

Culture



Peter Straughan accepts the award for Best Adapted Screenplay for "Conclave" during the Oscars on Sunday, March 2, 2025, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. Amy Poehler looks on from left. (AP/Chris Pizzello)



by Zachary Lee

[View Author Profile](#)

[Join the Conversation](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

March 3, 2025

[Share on Bluesky](#)[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

"Conclave," the political thriller detailing the process of the same name to select a new pope, may have walked away with only one Oscar win; still, it is evident the film's themes about embracing doubt amid uncertainty and using one's platform to speak against injustices will have staying power long after Hollywood's biggest night.

Director Edward Berger's [papal thriller](#) starring Ralph Fiennes, Stanley Tucci, John Lithgow and Isabella Rossellini was nominated for eight Academy Awards: Best Picture, Actor (Fiennes), Supporting Actress (Rossellini), Original Score, Editing, Production Design, Costume Design and Adapted Screenplay, which it won.

Peter Straughan's script was up against "A Complete Unknown," "Emilia Pérez," "Nickel Boys" and "Sing Sing." This marks the first win for Straughan, who was previously nominated for 2011's "Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy." In his acceptance speech, Straughan thanked his team and Berger, as well as the book author, Robert Harris.

Since its release, the internet has found "Conclave" quite [meme-able](#), and the Oscars only solidified the fact. Host Conan O'Brien warned the nominees that if their speeches go too long the camera would cut to something "much more powerful": John Lithgow looking "not angry, but slightly disappointed." Lithgow's expression then started trending on social media throughout the night, often when there were awkward or frustrating moments in the show itself. NCR's own Olivia Bardo [used](#) the Lithgow meme in frustration when Hulu, which was broadcasting the Academy Awards ceremony, cut the livestream.

More seriously, speeches throughout the night were marked with comments about the uncertain and tumultuous times, from Best Director winner Sean Baker urging audiences to support movie theaters, especially independent ones, to a tribute to the firefighters who helped battle the fires of Eaton and Palisades in Southern California.

But the most poignant speech of the night came from directors Basel Adra, Hamdan Ballal, Yuval Abraham and Rachel Szor, whose film "[No Other Land](#)," which focuses on Israel's violence against the Palestinian people of Masafer Yatta in a southern

area of West Bank, won Best Documentary.

Advertisement

"About two months ago, I became a father," Adra shared. "My hope for my daughter is that she will not have to live the same life I'm living now, always fearing settlers, violence, home demolitions, and forcible displacements that the community ... is facing. We call upon the world to take serious actions to stop the injustice to stop the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people."

"When I look at Basel, I see my brother, but we are unequal," said Abraham. "We live in a regime where I am free under civilian law and Basel is under military laws that destroy his life. ... There is a different path, a political solution without ethnic supremacy, with national rights for both of our people ... and the foreign policy in this country is helping to block this path."

It was the type of vital and open cry from the stage that both celebrated the great art of the past year and acknowledged there is much more work to do. I couldn't help but think of a line from "Conclave" spoken by Cardinal Benítez (Carlos Diehz) to his infighting fellow cardinals. "These last few days we have shown ourselves to be small and petty men. We have seemed concerned only with ourselves, with Rome, with these elections, with power. But these things are not the church. The church is not a tradition. The church is not the past. The church is what we do next."

This story appears in the **Oscars 2025** feature series. [View the full series.](#)