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EXCLUSIVE: How 'Kids Are All Right' Beat Aaron Sorkin at NYFCC Awards

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Stephen Lovekin/Getty Images

Everyone knew the New York Film Critics Circle would follow in the footsteps of the L.A., Boston, Indiana, D.C., Southeastern and AFI film critics by showering honors on *The Social Network*, which won best picture and director from NYFCC on Monday.

"*Social Network* got a lot of support," says a source close to the NYFCC action, "but the big surprise was how well *The Kids Are All Right* did, even in the supporting actor categories."

Word on the street was that the most influential critics' group was likely to disdain indie director **Lisa Cholodenko's** successful attempt to go mainstream with *Kids*, and I personally would have bet \$1,000 that even if *Social Network* won nothing else, **Aaron Sorkin's** preternaturally articulate screenplay would win at NYFCC, as it has in other awards competitions. It's quicker than **Preston Sturges** and *The Front Page* put together -- and **David**

Fincher's directing note was precisely the same one **George Lucas** kept uttering on the original *Star Wars*: "Faster!"

But remarkably, NYFCC gave Cholodenko and **Stuart Blumberg** best screenplay for *Kids*. How did that upset happen? The Second Ballot Gambit, says *THR's* source. "There are three ballots. On the second ballot, you list your top three choices. You can diss your rival by leaving them entirely off the list."

This tactic was used by at least one voter specifically to help screw **Christian Bale** out of a supporting actor nom. But the pro-*Kids* contingent was so passionate that they wangled not only the best screenplay and less-controversial best actress award for **Annette Bening**, but an almost completely unexpected best supporting actor win for **Mark Ruffalo**.

"Why a nomination for Mark Ruffalo?," marvels *THR's* source. "I don't think he'll ever be a mainstream movie star. But there's a mellow indie vibe to him that critics like."

"*Social Network* probably had broader, slightly shallower support," says the source. The kids who liked *Kids*, especially the screenplay, were more like an intellectual SWAT team. "They were really, really into it."

Despite the passionate intensity of *Black Swan* and its fans, all the film could manage was a best cinematography win for **Matthew Libatique**, who also won a New York Film Critics Circle Online award and a Broadcast Film Critics' Association nom this week. Libatique crept me out way more than *127 Hours* did.

NYFCC didn't feel the heat, however. "*Black Swan* didn't get that kind of support [that *Kids* did]," says the source. "It got tepid support."

There was a cliffhanger in the documentary voting, which wound up honoring *Inside Job* as best non-fiction film. "That took a long time. *Exit Through the Gift Shop* is much more artful. It's got vision, humor, a twist. *Inside Job* could be a TV special. A magazine article with talking heads. But I guess people wanted to send a message." Unfortunately, the people on Wall Street who need to hear that film's message are about as reachable and teachable as Kim Jong-il.

Whoever should have won the non-fiction prize, *Exit's* loss represents a missed opportunity for a potentially dramatic appearance of **Banksy**, the hooded director/hero of *Exit*, at the Jan. 10 NYFCC gala dinner at Crimson in New York. "Maybe Banksy will prank the awards, or send us a video message." Though Banksy famously avoids showing his face, like a superhero preserving a secret

identity, he is not averse to fame. "He's not J.D. Salinger. He's hardly a recluse." Our source thinks it would've been more fun if Banksy had won and done some mischief, "rather than someone coming up and saying, 'Thanks.'" Maybe *Inside Job* director Charles Ferguson should plan on doing something more dramatic, like bringing one of those expense-account hookers from Wall Street who costar in his film.

What's the bottom line on NYFCC's choice to honor *The Social Network* and *The Kids Are All Right*? "They're two movies about current trends," says our source. "Things in the news."

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