80 Years of the Oscar: The Official History of the Academy Awards by Robert Osborne

80 Years Of Oscar

For the film industry, the Academy Awards is the most celebrated and most significant night of the year: everyone longs for the recognition of being nominated to win a little golden statuette. For most of us, however, even a walk down the red carpet is just a dream. 80 Years of the Oscar puts readers into those iconic plush seats for the thrill of the Academy Awards, from the first show in 1928, shortly after the introduction of the talking picture, to this years eightieth anniversary. With hundreds of photographs and an informative text by Hollywood insider Robert Osborne, 80 Years of the Oscar is the official history of the Academy Awards. Organized by year, 80 Years of the Oscar chronicles the ceremonies themselves, as well as the accomplishments, trends, developments, and events that occurred, both within the Academy and for the film industry as a whole. Osborne comments on each years most important films and shares the stories behind them. He also transports readers into the awards show, quoting from notable acceptance speeches and celebrity reactions, as well as regaling readers with anecdotes from each year. All award nominees and winners are included, with a special listing of Oscar record-holders. An indispensable and encyclopedic reference for the amateur and expert alike, from the struggling actor to the film critic, this book has been a popular favorite since its first edition was published twenty years ago, just after the sixtieth awards ceremony. The authoritative 80 Years of the Oscar provides a depth of coverage found nowhere else, and it is sure to please movie-goers around the world. 855 illustrations, 85 in full-color

My Personal Review:
Dapper Robert Osborne, the genial, knowledgeable host of Turner Classic Movies, who visits me in my bedroom every night (in a nicely-tailored suit...), has written the exact reference source which a movie buff like me needs. In conversational Osborne style, there is a thoughtful foreword about the formation of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences,
and the creation of its annual Academy Awards. Then the rest of the book is laid out decade-by-decade, with an essay about the decade itself, and a short introduction to each year in that decade. Each years essay covers what made that year different from any other -- perhaps describing new trends in filmmaking or acting, highlighting changes in Academy rules, pointing to controversies or personality clashes, and adding interesting anecdotes about the ceremonies themselves.

The best thing about the book is that every nominee in every category for every year is listed. The winners are clearly marked. The book is easy to use and has an exhaustive index. This is the epitome of Oscar guides.

For years, I have been relying on The 1999 Academy Awards Handbook (Academy Awards Handbook), a compact paperback compendium of Oscar nominations and winners, to quickly locate who won Best Actor in 1955 (Ernest Borgnine for Marty) or which movie Meryl Streep won her first Oscar for (Kramer vs. Kramer). Its a handy little book -- easy to use and cheap. The drawback to the book is that it only lists the complete nominees for the Top Six categories for each year (Actor, Actress, Supporting Actor, Supporting Actress, Movie and Director). The rest of the categories list the winners only. Also, I had been keeping the book up-to-date by adding my own lists every year.

I was so ready for a new reference guide. And here it is.

The whipped cream and cherries on top are the wonderful photographs throughout the book of exciting Oscar moments and important Hollywood figures. I especially love that the original theatrical poster for the Best Picture winner from each year is displayed in full color. The book also has fascinating quotations from the text of particularly memorable acceptance speeches. In addition, the book has a chapter at the end which lists the date and time, venue, and host for every Academy Awards ceremony, as well as an intriguing list of Academy Award records and oddities which have occurred in Oscars first 80 years.

The book is beautifully crafted and made to last. It should withstand years of page-turning, book-marking and buttered popcorn stains. It is printed on heavy, shiny paper stock and covered in a gorgeous red and black dust jacket with the gold Oscar statue depicted. Its a book to be proudly displayed on the coffee table, or placed near your television set so that you can refer to it often.

I have only had it a few days, and already I have used it to browse through for pleasure, and to look up statistics on several movies which I was watching. Bravo, Mr. Osbourne! You have done movie fans everywhere a wonderful service with the release of this stellar reference book.
I give this volume my highest recommendation. If you love movies, you HAVE to own this book. If you are trying to come up with the ultimate gift for the movie lover, this is it.

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