

## Jon Stewart opens Oscars with post-strike humor

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Political satirist Jon Stewart returned as Oscar host on Sunday with a slew of jokes about the bitter Hollywood writers strike that had threatened the show and the grim, violent themes of many of the films

"Tonight we look beyond the dark days to focus on happier fare -- this year's slate of Oscar-nominated psychopathic killer movies," Stewart dead-panned, adding "Does this town need a hug?"

He then ticked off the titles of several of this season's bloodier Oscar contenders.

"No Country For Old Men,' 'Sweeney Todd,' 'There Will Be Blood. All I can say is: Thank God for teen pregnancy," he joked in a reference to the only comedy vying for best picture, "Juno," a story of unexpected motherhood.

The introductory monologue by Stewart, making his second appearance as Oscar host, was notably shorter than his opening performance in 2006, owing to production constraints posed by the Hollywood writers' strike.

The 14-week walkout officially ended on February 12, giving Oscar producers just 11 days to write material for a live telecast that normally takes many weeks to prepare.

Early reviews of the Oscar event and Stewart's performance noted that the rush to produce the show was evident in the large number of video montages and clips.