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John Madden's 'Shakespeare in Love' scored 11 Oscar nominations, including Best Picture, Best Director and Best Actress. Courtesy photo

OSCARS

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BEST ACTRESS — CATE BLANCHETT, "ELIZABETH"

Betrayal, cruelty, passion — history class was never this intense. Blanchett came out of nowhere to distinguish herself over Gwyneth Paltrow's acclaimed turn in "Shakespeare in Love" and Meryl Streep's tearjerking performance in "One True Thing."

Over the course of this amazing film, Blanchett manages to craft a character who alternates between vulnerable, confident and, at times, frightening.

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR — ED HARRIS, "THE TRUMAN SHOW"

From the lovable father in "Milk Money" to the hateable (yet somehow still likeable) ex-Marine terrorist in "The Rock" to the enigmatic television producer with a God-complex in "The Truman Show," Harris, like Hanks, proves that he can play a spectrum of characters and make the audience care about all of them — even the bad ones.

In "The Truman Show," Harris could have easily succumbed to the character's egomaniac and created a one-dimensional bad guy as a foil for Carrey's doofy but sweet hero. But he doesn't. Instead, he adds layers to Christof that make him hard to hate.

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS — KATHY BATES, "PRIMARY COLORS"

In Stephen King's movie "Dolores Claiborne," Bates sums it up

well: "Sometimes, being a bitch is all a woman has to hang on to."

We would like to modify that slightly: "Sometimes, being a crazy bitch is all a woman has to hang on to."

From her 1991 Oscar-winning part in "Misery" to her latest performance in "Primary Colors" Bates has perfected them all: crazy bitch, not-crazy bitch and just plain crazy. With roots as far back as "Fried Green Tomatoes," and with her fist around the lead roles in a handful of King's movie adaptations, Bates has proven her worth as an actress in a somewhat back-door fashion.

But she has definitely proven it.

BEST DIRECTOR — STEVEN SPIELBERG, "SAVING PRIVATE RYAN"

Does the Academy feel the same shame-faced guilt when it awards a statuette to a blockbuster that we feel when we throw another pick in the direction of "Saving Private Ryan"?

Yes, Spielberg probably had access to more movie-making resources for this flick than many other Hollywood directors have in their entire careers. And he's certainly no stranger to the Oscars.

But his departure from the traditional war movies Hollywood has been pumping out since its birth, portraying the horror of the D-Day invasion so realistically that some veterans couldn't stand to watch, deserves every bit of acclaim it has received. Spielberg's direction in this movie is both

groundbreaking and outstanding, and although Benigni again comes in a close second with "Life is Beautiful," Spielberg's work takes the cake.

BEST PICTURE — "SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE"

That's right; we didn't pick "Saving Private Ryan" for this one.

That "Shakespeare in Love" exceeded "Ryan's" nominations proves a pleasant surprise — and yet, at the same time, it's not too surprising that the Academy liked this all-around good film as much as we did.

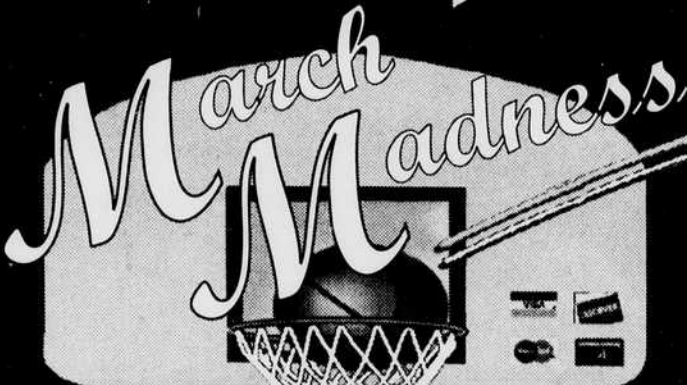
Although Spielberg's direction is incredible, as an overall film, "Saving Private Ryan" just doesn't beat the strong acting and wonderful wordplay found in "Shakespeare in Love."

The cast, including Oscar-nominated Geoffrey Rush and Gwyneth Paltrow, is wonderful. And the movie's fanciful handling of Shakespeare, with references to the bard's plays woven throughout, is a treasure trove for viewers familiar with the playwright, while still enjoyable for those who aren't.

But perhaps what it comes down to is taste. Sometimes, we enjoy traversing the murky depths of the human spirit with weighty films such as "Saving Private Ryan," which stimulate us with their disturbing observations about society and their graphic depictions of reality.

Other times, heaviness sinks, and it takes something a little lighter to stay above water.

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Neil Young sells out solo Hult concert

Some tickets sold for \$112 to benefit a school founded by Young's wife

By Jason George
Oregon Daily Emerald

Neil Young has been searching for a heart of gold for more than 30 years.

His search brings him tonight to the Hult Center for a sold-out, solo performance.

That's right, Neil Young, who has worked with more people than Puff Daddy, is coming to the Hult Center — alone.

But don't feel sorry for Young. On this West Coast tour, he plays the upright and grand piano, an organ, harmonica, several guitars and a guitjo, a guitar-banjo hybrid. He becomes his own band.

The songs are a mix of classics, personal favorites and songs from a new acoustic al-

bum to be released later this year. And although he will not be plugged in for the show, the two-and-a-half-hour concerts have been getting great reviews. Young allegedly offers a relaxed evening, even starting songs over if he makes a mistake.

Neil Young's career began with The Myhanbirds in 1965. Later, he went on to be a member of Buffalo Springfield and Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, finally releasing his self-titled solo debut in 1968.

Lately, with the unofficial title of "The Godfather of Grunge," he has released albums with Pearl Jam and has been enjoying a renaissance of sorts with a new generation of fans who enjoy hearing real guitars — real loud.

His most well-known songs are "Rockin' in the Free World," "Cinnamon Girl," "Heart of Gold" and "After the Goldrush."

Young's hits have been a musical yin and yang of distortion-filled chaos and melodic, acoustic songs.

A portion of the tickets for the Hult show were sold for \$112, with the cost benefiting the Bridge School, a school in the Bay Area that teaches students who are physically challenged and speech impaired. Young's wife, Pegi Young, was a co-founder of the school, and their child is one of the students.

Later this year, Young will possibly release a 32-disc retrospective box set in four installments.

Yep, 32 discs. The disc is rumored to contain live concerts in their entirety as well as numerous songs that have not been previously released. No release date has been set.

Tonight, Young might look like everyone in Eugene, but unfortunately, he is only visiting for the evening.