

Get ready for tonight's 98th Academy Awards

If you're filling out an Oscar ballot, forget what you want to win; our critic advises focusing on what the Academy is most likely to vote for and provides his picks for this year's best

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Flamborough Today
Mar 15, 2026



Stop rolling the cameras and roll out the red carpet instead: at long last, it's time for the Oscars!

This year's 98th Academy Awards will be presented in Hollywood tonight, and our movie critic is here with his annual guide to help you with filling out your Oscars ballots.

We'll answer all the big questions, from "Who will actually win?" to "Which is the one where Timothée Chalamet plays ping pong?" and everything in between.

After a rough couple of years, 2025 was the first year of bona fide success for blockbusters and award hopefuls alike at the multiplex. After years of turmoil due to the COVID-19 pandemic and obscure nominees, this year's Oscars feature many fan favourites and some of 2025's biggest artistic hits.

Now that new releases steadily coming out, new productions are being ordered and all the health crises and strikes are over, it seems audiences can finally go back to just enjoying ourselves watching great movies again.

2025 was a banner year for new movies, including several blockbuster hits that were big crowd-pleasers and made for some truly great memories.

True, last Easter's blues thriller *Sinners* and the adventure drama *One Battle After Another* have dominated headlines, but there were also great hits like *F1*, *Weapons*, *Superman* and *Zootopia 2*.

With recently dwindling viewership and the opportunity to capitalize on well-known titles this year, the stakes are high for the Oscars to have a good show tonight. Luckily, Conan O'Brien is poised to put on another great show, especially after his positive reception at last year's ceremony.

It can be easy to feel cynical about another award show, but this is the Oscars - it really is an honour and a big deal to be a winner. (And yes, it really also is an honour just to be nominated.)

My advice is to take the show's spirit seriously and the literal show less so. You'll relax and have a lot more fun - and make the photo finish for Best Picture this year all the more exciting.

Oscars ballot cheat-sheet

With so many great films, who's likely to bring home a statuette? That's always harder to guess than you might suspect. This year is also especially difficult with the close race in many categories between *One Battle After Another* and *Sinners*.

If you want some help filling out an Oscar ballot, my annual cheat sheet is listed below. It's worth remembering that predicting the Oscars isn't about who you want to win. It's about who you think the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Science actually voted to win.

Here are my predictions for the movies I believe will win each prize tonight. You can use my background and predictions to help you win your Oscar ballots - good luck!



ONE BATTLE AFTER ANOTHER

- Best Picture
- Best Director for Paul Thomas Anderson
- Best Supporting Actor for Sean Penn
- Best Adapted Screenplay
- Best Film Editing
- Best Cinematography



SINNERS

- Best Actor for Michael B. Jordan
- Best Original Screenplay
- Best Casting
- Best Original Score



FRANKENSTEIN

- Best Costume Design
- Best Makeup and Hairstyling
- Best Production Design



KPOP DEMON HUNTERS

- Best Animated Feature Film
- Best Original Song for "Golden"

So how good are my guesses? Not to brag, but my track record is pretty good. I saw more than 300 movies last year, including all of the nominated feature-length movies. That doesn't guarantee accuracy, but my insights (and track record) average between 70 and 90 per cent right. While I only predicted 16/23 winners

correctly last year, back in 2022 I was almost perfect having guessed 22/23, missing just one category.

Unlike last year when Anora led the ceremony and most other films mostly sharing what was left, this one should see four key winners winning multiple Oscars each (which is more commonly what happens), along with a dozen films poised to win a single award each.

First, Best Picture this year will be a photo finish race between *One Battle After Another* and *Sinners*, in that order.

No matter who takes home the top prizes, or any one Oscar specifically, these two will unquestionably be the two biggest winners of the night, and will win between nine and 12 total awards. (*Sinners* has already made history with 16 nominations, making it the most-nominated movie ever in nearly a century of the Oscars.)

Marty Supreme, the controversial ping pong picture from A24, was among the leaders with the most nominations, but that's no indicator of wins. Expect it to lose in all categories, especially with the controversies that have surrounded its star Chalamet's recent press tour.

Meanwhile, expect Netflix's big budget *Frankenstein* to clean up most technical prizes this year (but *Avatar 3* will take home Best Visual Effects, just as the first two films did.)

The biggest omissions, and likely solo winners, are the two female acting categories: the heavy favourites are Jessie Buckley for TIFF People's Choice winner *Hamnet* and Amy Madigan as Aunt Gladys in August's big hit *Weapons*. Expect those to be sole wins for both films.

Finally, each of the remaining six movies should be expected to win one award each:

- **F1** (Best Sound)
- **Sentimental Value** (Best International Feature Film)
- **The Perfect Neighbor** (Best Documentary Feature Film)
- **All the Empty Rooms** (Best Documentary Short Film)
- **Butterfly** (Best Animated Short Film)
- **A Friend of Dorothy** (Best Live Action Short Film)

One last secret pro tip: the closest race (and toughest to predict) this year will be Best Film Editing. But it's a great bellwether for who will win Best Picture in a year where the voting will be incredibly close.

While I'm predicting *One Battle After Another* will win both, don't be surprised if *Sinners* come up with a sneaky victory.

Tonight's ceremony begins airing on various networks at 7 p.m. (like last year, an hour earlier than traditionally), but the red carpet pre-show begins on most channels at 6 p.m.

For anyone who's looking for the best venue to enjoy the show on the big screen this year, there are still a few tickets left for The Westdale's annual watch party on the big screen, hosted by Lyla Miklos. The dress code: come in your best red-carpet couture or in the style of your favourite Oscar-nominated film.

The show starts at 5:30 p.m. and includes an Oscar ballot contest, trivia, a costume contest, a photo booth and more. Admission is free, but tickets are required.

Tune in tonight to see which movies win big - whether at your favourite Oscars party or, like the Kpop Demon Hunters themselves, from the comfort of your couuuuch.

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