

# My Counterpoint to the Oscars Snub

## OPINIONATED JUDGE

BY JUDGE  
DARLEEN ORTEGA



### Films with rich insight to the human condition

The Academy Awards, which will air on Sunday, are gradually making themselves irrelevant, as they shamelessly overlook some of the best work and promote only a small and all-white cadre of performers. In keeping with my own tradition, I offer this list of the 10 best films of 2015 just in time to provide a counterpoint, with a bit of Oscar commentary thrown in.

I must acknowledge at the outset that this is a pretty heavy bunch -- not a single comedy, and some pretty dark themes. More than half are foreign films and half are not in English; I saw two at last year's Portland International Film Festival (PIFF) and would have included one more ("The President" from Georgia) except that it's not had a DVD release in the U.S. Still, all these films are rich with

and a window into very particular aspects of an African culture that has not found its way onto Western movie screens. I saw this at last year's PIFF, and nothing has topped it since. [Not rated; on at least 76 other critics' top 10 lists; in Arabic, French, Tamasheq and Bambara; nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Lan-

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Oscar nominated 'Timbuktu,' a powerful African drama about a community in northern Mali under jihadist occupation, is the top film of 2015 as reviewed by our Portland Observer contributor and 'Opinionated Judge' columnist Darleen Ortega.

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LES FILMS

#### To start, here is the list:

1. **Timbuktu**
2. **Love and Mercy**
3. **The Salt of the Earth**
4. **Son of Saul**
5. **The Revenant**
6. **Tangerine**
7. **Leviathan**
8. **45 Years**
9. **Marie's Story**
10. **Peace Officer**

insights about the human condition and well worth plunging into their depths. The truth-telling here is beautiful and enriching.

1. "Timbuktu" is a devastating examination of lived experiences of jihad in a community in Mali. Director Abderrahmane Sissako focuses his gorgeous film on scenes of ordinary life in a Muslim village under siege by outsiders hired to impose religious regime change, impervious to the entreaties of even the local imam. Sissako portrays the brutality of fundamentalism with quiet clarity: Rules are imposed against music and sports and mixed company -- and yet, at every turn, the human spirit of the villagers fights being crushed. A group of boys assembles a soccer game with an imaginary ball; a woman whipped for singing in mixed company turns her cries into music; members of a small family savor their love for each other and dare to hope that humiliations will end. This is both a universal vision of human struggle against tyranny

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