

FRIDAY PRIMETIME/LATE NIGHT NOVEMBER 18, 2011
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Oscars
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film, which centers on a little boy's quest to find the lock that matches a key his father left behind after perishing in 9/11, features Tom Hanks, Sandra Bullock and Viola Davis.

With those films still under wraps, studios are seeing more opportunity than in past years when things were more certain and are being more aggressive with their campaigns.

"You need to get your film up earlier, accrue the right number of advocates," said one high-ranking studio executive who asked not to be identified because he's uncomfortable talking about the campaign process. "I think probably on balance, it's better for the overall race. It's based on the real quality of the films and the public embrace, rather than the luck of the draw."

Oscar-watchers believe the new voting rules could benefit smaller movies, such as Lars von Trier's end-of-the-world drama "Melancholia" over the bigger spectacles or mainstream crowd-pleasers. "The films that really evoke passion will have a much better shot than ones that merely please — a 'Melancholia,' say, over a 'Moneyball,'" said New York-based film critic John Anderson.

Also propelling what appears to be an increase in receptions, Q&As and screenings around town and across the country are the new campaign rules the academy has set in place, whereby the studios can directly invite members to events before the nominations are announced in January. (It used to be that they could only be invited through their various guild memberships.) But once those nominations are revealed, Academy members are not permitted to attend any event promoting a specific actor or film if the movie isn't being screened.

"The new rules on campaigning might encourage more voters to see the movies on the big screen or at least earlier in the season," said one veteran marketer who declined to be identified because she was not authorized to speak on the record. "But does having seven movies in the race or 10 movies in the race change things? It changes what gets in but it doesn't change your strategy. It's the same strategy as always: how do I get my movie seen and how do it get it to the top."

What films may get in could depend on where the studios with multiple films choose to spend their marketing dollars. Most of the major studios, and a few of the most prolific indie outfits, are charged with selling at least two films this Oscar season.

Sony Pictures is promoting the well-reviewed Brad Pitt-starrer "Moneyball," which has already earned \$70 million, and "Dragon Tattoo."

Warner Bros. has a slew of movies on its slate this season, including "Extremely Loud," "Harry Potter," "J. Edgar" and Steven Soderbergh's "Contagion." Paramount Pictures is launching campaigns for Jason Reitman's dark comedy "Young Adult" starring Charlize Theron as a former high-school mean girl who never grows up and Scorsese's "Hugo."

In addition to "Shame," Fox Searchlight is selling Alexander Payne's "The Descendants," starring George Clooney, and Terrence Malick's "The Tree of Life." DreamWorks Pictures will be hyping "War Horse" and "The Help."

The other contender never to be ignored is Harvey Weinstein, the man often credited with masterminding how today's studios campaign for awards.

His company is distributing "The Artist," which will include a heavy Oscar push, but he will also be looking for love with "My Week With Marilyn," starring Michelle Williams as Marilyn Monroe, and "The Iron Lady," which, with Meryl Streep playing Margaret Thatcher, just received a limited Dec. 30 release date.

In the end, while the wins are meaningful, it's the nominations that are the crucial part to the business of Hollywood — and what really helps the film's overall box-office receipts.

"Let's see what happens with 'Hugo,'" said Graham King, a producer of the film, who is hoping that the film's homage to the creation of cinema will resonate "very strongly" with Oscar voters. "It would really help us if we had some nominations on a poster."

Lifelight
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events in 35 states.

While this is the fourth year the fall Lifelight tour will be in Yankton, Hummel believes organizers have done a great job of changing up the schedule each year to keep it fresh and fun.

Another big change is this year the concert is free to everyone.

"Lifelight has a development director now," Hummel said. "Their job was to develop this tour and find the funding for the tour. We have still had to cover some of the local funding ourselves, but the show is free this year. We are still looking for donations, of course. We do have a few things that still need to be covered, but nothing too out of the realm for people to reach."

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