



For her role as a stripper in *Dancing At The Blue Iguana*, **Daryl Hannah** donned a wig and pole-danced in a G-string for punters in an LA strip joint every night for a month

Is The Method madness?

The Brits will be out in force on the red carpet on Sunday: with 17 Oscar nominations, including Leading Actress and Best Picture, we have produced a vintage crop. But is home-grown talent set to be forever the bridesmaid at the Academy Awards?

'There's clearly a difference between being nominated and actually winning,' says Method acting expert Brian Timoney. 'When the Academy vote for the Oscars, they're looking at performance – and it's interesting to see the trend of where those performances are coming from.' More than 100 Oscars have been won by Method actors, including the last two leading actor Oscars, which went to Daniel Day-Lewis and Forest Whitaker.

'Since 2000, around 75 per cent of Oscar winners have been Method actors,' says Timoney. 'So given that, Kate Winslet (pictured right, who's been nominated five times before) is unlikely to win this year. She puts in a good, solid performance but someone such as Meryl Streep is really in a different class – the training and system they go through in America tends to set them apart.' He also predicts a win for Mickey Rourke, 'although he's got tough competition against Sean Penn: both are Method actors'.

Despite such a good record, surprisingly few actors have adopted the technique. According to Timoney: 'Only about one or two per cent of the acting industry actually use Method acting but if you look at who's

Thesp v Method: With the Oscars increasingly dominated by Method actors are the more traditionally trained Britons such as Kate Winslet out of date? **BY FIONA MACDONALD**

in that group, it's usually all the top creative actors in Hollywood.' He believes the approach is key to their success – and could be hindering the careers of British actors. 'It creates really in-depth, believable performances, which is exceptional acting. But in Britain they don't embrace it as much, which leaves them on the back foot because the Americans are leading the way with Oscar wins and performances.'

The Method, in which actors draw on their own experiences in portraying their characters, is derived from a system created by Konstantin Stanislavski and was popularised by Lee Strasberg at the Actors Studio in New York during the 1950s. The Studio's list of alumni reads like the Hollywood Walk of Fame, including stars such as Robert De Niro, Al Pacino, Dustin Hoffman, Jack Nicholson, Marilyn Monroe and Marlon Brando.

Yet the Method has not been adopted by many British film actors, who tend to come through theatre. Says Timoney: 'In Britain,

the training tends to be more technical, more about text analysis, voice and movement – not to say they don't do some of the emotional side but it tends to be less of that. The British style leads to a performance that's slightly more technical and acted than the Method approach, which is coming from deep within that individual.'

He puts that down to cultural differences. 'The reason we don't embrace it as much over here is that it's fairly emotional. It's beginning to change because we're getting more accepting of people delving into their own psyche – for years in Britain we've held emotional stuff at arm's length because we found it uncomfortable. So the other style of acting really suits the British temperament. But I don't believe it produces the same level of performance.'

Of course, that's highly subjective.

According to casting director Dan Hubbard, who's worked on films such as *The Bourne Ultimatum*, *United 93* and *The Lord Of The Rings*, Britons have never been more in demand. 'American studios hold British actors in high esteem; they go out of their way to hunt down and recruit the new hot British stars,' he says. 'It's more than likely that these days, British actors will get a big break in America as

opposed to over here, where we need A-list talent to sell our films.' He points to names such as Toby Kebbell, who went from small indie film *Dead Man's Shoes* to be cast opposite Jake Gyllenhaal in *Prince Of Persia*, or Gerard Butler, a struggling actor until he moved to LA, who now commands up to £10million a picture.

Hubbard denies there's a fundamental difference between the British and US approaches. 'Who creates the rulebook for Method acting? Most decent actors are, to a certain extent, Method actors because they really care about getting it spot on. People such as Ben Whishaw, Paddy Considine, Anne-Marie Duff – they're all incredibly dedicated.'

Instead, if there is a divergence, it's one of attitude. 'We have a different outlook on the industry,' says Hubbard. 'British actors probably carry themselves in a different way. There's more of a self-effacing, down-to-earth kind of approach.'

Yet Timoney won't be deterred. 'Taking the American approach would definitely help British Oscar contenders,' he says. 'It shouldn't just be a focus on voice and movement and text analysis, and neither should it all be about emotional content – it should be a marriage of those two things. If we embraced that more in this country, we'd start to see a powerful, different level of acting.'



Boxing clever: Robert De Niro trained so rigorously for the role of Jake La Motta in *Bull* that he was rated the 20th best middleweight boxer in the US at the time

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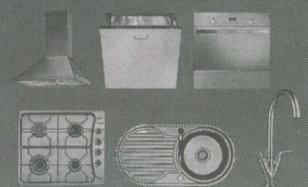


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