

Academy would be wrong to snub DiCaprio

By Jeremy Miller

It's finally here! The Oscar season draws to a close Sunday night, with many of us sitting and watching Hollywood's elite gather for the 86th Academy Awards.

Of the last five years, this year is by and far the most unpredictable.

This year we have an extremely widespread variety, especially when it comes to the Best Picture category. Nominated films include Spike Jonze's "Her", "12 Years a Slave", "American Hustle", "Gravity" and of course Martin Scorsese's "The Wolf of Wall Street". Paul Greengrass' "Captain Phillips" also snuck into the running despite an early release in the season. When you put a guy like Tom Hanks into an inspirational, action packed powerhouse like this one, you can be sure you'd see it nominated for something, but with heavy hitters in every best picture nominee it's not as if he's got an easy competition.



Leonardo DiCaprio is up for best actor for his performance in "Wolf of Wall Street".

Spike Jonze's "Her", the semi-futuristic love story involving a lonely man and his operating system, has won the heart of just about every critic in America. While it's an underdog compared to the season's blockbusters, I believe it has a strong chance. I also happened to be biased toward the film, as I'm a total sap for quirky indie romance flicks.

The real competition in my opinion is between Alfonso Cuarón's "Gravity", "12 Years a Slave" and "American Hustle". Many think that Scorsese will walk away with a best picture Oscar; however I think that his film "The Wolf of Wall Street" was nothing more than a new-age remake of his classic "Goodfellas".

The Academy Awards also tend to be heavily political. It's as if there's an unspoken agreement that a film can't win based on certain principles of which "Wolf" definitely violates.

"Gravity" is a heavy contender as the film takes place in space and was an absolute masterpiece in terms of aesthetics and special effects. Sandra Bullock definitely takes away some of the power as I feel her performance was lacking, especially compared to co-star and legend George Clooney by her side.

"12 Years a Slave" is definitely a likely winner as its subject content is what the Academy lives for – controversial, powerful, educational, and a thick emotional backbone.

"American Hustle" is also the talk of the town as its edginess and bold plot set it apart from its competition. It's in a category all its own really as a period piece that's packed full of drama, drugs, sex appeal and an all-star cast.

The best actor category is another unknown for those of us trying to predict the winners. The nominees are Christian Bale ("American Hustle"), Chiwetel Ejiofor ("12 Years a Slave"), Bruce Dern ("Nebraska") Matthew McConaughey ("Dallas Buyers Club"), and last but certainly not least, Leonardo DiCaprio for his performance in "Wolf of Wall Street".

I was a huge fan of "Nebraska", and I absolutely love Bruce Dern. I feel he'll get snubbed because the film didn't have nearly as much opportunity for real power as the rest. McConaughey definitely pushed himself to the limits physically for his role, but as far as just all around acting, he delivered but didn't blow me away. Christian Bale is one of my all-time faves, and I have a certain affinity for him as I am a huge Batman fan, so I'd be OK with him taking home the "W". Chiwetel Ejiofor has always been a talented and often overseen actor. His performance warrants an Oscar, but honestly, because the Academy is so political, I almost don't want him to win just based on that.

Now, as many of you may know, DiCaprio has had a rough streak at the Oscars. He's been snubbed more times than anyone in the last 20 years. He was looked over for his most notable roles in "The Departed" and "Blood Diamond" and really I just want the guy to win an Oscar. He's deserved one for years and I think that finally the Academy will take an honest look at his talents and give him the credit that he's deserved for so long.

As far as the Oscar for best actress in a leading role, I believe it is between two of the five contenders. It's between Amy Adams for her role in "Hustle" and Sandra Bullock for "Gravity". As previously stated, I don't believe Bullock really brought the power, but I could see how she'd be nominated out of respect for the torture of shooting a movie that takes place in space. It's not easy to sit in front of a green screen and act as though there's no gravity, being suspended by wires all day long. If it were up to me, and I based it on talent alone, Adams would win it by a long shot.

The last category I'll discuss is for best director. The nominees that have a chance are David O. Russell for "American Hustle", Alfonso Cuarón for "Gravity", and Alexander Payne for "Nebraska". Payne definitely has a shot as almost all of his films bring him home a bucket of awards. His depiction of

loneliness and familial bond was near perfect in his film "Nebraska" and though not a blockbuster with a shut out weekend at the box office, his film was moving and powerful and beautifully depicted. "Hustle" was a good time, sure, but best director material? I don't think so. It wasn't unique in the way its story was told, and the camera work was so-so. Alfonso broke the ceiling of science fiction with newly developed camera techniques and technologies and that right there is worthy of an Oscar.

All that being said who are my official picks for Sunday night?:

- Best Picture – "Her"
- Best Director – Alfonso Cuarón for "Gravity"
- Best Actor in a Leading Role – Leonardo DiCaprio for "Wolf of Wall Street"
- Best Actress in a Leading Role – Amy Adams for "American Hustle"
- Actress in a supporting role – Jennifer Lawrence for "American Hustle"
- Actor in a supporting role – Jonah Hill for "Wolf of Wall Street".

I would like to end this piece by saying that if DiCaprio gets snubbed one more time by the Academy, I am going to flip out and lose faith in the members of the Academy. Though the movie wasn't my favorite, he deserves it, just give him one. Enjoy the Oscars on ABC at 4pm. See you on the red carpet.

For a full list of nominees and any other information on the 86th Academy Awards, go online.

South Lake Tahoe resident Jeremy Miller has more movie reviews online.