

EXCLUSIVE!

# Oscar's UNSEEN MOMENTS

Melissa McCarthy hit on Billy Crystal, Robert Downey Jr. pulled a Tebow, and newbie presenter Emma Stone won over the crowd. Hollywood may be glamorous year-round, but everything gets amplified at the Academy Awards. Here, we pull back the curtain and show you everything the TV cameras didn't capture!

BY SANDY COHEN  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY ART STREIBER



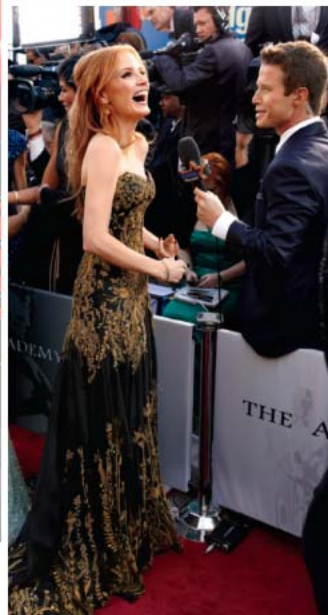
**GRAY MATTER**  
"My train's really long, so if I'm behind you, it might take a while." Penelope Cruz told her co-presenter, Owen Wilson, during rehearsal, referring to the acres of organza on her Armani Privé gown. The two bonded over their memories of working with Woody Allen. "He's not much for awards," said Cruz of the famously neurotic director (who won best original screenplay for the fanciful *Midnight in Paris*, which featured Wilson). "But," she added, "bring up linesses and then he'll start talking!"



**BREAK A LEG (OR TWO)** Best-supporting-actress nominee Melissa McCarthy jokingly trapped Billy Crystal in his dressing room. The *Bridesmaids* babe told the host she wanted to introduce him to someone, then hoisted her right leg in the door frame—her trademark move from the hilarious hit—to block his exit. When Crystal protested, she rituously raised her left leg the same way. (How'd she do it? The slit was pre-taped, with a stunt double providing one of the bloomer-clad limbs.)



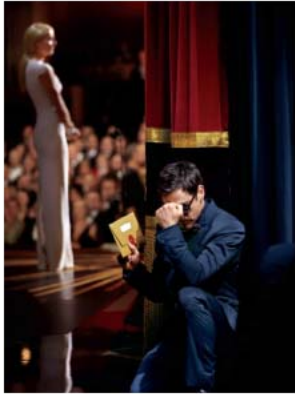
**SUPERSTAR SUPERSTITION**  
To avoid jinxing any of the best-picture candidates by saying their names out loud during the day-before run-through, a cautious Tom Cruise honored tradition, silently mouthing the nominees and staying inebriated when it came time to announce a winner.



**BUSY BODY** Seen here cutting up with Access Hollywood's Billy Bush, *The Help*'s best-supporting-actress nominee Jessica Chastain confessed to being bummed that a scheduling conflict with *Zero Dark Thirty* kept her from working on a Tom Cruise sci-fi flick. Meanwhile, another pressing matter vied for her time. "I really need a massage," she said.

**SIGNATURE MOVE** With statuesque girlfriend Stacy Keibler (jilted in *Marchesa*) by his side, the gregarious George Clooney slipped past a velvet rope after a live interview to sign autographs for some of the '00 lucky fans who were calling his name.

**MANE ATTRACTION** Sticking his gum onto a nearby napkin, Robert Downey Jr. struck a Tim Tebow-style pose before joining co-presenter and Iron Man co-star Gwyneth Paltrow onstage. "Really, how's my hair?" he quizzed her as they walked off. "Phenom," she deadpanned.



**KISS AND TELL** "I don't know what I just said," a shaken Octavia Spencer stammered to Sandra Bullock, who helped Spencer carry her train offstage. There, the star of *The Help* met a similarly breathless Meryl Streep, fresh from her third Oscar win (for *The Iron Lady*)—and it was love at first sight for their little gold men.



**BOOGIE NIGHTS** *Black Swan*'s prima ballerina Natalie Portman wasn't the only winner with dance chops. After she presented the best actor award to *The Artist*'s Jean Dujardin, she watched as the light-footed Frenchman did an impromptu soft-shoe, capping off his performance with a fist pump in the wings—followed by a congratulatory face lick from his canine co-star, Uggie.

“I was in a daze last year,” said presenter Natalie Portman of her *Black Swan* win. “But tonight is so fun—I get to hand out an award, look at all the dresses, and watch Billy Crystal make jokes.”

L.A. WRITER SANDY COHEN COVERS ENTERTAINMENT FOR THE ASSOCIATED PRESS.



**BUT SERIOUSLY** Tina Fey and Bradley Cooper remained laser-focused during their Oscar duties. Dressed down at rehearsals—Cooper totted along his trusty backpack and a motorcycle helmet—the two actors were all business: They ran through their lines once, parted with a formal handshake, and reunited for this portrait on show night, where they were onstage and off just as efficiently.



**SUPPORT GROUP** Brad Pitt ducked behind the curtain to cheer on his partner, Angelina Jolie, while she dazzled the audience. He watched the monitor, shook hands with *The Descendants* writer-director Alexander Payne, and chuckled at a clip from *Bridesmaids*. Spotting Pitt, Oscar producer Brian Grazer (right) walked over to ask him how the show was going. “Great work!” Pitt assured Grazer just as Jolie (and her celebrated leg) sauntered offstage to join the power-player powwow.

the OSCARS!



**CRAZY, STUPID, FUN** Before presenting the award for best visual effects, comic champs Emma Stone and Ben Affleck got a pep talk from seasoned ham Robert Downey Jr. “Make sure to blame each other if it doesn’t work,” he said jokingly, on the off chance that the pair’s bit fell flat. Not to worry: The skit was a show highlight. Sighed a relieved Stone as they glided into the wings, “I might go to the bar now!”



**EQUIPMENT CHECK** Honorary Oscar recipients James Earl Jones and Oprah Winfrey shared a moment of awe. “It has my name on it!” marveled Jones, as he admired his statuette. He peered at Winfrey’s and asked, “Does yours?” She grinned and confirmed, “It does!”