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## Tomorrow's Oscar Hopefuls Today

By [DAVID M. HALBFINGER](#)

LOS ANGELES, Dec. 7 — Two years ago a young executive at [Leonardo DiCaprio's](#) production company, hungry for some good scripts to read over the holidays, asked 100 peers to send him their 10 favorite new screenplays that would not make it into theaters before the New Year. He whipped up a spreadsheet ranking the responses, titled it "The Black List," e-mailed it around and then watched it become a Hollywood phenomenon, the kind of underground document that writers with projects stuck in development pray will mention their script.

That 2005 list began with "[Things We Lost in the Fire](#)," "[Juno](#)" and "[Lars and the Real Girl](#)," three movies that came out this fall, with the last two attracting much Oscar buzz for their screenplays. Atop the 2007 list of 130 screenplays, which the list's compiler, Franklin Leonard, issued on Friday: "Recount," by Danny Strong, about the 2000 election battle in Florida; "[Farragut North](#)," a political drama by Beau Willimon; and "[Passengers](#)," by Jon Spaihts. [HBO](#) and Warner Brothers are already making the first two. The third, by a new writer, about a spaceship passenger prematurely thawed from a cryogenic slumber a century before anyone else, is available to studios or financiers, with [Keanu Reeves](#) attached to produce and star.

"I would never say the Black List is what gives these scripts momentum," said Mr. Leonard, who now works for [Sydney Pollack](#) and [Anthony Minghella's](#) production company, Mirage Enterprises. "The vast majority are great, and we're only highlighting them. But maybe it brings them to the attention of someone who can get them made."

Mr. Leonard lamented that the writers' strike provided a much unhappier context for his list this year. "Hopefully we will all be going back to work soon," he said. "There are going to be writers who need to be hired on projects, writers pitching ideas and writers who will write spec scripts. For people in my job to be more familiar with those writers, then, means more interest in them. Hopefully it allows them — I admit this may be a pie-in-the-sky perspective — to get the pay that they deserve."

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