

And the Oscar Goes to Milena Canonero

Natasha Lardera (February 24, 2015)



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The 87th Academy Awards were the Oscars of *Birdman*, the film by Mexican director Alejandro González Iñárritu about a washed out actor (played by nominee Michael Keaton) who wants to redeem himself by starring in a serious play, that opened the latest edition of the Venice Film Festival.

Birdman won four of the coveted statuettes: Best Film, Best Director, Best Original Screenplay and Best Cinematography, yet in order to be a real victory Michael Keaton should have been awarded the Oscar for Best Actor in a Leading Role.



The winner was Eddie Redmayne for his intense portrait of Stephen Hawking , the famous physicist afflicted of SLA, in *The Theory of Everything*.

But an Oscar night is not complete if there isn't at least one Italian winner: and this year the honor went to Costume Designer Milena Canonero, for the costumes of Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. Although it didn't take home the top honors *The Grand Budapest Hotel* tied the winning film, *Birdman*, for the number of wins with four: in addition to Costumes, it won for Original Score (Alexandre Desplat), Production Design (Adam Stockhausen's production design and Anna Pinnock's set decoration) and Makeup and Hairstyling.

The Grand Budapest Hotel is set between World War I and II, in a candy-colored imaginary Eastern European nation called Zubrowka. Hotel clerks wear purple uniforms that are faithful to the 1930s, soldiers wear gray-and-black uniforms based on the fusion of different military sources, the old Madame D wears a Black Diamond mink fur by Fendi while the sexy black leather coat worn by Willem Dafoe was made by the house of Prada.

Each and every costume choice carefully matched Wes Anderson's vision. In order to do that, Canonero had to submerge herself into Anderson's world, listen to his needs but also to her own creative input.

Just a week before the Oscar win, Canonero's efforts on *The Grand Budapest Hotel* were recognized by her colleagues (Costume Designers, Assistant Costume Designers and Costume Illustrators) with a victory in the Period Film category at the [17th Costume Designers Guild Awards](#) [2]. She also won a BAFTA for the film.

The Turin-born costume designer has dedicated her life to the craft of Costume Design and has worked for both film and stage productions since the late 1960s. Milena Canonero, who studied art, design history and costume design in Genoa, made her debut in Stanley Kubrick's iconic 1971 film *A Clockwork Orange*.

She is the one who gave Alex, the sociopath played by Malcolm McDowell, his signature Bowler Derby Hat and white suspenders. She won her first Oscar four years later with Kubrick's period drama *Barry Lyndon*. Canonero met director Stanley Kubrick on the set of *2001: Space Odyssey*, and they often worked together. Hers are also the iconic twins' blue dresses from *The Shining*.

She won two more Oscars: in 1981 for Hugh Hudson's *Chariots of Fire* and in 2006 for Sofia Coppola's *Marie Antoinette*. Overall, Canonero was nominated nine times and in 2001 she received the Career Achievement Award in Film from the Costume Design Guild.

The Grand Budapest Hotel was her third collaboration with director Wes Anderson, after *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* and *The Darjeeling Limited*. "Thank you Wes, this is for you," the Italian designer said as she accepted the statuette at the ceremony addressing the director directly. "You were a great inspiration, like an orchestra director, a composer, you are our source of inspiration." The simplicity and sincerity of her address have been praised by viewers worldwide... and they have been reason of great pride in Italy.

Italy's Premier, Matteo Renzi, tweeted, the day after her victory, " Congratulations to Milena Canonero, elegance, grace and talent at the Oscars," while the Minister of Culture, Dario Franceschini has declared, "(This Oscar) is yet another confirmation of the strength and vitality of Italian cinema and creativity. Her victory makes Italy proud."

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