

Where there's a Will, there is a way to make the Oscars interesting

 By [Howard Feldman](#)

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The magnificence of the Will Smith and Chris Rock spat is that it could not be less relevant if it tried to be.



Image sourced from [Twitter](#)

The simple fact is that two A-list celebrities reduced the Oscars to a barroom brawl over a comment about one of their wives.

It's one of the oldest and least original stories in the world, only made interesting by the fact that it unfolded in front of us, and that they battled it out in Armani. Or Versace. Or Tom Ford. And perhaps because reading the room was a challenge, given the amount the botox per capita was most likely higher than ever witnessed prior.

And yet, it is impossible to look away.

Whereas there are those who have wasted no time in screaming ‘toxic masculinity’ along with several other male horrors, the story is frustratingly simple. There is no issue of race, given that they both are black. There is no issue of gender as they are both male, no financial disparity, no power distance differential and no political or obvious religious divide. Neither of them was even disabled.



What this means is that the 2022 ranking system, listed above, cannot be applied. And that means that we might even be asked to form our own view of the situation, in essence, because there is no one to tell us what to think about this, it presents a unique opportunity to consider the events ourselves. That is both scary and liberating at the same time.

For anyone living under a rock (see what I did there), this is what happened. Oscar host comedian Chris Rock made a joke that referenced Jada Pinkett Smith, wife of Will Smith. The comment alluded to *GI Jane*, the 1997 movie starring Demi Moore and poked fun at the fact that Jada is bald (Jada allegedly suffers from alopecia).

Footage shows Will Smith initially laughing at the joke, but also shows a distinctly unimpressed Jada. At some point, Will is seen walking up onto the stage and slapping Rock across the face. If anyone mistakenly thought the event was scripted, the profanity used by Smith after he returned to his seat, made clear that this was the real deal.

It was a horrible and unimpressive moment that lowered the standard of an already floundering awards evening. It shattered the illusion of sparkle and glamour and stripped the veneer of Hollywood to reveal a violent underbelly that we prefer not to see: a reality that the ‘Me Too’ movement has forced us to face.

“ Thousand words right now when Will Smith slaps Chris Rock pic.twitter.com/O31850Qx74 — Reda (@RedaMor_)
[March 28, 2022](#) ”

Chris Rock’s joke might have been in poor taste, but so was the reaction. Will Smith had a choice. He could have stood up, reached out his hand to his wife, and together they could have exited the auditorium. That would have said so much more than slapping Rock across the face and screaming obscenities.

Hollywood press tried to do its bit to smooth it over. *Vanity Fair* posted a photo of the Smiths ‘all smiles’ at the after-party. The scene depicted Will Smith holding the Oscar alongside his family. It was an attempt to gaslight followers, given that only two of the five Smiths even attempted a hint of a smile. Instead, they looked miserable, disinterested and dysfunctional. Other publications reported that the spat was resolved by the end of the evening and that all was well in Hollywood.

“Believe the illusion”, they screamed. “Glamour is not dead”, they pleaded.

Only it is unlikely we will do so.



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There are many reasons why Smith could have done what he did. Aggression, insecurity in his 'open marriage', drugs or mental health, although speculation, could all have been factors. But what is clear, is that Hollywood can ill afford the moment that made the Oscars interesting.

With the world at the end of a pandemic, with millions displaced in Ukraine, it is little wonder that we are drawn to stories like this one. Hardly a living soul outside of Rodeo Drive will care if the Smiths and Rocks meet for Sunday lunch or if Will Smith retains his Oscar. The story is a welcome flash in a very serious pan and that makes it a welcome diversion.

ABOUT HOWARD FELDMAN

Howard Feldman is one of SA's leading entrepreneurs and Head of Marketing & People at Synthesis. His experience is global and extensive, spanning more than 20 years of working as a businessman, philanthropist and social commentator. Feldman was the chairperson of the Board of the South African Jewish Report, the only weekly Jewish newspaper in Africa, and he is a global keynote speaker, business strategist, author and morning drive show host.

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