Predicting who the Oscar will go to

By Howie Nave

At last! The Super Bowl of movies has finally arrived and is taking place this Sunday on ABC. It's the 85th annual Academy Awards show (which ironically is also the average age of those who are members of the Academy). Maybe that's why for the first time the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has decided to rebrand their product calling it just "The Oscars" because co-producer of the show, Neil Meron, said "85th Academy Awards" sounded too "musty."

I wonder if rebranding the Oscars (which is what most of us referred to it as anyway) will help their ratings? We'll see.

I've already rolled out the red carpet for the dogs as Nancy and I prepare the popcorn waiting with baited breath as to who will bring home the coveted statue? It's going to be interesting to see how first time host Seth McFarlane does. His past exposure hosting shows at the national level has been those roasts on Comedy Central, and if you've seen any of those it's a sound editor's nightmare. I imagine the Academy will try to temper Seth, but c'mon, this is the same guy who gave us "Ted" last year, which isn't exactly a picture for the faint of heart. (I laughed my butt off though watching that flick). Will Seth McFarlane be a Ricky Gervais reincarnated? Who knows, but that's always the fun part: unplanned improvisational humor (and hiccups) that keep the censors on edge.

To be fair, though, McFarlane has a song nominated in the Best Original Song category ("Everybody Needs a Best Friend" from the aforementioned, "Ted") so yeah, he has some Oscar creds going for him. However, it's safe to say that the creator of "Family Guy" will definitely be topical, which might lead to a few embarrassing moments and gaffs. Let's just hope he doesn't upset too many Hollywood insiders attending the event. OK, I'm hoping he does.

Let's get right to it though as we have a lot of ground to cover starting with **Best Picture** category. The nominees are: "Amour," "Argo," "Beasts of the Southern Wild," "Django Unchained," "Les Miserables," "Life of Pi," "Lincoln," "Silver Linings Playbook" and "Zero Dark Thirty." Who will win?

I'm going with "Argo" in part because its director, Ben Affleck, was snubbed in the directing category (why does Oscar do that?) which seems odd because he's won that category at just about every other award show leading up to this one. Oh sure, Steven Spielberg's "Lincoln" has 12 nominations going for it and Oscar will give Spielberg the statue in that category because they're feeling guilty now that Affleck was snubbed and will reward him here giving it to "Argo." The surprise might be "Zero Dark Thirty", but going I'm with "Argo" for Best Picture.

For **Best Director** the nominees include Michael Haneke for "Amour," Benh Zeitlin for "Beasts of the Southern Wild," Ang Lee for "Life of Pi," Steven Spielberg for "Lincoln" and David O. Russell for "Silver Linings Playbook." Who will win?

Steven Spielberg hands down. Oscar loves epic pictures and has a history of rewarding those at the helm of such epics like Warren Beatty for "Reds" (1981), Sydney Pollack for "Out of Africa" (1985), Kevin Costner for "Dances With Wolves" (1990), James Cameron for "Titanic" (1997) and even Mel Gibson for "Braveheart" (1995) before he started publicly hating Jews. Spielberg won in 1998 for what I believe to be one of the

definitive movies about WWII, "Saving Private Ryan." So, proving that history does indeed repeat itself in the epic department, I'm going with Steven Spielberg to win for Best Director.

In the **Best Actor** category the nominees are Bradley Cooper for "Silver Linings Playbook," "Daniel Day-Lewis for "Lincoln," Hugh Jackman for "Les Miserables," Joaquin Phoenix for "The Master" and Denzel Washington for "Flight." When you carry the name of the movie as the character odds are you're a shoe-in especially when the movie was spectacularly good. I mean, I've seen really good actors carry so-so movies (such as what Joaquin Phoenix and Philip Seymour Hoffman did for "The Master") but when the acting is superb as well as the movie then you have to go with Day-Lewis here. Wolverine, I mean Hugh Jackman pulls out a few emotional stops in "Les Mis" and Cooper as a dramatic actor was impressive and Denzel makes any movie worth watching but this time around going with Daniel Day-Lewis in the Best Actor category.
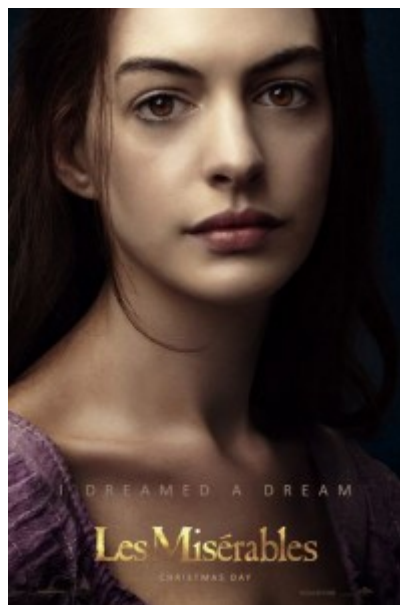
In the **Best Actress** category the nominees are Jessica Chastain for "Zero Dark Thirty," Jennifer Lawrence for "Silver Linings Playbook," Emmanuelle Riva for "Amour," Quvenzhane Wallis for "Beasts of the Southern Wild" and Naomi Watts for "The Impossible." Man, this is a tough one. Probably one of the more tougher and least predicable categories in some time. The buzz seemed to be going to Sacramento's Jessica Chastain and deservedly so as she was complete heat in that docudrama of a movie (that matched her sizzling red hair) and she literally lights up the screen. I wouldn't count out 9-year-old Houma native Quvenzhane Wallis as a long shot which would make her the youngest winner ever to snag the statue in this category. But Jennifer Lawrence (who won both an Oscar and Golden Globe

nomination back in 2010 for "Winter's Bone") is a tough candidate to beat. Her star has been rising faster than that asteroid that came close to hitting our planet a week or so ago. Then again Chastain was also nominated last year in the category of Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Role for "The Help" so it's between her and Lawrence, both who turned in excellent performances. I'm a little biased though and going with Jessica Chastain for Best Actress.

In the **Best Supporting Actor** category the nominees are Alan Arkin for "Argo," Robert de Niro for "Silver Linings Playbook," Philip Seymour Hoffman for "The Master," Tommy Lee Jones for "Lincoln" and Christoph Waltz for "Django Unchained." As I mentioned earlier, Hoffman carried "The Master" and sure, Oscar might take that into consideration (playing a character as a cult leader loosely based on the teachings of Scientology) but taking the whole movie into account I had narrowed my picks down to the legendary Robert de Niro and Tommy Lee Jones, both who've taken home the statue before. Jones is the favored, but when you have a movie as serious as "Silver Linings Playbook" that got pretty heavy at times who was it that brought levity and humor just at the right moments when needed? Robert de Niro that's who so I'm going with for Best Supporting Actor.

In the **Best Supporting Actress** category the nominees are Amy Adams for "The Master," Sally Field for "Lincoln," Anne Hathaway for "Les Miserables," Helen Hunt for "The Sessions" and Jacki Weaver for "Silver Linings Playbook." Kudos to Amy Adams and Anne Hathaway for expanding their range coming from usually sweet roles and taking on something with a little more meat to it being more dramatic. I'm going to just jump to the front of the line here and say that Anne

Hathaway will win in this category because in addition to her fine acting, Oscar loves to award those that literally re-boot and transform themselves to play a character that is so outside their realm. Hathaway changed her voice pattern (and sings like an angel), cut her hair and without giving anything away (in case you haven't seen "Les Mis") will cause you to cry a little when you see what happens to her character. OK, you'll cry a lot, so I'm going with Anne Hathaway for Best Supporting Actress.

In the **Best Animated Feature** category we have "Brave," "Frankenweenie," "ParaNorman," "The Pirates! Band of Misfits" and "Wreck-It Ralph." You know for a while there this was an easy category because it seemed like anything that had Pixar attached to it was the clear choice as to who would win. This year it's kind of up in the air. It's interesting to note that Disney (parent company to Pixar) has both "Frankenweenie" and "Wreck-It Ralph" in the running. I am a huge fan of director Tim Burton who, back in 1984 did a short version of "Frankenweenie" for Disney that was way ahead of its time and freaked the studio out (I think) a little Disney basically being too weird by their corporate standards. Of course years later when Burton became a huge hit as a director (almost singlehandedly becoming Johnny Depp's go-to director) Disney dusted off their "prize" and offered it up in limited release. Fast-forward to last year where the green light was given for Burton to re-boot his short and turn it into a feature length movie with his brand of animation making a movie that was actually quite moving. As much as I want my "Frankenweenie" to win I think Oscar is going to go give it to "Wreck-It-Ralph" for Best Animated Feature so I'm going with that one. And yes, it was also a very good piece of filmmaking too.

At this part in the game things start to get interesting as we enter the category that nobody ever seems to make the time to check out. Granted here in Tahoe we don't get too many of these films so you have to sometimes travel off the mountain

and seek them out for yourself. I'm referring to the **Best Foreign-Language Film** category whose nominees include "Amour," "Kon-Tiki," "No," "A Royal Affair" and "War Witch." I'm guessing that this category belongs exclusively to "Amour" because that movie is also nominated in the Best Picture, Best Director and Best Actress categories (yes!) so I'm going to with "Amour" to cinch the Best Foreign-Language Film category because the only other foreign-language film I caught was "Kon-Tiki" making "Amour" an easy choice to win.

In the category for **Best Original Song** the nominees are "Before My Time" from the movie "Chasing Ice," "Everybody Needs a Best Friend" from the movie "Ted" (which was co-written by Oscar's host this year, Seth McFarlane), "Pi's Lullaby" from "Life of Pi," "Suddenly" from "Les Miserables" and "Skyfall" from the movie of the same name. OK, since I'm a huge James Bond fan (plus I understand there will be a tribute honoring the 50th anniversary of that franchise at Oscar) what better way to acknowledge the Bond franchise than having Adele herself singing "Skyfall" huh? It's a no-brainer here folks: "Skyfall" wins for Best Original Song.

With regards to the rest of the categories my picks to win will be "Lincoln" for **Best Original Score and Adapted Screenplay**, "Les Miserables" for **Best Makeup & Hair Styling** and for **Best Sound Mixing** as well. **Best Film Editin**g will go to "Argo" and "Zero Dark Thirty" will get the **Best Sound Editing** award.

Howie Nave is host/emcee/manager of The Improv at Harveys. You can hear him Monday-Friday 6 to 10am on KRLT FM-93.9.