

OSCARS!

Predictions by Vince LePlay

And the Oscar goes to...

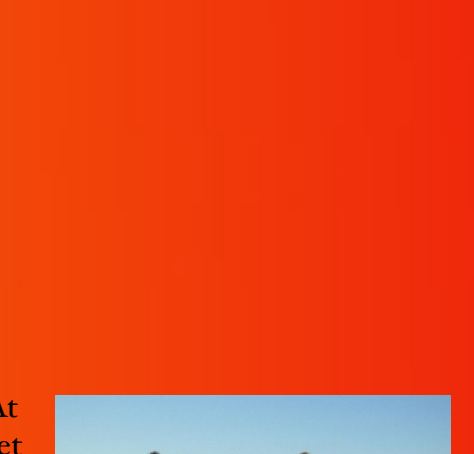
Here are my Oscar picks for 2024. It's always hard to judge the categories with either an objective or subjective eye: who will win as opposed to who should win? There have been plenty of sins of omission in past years (*Ordinary People* over *Raging Bull*, *Dances With Wolves* over *Goodfellas*, *Shakespeare in Love* over *Saving Private Ryan*)? Yet there are the unexpected upsets that always add a little flair and excitement to the mix

(See Marlon Cotillard's 2007 win for *La Vie En Rose* and the 2016 Best Picture debacle that *Moonlight* landed on the winning side of). My choices you'll find below are simply a guideline of who I think *will* win and *should* win (I tend to fall on the side of subjective). You'll find some clear locks and questionable calls but these are the nominees I truly thought were the best and deserved of recognition. Make sure to tune in to the big show on Sunday March 2nd at 6pm on ABC and don't forget to bust out your best duds, put the champagne on ice and roll out the red carpet: It's Oscar season!

Best Documentary Feature

- Black Box Diaries*
- No Other Land**
- Porcelain War*
- Soundtrack to a Coup d'Etat*
- Sugarcane*

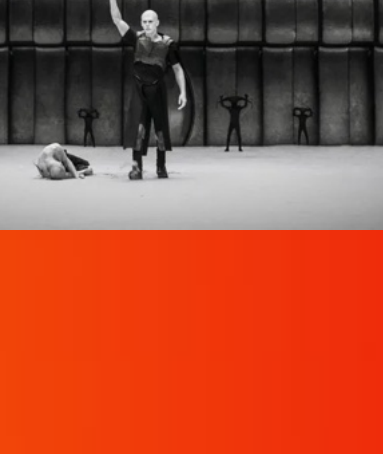
Hot button topics galore to start things off. Regional standouts *Sugarcane* and *Soundtrack to a Coup d'Etat* are happy to be nominated. *Black Box Diaries* takes an original step with having the filmmaker document her history and experience with sexual assault. It'll be left to *No Other Land* and *Porcelain War* to duke it out for the win with their globe-spanning ultra-relevant topics about modern warfare: the first depicting the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and the second depicting the struggle of local artisans amidst the carnage of the ongoing Russia/Ukraine war. *No Other Land* wins due to it's subject's centuries-old struggle for freedom.



Best Animated Feature

- Flow**
- Inside Out 2*
- Memoir of a Snail*
- Wallace & Gromit: Vengeance Most Fowl*
- The Wild Robot*

Inside Out 2 comes in as Disney's go-to cash cow while the return of Wallace & Gromit pleased longtime fans albeit a continuation of a previous work. *Memoir of a Snail* made waves overseas while *The Wild Robot* took a popular kids book office and turned it into a successful fall time film with critics and box office alike. Yet it's the Latvian feature *Flow* (rendered entirely through the editing software Blender and containing no dialogue) that grabs the headlines and pulls hard. The little black cat overtakes the big white robot on Oscar night.



Best International Feature

- I'm Still Here**
- The Girl with the Needle*
- Emilia Pérez*
- The Seed of the Sacred Fig*
- Flow*

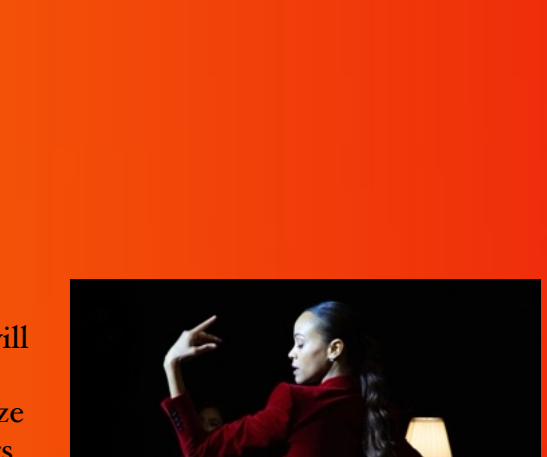
A very strong batch of candidates in this category. From an animated survival tale to horrific period pieces, there's much to pick through. At first the strongest bet was the french-mexican musical *Emilia Pérez*, yet in light of Karla Sofia Gascón's recent controversy, voters are looking at the big picture. After *I'm Still Here* opened wide following a trio of nominations, its stark depiction of a frightening topic viewed through the past seems towering in relevance as compared to the song-and-dance antics of the former frontrunner. The Brazilian drama will pull ahead in the home stretch to garner a victory.



Best Visual Effects

- Alien: Romulus**
- Better Man*
- Dune: Part Two**
- Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes*
- Wicked*

Monkeys on the mind with *Better Man*, *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes* and *Wicked*, all ably animated but the interstellar worlds of *Alien: Romulus* and *Dune: Part Two* lead the pack. Academy voters will give it to the team behind creating Arrakis and Geidi Prime for the second part of Denis Villeneuve's epic adaptation of Frank Herbert's sci-fi classic.



Best Editing

- Anora**
- The Brutalist*
- Conclave**
- Emilia Pérez*
- Wicked*

Runtimes play a huge role in this year's field of editing nominees. Kudos to *Wicked* and *The Brutalist* for shaping their heady source material into digestible chunks. Count on voters to give it to *Conclave* for its expert pacing and taut timing.



Best Makeup & Hairstyling

- A Different Man*
- Emilia Pérez*
- Nosferatu*
- The Substance**
- Wicked*

This one's a coin toss. *Emilia Pérez*, *Nosferatu* and *Wicked* all possess outstanding prosthetics but none of them are highlighted within the story like *A Different Man* or *The Substance*. The latter wins by an inch.



Best Sound

- A Complete Unknown**
- Dune: Part Two**
- Emilia Pérez*
- Wicked*
- The Wild Robot*

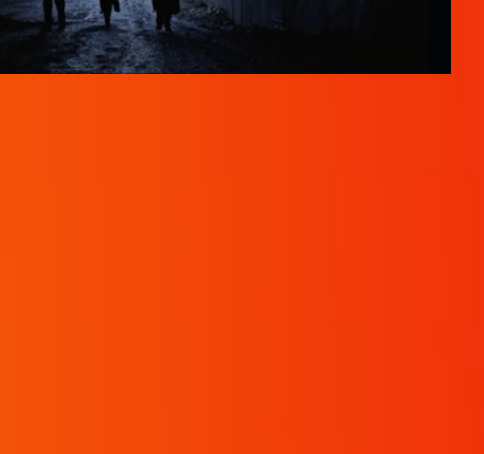
The acoustic twangs and electric fuzz of *A Complete Unknown* ground the film in its era while the sonic landscapes of *Wicked* & *Emilia Pérez* are more so highlighted by their musical numbers. *The Wild Robot* gets a nod for its expansive Foley work but it's the crew behind creating the expansive soundscapes for *Dune* (2022) that will win again for their refined and precise methods in bringing the otherworldly creations of deep space to life.



Best Original Song

- "El Mal" from Emilia Pérez**
- "The Journey" from The Six Triple Eight*
- "Like a Bird" from Sing Sing*
- "Mi Camino" from Emilia Pérez*
- "Never Too Late" from Elton John: Never Too Late*

Similar to last year's *Barbie*, the winner for Best Original Song will hail from *Emilia Pérez*... but which one will win? *Mi Camino* is a hell of a catchy ear worm but firestarter *El Mal* will take the prize with Saldaña and Gascon's musical tête-à-tête a feast for the ears.



Best Original Score

- The Brutalist**
- Conclave*
- Emilia Pérez*
- Wicked*
- The Wild Robot*

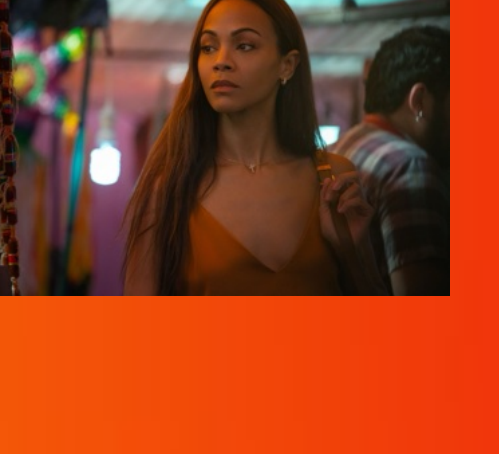
A killer's row of composers to choose from here. Kris Bowers' recent hot streak continues with *The Wild Robot* while Volker Bertelmann's crisp strings for *Conclave* match the pace and intensity of the film. Much credit must be given to the teams behind *Wicked* and *Emilia Pérez* for landing the balancing act of writing a score to match the songs featured throughout (one reinterpreted from the stage version and one originally written as a stage version). Yet Daniel Blumberg will win for his sweeping orchestral swells and experimentally rustic tones that flourish and thrive throughout *The Brutalist*. The stirring emotion of it all is what will earn him the statue.



Best Costume Design

- A Complete Unknown**
- Conclave*
- Gladiator II*
- Nosferatu*
- Wicked**

The beautiful flowing robes of *Gladiator II*, *Conclave* and *Nosferatu* are a sight to behold while *A Complete Unknown* stays true to the rebellious get-ups of the 1960's. Count on cultural phenomenon *Wicked* to grab a win here with its unique and individualistic outfits of the land of Oz.



Best Production Design

- The Brutalist**
- Conclave*
- Dune: Part Two**
- Nosferatu*
- Wicked**

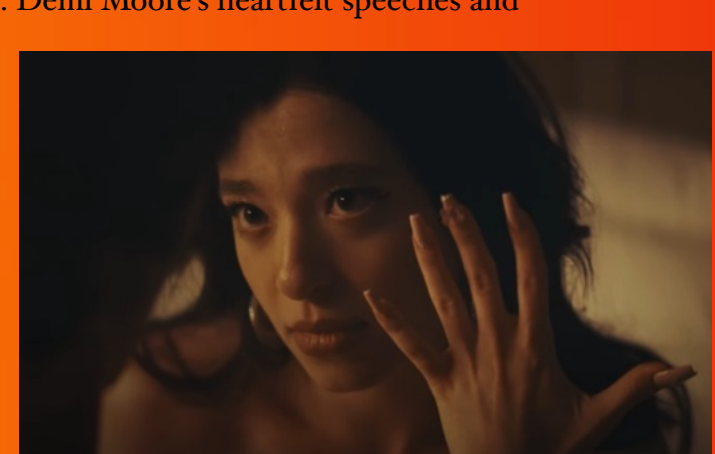
Wicked will match its victory in the costume category with further recognition for its immaculately constructed sets. Dark Horse option: *The Brutalist* may pull a sleeper win due to architecture and memorialization being at the heart of its story.



Best Cinematography

- The Brutalist**
- Dune: Part Two**
- Emilia Pérez*
- Maria*
- Nosferatu*

Ed Lachman gains another legacy nomination (the single nomination for *Maria*) while Greig Fraser has already won for his prior work on *Dune* (2021). The swaying camerawork for nominee powerhouse *Emilia Pérez* will be lost amongst its other stronger categories leaving the little gold man down to two. Lol Crawley will win for *The Brutalist* due to the sheer scope of the film's visuals and the tenacity to shoot it in VistaVision (the last film shot in this format was Marlon Brando's *One-Eyed Jacks* (1961)) and project it on 70mm. Don't overlook possible upset Jarin Blaschke for his atmospheric work on *Nosferatu*. He'd have more of a chance if his aesthetics retained more consistency (the second half of the film never looks as good as the gypsy camp in the woods at the end of the first act). Crawley wins due to maintaining a consistent and magnificent tone that sustains itself throughout *The Brutalist*'s gargantuan runtime, intermission and all.



Best Adapted Screenplay

- A Complete Unknown**
- Conclave**
- Emilia Pérez*
- Nickel Boys*
- Sing Sing*

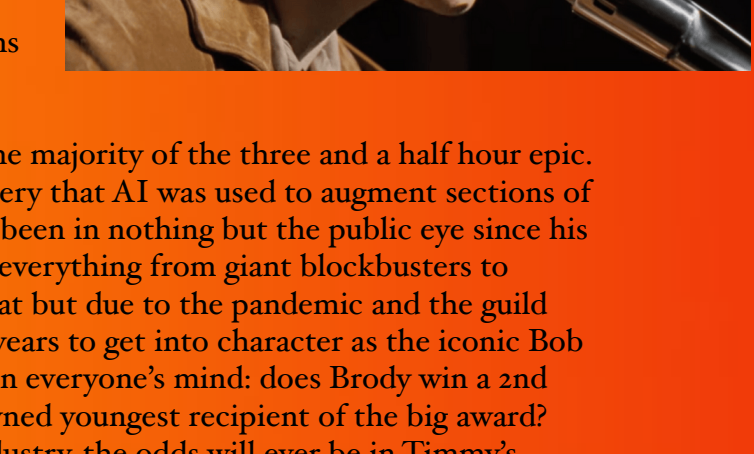
With its misses in the directing and camera categories, *Conclave* looks to make up for it with a win here for Peter Straughan's stirring adaptation of the 2016 page-turner that equals the slow-burn intrigue of the novel on every level.



Best Original Screenplay

- Anora**
- The Brutalist*
- A Real Pain*
- September 5*
- The Substance*

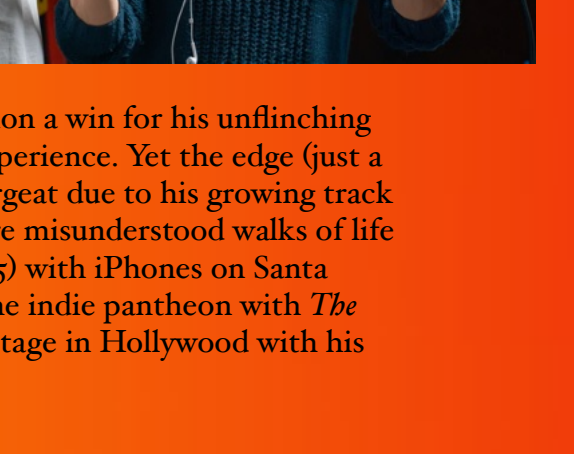
An extremely tough category to predict. The writers of *September 5th* slide in with a left-field nomination while Jesse Eisenberg's first writing nod is well-earned for an emotionally personal work. The remaining remnants of films all could take it. Brady Corbet's *The Brutalist* could swoop in for the win though its sprawling length could set it apart from the others. *The Substance* may have its divisive but could very well win due to its divergent into horror and a lens turned upon the industry itself. Sean Baker's *Anora* may be a bit long-winded towards the end of the pick but the characters and story are so utterly original that it's a sin to count him out. Second year winner but I'm betting on *Anora* sneaking in a win here due to its late-race surge in the categories of writing, acting and directing.



Best Supporting Actress

- Monica Barbaro - A Complete Unknown**
- Ariana Grande - Wicked*
- Felicity Jones - The Brutalist*
- Isabella Rossellini - Conclave*
- Zoë Saldaña - Emilia Pérez**

Monica Barbaro's delicately rugged portrayal of folk legend Joan Baez gets rightful recognition while Ariana Grande gets a nod for flexing her acting chops along with her top-notch singing. Rossellini's fierce but quiet performance is handicapped by very little screen time and the same goes for Jones's few but forceful scenes smattered throughout the bulky runtime of *The Brutalist*. First-time nominee Zoë Saldaña will win; as academy's back and forth between her role as a lead or as supporting will give her the power to push through for Oscar gold.



Best Supporting Actor

- Yura Borisov - Anora**
- Kieran Culkin - A Real Pain**
- Edward Norton - A Complete Unknown*
- Guy Pearce - The Brutalist*
- Jeremy Strong - The Apprentice*

Yura Borisov enjoys a first time nomination while Ed Norton adds another to his mantle with his headstrong interpretation of Pete Seeger. Guy Pearce and Jeremy Strong rule the roost with explosively dark performances but academy voters may be too put off by the images of the tyrannical men they're playing as opposed to the quality of the performances themselves. So first-time nominee Kieran Culkin for his brash and bruised portrayal of a Jewish American descendent of Holocaust survivors who grapples with the effects of generational trauma.



Best Actress

- Cynthia Erivo - Wicked**
- Karla Sofia Gascón - Emilia Pérez*
- Mikey Madison - Anora**
- Demi Moore - The Substance*
- Fernanda Torres - I'm Still Here*

Cynthia Erivo makes a monumental turn in one of the stage's most revered roles and knocks it out of the park on the big screen. Karla Sofia Gascón's chances were good until her awards circuit spiral made everyone forget about the powerful and complex role she played. Either of the remaining three could take it on Oscar night. Demi Moore's heartfelt speeches and comeback tour has been more of the driving force for her as opposed to the role she personifies. Fernanda Torres's silent and brooding incarnation of a woman stripped of everything is sure to sway voters with her emotional power and hefty amount of screen time. Yet Mikey Madison's bombastic portrayal of the bristly Anora (along with her late-circuit slew of wins) is hard to turn away from. It's *Anora*'s other wins throughout the night that will seal the deal for this intensely tight category.



Best Actor

- Adrien Brody - The Brutalist**
- Timothée Chalamet - A Complete Unknown**
- Rolph Fiennes - Conclave*
- Sebastian Stan - The Apprentice*

A cold war of a race if there ever was one. Ralph Fiennes adds another stellar turn to its tenure of nominations while Sebastian Stan embodies the current zeitgeist of political and national oppression and deserves every single flower for having the balls to play such a figure at a time such as this. Colman Domingo (perhaps the group's most heartwarming performance) goes back-to-back following up last year's charismatic nomination for *Rustin*. As per usual it's going to be a battle down to the nitty gritty between a final pair: Brody and Chalamet. I mean CLOSE. Brody's no stranger to Oscar love (he still remains the youngest to ever win Best Actor) and it can't be ignored that he carries the entirety of *The Brutalist* on his back while being on screen for the majority of the three and a half hour epic. A thorn in his paw, however, is the recent discovery that AI was used to augment sections of his Hungarian accent. Meanwhile Chalamet has been in nothing but the public eye since his last nomination for *Call Me By Your Name*; doing everything from giant blockbusters to heartfelt dramas to musical biopics. Not only that but due to the pandemic and the guild strikes, Chalamet was afforded a whopping five years to get into character as the iconic Bob Dylan. Come Oscar night one question will be on anyone's mind: does Brody win a 2nd Oscar or does Chalamet become the newly crowned youngest recipient of the big award? With the use of AI still a touchy topic in the industry, the odds will ever be in Timmy's favor. Bet on him to win in a major upset.



Best Director

- Sean Baker - Anora**
- Brady Corbet - The Brutalist*
- James Mangold - A Complete Unknown*
- Jacques Audiard - Emilia Pérez*
- Coralie Fargeat - The Substance*

A younger generation of filmmakers dot this year's five directing nominees. French mainstay Jacques Audiard deserves to win just as much as anyone but the flack and criticism for lack of research on the subject of not only depictions of Mexican life but also depictions of trans individuals will hurt his chances. James Mangold (the unsung king of music biopics) gets a much-deserved nomination here for his clear and incisive recreations of musical history. Coralie Fargeat will rest on the nomination here while her chances of nabbing an original screenplay win are more in her favor. Brady Corbet has a real, REAL chance of breaking through as a maverick filmmaker by making his first nomination a win for his edging vision of his beehemoth chronicling of the immigrant/artist experience. Yet the deft (just a slight one) will go to Sean Baker. He beats out Corbet and Fargeat due to his growing track record of off-the-cuff films that showcase the lesser seen, more misunderstood walks of life in modern America. His journey from shooting *Tangerine* (2015) with iPhones on Santa Monica Boulevard to carving a name out for himself within the indie canon with *The Florida Project* (2017) and *Red Rocket* (2022) to entering center stage in Hollywood with his biggest success yet in *Anora*... he's the guy to take it this year.



Best Picture

- Anora**
- The Brutalist*
- A Complete Unknown*
- Conclave*
- Dune: Part Two*
- Emilia Pérez*
- I'm Still Here*
- Nickel Boys*
- The Substance*
- Wicked*

It's been a long time since the Best Picture race has been so hard to call. *Dune: Part Two*, *Nickel Boys* and *The Substance* won't win due to overall lack of nominations. *I'm Still Here* can bank on an International Feature win while *Wicked* will swoop in for the technical awards and box office love. *Emilia Pérez* was a strong starter but again Gascón's dramatic downside will unfortunately sink its chances of winning. *A Complete Unknown* has as good a chance as any but its biopic format may be seen by some as tired and worn in comparison to more original works. *Conclave* is an adaptation of a novel but it's so purely entertaining that it could sneak in and take it (its recent BAFTA win only adds to its odds of winning). *The Brutalist* could win if academy voters decide it's a year to crown a winner in the vein of the grand old filmgoing experiences of the 50's, 60's and 70's (a win for Brody and Corbet in the acting, writing and directing departments will definitely bolster its chances.) The exact same can be said for *Anora*; wins in other major categories will strengthen the film's chances of winning the big prize. I think voters will look at the quality of the work. Baker has presented coupled with his road from indie filmmaker to major Hollywood player and award *Anora* the Best Picture winner of 2024.

