

From *Vanity Fair*

TV Review: Oscars Celebrate Cinema Through the Messy Power of Live Television

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The season finale of awards season was just crazy this year

Just when you think the [Oscars](#) might be boring — a post-midnight twist makes them worth staying up for.

After one of the more pleasant if predictable runs of show in recent Oscars history, a complete best picture upset stunned at Sunday night's 89th Academy Awards, as "La La Land" — in the process of receiving the final and most prestigious Oscar of the night onstage — [was interrupted by the revelation](#) that the award in fact had been given to breakout "Moonlight."

It's an incredible story of "Moonlight," a film that slowly caught the attention of a mainstream audience through the awards circuit and now has entered a hallowed canon of films. It's less of one for the producers "La La Land" — which, while still [winners of six other Oscars](#), were forced to make way for another film in the middle of their own acceptance speeches.

Best Oscar Quotes: 'This is Not a Joke ... 'Moonlight' Has Won Best Picture' and More

But that final-seconds revelation, and resulting confused awkwardness, served to be one of the most equalizing and wonderful moments in Oscars history. It was hard to accept that "La La Land" had lost and "Moonlight" won, but somewhere in between good intentions and studio hype, both films got a chance to share the (literal) stage. And on a night that frequently ends up being about just one film — or one studio, or one

auteur — Sunday night's Academy Awards felt like they were a joyful, messy tribute to how revelatory and wonderful cinema can be, at its best and most ambitious.

They accomplished that by being great TV.

After the political firestorm that was [this year's Golden Globes](#), the Oscars began with a slightly tentative feeling. The same anger and frustration at American politics was present, but seemed a little less explosive; it felt like everything that happened during the ceremony was political — with a bit more restraint and grace than from just a month or two ago.

Maybe Hollywood has reacted to the first turbulent month of Donald Trump's presidency by beginning to focus on how to channel anger and frustration into the work they do best — telling stories. More than usual, the Oscars were suffused with fervent belief in the power of cinema. Some years, that dedication seems a little performative and superfluous — and going into the ceremony, where "La La Land" was expected to sweep, an emphasis on fantasy and escapism seemed inappropriate.

[Jimmy Kimmel's](#) Oscars found a way to balance the telecast between that sensibility — the treacly self-satisfaction of sweeping orchestrals and tap-dancing starlets — and the very real widening gulf between the wealthy and cultured elites in Hollywood and the global public they make art for. Several of his bits were about bringing the audience into the telecast — "[Mean Tweets](#)," from "Jimmy Kimmel Live!," was joined by a practical joke where a Starlite Tours tour group was [diverted into the auditorium](#) to rub shoulders with [Denzel Washington](#). Politics were omnipresent — Kimmel addressed Donald Trump's tweets several times throughout the evening — and the winners and presenters championed the voices of the underrepresented, the transformative and universal power of art, and most specifically, the harsh stance on immigration taken by the Trump administration. But also prevalent at this awards show was the sentiment seemed to be that the arts and entertainment industry could be a force of good, without simply using that soapbox for soundbytes.

Kimmel's not Teflon, but he's found an interesting way to braid together both bro comedy and sensitivity — and that's usually by opting into the role of jackass, which allows pretty much everyone else to look good. Even at the end of the night, he said ruefully to the audience that he knew he was going to screw up the telecast somehow —the perfect, quintessential host move. It makes Kimmel the joke, not anyone else, even though the mix-up was obviously not his fault at all.

The host's style made for a ceremony where even if you loathed his jokes or delivery, the ceremony was kind of nice; rather than the final circuit of an endless PR tour for the three or four Best Picture frontrunners, it felt like a tribute to the cinema in general. In addition to the ritual "In Memoriam" and the platitudes about showbusiness, Sunday night's Oscars included montages for each acting category that showed clips of past greats and a recurring feature where stars talked about a movie that changed them before coming out with a star from that very film. So Charlize Theron walked out with Shirley MacLaine, and Seth Rogen reminisced about "Back to the Future."

And there's no better example of that renewed sense of purpose than "Moonlight's" win, which is a repudiation of the night's expected narrative and last year's much discussed "Oscars So White" phenomenon, where creatives of color were nearly shut out from the nominations. The Academy has made some real changes, and Hollywood seems ready to work.

The Oscars can feel like a very stuffy party full of people in penguin suits. Not this time. There was something really *live* about this live telecast — something raw and shifting and earnest, whether that was Viola Davis' typically lovely speech, a stray fabric "wave" [hitting Auli'i Cravalho in the head](#), and the tears in Denzel Washington's eyes when he lost Best Actor to Casey Affleck. There were weird segments and bits that didn't totally land. But that's live television, in its fascinating unpredictability. The Oscars weren't a complete vision tonight, as prestigious films usually try to be. They were a strangely fascinating mess.

Of course, a last-minute twist is some "The Walking Dead" style storytelling, and obviously, if the Oscars' producers had had their way, there would have been no mixed-up envelope delivery at the end. But that kind of

half-fantasy mess is exactly the weird and wonderful place where showbusiness lives, whether it is in the musical sequences of “La La Land” or the subtle, sneaky power of “Moonlight.” Now both of these movies can be joined by the last few minutes of the telecast. All three really have to be seen to be believed.

From *The New York Times*

\$25 AND UNDER; When There's Only One of a Chain

By ERIC ASIMOV

Published: September 17, 2003

I usually avoid places like Chipotle Mexican Grill, which opened last month on 44th Street, near Third Avenue. It belongs to a chain partly owned by McDonald's. That places it squarely among the forces that are ironing the country's quirky regional wrinkles into a smooth national uniform in which Anchorage equals Akron. Each franchise, whether restaurant, coffee shop or drugstore, arrives with focus groups, market surveys and other tools of bureaucracy, relentlessly homogenizing flavor and creativity.

Regardless of how one feels about chains, this first Chipotle in New York City produces undeniably good food, including the last things I would expect: forceful spicing, fresh, good-quality ingredients and attention to details. What's more, while the components of Chipotle's burritos, fajitas and tacos are made in advance, they are assembled to order, a crucial element in the leap from sustenance to pleasure.

The chain trumpets its use of free-range pork, chicken and beef, from humanely raised animals that are not fed hormones or antibiotics. I can't help applauding, though Chipotle applauds itself enough without my help. Still, poor kitchen practices can overshadow even the best ingredients. What's most impressive is how carefully Chipotle controls its cooking and serving operation, a difference you can taste, not just between Chipotle and other fast-food places but also between Chipotle and independent burrito shops.

I am not actually partial to burritos. Like Hummers and McMansions, these behemoth California creations reflect a bias for size and power over finesse or delicacy. The huge portion and the number of ingredients slapped together, too often irrationally, make most burritos hard slogging. About its own burritos, Chipotle's disquieting slogan is, "They beep when they back up."

Nonetheless, Chipotle's burritos are different, especially those made from braised pork (\$6.50), which has a rich, deep porky flavor. It goes especially well with plump, well-seasoned pinto beans and a medium-heat salsa that combines the brightness of tomatillo with the spark of green-chili heat and the fresh jolt of cilantro. I prefer a burrito with a modest amount of cheese and no sour cream, and as I made my way along the swift-moving line at the counter, I could oversee its fabrication to my specifications.

About the only thing wrong with the burrito was the firm, rubbery flour tortilla, which posed a sturdy shield between mouth and the succulent innards. Surprisingly, Chipotle had an answer, a tortilla-less burrito, which it calls the burrito bol. It's served in a bowl, naturally, and you won't miss the tortilla a bit unless you're trying to eat it on the subway.

I tried other burrito combinations. The only one that approached the pork was what Chipotle calls barbacoa (\$6.75), spicy shredded beef, which also shows its full range of seasoning, especially garlic and cumin. Steak (\$6.75), chewier and not so spicy, is not bad at all, but chicken (\$6.50) was dry as jerky. Despite the name of the chain, the flavor of chipotle -- a smoked jalapeño pepper -- was nowhere to be tasted.

Beyond burritos, Chipotle serves tacos with the same fillings. I don't recommend them. The choice of flour tortillas or hard corn shells is not enticing, and they don't stand up to the fillings. I did very much like the selection of salsas, and the guacamole (\$2.25) was salty, tangy and garlicky, after warming up from its icy refrigerator purgatory.

Chipotle's minimalist décor -- shiny steel, plywood chairs and direct lighting -- is pleasing, compared with the banality of the usual chain franchise. Yet the restaurant offers unfortunate hints that, ultimately, it lacks soul. Those infernal registered trademark indicators follow each use of the Chipotle name, always a bad sign. The company tries to create a disarming mystique using lame-brain mottos like "The food is fresh and hot. The atmosphere is cool." Most unfortunate is word that Chipotle is planning to open in a half-dozen or more Manhattan sites in the next year.

Starbucks, too, was once a pleasant surprise.

Chipotle

Mexican Grill

150 East 44th Street, Manhattan; (212) 682-9860.

BEST DISHES -- Burritos (pork, barbacoa, steak), burrito bol, guacamole and chips.

PRICE RANGE -- \$5.96 to \$6.75.

CREDIT CARDS -- MasterCard, Visa.

HOURS -- Daily, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS -- Entrance, restrooms, counter and small dining room are all on one level.