



2009 AWARD CONTENDERS

Our 2008 Contenders list includes 22 films that Variety's pros deem to have a shot at two major Oscar nominations. Our definition of "major" spans these kudo categories: picture, actor, actress, director and screenplay. Plus, we've highlighted 10 more titles that could yield at least one major nod.

Contenders

- [Australia](#)
- [Burn After Reading](#)
- [Changeling](#)
- [The Curious Case of Benjamin Button](#)
- [The Dark Knight](#)
- [Doubt](#)
- [Frost/Nixon](#)
- [Gran Torino](#)
- [Happy-Go-Lucky](#)
- [Milk](#)
- [Rachel Getting Married](#)
- [The Reader](#)
- [Revolutionary Road](#)
- [The Secret Life of Bees](#)
- [Seven Pounds](#)
- [Slumdog Millionaire](#)
- [Synecdoche, New York](#)
- [Vicky Cristina Barcelona](#)
- [The Visitor](#)
- [W.](#)
- [The Wall-E](#)
- [The Wrestler](#)

⌵ ABOUT THE FILM

W. Three-time Oscar winner Oliver Stone isn't the awards-night staple he once was, but it's worth noting that when he addresses presidents and controversies surrounding them, the Academy takes notice. The hastily assembled Bush biopic "W." is friskier Oliver Stone, though, using a farce-laced yet psychologically serious approach to the peculiar rise of our 43rd president. [read more](#)

⋮ FILM REVIEW



W.

Oliver Stone's unusual and inescapably interesting "W." feels like a rough draft of a film it might behoove him to remake in 10 or 15 years. ...

⋮ NEWS & RELATED ARTICLES

Films reflect problems of the times

'Knight' and others connect with events in '08

W.

Adapt Bush's Situation Room to the bigscreen

Biopics offer authentic tales of politics

Best films try to steer clear of pop hagiography

Elizabeth Banks, 'W.'

Supporting actress in the mix

Josh Brolin, 'W.'

Portraying a president requires more than caricature

James Cromwell, 'W.'

Daddy knows best when playing politics

Richard Dreyfuss, 'W.'

Supporting actor in the mix

Oliver Stone, 'W.'

Helmer soldiers on through victories and defeats

Casting directors: Search and employ

Actor experts put together all the performer pieces

BEST PICTURE CONTENDERS: "Wall-E" could beat the odds to become the first-ever animated film to win best picture. Films like "Australia" or "Changeling" could succeed as the Oscar winners they clearly want to be. Either way, here's our early look at the contenders.



[I've Loved You So Long](#)
[Milk](#)
[Rachel Getting Married](#)
[The Reader](#)
[Revolutionary Road](#)
[Slumdog Millionaire](#)
[Valkyrie](#)
[The Visitor](#)



[W.](#)

[Wall-E](#)
[Wendy and Lucy](#)
[The Wrestler](#)
[Australia](#)
[Ballast](#)
[Changeling](#)
[Che](#)
[The Class](#)
[The Curious Case of Benjamin Button](#)
[Dark Knight](#)
[Defiance](#)
[Doubt](#)
[Frost/Nixon](#)
[Gran Torino](#)
[Iron Man](#)

BEST DIRECTOR CONTENDERS: "Dark Knight" director Christopher Nolan could surprise Award Season pundits by swooping in for an Oscar. Or Woody Allen could nab that elusive directing nomination for his Spanish-set romantic comedy "Vicky Christina Barcelona." Either way, here's our early look at the contenders.



Darren Aronofsky The Wrestler

Danny Boyle Slumdog Millionaire

Stephen Daldry The Reader

Clint Eastwood **Changeling** / **Gran Torino**

David Fincher The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

Ron Howard Frost/Nixon

Baz Luhrmann Australia

Sam Mendes Revolutionary Road

Chris Nolan The Dark Knight

Gus Van Sant Milk



Oliver Stone W.

Ed Zwick Defiance

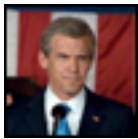
BEST ACTOR CONTENDERS: Christian Bale could become the first actor to break the glass ceiling -- you know, the one that prevents superheroes from winning Oscars. Or Mickey Rourke could conclude his Cinderella story with a happy ending. Either way, here's our early look at the contenders.



LEADING LIGHTS

This year's races are very competitive. Here's a breakdown of who's worthy of attention based on reviews, blogs and buzz.

LEAD ACTOR



[Josh Brolin](#) W.

[Leonardo DiCaprio](#) Revolutionary Road

[Clint Eastwood](#) Gran Torino

[Richard Jenkins](#) The Visitor

[Frank Langella](#) Frost/Nixon

[Sean Penn](#) Milk

[Brad Pitt](#) Benjamin Button

[Mickey Rourke](#) The Wrestler

SUPPORTING ACTOR



[James Cromwell](#) W.



[Richard Dreyfuss](#) W.

[Robert Downey Jr.](#) Tropic Thunder
[Ralph Fiennes](#) The Duchess
[James Franco](#) Milk
[Philip Seymour Hoffman](#) Doubt
[Heath Ledger](#) The Dark Knight
[Dev Patel](#) Slumdog Millionaire
[Michael Shannon](#) Revolutionary Road

BEST ACTRESS CONTENDERS: Could Meryl Streep receive her 15th (!) Oscar nomination for "Doubt"? Kristin Scott Thomas could make a comeback with "I've Loved You So Long." Or will voters go for the unexpected with Melissa Leo in "Frozen River?"



SUPPORTING ACTRESS

[Hiam Abbass](#) The Visitor
[Amy Adams](#) Doubt
[Penelope Cruz](#) Vicky Cristina Barcelona
[Viola Davis](#) Doubt
[Rosemarie DeWitt](#) Rachel Getting Married
[Taraji P. Henson](#) The Curious Case of Benjamin Button
[Marisa Tomei](#) The Wrestler
[Elsa Zylberstein](#) I've Loved You So Long
[Kathy Bates](#) Revolutionary Road



[Elizabeth Banks](#) W.

[Zoe Kazan](#) Revolutionary Road
[Queen Latifah](#) The Secret Life of Bees
[Freida Pinto](#) Slumdog Millionaire
[Kate Winslet](#) The Reader