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AWARDS

The Envy Awards honor tap dancing, Spartacus, and George Clooney and Brad Pitt





(Luke McConkey/For The Times)

By Randee Dawn

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The weird, the wonderful, the what-the-heck? These are the elements of so many movies that rarely receive acknowledgement during awards season. Fortunately, the Envy Awards are held (in these pages) every year to honor all of those underappreciated moments. This season, we make sure to give special mention to a medal, a tap dance — and women who spend all of their screen time staring at men. Please enjoy the 2024-25 Envy Awards!

Feline good award

“A Quiet Place: Day One”

The moment we see a fluffy cat named Frodo gathered up in the arms of terminal cancer patient Samira (Lupita Nyong’o), it seems hard to imagine that he’s going to outlast his owner — or the picture. But Frodo is a master of appearing when needed and completely disappearing from the narrative when he’s not, and he always ends up with the woman who saved his life. Spoiler alert: This cat lives, and that’s what gives the “Quiet Place” prequel so much of its humanity.





Elliott Heffernan stars as George in “Blitz.” (Parisa Taghizadeh/Apple)

Best performance by religious jewelry

St. Christopher medal

The St. Christopher medal — representing the patron saint of travelers — dangles from more than one neck in films this season. Sported in both “Blitz” and “The Order,” the medal can be a quick shorthand not just to a character’s faith but also their views of themselves (among the guilty and innocent alike). And in the case of “Blitz,” it’s also a family heirloom, handed down from Marcus (CJ Beckford) to Rita (Saoirse Ronan) to their son, George (Elliott Heffernan), that watches over the boy as he winds his way back home.

Outstanding use of company headquarters

“Babygirl”

Watching movies at the HQ of the studio distributing it is nothing new to reviewers; however, watching “Babygirl” at A24’s Manhattan offices was a particularly jarring experience as apparently Romy’s (Nicole Kidman) business is *also* located there. She’s shown exiting the building and standing outside it for an extended beat in at least one scene, a funny, very specific kind of Easter egg for those paying attention.



We see what you did there award **“Gladiator II”**

If you’re going full bore into swords-and-sandals shoutouts, you could do worse than summoning the ghost of a classic “Spartacus” moment. In “Gladiator II,” the gladiators’ overseer demands to know which of his warriors shot a crossbow arrow at the Caesars in the stands — and the men all cover for Lucius (Paul Mescal) by claiming, “I did it! I did it!” Kirk Douglas would be proud.

Unexpected apocalyptic celebration choice award **Tap dancing**

There are those who believe the world will end with trumpets signaling major cataclysms, but in both “The End” and “The Performance,” characters instead shuffle off to Buffalo and tap their little hearts out as the world crumbles around them. It’s hard to resist Father (Michael Shannon) and Butler (Tim McInnerny) hoofin’ it

underground postapocalypse style in “The End” or Harold (Jeremy Piven) and his troupe of tappers dancing for their lives in pre-World War II Germany in “Performance.” Rarely has such mayhem been so sharply, poignantly choreographed.



Timothee Chalamet and Monica Barbaro star in “A Complete Unknown.” (Macall Polay/Searchlight Pictures)

Women staring at men award

“A Complete Unknown”

Credit to the great comedy writer Merrill Markoe, who spelled out the two main issues with the inclusion of Pete Seeger’s (Edward Norton) wife, Toshi (Eriko Hatsune), in her Substack article: No. 1, Toshi hardly says a word, just stares from offstage while the men make the music; and No. 2, Toshi — an “Emmy Award-winning producer, director, political activist, documentarian and musicologist” was

reduced to being “some kind of DEI set decorating.” Should Toshi ever get her own much-deserved biopic, we look forward to the scenes where Pete stares lovingly at her from the shadows. For now, she gets Markoe’s first-ever TOSHI Award.

The bodies, bodies, bodies award

“The Substance”

From the suicide-by-head-hitting-table-repeatedly in “Longlegs” to the human-faced xenomorph that emerges in “Alien: Romulus” to Arthur’s killer slicing up his own face at the end of “Joker: Folie à Deux,” this was the year body horror went mainstream. But ultimately, we have to give an (extra?) hand to “The Substance,” which continues to haunt our nightmares with the melding of two human bodies into the toothy horror of Monstro Elisasue. Now, can we get David Cronenberg to present the prize?



Brad Pitt and George Clooney in the movie “Wolfs.” (Scott Garfield / Apple TV+)

Never too old for this award

“Wolfs”

It’s astounding that Apple failed to realize that audiences will watch George Clooney and Brad Pitt read the phone book, so long as they do it together, and truncated “Wolfs” stay in theaters. Not only did the actors bring their Redford-Newman chemistry to a tale of bickering, competitive cleanup men, they also good-naturedly poked fun at the fact that both are now in their 60s. While no one in “Wolfs” pulls out the hoary action movie cliché of “I’m gettin’ too old for this,” it’s delightfully charming to see them acting like middle-aged guys who have back issues when they move dead bodies, or end up huffing and puffing while chasing a drug-fueled young troublemaker in his underpants through New York streets. Lean into it, guys! We sure did.

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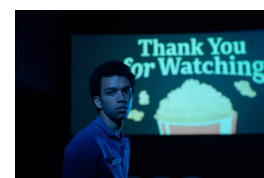
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