

y night at the Oscars ended on Melrose, around 1 . . ., teetatorgon Carourb in dean cold air of Los Angeles after a winter snap and a rainstorm, o ering girlfriend-outside-the-dub encouragement to the beloved actress in her fities whose stilettos had sunk into the grass outside the *VarityFair* party at the same time as mine. She'd pulled me onto the curb with her. "The grass is *tarrible*" she said. Behind us were perpetual ashbulbs, heat lamps, a duster of models dressed like exotic birds. In front of us, black S.U.V.s crawled down the street with D r





Trussed into my dress like a chicken, I arrived at the Hot Topic around 1:30 . . and stood there for a while, observing the red carpet from a distance limos dropped the celebrities o in a holding pen, from which they were escorted by handlers to the step-and-repeat, and then through the nal press section, which featured bleachers of fans who'd been in place since the morning. E ach person who walks is on a timetable, the camera angles are planned, as are many of the intertview auestisms At #the for Seveetheart of a man told me that he'd been onsite for the last three days doing "standing work"—walking the carpet as a celebrity placeholder so that the camera people could gure out their shots "I t's even more fun when you get to be inside the theatre pretending to be the nominees, because you always get to pretend to be the winner," he told me "No one knows what's going to happen except for PricewaterhouseCoopers, so they have to practice every possible shot."

I went down to the red carpet—a blur of sequins and satin and I ler and feurindiantiphtis #idokherii thick/ij/baxables borrein There was a line of publicists, a line of tuxedoed security guards, and a trickle of celebrities accompanied by handlers "Would you be interested in talking to Paz Vega?" a woman asked, as she walked down the press row holding a sign that said "i" Waves of cheering pasn

cocktail shrimp. "I'm here with Bulgarian television, but they didn't pay for Internet," one young woman said. "Please—it's been such a long day already—can anyone help?"

he great masses of beautiful people started migrating into thehe

prompted by the sudden cultural focus on equality than to pretend that the narrative has already been resolved.

The glittering rock-candy arch that spanned the Dolby stage framed a lot of erce, uneven change as the night progressed. Frances M



trays with tru e mac and cheese, c

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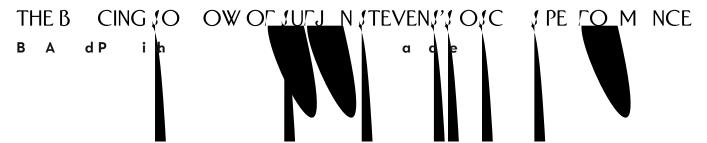


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A look at the nominees for best picture at the O scars in rough the decades.

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