards are nothing but chances for the big money groups to hoard their wealth. If it surprises people that "Gladiator" is nominated over and over for awards, they should know few films could match "Gladiator" in money spent.

That doesn't even begin to touch on the marketing dollars spent to essentially buy nominations. A film like "Chocolat" may be fine in several respects, but nearly every person in the film community acknowledges that the movie's production company, Miramax, spends so much money on marketing that they make sure every voter sees their film. How many voters, on the other hand, saw the Artisan-powered "Requiem for a Dream"?

What the system does is bury some of the best films for being small or, even worse, being released at the wrong time.

Consider "Momento," a film currently running the New York/L.A. circuit and gaining raves. Any chances of a film opening now being remembered next February that has little marketing money behind it and little word of mouth 10 months later?

Will Nebraska lose to Troy State next year?

Editorial Board

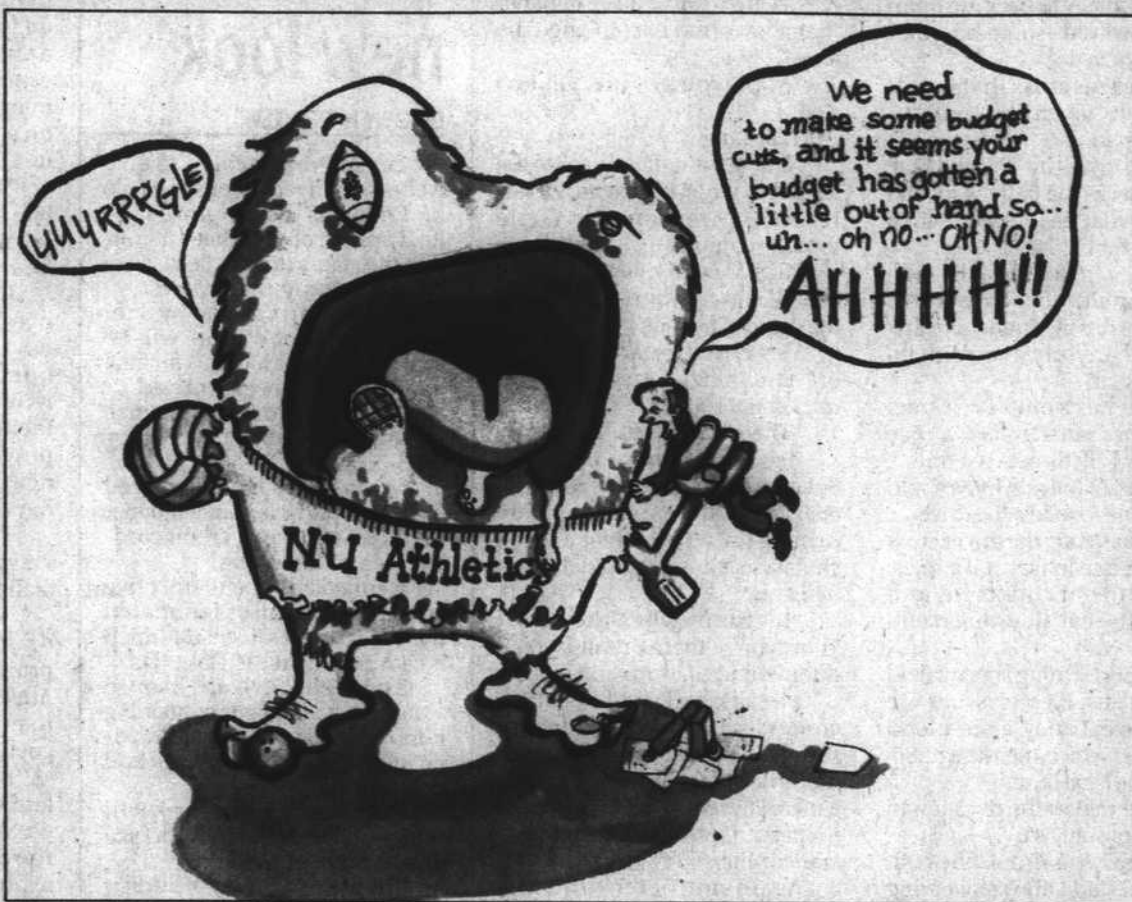
Sarah Baker, Jeff Bloom, Bradley Davis, Jake Glazeski, Matthew Hansen, Samuel McKewon, Kimberly Sweet

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Megan Cody/DN

Letters to the editor

God and athletes

In response to Samuel McKewon's article "A little help from above?" (Thursday, March 22), I have a few questions for him. Are you so arrogant to think that someone who created the universe can't care about the outcome of a sporting event but only you can? Matthew 10:30 reads, "And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Yet, you think that sports are too frivolous for God?

Also, I find it hard to believe that you honestly think that athletes accept God because other athletes are doing it. Athletes spend their whole lives going against their peers and working to better themselves. That is why only a few people will make it. Professional, I may not be, but as one person on a team of 24, you can't misunderstand my faith in God as a bandwagon theory.

I personally think that it is quite obvious that the reason so many athletes are speaking about God is that they realize that they could not have made it to where they are without His power in their lives. And once I got to know Jesus Christ personally, I have not wanted to stop shouting about Him either.

And what about second chances? You claim that there are no second chances in sports. I, myself, had an injury during high school that should have hampered my ability to ever be able to play again. I did, however, have a second chance. I was able to play for four more years. Praise God!

Lauren Tatum
senior
biochemistry
NU soccer player

What free news?

In response to Josh O'Connell, regarding the superfluosity of the Daily Nebraskan:

Mr. O'Connell mentions several "trustworthy (and free) sources" of the news he prefers not to get from the DN. I'm not sure I correctly understand his definition of free, however. I don't have a home com-

puter on which to access the AP news, and to purchase one equipped with Internet would cost \$799.

I don't have a television to watch Bill Maher, so that would be another \$225. Cable for SportsCenter would be \$360 per year. A subscription to the Journal Star, for a year, runs about \$172. Altogether, his "free" news sources would cost \$1,556 for me to access. The Daily Nebraskan costs a couple bucks a semester, and I've enjoyed reading it for the past four years. A well-funded paper is a better paper, and I fully support the DN. As for opinions, I wonder what vehicle he would have chosen to voice his opinion on this issue if not the DN. I'm sure it wouldn't have made Politically Incorrect.

Jennifer Kuzara
senior
anthropology, German

A personal attack

Just when I thought the Daily Nebraskan couldn't prove its unprofessionalism any more, it steps right up to the plate with the editorial of "Brent's Blunder." Since I first learned to read, I have never seen a reputable paper personally attack one person as that article did Stanfield.

I don't know Stanfield personally, and actually, I did not agree with cutting the DN's funding as much as he proposed, but I also don't agree with labeling him as "a senator with an ax to grind," taken directly from the article. If he was grinding the ax, that article picked up the shotgun, loaded it and let him have both barrels.

In the last line of the article, it states, "Senators shouldn't let one person's voice overpower that of an entire student body." If the DN truly stands behind that statement, then it should also believe that a newspaper shouldn't use its position to carry out a personal vendetta against one person.

John Backer
junior
criminal justice

Behind the waxy myths

"Truth: n. An ingenious compound of desirability and appearance. Discovery of truth is the sole purpose of philosophy, which is the most ancient occupation of the human mind and has a fair prospect of existing with increasing activity to the end of time."

— Ambrose Bierce, "The Devil's Dictionary"



Jeremy Patrick

I wish Ambrose Bierce were alive today. Author of "The Devil's Dictionary," he had the rare ability to see what we actually mean when we use certain words.

One of the current buzzwords in academic discourse is "critical thinking." It's recited like a veritable mantra by many intellectuals.

I expect if Bierce were around, he'd look at the term's current usage and give it an entry in "The Devil's Dictionary" like this: "Critical thinking: n. That which one has obviously failed to do whenever one disagrees, for whatever reason, with the views of the speaker."

But at the same time, it is clear that our society is dangerously lacking in critical thinking. When the National Enquirer makes millions, thousands call the "Psychic Hotline" and every 3 a.m., infomercials tout a new "miracle" product, something is probably wrong. If, as the textbooks say, an informed public is necessary for a well-functioning democracy, the reason for many of our country's various debacles suddenly becomes crystal-ball clear.

Of course, we're all guilty of lapses in critical thinking at one time or another. The problem with such lapses is they can be terribly embarrassing and strike anyone, anytime. They are not relegated solely to the "uneducated," as shown by the fact that just about every scam in existence has had testimony from a doctor or scientist of some sort.

So as penance for my own lapse in critical thinking, I share a story: Several months ago my boyfriend, Daniel, told me about this new product called "ear candles." He told me that they were a great way to remove earwax and that he had personally seen how well they work. So with such "evidence," we trudged on down to Open Harvest and plunked down several dollars for tapered tubes made out of wax.

Daniel filled me in on how they "work." First, you lie down on the couch. Second, you place the narrow end of the tube in your ear so that the other end is

sticking in the air. Third, you light that end on fire.

Now, if you're picturing someone with a flaming cone sticking out of their ear and it sounds suspicious, you're right and a whole lot smarter than I was. But alas...

Although I almost set Daniel's hair on fire, we were both amazed by what happened. After a few minutes, we snuffed the lit end and looked inside the tube. It was filled with a crumbling brown substance, obviously earwax. We weren't able to figure out how they worked, but I remember hypothesizing something about a vacuum.

So it was much to my chagrin when, a few days later, I walked into Barnes and Noble and picked up the newest issue of Skeptical Inquirer. There, on the cover in big bold letters, were the words "Behind the Ear Candle Myth." The article discussed experiments the authors had done and stated what should have been very obvious: the brown, crumbly substance found after lighting one end of the candle on fire was the remnants of the candle itself.

In reading Kant's thick, obfuscating works, there has only been one time I have ever laughed. It was when, in the "Critique of Pure Reason," he said, "Deficiency in the faculty of judgment is really what we call stupidity, and there is no remedy for that."

I hope he's wrong about that last part and that a rigorous use of critical thinking can compensate for at least some inherent stupidity. At its core, "critical thinking" is nothing more than the application of the scientific method. When it comes down to it, the method of science is even more important than the results it helps us to achieve.

As Stillman Drake said, "Facts ... constitute only a part of what science has to teach us, and they make up neither the most interesting nor the most significant ... the truly influential and pervasive aspects of modern science are not its fact at all, but rather its method of inquiry and its criterion of truth."

In his book "The Demon-Haunted World," Carl Sagan wrote about what he called a "baloney-detection" kit. In short, a few principles everyone should keep in mind when evaluating a claim. The "tools" in Sagan's baloney-detection kit are simple but effective.

Finding independent confirmation of facts, encouraging substantive debates by knowledgeable proponents on both sides of an issue, examining multiple hypotheses, avoiding arguments from authority and asking if the hypothesis can (at least in principle) be disproved, are all good methods of separating the wheat from the chaff.

Or at least separating the ear candles from the Q-Tips.

Pop culture's aluminum chariots

Nick Tarlowski
Today I wondered something. Where did all those cute little aluminum scooters go?

I haven't seen one since the second day of school this fall. It's like they vanished or something ... like a fad, even.

They just up and scooted themselves off the face of the earth — or to the dorm closets of hundreds of embarrassed undergraduate students.

Either way, I haven't seen one in forever and, well, I'd like to. You know, for old times sake. There was a day (but only one) when UNL's popular public trended by me on these sleek aluminum chariots to and from class and parties and dorms and whatnot, while a passion burned within me.

Yes, I, too, wanted one of those cute foldable scooters back in the day (for only one day, mind you), but I'll be damned if I'll ever know why. Well, actually I know exactly why. I'm weak. There it is; no use denying it.

It's a simple answer, really, and I've come to accept it. See, there are certain pieces of pop culture college regalia that I'm finding harder and harder to resist.

As always, I steer clear of the party/alcohol scene that seems to be so important to being "college-ish," but for some reason I can't help but listen to 97.7 JAMS when I'm in my car. I rarely buy name-brand clothes first hand, but I insist on eating two egg rolls and rice nearly everyday at the oh-so-filling Chinese restaurant in the Nebraska Union.

While I mock the SUV and its four-wheel stupid, anti-lock stupid, sunroofs, buttwarmers and other executive features, I recently purchased a cell phone for my phoning needs. I have lost all my credibility, haven't I? As the comic book guy from "The Simpsons" would say, "Nyew".

I used to preach the evils of pop music to my oldest little sister, a girl who routinely calls me on the silliness of my crusades. I methodically told her the details of backstage pitch correction that ensures a fresh, fluffy, harmonically correct boy-band performance every time.

I tore into her for having a Hanson CD back when those kids were young enough to be cute. I mightily upheld the code of punk as laid before me by my mentors Bad Religion and NOFX. Today I smile. Busta Rhymes is zipping down from my Napster server at 4.6k per second. Woo-ha! That's enough to make anyone think I went soft, right? Well, what all these "anyones" don't know is that while I roll up at a red light with the door speakers in my Honda kicking out "mo money mo" problems, I'm having a roaring good time making up scenarios for "Stay Puft Daddy," a 300-foot-tall marshmallow rapper who likes to eat the Sower off the Nebraska Capitol.

Those "anyones" look at me like I looked at my sister. "That kid is soooooo lame," they say shaking their heads; tinted windows, jaded minds. At least I know that it's all in fun. Life, that is.

So let the naysayers say nay for all I care; I'm all about egg rolls. It's all right that I do what I like. Aside from just having a good time with life in general, I'm glad I feel philosophically unchanged. I do my best not to be sold to an advertisement, and I routinely ask myself if I know my own motives.

As long as I can say that, it's good enough for me. The rest is all in the fun of living, and as far as I can tell, living is pretty good. To reiterate, I'm the same punk kid found at Southeast Community College two years ago — just with a few more groanable tendencies.

My laugh is heartier, too, I think. Pop culture college droops over me like a mushy Village Inn pancake hiding a hard boiled egg. It's an odd analogy, but it makes the point that I like to taste what's smothering me. Village Inn makes good pancakes.

So here's my big political move, my gusto manifesto. Students of UNL, lend me your ears and quit being cool for a second. There's a warm breeze this time of year. Drag those scooters out of the closet for a ride around the block. I'll be in the union cutting up with the boys over egg rolls and rice.