

## Live Action Shorts.

Written by Dave Crackpot

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[2009 Oscar Live Shorts piece is up!](#) Check back SOON for Animated!

### YOUR OSCAR POOL: LIVE ACTION SHORTS

Again trying to give you an edge to you Oscar Pool, I recently got to check out the Academy Award Nominated Live Action shorts. While each of these quickies are good, not a single one really knocked my socks off. Four of the five films rely on overused themes or plotlines that left me cold. The fifth just goes with a tried and true Hollywood solution- adapt an Elmore Leonard novel. The core problem with each of these shorts is they needed to be a little shorter.

These are all good just not GREAT. But, which one will win?

**THE SUBSTITUTE:** A Substitute teacher with unorthodox methods, like sadistic humiliation, works his class into a “Lord of the Flies” style frenzy. While this is initially a hysterical piece, the joke becomes a bit too long and cruel. The eventual conclusion does give some explanation but falls short.

**TANGHI ARGENTINI:** A lovable loser meets a woman in a chat room and promptly lies to her about his Tango expertise. He then enlists the help his co-worker dance expert to help sweep her off her feet. This leads to the usual comedy of two men sneaking off to dance together.

The dancing between the two men is far superior than your average comic setup and a deft surprise ending does save the film. However, by this time the plot has grown old.

**AT NIGHT:** Despite terrific performances **AT NIGHT** almost seems manufactured for an Academy Award. Three women in various stages of cancer treatment, bond and try to enjoy the holidays together. I felt like my buttons were being pushed. Soft Blue lighting to remind us things are bleak? Check! Women who bravely celebrate the New Year Eve despite oxygen tubes? Check! Father Daughter "I've always been proud of you" speech? Check! While this is a very serious and deadly subject, I felt like I had seen it before.

**THE TONTO WOMAN:** Based on the Elmore Leonard short, **THE TONTO WOMAN** is the most beautifully shot of the five films. Panaromic views of the Old West and restrained performances from the leads made this a natural choice for a nom. But the story of a mysterious stranger who befriends and empowers a scarred and forgotten women.. just misses greatness.

**THE MOZART OF PICKPOCKETS** Two C- pickpockets desert their gang upon near bust. On the way home a deaf orphan kid follows them home and won't leave. They soon find the kid has superior slight of hand skills. A very funny piece with some very exciting camera work. There seems to be a bit too much build up for too little joke, it could have benefited from just a few cuts,

So who is the winner.. my pick would be **MOZART** . Overall it does have a raw energy to that is infectious. However I know how the Academy is a sucker for Panaramas and terminal illness. It's a dead heat between **AT NIGHT** and **TONTO**. **TONTO** has a strong female lead in a male dominated society Elmore Leonard, lush cinematography and it stars Anthony Quinn's son. However, **AT NIGHT** has the stronger performances and meatier subject, Gotta go with **AT NIGHT**!