

News Oscars



gess and me — my daughter, gess, was my assistant on this one, man, she was good.



Loyal and me — Loyal Catlett has been my stand-in on fifty-six movies.



Cassidy Vick (Hicc (Stunts)), Gwendolyn Cunningham (Double)



Jeff Coen, Armstrong (a hand out)

Point and shoot? No, this gunslinger has a true eye for detail

When Jeff Bridges wasn't in front of the True Grit cameras, he was behind his own. The actor discusses his portfolio with Tim Teeman



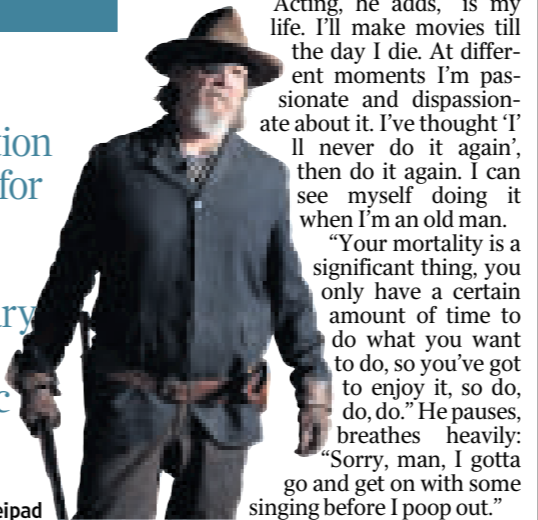
Jeff Bridges laughs dismissively when considering his Oscar nomination for Best Actor for True Grit, one of ten nominations that the film has scooped, including Best Picture. "I never held any ambition for making it as an actor," the 61-year-old star told The Times in New York, in his gravelly, genial voice. "Awards like the Oscars are all whipped cream and cherries to me. I don't think I'm going to win. I'm not counting on anything." He has already been warned to keep any victory speech to 45 seconds. "But if I get up there, I'm gonna let rip, ha-ha. You've got to."

Edge, The Fisher King and The Big Lebowski (also directed by the Coens), uses a Widelux camera with a 28mm swinging lens. He has used similar cameras for the past 33 years. "My wife [Susan] bought me my first one as a wedding gift. What I love about them is they give that wide, panoramic perspective," he says. "The end result is like the missing link between movie images and still photography. This camera lends itself to capturing action, for my money it's like a human eye. At school I heard the photographer used to take group shots with it and I remember hearing if you ran fast enough you could appear twice in the same shot."

Bridges, who has three daughters, comes from solid Hollywood stock: his father, Lloyd, and mother, Dorothy, were actors and his brother Beau is too. He began taking photographs as a "kid in high school, I had a dark room and all that". He was particularly inspired by the French photographer and painter Jacques Henri Lartigue (1894-1986), "who was so brilliant at capturing moments, rather than stiff formality. He helped change how we saw photography."

Music is another passion: the actor is working with the songwriter and producer T-Bone Burnett on his first album, which will be released this year. "I've written a lot of stuff and he is amazing," Bridges says of Burnett. "He's got an amazing band together. We're having a wonderful time. I'm concentrating more on that than acting right now."

He is a spokesman for the latest campaign, beginning next month, for No Kid Hungry, an organisation for eradicating child hunger in the United States, "which affects 17 million children, which is remarkable in a country as fortunate as ours". Bridges laughs when asked if he minds becoming the subject of internet parody: his True Grit character's sometimes indecipherable diction has been subtitled by one online wag. "I was building a character," he says. "I was checking in with the guys [the Coen brothers] all the way through and they thought it was fine. But you know, in life sometimes, some things people say to you or what you say to other people are unintelligible. I've seen the movie two or three times and it isn't a problem for me, but to those who have found it a problem, I apologise."



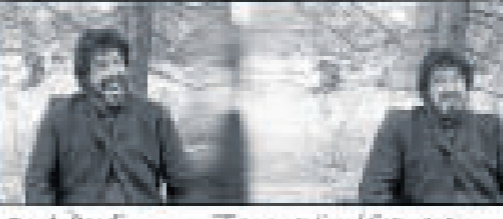
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Jeff Bridges / COURTESY OF ROSEGALLERY



Country and Western



Josh Bridges — Tringulation / Chromation



Jeff Coen, Armstrong (a hand out)

Prized contents of the losers' goodie bags

Tim Teeman New York

Who would want to win an Oscar? No, really. Because the morning after, when all you are left with is a golden statuette, wouldn't you rather be waking up to the \$75,000 (£46,000) goodie bag that every losing nominee will receive on Monday morning. The goodie bags contain treats such as a stay at a luxury Connecticut hotel, a holiday in the Maldives, clothes, jewellery and "lots of chocolate".

"Let's face it, you're going to need that after losing, although technically you're gaining," says Dina Rezvanipour of Distinctive Assets, the gift company that for the past nine years has sent luxury goodie bags to losing nominees.

The losers' gift bag, according to Distinctive Assets, is "meant to titillate and indulge those who may have everything but still enjoy experiencing one of the industry's greatest rewards: swag". Indeed, Hollywood is awash with swag, but not in the places where you expect to find it. The Academy Awards does not allow "any gifting or gift bags" within the Kodak Theatre.

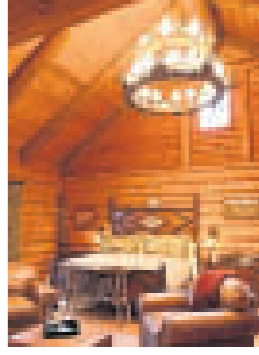
There are also no gift bags at the Vanity Fair Oscars party, held at the Sunset Tower Hotel, or at the Elton John Aids Foundation Party, at the Pacific Design Centre. The latter used to be famous for its goodie bags but a source reveals: "They were seen as inappropriate within a charity event."

The canny celebrity freeloader knows, however, that the top-dollar swag is to be found in the days running up to the Oscars in Beverly Hills's swankiest hotels. During awards season, hotel suites are occupied for days at a time by "gifting" companies.

Celebrities and nominees come along and take whatever they like. The quid pro quo: the celebrity is typically photographed with whatever item they choose, which the maker can use for publicity purposes. The biggest prize for the gift givers is to get a pair of shoes, a piece of jewellery, a handbag



Some consolation: a trip to the Maldives or the Winvian resort in Connecticut



GETTY IMAGES; MRANDMRSMITH.COM

or even a dress photographed on the red carpet. "That's maximum exposure," says Gavin Keilly, president of GBK Productions, whose two-day "Golden Oscar Lounge" at the W Hollywood Hotel features \$50,000 worth of gifts. One Hollywood events specialist said: "Gifting fell out of fashion in the recession. Celebrities didn't want to be seen as greedy and companies didn't want to give anything away, but we're coming out of that. Having said that, I know a lot of us are shocked to see privileged celebrities helping themselves in the way they do."

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