

The Academy announces a misguided new category

Notes & Cues:	Article: <p>The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced on August 8th that it will be introducing a new category in time for next February's awards ceremony, one that honours "achievement in popular film".</p> <p>The idea is that, alongside the time-honoured "Best Picture" category, there will be another for films which have a broader appeal: blockbusters, in other words.</p> <p>Ironically, the announcement has been anything but popular.</p> <p>On social media, responses to this idea have ranged from hostile to very hostile indeed.</p> <p>Many feel that the once-prestigious Oscars are dumbing down to the level of the MTV Awards.</p> <p>What's next—Best Kiss? Loudest Shoot-Out? Most Skyscrapers Flattened by Aliens in a Single Action Sequence?</p> <p>The concept of the "Hit Oscar" or the "Popcorn Oscar", as it has been nicknamed, raises other questions, too.</p> <p>To start with, who decides whether or not a film is popular? What are the criteria or thresholds?</p> <p>And isn't it an insult to nominees, the implicit suggestion being that hit films can't be artistic (and vice versa)?</p> <p>There was a time when the likes of "Braveheart", "Titanic" and "Gladiator" could make zillions at the box office, while also scooping up armfuls of golden statuettes.</p> <p>But in the past decade the top Oscar has gone to auteur projects such as "The Shape of Water", "Moonlight" and "Birdman": terrific films, but by no means the so-called "tentpoles" that keep a roof over the studios' heads.</p> <p>The new division between best picture and popular picture may be ill-judged, but it reflects a pre-existing dichotomy between arthouse and multiplex fare.</p> <p>So have pity on the poor Academy.</p> <p>If Hollywood studios weren't quite so obsessed with superhero franchises, the Oscars might not be in this mess in the first place.</p>
Summary:	