

Can't make it to L.A. this Sunday?

Try one of these local Oscar-viewing parties

Join fellow movie buffs at the Westdale or the Playhouse this weekend

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By Raymond Beauchemin, contributor



Lyla Miklos, left, and Ryan Trepanier will be hosting Oscar-viewing parties on Sunday at the Westdale and the Playhouse.

Photo Credit: Terrance Odette

Local author Raymond Beauchemin's first movie memory is of a triple bill at the drive-in: "Jungle Book" followed by "The Alamo," followed by "Alice's Restaurant," during which his father finally woke up, said, "What is this?" and drove everyone home.

Lyla Miklos remembers when her father got a copy of “Star Wars” and showed it in the gymnasium at her school in Iqaluit. She remembers the Hasbro “Star Wars” toys her father got her also.

“At some point we moved to Hamilton,” Miklos remembered in a recent conversation about hosting a party for this year’s Academy Awards. “When we got here, we looked around, wondering, where’s all our ‘Star Wars’ toys? ‘I gave them away,’ my father said. ‘But, Dad, that was the Millennium Falcon!’”

Film, it almost goes without saying, has been a major part of Miklos’s life.

“This is my playground,” she said.

Miklos is hosting for the second year in a row an [Oscar-viewing party at the Westdale Theatre](#). Doors open at 5:30 p.m. and the live telecast starts at 7.

In-between is an Oscar-winner prediction pool for \$5. The winner gets a year-long movie pass at the Westdale (popcorn and pop included). There’s also a best-dressed contest, where attendees can come as a character from a nominated movie or try to pull off a red carpet look. Then, during commercial breaks, there’ll be movie-related trivia questions with prizes of free popcorn or movie passes.

“It’s a good community event,” Miklos, a writer and performer, said. “We were jam-packed last year. There was young and old, all backgrounds. We’re all people who love movies.”

As a companion event to the Westdale party is an Oscars viewing at [the Playhouse Cinema](#). Participants can come dressed if they’d like, but there’s no contest. The night is “meant to be more inclusive. You don’t have to have a \$1,000 tux. Just come on out and be among a community of film lovers,” said Ryan Trepanier, who is hosting the Playhouse party.

Good thing there’s no Bond movie [among contenders this year](#).

But there are some amazing films among the nominees for best picture, director, actor, actress and the 19 other categories. [One of the most talked-about films has been “Emilia Pérez,”](#) but not for normal go-watch-it reasons.

Though it received 13 nominations, including Best Picture, Best Actress for Karla Sofía Gascón, the first trans woman to receive such an accolade, the film is mired in controversy. The trans community believes it’s misrepresented as do Mexicans

(we're not all drug lords, ¿Comprende?) and moreover it's a French production, completely shot in France by a director who admits he did no research before making the film.

It's so controversial, Miklos said, it could end up like Steven Spielberg's "The Color Purple," garnering no awards despite 11 nominations.

Miklos admits she walked out of the film within the first 10 minutes. When interviewed, she was still waiting to see "The Brutalist," "Nickel Boys" and "Anora."

Trepanier said he's torn as to his favourite for best picture this year between "The Brutalist," which though it clocks at three hours and 45 minutes — including intermission — doesn't feel that long, and "Anora," which has been compared with "Pretty Woman," though it's "nothing like that. It's oddly funny and heartbreaking at the same time."

Given the range of the movies up for the top awards, Trepanier said "this year isn't as obvious as last year" in terms of probable winners.

Regardless, the Oscars are a party.

"I've loved the Oscars since I was a kid," Miklos said. "For years, I would invite my friends home for Oscar night and I'd have trivia prizes and cover the walls with pictures of the nominees. A baker friend of mine would make Oscar-shaped cookies." And a good time was had by all.

This year could prove interesting in other ways, of course. This is the first Academy Awards night since the re-election of a certain president.

Miklos said she hopes the award presenters and winners "keep it classy."

But one never knows. Sometimes political speeches are received well, other times not and one finds oneself blackballed by the Academy of Motion Pictures.

"Michael Moore made a speech against George Bush and the war in Iraq (when accepting an award for 'Bowling for Columbine') and got booed. These are tense times for everybody right now, especially if you're a member of a minority."

Yet, there are so many political movies among the nominees, even one as seemingly innocent as "The Wizard of Oz" prequel "Wicked," which started life as a novel before being adapted as a stage musical.

But the musical, given the limits of its two-hour length, could only go so far down the yellow brick road of politics. The movie brought out the politics more, Miklos and Trepanier said.

“And having a Black woman (Cynthia Erivo) at its centre makes it more political,” Miklos said. “It’s a story about racism, about fascism, in the end, and that’s far clearer in the movie.”

Academy Awards viewing parties:

Westdale Theatre

1014 King St. W.

Doors open 5:30 p.m.

Telecast begins at 7 p.m.

Playhouse Cinema

177 Sherman St. N.

Doors open 6:30 p.m.

Telecast begins at 7 p.m.

Opinion articles are based on the author's interpretations and judgments of facts, data and events.

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