

2009 Movie Draft

by Brandon Kruse, Joe Mulder, Jameson Simmons, & Mike Wagner

We are nerds with nothing better to do. That's really the only explanation we can offer for what follows, aside from the fact that it is unrelentingly awesome – and any disputes to that claim will be settled by greasing up and wrestling the four of us until only one man is left standing. (Yes, that means if we roundly defeat you right away, we will then turn on one another. No biting.)

Anyway, weren't we talking about a movie draft? Here's what happened: we took the following 20 actors who were nominated for acting honors at this year's Academy Awards, and we drafted them, fantasy-sports-style...

Amy Adams
Josh Brolin
Penélope Cruz
Viola Davis
Robert Downey, Jr.
Anne Hathaway
Taraji P. Henson
Philip Seymour Hoffman
Richard Jenkins
Angelina Jolie
Frank Langella
Heath Ledger
Melissa Leo
Sean Penn
Brad Pitt
Mickey Rourke
Michael Shannon
Meryl Streep
Marisa Tomei
Kate Winslet

The stated goal was not necessarily to win more Oscars or clean up at the box office: simply to make the most completely kick-ass movie available with the talent on offer. Once our cast was established, we each drafted a movie title from the following list of 20 – which were randomly selected from a list of 56 titles found in the popular party game Balderdash, after eliminating the excessively wacky or unwieldy ones.

Acting On Impulse
All That Money Can Buy
Americano
The Appointment
Beginning of the End
Fly By Night
Higher & Higher
In Society
The Last Laugh
My Name Is Nobody
Offbeat

Out of Order
Panic Button
The Point
Razorback
Six Pack
Son of Oklahoma
Talk To Me
Twenty Bucks
You'll Find Out

We each had a cast, we each had a title. Then, we each came up with a movie. The results are as follows. (Note to cultural historians and time capsule creators: don't stop here, because reviews of the four resulting fake movies have also been written and posted to our site. As we attempted to explain at the start, the awesomeness of this thing knows no bounds.)

Round 1, Pick 1: Joe

Penélope Cruz. She's pretty much the most beautiful woman on the planet, so there's that. Also, what little track record she has isn't all that bad; *Vanilla Sky* was a confusing as hell and turned out to be about nothing, and it made \$100 million. And she pretty much carried *Sahara* to \$70 million (and that's in 2005 dollars!), which, in terms of tall orders, is probably the movie equivalent of if Kurt Warner were to return to the Super Bowl yet again next season... with the Los Angeles Clippers. I think we'll be fine here.

In any case, feel free to take a hotter chick with your next draft pick.

Except oh wait, you can't!

Pick 2: Jameson

Robert Downey, Jr. I hadn't planned for this because I assumed this option would be unavailable after the first pick, but since the goal of this enterprise is to end up with an awesome movie, I'm going to have to set my emotions aside and pick Robert Downey, Jr. I know it was technically possible to make non-awesome movies with him in them in the '80s and '90s, but not today, sirs. Not today. Anyone who's seen *Iron Man*, *Tropic Thunder*, *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*, or even a press clipping from *Sherlock Holmes* knows that. Take any title on our list and imagine RDJ in it, and if you're not already creaming your pants you've clearly got your brain in backward. *Americano*, in which he plays a street-smart DEA agent gone off-book down in Bogotá, knocking heads together to find the guy who copped his undercover partner? *Razorback*, where his coked up superstar sports agent is busted and forced to take a job as the new ladies' basketball coach at U of Arkansas? Hell, I'd even watch him in the weepy frontier epic *Son of Oklahoma*. RDJ is where it is, boys; just wait and see.

I'm taking RDJ, as any sane person would, and we're off and running! Brandon, you're up. And Mike, if either of you two pick Amy Adams before I get my second pick, I will skin you alive. May the best man win!

Pick 3: Brandon

Brad Pitt. Wow. Brad Pitt at number three. This takes me back to 1984, when a certain team called the Chicago Bulls took a certain player named Michael Jordan with the third pick in the NBA Draft. Sure, Hakeem Olajuwon was great, but no sane person would declare him better or more valuable than Jordan. And as for who's Sam Bowie in this scenario, well... let me just say this: don't be surprised when Penélope Cruz comes down with a stress fracture in her left shin.

You guys have just handed me the most bankable movie star on this list (and arguably the most awesome of all the mega-bankable movie stars) at a below-market draft slot. He can get any movie I want greenlit, even a sack of crap like *Beginning of the End* (I see a *Kramer vs. Kramer*-esque divorce drama, or perhaps even a satire on the current collapse of the financial markets). And his versatility will allow me to go in pretty much any direction I want from here, which is all you can ask for in a first-round pick. I smell a dynasty cookin'!

Pick 4: Mike

Angelina Jolie. Does Joe not realize that Matthew McConaughey was in *Sahara*? Did he forget that Tom Cruise was in *Vanilla Sky*? I can't fault Jameson or Brandon for their picks (though Jameson picked someone who may well spend the *Razorback* shoot in prison on coke charges while Brandon picked someone who didn't have the clout to change the title of *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*), but Joe just drafted Kwame Brown - immensely talented in high school (i.e. Spanish cinema) and a string of success with big stars (with the Lakers) and failures when leading on his own. Meanwhile, I'll go ahead and pick someone that more than one magazine has called the hottest woman on the planet. Also, she can act. Will she be the (heavily made up) ugly duckling who blossoms in *All that Money Can Buy* or will she be a mentally disturbed head of state in *Acting on Impulse*? My money's on the female lead in *Son of Oklahoma* about an Okie who makes it big thanks to the sexual tutelage of one Angelina Jolie.

JOE: *Great points on McConaughey and Cruise. This is why - and I hate to give away my strategy this early - I also plan to select additional actors and actresses in subsequent rounds of the draft. Dammit Wagner, you cagey bastard; you dragged my secret out of me!*

Round 2, Pick 5: Mike

Josh Brolin. This dude is on the rise. Yes, he's a jerk. But this guy is getting it done in movie after movie. Paired with Angelina as the simple Okie, he could win an Oscar *and* a Blockbuster award! Of course, now with two hotties with chops we can go for the spy drama *In Society* that takes *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* times James Bond plus Angelina friggin' Jolie and laughs all the way to the bank (provided that America still uses banks after the revolution comes).

Pick 6: Brandon

Philip Seymour Hoffman. As much as I'd like to pick Amy Adams just to piss off Jameson (thus hopefully throwing him into such a rage that he does something impulsive and stupid with his next pick, like taking Sean Penn), and even though casting her with Brad Pitt would finally be the thing to catapult her into the stardom she deserves, I'm going to have to go with good ol' P.S. because of this: did you know that Brad Pitt is actually four years *older* than Philip Seymour Hoffman?! But thanks to genetics and lifestyle choices, no one would ever guess that, not in a million years. And that, my friends, is the basis for some excellent comedy, hopefully with the two of them as rivals for the same goal, like a big promotion in *Higher & Higher*. Or perhaps PSH can steal Pitt's identity in *My Name is Nobody*. This is the best bit of opposites casting since Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito, and I'm going to ride it all the way to glory.

Also, I can't let PSH slide down to Jameson, where he could pair him with Downey. Even I'll admit that combination would tilt the awesomeness dangerously in Jameson's favor.

Pick 7: Jameson

Amy Adams. I'm not going to pretend this isn't a sentimental pick, but looking at the remaining candidates there's a lot of talent and versatility, but little to match that of Amy Adams, who's packed with potential and essentially headed for the Hollywood stratosphere with her award-winning talent and her ability to do everything from indie drama to family comedy - and let's not forget how amazing she was on "The Office". She and Downey could play mismatched secret agents (he, the savvy superspy and inveterate womanizer; she, the by-the-book agent who broke off her engagement to him five years ago when she caught him in bed with her mom). With that script, I could throw a dart blindfolded at our list of titles and I'd still be fine - once I worked the dart out of my leg.

Pick 8: Joe

Anne Hathaway. It took me a little while to warm up to Anne Hathaway, but she more than won me over when she

hosted "Saturday Night Live" a while ago. If you can do that, and be great, when plenty of movie stars haven't been... well, then you're okay in my book.

I figure Anne Hathaway a staid, conservative, possibly somewhat naïve grad student studying somewhere in Central or South America... she runs into Penélope Cruz somehow... that's where it starts to get "good."

But am I talking thriller? Drama? Comedy? Which way am I going with it? Huh?

Round 3, Pick 9: Joe

Mickey Rourke.

I'm going *that* way with it, bitches!

Am I the only one here who saw *The Wrestler*, by the way? I suppose I must be, or else Mickey Rourke wouldn't still be here at Pick #9.

Penélope Cruz, Anne Hathaway, Mickey Rourke... don't worry. I've got a plan.

Hathaway meets Cruz... things take a turn... and then somebody, at some point, and I'm not quite sure how or why yet, is forced to say, "Dammit, get me [Mickey Rourke's character's name]!" Oh, high-level government figures will be involved; don't think they won't. And I can say that without tipping my hand; the beauty of the new political world we're all living in is that, for at least the three or four more years that the United States stays solvent, pretty much anybody of any race or gender can play pretty much any part when it comes to high-level government figures.

I'll be honest, though: I'm looking forward to seeing who joins RDJ and Amy Adams with Jameson's next pick. Thank God it won't be Anne Hathaway or Mickey Rourke.

BRANDON: *Am I crazy, or did Joe just propose the first major studio feature with lesbian lead characters since 1996's Bound? I have to admire his chutzpah and marketing savvy, as well as his charity in finding a home for wayward lesbian Mickey Rourke.*

Pick 10: Jameson

Heath Ledger. I had to pass up some pretty enticing options making this pick, but I think Ledger (who, for our purposes, survives at least long enough to complete principal photography on this movie) should add something very interesting. I'm operating on the assumption that *The Dark Knight* was a major turning point for him, a departure from his hit-or-miss past toward a trajectory of captivating character work. Putting him and Robert Downey, Jr. opposite

each other guarantees fireworks - I haven't decided yet whether they'll be dramatic fireworks (Ledger as the young priest who confronts RDJ as an abusive paterfamilias in *Beginning of the End*) or comic ones (pair them up as U.S. Marshals in a Ben Stiller-style buddy movie/thriller spoof *Offbeat*). This move may push Amy Adams to more of a supporting role than a co-lead, we'll have to wait and see. In either case, I know she can handle it.

Pick 11: Brandon

Meryl Streep. If you're just going to leave the greatest living film actress sitting out there this long, I'm not going to not take her. Come on! Now you know I loves me some comedy, so I'm certainly leaning that way, and while Marisa Tomei's Oscar for *My Cousin Vinny* makes for a nice story/urban legend, there's nothing in her filmography that matches the comic chops displayed by Meryl in *Defending Your Life*, *Adaptation*, and with her voice over work as Jessica Lovejoy on *The Simpsons*. (I love Kate Winslet too, but comedy? Not so much.) But given the vast array of experience on hand now between Pitt, Hoffman, and Streep, I can go with any genre I want. *The Point*: Is it a complex relationship drama? A farcical comedy of one-upsmanship? Or a brainy action/thriller pitting three former West Point grads against each other in violent competition? Why not all three? Yeah, good luck focusing on anything else (including not peeing in your pants) for the rest of the draft, suckers!

Pick 12: Mike

Marisa Tomei.

Round 4, Pick 13: Mike

Sean Penn. I'm torn, torn, torn. So many different directions I could go. I'm going to hope that my wildcard actor stays alive until the last pick and go ahead and Mel Kiper this baby by picking the best players available given my needs. So, I'm going with Marisa Tomei and Sean Penn. This way, Josh Brolin will go batshit crazy on the set being the only castmember without an Oscar. Also, he'll know that Marisa Tomei has one and he doesn't. I may well have to hire Dustin Hoffman's character from *Wag the Dog* to produce this baby, but *Son of Oklahoma* just got a wild brother and third-wheel love interest!

JOE: *I'd love to trash talk Mike here, but, any time you can get two Oscar winners at picks 12 and 13, both of whom are still relatively young and capable of fitting into almost any type of part in your fake movie, you're doing something right.*

Pick 14: Brandon

Richard Jenkins. Yes! I gambled that Jenkins would still be available at this pick, and it paid off. The fact that Jenkins got an Oscar nomination for the first leading role of his entire 35-year career tells you how awesome he is and how dumb everyone else is for not doing this a long time ago. I'd like to point out that with him on board, I could do a potentially mind-blowing remake of *Step Brothers* with Streep in the Mary Steenburgen role, Hoffman in the John C. Reilly role, and Pitt in the Ferrell role. But alas, that's not what we're here for (and the original version is plenty good as is). So let's keep Jenkins and Streep as husband and wife, but they're getting a divorce, and Pitt and Hoffman are their lawyers... and their sons! It's courtroom hijinks, family dysfunction, sibling rivalry, and maybe, just maybe, a little bit of heart in *Out of Order*.

Pick 15: Jameson

Taraji P. Henson. I was really, really hoping to get Richard Jenkins. Not because he's my favorite actor or anything (I think we all know that's Malcolm Gets), but because so far my strategy has been versatility. Robert Downey, Jr. has done everything and done it well; Amy Adams has displayed serious range in a very short time; Heath Ledger has been hit-or-miss but he's a dynamic actor and my favorite two roles of his were in *The Dark Knight* and *10 Things I Hate About You* (and his other renowned role was a gay 1960s cowboy). I'd say he's comfortable with a variety of material. Upon examination, I may have sold Henson short in the versatility category all along: I've seen her in two major roles ("Boston Legal" and *Smokin' Aces*) but IMDb had to clue me in, because I didn't even recognize her - she disappeared so completely into those parts. Her "Boston Legal" part was unmoored and sloppily written, but it was a sassy comedy role and *Benjamin Button* is a heartfelt, dramatic one. (I haven't seen it, but I assume it is because Oscar took notice.) So, welcome aboard, Taraji P. Henson. I'm sure you'll deliver ably, whether we opt for romantic-triangle comedy (*You'll Find Out*), domestic melodrama (*Talk To Me*), or taut, intriguing corporate malfeasance thriller (*The Point*).

Factoid! IMDb says she's already been in a movie called *Talk To Me* from 2007. Kismet! (Er, kismetoid!)

Pick 16: Joe

Frank Langella. I was a bit nervous, I must admit, when Richard Jenkins went off the board. One idea in particular is percolating in my head (I'm thinking thriller; details to come), and for it to work in the slightest, somebody had to play Anne Hathaway's dad. And the only people left who were even mathematically eligible to do that were Richard Jenkins and Frank Langella (although Langella would be the weird old dad, who had her with his second, "trophy" wife). Once Wagner picked Marisa Tomei and Sean Penn, I was like, "okay, as long as the next two picks aren't *specifically*

Richard Jenkins and Frank Langella, I'll be fine." And then, of course, the next pick was Richard Jenkins. So if I was a bit impatient during the 18 or so hours between Brandon's pick and Jameson's, it's only because my master plan was in danger of being ruined, and the wait was damn near unbearable. It's like, if you got tested for some horrible, fatal disease, and they said "we'll call you on Tuesday to tell you if you have it or not," and then you had to wait until like 9:00 Tuesday night before they finally called you (that's not a fair comparison, obviously; contracting some horrible, fatal disease wouldn't be nearly as bad as having your Oscar draftplan messed up. But hopefully you see what I'm getting at).

Although I was able to relax a little bit when I IMDb'd Melissa Leo and found out she would technically work as Anne Hathaway's mom. We'd have to do some retooling, but, we could make it work.

Round 5, Pick 17: Joe

Michael Shannon. Turns out I've seen Michael Shannon in a bunch of stuff (just not *Revolutionary Road*). And, I've got to say, once I picked Mickey Rourke, I had a specific plan for a specific movie that in a perfect world would have included Richard Jenkins and Sean Penn, but will work just fine, thank you, with Frank Langella and Michael Shannon.

Penélope Cruz, Anne Hathaway, Mickey Rourke, Frank Langella and Michael Shannon. There we have it. I'm done. I couldn't realistically have expected it to go any better for me; you guys are in exactly as much trouble as I initially suspected you'd be. What we've got here is a character piece disguised as an action thriller with geopolitical stakes of the highest order; Anne Hathaway goes down to South America, she runs into Penélope Cruz, things get... awesome; then, they take a turn. Anne runs afoul of Michael Shannon (hey, was Penélope Cruz in cahoots with him all along?), and all anybody knows about him is that he's up to no good down there. Now she's in serious trouble. Anne's dad, Frank Langella, a high-ranking US official - and I think he can pull off the role of a high-ranking US official, since he just got nominated for an Oscar for playing *the President*; like, is that high-ranking enough for you? - anyway, Frank Langella is all, like, "Get me [Mickey Rourke's character]!" Yeah. Action ensues. Don't think it doesn't.

Now I just have to sweat out the title draft, since I'm picking last; obviously one title and one title only works with this scenario and I need that title desperately, to the point where it would probably be worth it for any of you guys to sabotage your own projects by picking my title, just to have any hope of stopping my runaway freight train of awesomeness... so I'll have to play it pretty close to the vest about which title I'm going after.

Wouldn't you guys like to know, eh?

Ah, screw it; we all know it's *Americano*. So please don't pick that one.

Or, wait: *do* pick that one. Please.

(You know what? Just listen to whichever plea will make you not pick *Americano*)

BRANDON: *I would just like to mention that Michael Shannon is batshit insane (or at least he used to be). When I lived in Chicago, he and a friend of mine got into a drunken bar fight one night, and Shannon bit my friend's face.*

Pick 18: Jameson

Kate Winslet. Fuck. I wouldn't have predicted you'd take *both* of the only two guys left I could find a use for. (Otherwise, I'd have taken one!) I'll take Winslet; it's a prestige name, at least. I'll probably just put her in a piranha tank for the opening credits like my mom suggested, but I may as well take her. My other option is to team up Viola Davis with Taraji P. Henson in some kind of period civil rights story where RDJ, Ledger, and Amy Adams play the committed, relentlessly decent somebody-or-others who... do something. Yeah, that'll kick the ass of *Americano* (Working Title) right? I'll take Winslet... I just have to pray I get a powerhouse screenwriter in the Hypothetical Screenwriter Draft and he bails my ass out like writers have been doing for numbskulled producers since time immemorial. (Or at least since *The Hottie and the Nottie*.)

I would say I hope Michael Shannon runs wild on the set and bites off Mickey Rourke's face, but who'd notice? Good luck with your awesome blockbuster. It's not even worth stealing your title. Even if I do I know you'll still have *The Last Laugh*.

JOE: *If this draft had been televised, we'd have reached the point where the entire green room (or whatever they call the waiting room-slash-holding area at the draft) is empty except for Kate Winslet, who was projected as a top pick; Jameson would have finally just put an end to that incredibly awkward period during which the non-draftee sits there and gets progressively more and more pissed, everyone in the entourage just sits there uncomfortably, and the announcers are so mortified for the person that they don't really know what to say. Then that person finally gets drafted, and everyone's like, "thank God."*

Basically, what I'm saying is: Kate Winslet, meet Aaron Rodgers!

Seriously, though, to get a Kate Winslet at pick 18; I'm not the president of her fan club, or anything, but, if we did this draft for the next 50 years we might not see a "name" like that slide that low again (which is not to impugn the good names of Viola Davis or Melissa Leo...).

Pick 19: Brandon

Melissa Leo. Neither Melissa Leo nor Viola Davis have much of a comedy background, but Leo at least has *Mr. Woodcock* (technically a comedy in name, even if no one laughed) and something called *True Adolescents* in post-production that IMDB labels a comedy, and that's good enough for me.

Now I know that *Out of Order* seems awfully damn perfect as it is, but there's still one piece missing: a judge, of course. Now Frank Langella would have been a natural fit, IF you wanted to go the boring, staid, traditional route. Instead, we're putting Leo in that role, and giving her one hell of a secret: drawing upon the first lead role of Leo's career, in 1985's *Streetwalkin'*, Leo's judge put herself through law school by working as a prostitute, and her biggest client back then just happened to be... yep, Richard Jenkins. And they haven't seen each other since Leo stopped turning tricks; that is, until this trial. Leo can't recuse herself because letting this secret out about her past would ruin her judicial career, and as a prominent local businessman with political aspirations, Jenkins wants to keep it under wraps as well. But to cover his bases in the trial, Jenkins has to come clean to Pitt, the son who's working as his lawyer, which of course makes Pitt even more conflicted about this case. Streep has always had her suspicions that Jenkins was unfaithful, so any weirdness between Leo and Jenkins in the courtroom will not escape her notice, and she will be more than willing to push Hoffman, the son who's working as her lawyer, to dig up dirt, which adds to his conflicts about the case. The comedic tension has just been ratcheted up a notch, bitches!

Mike, if you take *Out of Order* away from me, I will have no choice but to filet and eat you on a Pay-Per-View special.

JOE: *Brandon, you needed a judge, and you didn't take Viola Davis? What in the everlasting hell?*

If there's one thing I've learned in the last five to ten years from watching movies and TV, it's that all judges are middle-aged black women, and all middle-aged black women are judges. And you had a middle-aged black woman just sitting there!

*Plus, you could have made sure she wasn't the last pick, and saved us all from looking like racists. I mean, yeah, we're all avowed racists; sure. No one disputes that. But we don't want to **look** like racists, do we? Come on, man!*

Pick 20: Mike

Viola Davis. I take Viola Davis with the last pick. She's the "Mr. Irrelevant" of the 2009 fantasy movie draft.

Title Round, Pick 1: Mike

I am taking *Son of Oklahoma*. Also, I am taking this contest. Be advised.

JOE: *With Josh Brolin in your movie, I'm not sure what other options you had. He was pretty much born to star in a movie called Son of Oklahoma.*

Pick 2: Brandon

I am, of course, taking *Out of Order*. Suck on it. Lemon out!

Pick 3: Jameson

Okay, bit of a Hail Mary here, but I do have a plan. Maybe it's the sleep deprivation talking, but I think it might even be a viable plan. I mean viable as in: you're all toast.

I have decided to take *Fly By Night*. I've got something else up my sleeve and I'll have to tinker with it a little to see how good I can make it. (Hint: think *The Last of the Mohicans* meets *Freddy Got Fingered*.)

Pick 4: Joe

I will, as has been discussed, select *Americano*. And I've talked enough about the plot, so I think we all have a basic idea of what we're dealing with; sort of a *Batteries Not Included* meets *Like Water for Chocolate*.

MIKE: *If I didn't say so before, Son of Oklahoma is a kind of Porky's II: The Next Day meets Amelie.*

The Films

Americano – Joe

Starring Mickey Rourke, Anne Hathaway, P enelope Cruz, Michael Shannon, and Frank Langella

Disillusioned ex-Army Ranger Paul Kestler (Michael Shannon) now runs a drug-and-weapons operation from his hideout in the Colombian rainforest. Also, he and his team occasionally venture to the seaside tourist mecca of Cartagena to mix in a little kidnapping-for-profit, disarming rich and/or important men with the feminine wiles of Kestler's lover Maria (P enelope Cruz) and then abducting them to the group's jungle headquarters. Now, a looming trade agreement between Colombia and the U.S. threatens to empower the Colombian government, making Kestler's life extremely difficult.

Tom Kubusheskie (Frank Langella) is multi-millionaire

businessman, an old buddy of the President's, and the Secretary of Commerce. He has the President's full attention when it comes to matters of business. Tom is also a Vietnam War vet and once, during fierce combat, saved the life of one William Cade.

William Cade (Mikey Rourke) barely survived Vietnam, but rose through the ranks of the special forces and went on to conduct several off-the-books operations in Central and South America. Fifteen years or so ago, however, for reasons known only to him, he dropped completely off the grid. He lives an anonymous, spartan life in a cabin outside of a small village in Panama's Darien Province.

Tom's daughter Ellie Kubusheskie (Anne Hathaway) is a young news researcher. Her editor sends her down to Colombia to help with a story on the U.S. trade talks, thinking her family connections could well prove useful. One day, Kestler and Maria overhear Ellie introducing herself to a colleague in a Cartagena restaurant. Kestler recognizes her uncommon last name and confirms that Ellie is indeed Tom's daughter. After hacking into her Facebook profile, Kestler and Maria notice something about the look Ellie is giving one of her girlfriends in a couple of photos. They decide to see if their usual seduction-and-kidnapping plan with Maria might work on Ellie.

It does.

Secretary of Labor Kubusheskie is sent a video file showing his daughter tied up and surrounded by men with guns, one of whom is Kestler. No ransom is demanded, but Secretary Kubusheskie must use his influence with the President to kill the U.S.-Colombia trade agreement. He believes that the agreement is vital for Colombia and has major national security benefits for the United States as well. But, having lost his wife to cancer two years earlier, he's not about to sacrifice his only daughter. Only one man can help. A man who owes him...

Kubusheskie picks up a phone. "It's Tom," he says. "Find me William Cade." A pause. "You heard me, God dammit. *Find me William Cade!*"

And at this point we're barely to the half-hour mark, if that. Anyway; yeah. The action gets fast and furious (not unlike in the movie *Fast and Furious*). Cade gets to Ellie without a ton of difficulty, but escaping Kestler's compound is another matter...

So there you have it. *Americano*. Think *The Royal Tenenbaums* meets *Under the Tuscan Sun*. No, seriously; think *Proof of Life* meets *The Rundown*.

Fly By Night – Jameson

Starring Robert Downey, Jr., Amy Adams, and Heath Ledger, with Taraji P. Henson and Kate Winslet

Mid-summer, 1969. Kate Winslet and her young son drive through the New Mexico desert on their way home from a trip. She stops to pump gas and the inquisitive boy, seeing bright lights just beyond the hill, goes to investigate. What he sees will change the course of his life: actors in spacesuits, faking the moon landing. Cut to present day and that boy is Robert Downey, Jr., doing his version of Mel Gibson in *Conspiracy Theory*, a charming and savvy man, slightly unhinged by his obsession. He's thought of nothing else his whole life. These days he's a physics professor in Pasadena, teaching rocket science, and his top-secret side project is attempting to create time travel so he can go back and unfake the moon landing. He was inspired by the space program as a kid, and he thinks he owes it to all the other kids to make that inspiration real.

When a comely graduate student (Amy Adams) shows up in Downey's class, she wins his trust and he shows her the time travel project, where her unique genius fixes his glitches in no time. They're off to the '60s, where things take a *Three Days of the Condor* turn. They tangle with a stubborn NASA PR flack with thugs and hitmen in her Rolodex (Henson, who also appears in present-day scenes in old-age makeup), meet a whistle-blower inside the Apollo engineering division (Heath Ledger, looking irresistible in slightly shaggy hair, horn-rimmed glasses, and a short-sleeved dress shirt with a narrow tie), survive chance encounters with Winslet, and, of course, fall in love. In the end, Ledger helps them sneak into NASA's files and they learn Armstrong and Aldrin really did land on the moon, but they found aliens there. NASA didn't think the public could handle it, so they switched their cameras to the New Mexico set as a fallback plan. Downey returns to the present, where he and Adams become top researchers in NASA's secret alien division, and he's inspired all over again.

Out of Order – Brandon

Starring Brad Pitt, Meryl Streep, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Richard Jenkins, and Melissa Leo

Richard Jenkins is a prominent Los Angeles attorney, the head of his own very successful law firm, and is considering running for the U.S. Senate; his ego is matched only by his womanizing. Meryl Streep is his long-suffering, jaded wife, who gave up a once-promising career as a foot model to become a mother and homemaker. After many decades of volatile married life, Streep has had enough, and she files for divorce. Wanting to turn the screws on Jenkins and make the whole thing as publicly embarrassing as possible, Streep hires, as her lawyer, Philip Seymour Hoffman... who just so happens to also be their son. Looking to retaliate, Jenkins hires their other son, Brad Pitt, as his lawyer. The two boys both have their reasons for doing this. Hoffman has long struggled to keep his law practice alive, and this high-profile case could be his big meal ticket; and as a schlubby, bumbling loner, he's always been jealous of and competitive with his younger, handsomer, more successful brother. Pitt

seems to have it all – a beautiful wife, adoring kids, and after many years in his dad's law firm, he believes he's poised to take things over when Jenkins retires – but what he's never had is his father's approval; he hopes winning this case will give him that.

But things get even more complicated once the case makes it to court and they meet the judge: Melissa Leo. She and Jenkins know each other – the judge put herself through law school by working as an "escort," and her biggest client back then just happened to be... yep, Jenkins. They haven't seen each other since Leo stopped turning tricks; that is, until this trial. Both have obvious reasons to want to keep this secret under wraps. But Jenkins believes it will be the ace in the hole that helps him avoid an expensive divorce settlement, so he comes clean to Pitt. Meanwhile, Streep has a secret of her own that she shares with Hoffman: she actually didn't quit foot modeling after she got married, and discreetly built up a small fortune that she keeps in a Swiss bank account. She just wants to gouge Jenkins financially to stick it to him. Pitt and Hoffman are now both conflicted, and over a private lunch meeting, spill their secrets to each other. They decide to join forces, and turn the tables on their parents and the judge: in the judge's chambers, they force Jenkins and Streep to agree to a no-fault divorce and get Leo to sign off on it, and get Jenkins to sign papers turning his law firm over to both brothers, who will now run it together as partners.

Son of Oklahoma – Mike

Starring Josh Brolin and Angelina Jolie. Featuring Marisa Tomei and Viola Davis, with Sean Penn as Braxton McCoy.

We open with a wide shot of the Oklahoma dirt and prairie. As the camera slowly zooms over a dusty, poorly vegetated hill, we see a town of about 250,000. The camera passes a mixture of traditional Oklahoma's past ("Merlyn's Cattle Feed") and the modern world's infiltration of Oklahoma ("Applebee's," "Zelda's Organic WiFi and Coffeeshaq"). We see the city building where assemblyman Jason McCoy (Brolin) is addressing his colleagues with an earnest, homespun wisdom about giving a liquor license to a new wine cafe owned by Oklahoma native Janelle Moore (Jolie), a former restaurant lobbyist with a past. At McCoy's house, Evelyn McCoy (Marisa Tomei) is flipping channels in the living room with her two kids. They pass the public access station broadcasting the assemblymen meeting; the kids get excited, Tomei rolls her eyes (it's only public access) and keeps on flipping.

Jolie is appreciative of McCoy's help and suggests he stop by her new wine bar; McCoy does her one better. He's running for the Senate (Jason McCoy: *Son of Oklahoma*, *Leader for Oklahoma*) and offers to host a fundraiser at the bar, merging old and new Oklahoma. They talk for hours, they have chemistry. It is unclear if anything "happened."

McCoy's star is on the rise, which is why the Democratic

Party has brought in fast talking Darcy Washington (Davis) to run McCoy's campaign against "Murphy" (whom we never see). McCoy is uncomfortable with an outsider in charge, but he's ambitious and understands how the game is played.

A few weeks later the campaign office is popping with phones, volunteers, great signs and posters. Evelyn feels neglected. Janelle keeps showing up, dropping off a bottle of wine at the McCoy's (to Evelyn, Jason's out campaigning), introducing McCoy at a small business forum, etc.

The night before his only debate with Murphy, the night of the fundraiser at Janelle's new wine bar, McCoy's older brother Braxton (Penn), still working on the family farm on the other side of the state, shows up, gets drunk and implies that he loves Evelyn and that McCoy is having an affair with Janelle. After stumbling out, Braxton drives his car into a tree, breaking his arm. To make matters worse, Jason got a previous drunk driving conviction on Braxton overturned on a technicality. Washington knows the negative ads are coming, and starts encouraging McCoy to disown his brother, something he will not do.

After the fundraiser, McCoy stays to help Janelle clean up. It turns out she knew Braxton from his one semester at Oklahoma State where they were both taking hotel and restaurant management courses. Brilliant, but troubled, he was as we see in flashbacks; as if he was covering up a terrible secret from his past. Jason honestly has no idea what it could be. But Janelle knows.

Son of Oklahoma is a *Twins meets Lawrence of Arabia*... or, it is really a *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* meets *Closer* with a pinch of *The Grapes of Wrath*?

(Reviews of these four films can be found here: [Americano](#); [Fly By Night](#); [Out of Order](#); [Son of Oklahoma](#).)

JAMESON: Interesting work. In terms of all-around star power, Brandon and Mike seem to dominate, but the talent is generally spread across all four films. Joe and Brandon seemed to settle on a genre and style early on and focus their strategy on best achieving that end. Mike played his strategy closer to the chest – though the final result seems close to what he envisioned back when he was drafting Angelina in Round 1. I took a more shotgun approach, attempting to corral as much awesomeness as I could (strong at first with Downey and Adams, lousy finish with Winslet) – with the hope that the assembled killer team could then be fit into any narrative. The results were somewhat shaky, but for a first-time drafter up against a cabal of pros, I can't feel too upset with myself.

(Still, since my goal was to make an awesome movie and I ended up with a movie which includes Kate Winslet, I can

feel pretty upset with myself.)

BRANDON: Joe, you did a fine job with *Americano*, but I've gotta say, I think you overdrafted on Penélope Cruz. The "are you nuts?" reactions you privately got from us suggest that's the case, and while your personal preference may be for Cruz over Jolie in hotness, I think the general consensus is that Jolie trumps Cruz ([this site](#) seems to agree). But here's the thing – I'm convinced you could have had both, if only you'd taken Jolie with the first pick. Cruz would have still been there at the 8th pick. Anne Hathaway is nice enough, but there's no way you or anyone else can tell me with a straight face that *Americano* isn't better with Cruz and Jolie. The Hathaway version gets you some interest, no doubt, but the Jolie version? You make a couple of ad buys during whatever huge sporting event is going on around your release date (Super Bowl, World Series, March Madness), play your trailer, and watch as men around the world simply walk out of their homes in a trance, wallet in hand, to the nearest movie theater. ("I want to go to there.")

As an added bonus, I believe this move would have also done some collateral damage to Jameson. Mike would have likely taken Brolin and Philip Seymour Hoffman rather than Brolin and Jolie, I would have taken Amy Adams (because she's great and to spite Jameson), and Jameson would have been inconsolable. I mean, he'd probably have gone with Hathaway, but you can't dismiss the possibility that, in a fit of rage, he takes Frank Langella in the second round, then wanders the streets shirtless and drunk for several hours, crying out Adams's name.

JAMESON: I like that this is referred to as "some collateral damage." Of course, both are grave understatements. I would immediately have been on a motorcycle (stolen) to Minnesota with a shotgun (stolen) and a medieval flail weapon (rented). I wouldn't only have taken Langella, I'd also have taken Sean Penn and Mickey Rourke and I'd have slapped together a remake of *Wild Hogs* but instead of a chucklefuck over-the-hill comedy they'd end up as a gang of itinerant serial killers (still in a chucklefuck comedy).

JOE: First of all, with the #1 pick in the 2010 PoopReading.com movie draft, Joe Mulder selects... Penélope Cruz.

And you can feel free to come out here to California and "overdraft" my nutsack.

While it's possible (probable?) that I could have gotten Angelina Jolie (for example) and Penélope Cruz, Penélope Cruz was the one person I was after above all, and since I wasn't picking again until pick #8, I figured better to reach for her than to risk not getting her. I knew the chances were overwhelmingly good that I'd end up with another hot lookin' lady with my second pick (be she Angelina, Anne Hathaway, Kate Winslet, Marisa Tomei, Taraji P. Henson, or whomever), and I'd just tailor my idea to match who I got. I

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got Anne Hathaway, so she became a young, perhaps naive news researcher a few years out of college whose relative innocence could be exploited by Cruz and Michael Shannon. Obviously with Angelina Jolie it's a different movie, and with Marisa Tomei it's slightly different still.

Maybe I reached with Mickey Rourke, is who I maybe reached with; I would rather have had Sean Penn than Michael Shannon (nothing personal, Michael Shannon), and I might have been able to grab Sean Penn at #9 and still ended up with a cast of Cruz, Hathaway, Penn, Rourke, and Langella.

In the end, though, I drafted with a pretty specific plot in mind, and hoped that everyone else's picks fell exactly the way I needed them to. Which they did. A risky strategy, to be sure, and not one I'd recommend to all of you kinds out there doing your own movie drafts at home. You leave that sort of thing to the professionals.

(Not that I got paid for any of this, necessarily. In fact, I probably spent several hours working on it that I could have spent doing something that would have earned me some money. But still.)

BRANDON: Had your nutsack been in the draft, it would have made a fine replacement for Sean Penn at Pick #13.

MIKE: I was a little surprised that the players didn't try harder to screw each other. If any of our readers had been privy to the ridiculous graveness with which Brandon, Jameson, and Joe approached this project, they'd beg me to shoot all three of them. I still have a headache from having to read 40 e-mails about some website that generates random draft orders via password protection encrypted by a locksmith who broadcasts his social security number on the magical tubes of the interwebs to demonstrate the veracity of his encryption methods.

Anyway, Jameson nearly goaded me into picking Amy Adams (though if I had, Marisa Tomei could've pulled off the Adams role as a comely, but street smart grad student). And given how freakin' seriously you three nerds were taking this draft and all of its subsequent rules to randomize the draft order, generate the potential titles, and such, I'm surprised we didn't have to call in an outside party to officiate the draft. In fact, I think I'd like to lodge a formal protest and request that Jimmy Carter come and monitor a redraft to make sure that it upholds the highest democratic principles.

Of course, we all know I won't really lodge a formal protest because Jameson would demand that we develop a protocol for protest lodging while Brandon drafted a letter to Jimmy Carter that we'd all have to review before sending it out on letterhead (Joe has three designs with different PoopReading.com crests, we just need to agree on one!).

BRANDON: Jimmy's already committed to fly to California to mediate the Mulder nutsack matter. He's a real pro, that Carter.
