

Matthew McConaughey Thanks 'God, Who I Look Up To,' in Oscar Speech

Matthew McConaughey won the Oscar for best actor on Sunday for his role in *Dallas Buyers Club* as a homophobic, rodeo-loving Texan who contracts AIDS and becomes an unlikely savior for gay patients and drug addicts desperate for treatment.

McConaughey lost some 50 pounds for the role, looking gaunt as real-life crusader Ron Woodroof, a cowboy who fought the U.S. government during the early AIDS epidemic of the 1980s to provide patients with medicines he imported from foreign countries.

"First off, I want to thank God, because that's who I look up to," the actor said accepting the award. "He's graced my life with opportunities that I know are not of my hand or any other human hand. He has shown me that it's a scientific fact that gratitude reciprocates."

The win is the first Academy Award for McConaughey, 44, once known primarily as the handsome leading man in romantic comedies such as *The Wedding Planner* and *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days*.

"Whatever it is we look up to, whatever it is we look forward to and whoever it is we're chasing, to that I say, 'Amen,' to that I say, 'Alright, alright, alright,'" McConaughey said adding his trademark exclamation that drew laughter from the audience, "to that I say just keep living."

In recent years, McConaughey has sought more serious roles, winning critical acclaim for movies including *The Lincoln Lawyer* and *Mud*, and the HBO TV series *True Detective*.

As Woodroof, the actor brought to life a man who evolved from detestable bigot to a lifeline for fellow AIDS patients, many of them gay or transgender. At the same time, he fought for his own life at a time when doctors were scrambling to find effective treatments for the fatal disease.

McConaughey's passion for the role helped bring *Dallas Buyers Club* to the big screen after 20 years of setbacks, when other actors dropped out and major Hollywood studios rejected it.

The actor, himself a Texan, helped bring together financing and embarked on his extreme weight loss to force the movie into production. His role has brought him more than a dozen awards, including a Golden Globe and Screen Actors Guild Award.

The film was made for about \$5 million, a tiny sum by Hollywood standards, and filmed in 25 days.

McConaughey beat rival Oscar nominees Bruce Dern for *Nebraska*, Leonardo DiCaprio for *The Wolf of Wall Street*, Chiwetel Ejiofor for *12 Years a Slave* and Christian Bale for *American Hustle*.

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