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# 8 magic moments: Directors reveal what scene is key to their film

By **RANDEE DAWN**  
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Thomasin McKenzie and Ben Foster in "Leave No Trace." (Bleecker Street)

All films contain a beginning, a middle and an end. But for most directors there is one key scene that ties everything together or reveals a key motivation or turning point in the story. It can be a big dramatic moment or a quiet glimpse of an actor's face that says it all. And more often than not, it is the scene that lingers in your memory after leaving the theater. The Envelope talked with the directors of eight of this season's award-contending films to find out what scene for them was at the core of their films.

**Adam McKay | 'Vice'**



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“When Dick Cheney gets the phone call [from future President George W. Bush]. It's when history has failed. Cheney is a CEO, the head of an oil services company, he's no longer in politics, he's retired, he's wealthy, his family is happy — the story is

over. Then the phone rings, and that's the pivotal moment. We could be in a different world if that phone call doesn't come.”

## **Rob Marshall | ‘Mary Poppins Returns’**

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\*Emily Blunt is Mary Poppins in Disney's "Mary Poppins Returns." (Jay Maidment / Disney Enterprises)

“There's a song in the film, and it has a reprise: ‘where the lost things go.’ Mary Poppins is reaching out to help the children with the loss of their mother and sings a song about how nothing's gone forever, you never really lose anything. Then later on, the kids help their father with the reprise of lost things and teach him about loss. They find a ray of hope and help him remember his childhood, that wonder

and joy in life can still exist. And we realize in this moment that Mary Poppins has orchestrated all of this.”

### **Steve McQueen | ‘Widows’**

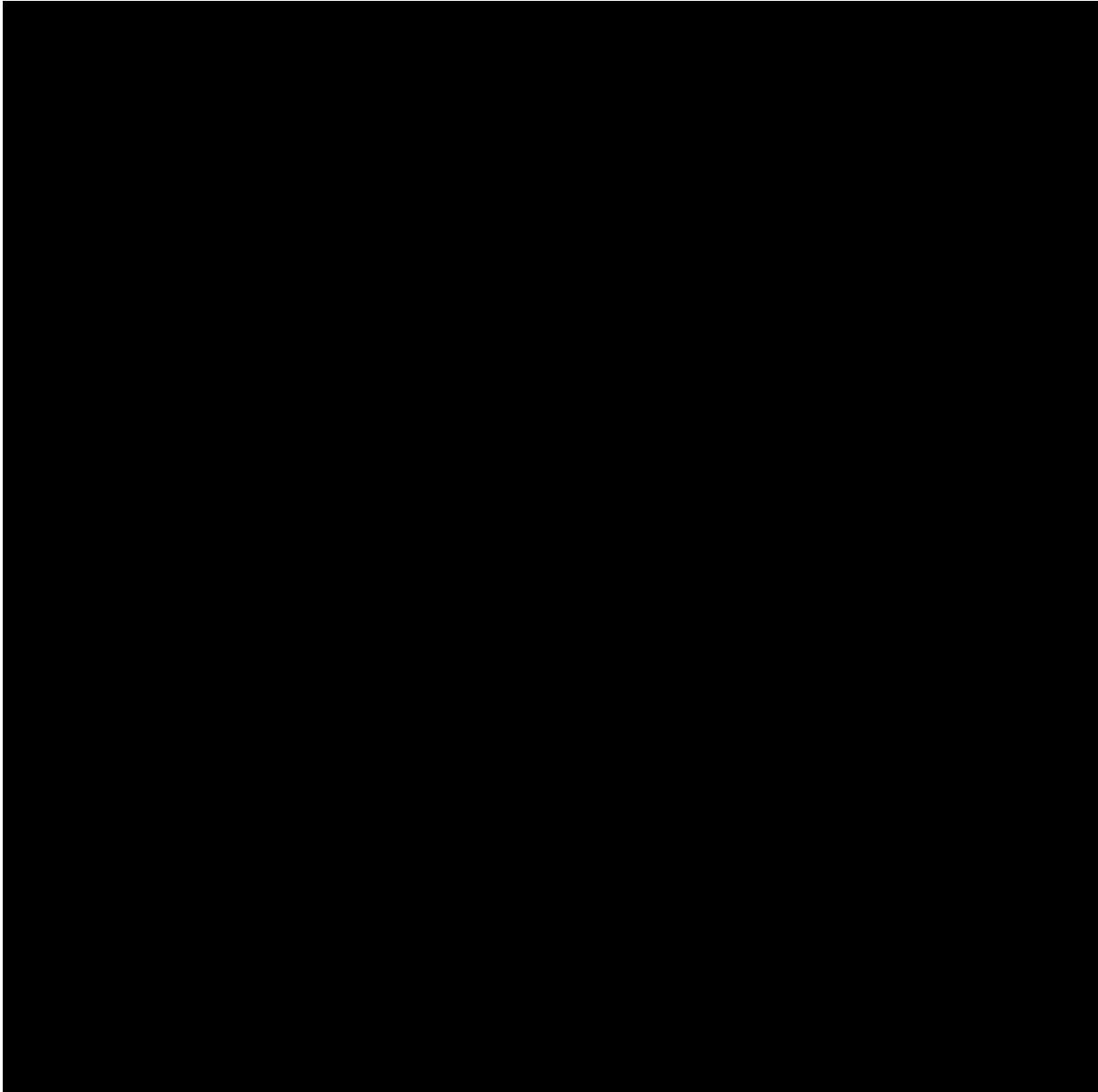
“I don't like to give out spoilers, so let's just say the key scene is when these four women come together and make the decision that they're going to work together. They've got to put aside certain feelings and go for it and make everything 50-50. The big decision is that they need to work together.”

### **Debra Granik | ‘Leave No Trace’**

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“There's this scene where Tom [Thomasin Harcourt McKenzie] begins to differentiate her views from her father [Ben Foster]; the first time is when she expresses this profound concern about what society will think of them. He's a little crushed because his dream was that social conformity wouldn't touch her. She's using all her resources to speak her feelings. Not every scene in a film has to be a shootout — for me these are the shootout scenes; they're bullets of emotion.”

### **Mimi Leder | ‘On the Basis of Sex’**

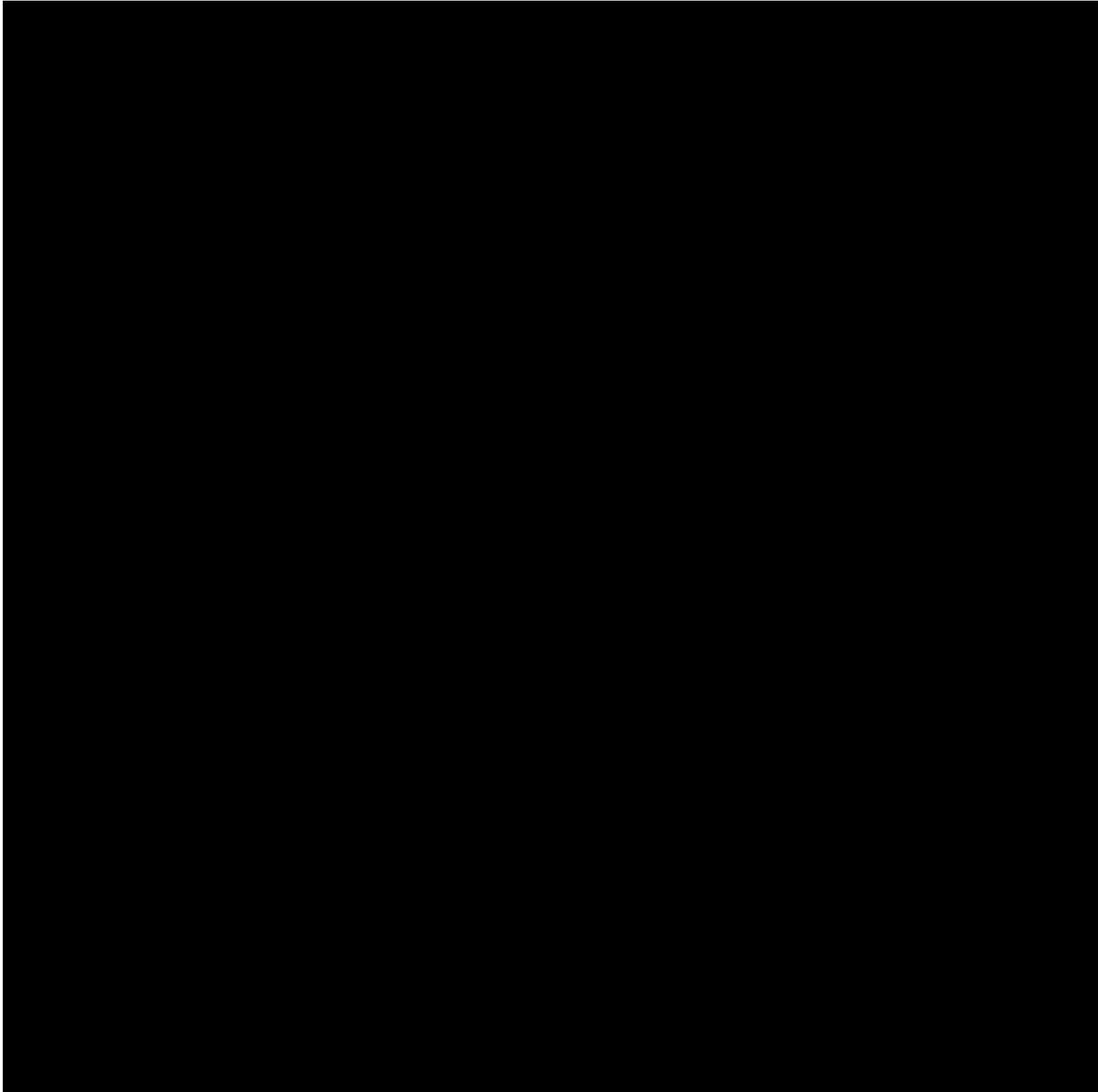


Armie Hammer (left) as Marty Ginsburg and Felicity Jones (right) as Ruth Bader Ginsburg in Mimi Leder's "On the Basis of Sex." (Jonathan Wenk / Focus Features)

“Ruth Bader Ginsburg [Felicity Jones] is at a party for Marty Ginsburg [Armie Hammer], and she's like an island in this office party. All the women are together chit-chatting and laughing, and all the men are on the other side of the room talking about politics and about the world. During this party she's just lost. She goes over and finishes one of Marty's sentences to show how smart and clever she is, and Marty's boss tells her, 'You're a lucky girl, Ruth, you married a star.' And they're walking in the street after that, and she's so angry she tells Marty he doesn't know what it's like to be put off into a corner: 'It's OK, girlie, sit there and look pretty.' It's

a pivotal moment in the film where she says out loud, ‘This isn't right; this isn't fair.’  
”

### **Jon S. Baird | ‘Stan & Ollie’**

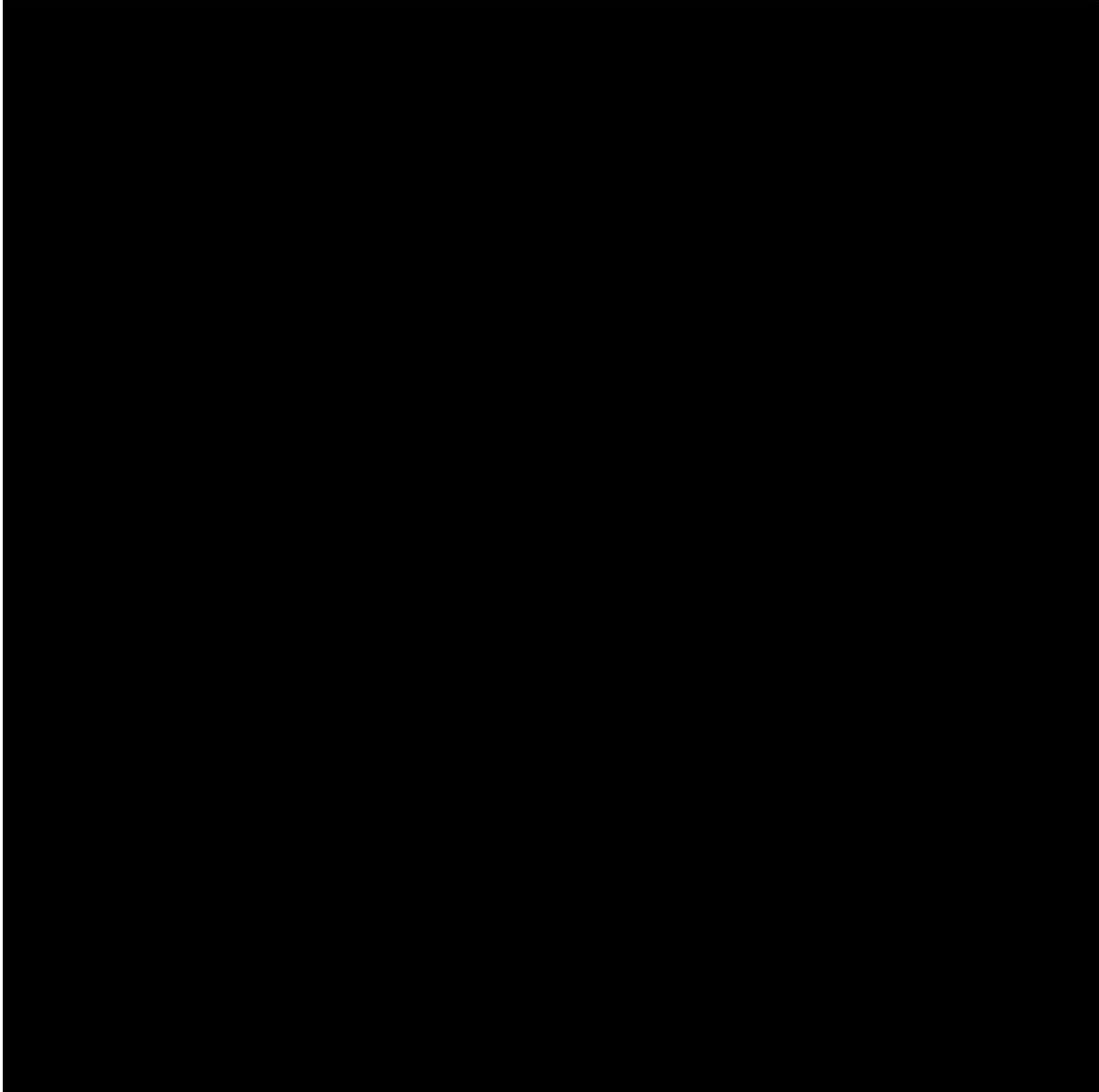


Steve Coogan as Stan Laurel, John C. Reilly as Oliver Hardy in "Stan & Ollie." (Aimee Spinks / Sony Pictures Classics)

“The film itself is about this lifelong friendship and is kind of a love story, but in any love story there's a point where that relationship is challenged. There's a moment in the film where it looks like this is the first argument these guys are having, and it's a telling moment because the rest of the film is ‘How do we overcome this problem?’

There's been a kind of infidelity between a couple, and it's a turning point in the film.”

## **Björn Runge | ‘The Wife’**



Glenn Close and Jonathan Pryce in "The Wife." (Graeme Hunter Pictures / Sony Pictures Classics)

“When Joe and Joan [Jonathan Pryce and Glenn Close] arrive in Stockholm and come into the hotel lobby, and members from the Swedish Academy come up to them and say, ‘Welcome to Stockholm,’ and Joseph takes off his coat and leaves it with his wife. He disappears with a whole group of men, and she's just standing there with the coat, alone. When you know the truth of the film and go backward, you understand all about that scene.”

## Wash Westmoreland | 'Colette'

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“The whole film is building toward one scene, at the end of the movie when Colette [Keira Knightley] is able to speak to her husband [Dominic West] and tell him what she has been going through and how she'll no longer accept it. Keira delivered it in such a powerful way, and the performance is so energized and tightly focused and bang-on the message of 'Colette.'”

[MORE COVERAGE: 'On the Basis of Sex' review: Biopic beautifully argues the importance of Ruth Bader Ginsburg's work »](#)

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