

## 'Star Wars,' 'Revenant' Rain on 'Mad Max' Parade at Visual Effects Society Awards

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### **(In Contention)**

*Is it a telling sign for George Miller's opus in the Oscar derby?*

If indeed "Mad Max: Fury Road" is set to win the visual effects Oscar later this month, as many pundits believe, it hit a bit of a speed bump along the way tonight as films like "The Revenant" and "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" outshined George Miller's high octane actioner.

“Star Wars” picked up four awards, while “The Revenant” claimed three. “Mad Max: Fury Road” did manage to beat “The Force Awakens” for honors in effects simulations, for its “toxic storm” sequence.

In feature animation, the VES zigged where most of the industry zagged, awarding three trophies to Pixar’s tepidly received “The Good Dinosaur” and only one to the company’s Oscar favorite, “Inside Out.” And like Lucy yanking the football away from Charlie Brown, the VES dangled six noms in front of Fox/Blue Sky’s “The Peanuts Movie” but gave it no trophies.

“Game of Thrones” walked away with four wins on the TV side.

As sometimes happens at the VES, a commercial may have had the best night at all. SSE’s “Pier” spot won three awards, including animated performance (for its orangutan), compositing and VES’s top honor for an ad, outstanding visual effects in a commercial.

VES executive director Eric Roth opened the festivities, welcoming and praising his membership. Noting the controversy over diversity in entertainment, he noted that the VES sees diversity in viewing the industry from a global perspective, naming the many countries in which the VES has chapters. Geographic diversity notwithstanding, the attendees were overwhelmingly white, and the winners overwhelmingly male.

Roth then made a flub that became a running joke for host Patton Oswalt. Roth gave an effusive introduction to the night’s lifetime achievement award honoree, Ridley Scott, then referred to him as “Sir Ridley Thomas.” Moments later Sir Ridley was shouting a good-natured correction to the flabbergasted Roth, who asked “Did I say *Thomas*?” Oswalt pounced, first saying “Keep it going for Eli Roth, ladies and gentlemen!,” later talking about “Sir Ridley Scott... if that really is his name” and then mispronouncing it in creative ways throughout the evening.

In his opening monologue, Oswalt had his own take on the VES and diversity: “It doesn’t matter who you are, as long as you’re being screamed at and being told to get it in a week earlier. That’s real diversity!” Summarizing the year in visual effects, Oswalt said of “Mad Max” director George Miller: “I love the fact that a 70-year-old Australian just handed every young action director their asses.”

Oswalt made a long and appreciative simile with Star Wars, though not one Disney is likely to use in its marketing materials. Oswalt compared the original “Star Wars” to a favorite uncle who had great cocaine and hookers, and returned with progressively better coke and crazier hookers every few years, only to disappear for 20 years and show up clean, sober and very earnest. (“Let’s look at the backstory of those hookers...”) — the reformed, boring uncle being the prequel trilogy. But “The Force Awakens,” he said, was like a nephew with really great weed, enabling everyone to enjoy “Star Wars” once again.

Unlike past years, when the VES Awards had trouble even announcing the winners correctly, the ceremony itself went smoothly. Futurist and artist Syd Mead, whose first film was Scott’s “Blade Runner,” spoke briefly and thanked his life partner. Scott himself used the occasion to run down his history of visual effects films, speaking briefly on each. “You save our asses frequently, let me tellya,” said Scott.

Industrial Light & Magic got a 40th anniversary tribute, including a highlight reel. ILM had a triumphant night in general, as it has not only “The Force Awakens” but also “The Revenant.” The company had six tables at the awards, and with so many nominations — and winners — every chair was needed.

Full list of winners below.

### **Outstanding Visual Effects in a Photoreal Feature**

“Star Wars: The Force Awakens”

### **Outstanding Supporting Visual Effects in a Photoreal Feature**

“The Revenant”

### **Outstanding Visual Effects in an Animated Feature**

“The Good Dinosaur”

### **Outstanding Visual Effects in a Real-Time Project**

“The Order: 1886”

### **Outstanding Visual Effects in a Photoreal Episode**

“Game of Thrones” — “The Dance of Dragons”

## **Outstanding Visual Effects in a Commercial**

SSE — “Pier”

## **Outstanding Visual Effects in a Special Venue Project**

“Fast and Furious: Supercharged”

## **Outstanding Created Environment in a Photoreal Feature**

“Star Wars: The Force Awakens” — Falcon Chase/Graveyard

## **Outstanding Supporting Visual Effects in a Photoreal Episode**

“Vikings” — “To the Gates”

## **Outstanding Animated Performance in a Photoreal Feature**

“The Revenant” — The Bear

## **Outstanding Animated Performance in an Animated Feature**

“Inside Out” — Joy

## **Outstanding Created Environment in an Animated Feature**

“The Good Dinosaur” — The Farm

## **Outstanding Animated Performance in an Episode, Commercial or Real-Time Project**

SSE — “Pier” — Orangutan

## **Outstanding Created Environment in an Episode, Commercial or Real-Time Project**

“Game of Thrones” — City of Volantis

## **Outstanding Virtual Cinematography in a Photoreal Project**

“Star Wars: The Force Awakens” — Falcon Chase/Graveyard

## **Outstanding Effects Simulations in an Episode, Commercial or Real-Time Project**

“Game of Thrones” — “Hardhome”

## **Outstanding Compositing in a Photoreal Feature**

“The Revenant” — Bear Attack

## **Outstanding Models in a Photoreal or Animated Project**

“Star Wars: The Force Awakens” — BB-8

## **Outstanding Effects Simulations in a Photoreal Feature**

“Mad Max: Fury Road” — Toxic Storm

## **Outstanding Compositing in a Photoreal Episode**

“Game of Thrones” — “Hardhome”

## **Outstanding Effects Simulations in an Animated Feature**

“The Good Dinosaur”

## **Outstanding Compositing in a Photoreal Commercial**

SSE — “Pier”

## **Outstanding Visual Effects in a Student Project**

“Citipati”

## **Visionary Award**

Syd Mead

## **Lifetime Achievement Award**

Ridley Scott

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