

Nave: It may be year of the women for Oscars

By **Howie Nave**

On the surface the timing couldn't be more perfect. When you look at the change, or movement if you will, that's been happening in the country on attitudes toward sexual harassment, more women being empowered and the treatment of minorities in the bigger cities it just seems more than just a coincidence that many of the major motion pictures in Oscar contention this year mirror what's been going on. However, when you factor in the time it takes to make a movie it's almost like the trends caught up just about the time the movies were having their premiere in theaters across the country (and the world). Add to that the beating Oscar took for it's "whiteout" with the bulk of most of the nominations eliminating movies of color in 2016 well, this year's 90th Academy Awards ceremony is trying to correct itself.

And Oscar isn't just nominating actors just because of color, but actors that really shined this past year. Some movies were made close to home such as Sacramento's Greta Gerwig who directed "Lady Bird" and actor turned director Jordan Peele climbed to the top in the dark comedy/horror flick "Get Out," which to me is the best, overt movie on the whole black/white debate where Peele not only sneaks in a covert (albeit satirical) message but turns out a very entertaining piece of work that stands on its own.

And, yes, I'm miffed that "Wonder Woman" wasn't recognized at this year's Academy Awards. Gee, what a shock. The movie was the No. 1 summer film of 2017, grossing \$412.5 million in the States and making over \$822 million worldwide making its director, Patty Jenkins, the biggest opening ever for a female director. Oh, and who played the dynamic lead character in

this flick? Israeli actress Gal Gadot!.Add to that the critics overall loved the movie, but an Oscar? I guess the members of the Academy were predominately Palestinian this past year. OK, no whining let's get to it.



"Three Billboards" may take home Best Picture on Sunday.

In the category for Best Picture the nominees are:

"The Shape of Water"

"Dunkirk"

"Darkest Hour"

"Get Out"

"Lady Bird"

"Phantom Thread"

"Call Me By Your Name"

"The Post"

"Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri"

I believe this is a two way battle between the beautiful fantasy flick "The Shape of Water" and the powerful drama, "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri." Sorry "Lady Bird" and "Dunkirk" (not to mention the gay romance, "Call Me by Your Name") not this time. Progressive and very original movies, sure and no way "Get Out" could get in on this running. I'm a huge fan of history and loved "Darkest Hour" but again, not to be. While "The Shape of Water" received an impressive 13 nominations, my money is on "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri" just on the strength of the amazing Frances McDormand playing determined mother seeking justice for her murdered child.

•Winner for Best Picture: "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri"

Let's move on now to the category of Best Actor where the nominees are:

Daniel Day-Lewis, "Phantom Thread"

Timothée Chalamet, "Call Me By Your Name"

Gary Oldman, "Darkest Hour"

Daniel Kaluuya, "Get Out"

Denzel Washington, "Roman J. Israel, Esq."

OK, sorry Denzel. As good an actor as you are nobody saw your movie, so that's out. Coming in second for movies not seen: "Call Me By Your Name" (but gotta say this young man Chalamet was very moving). I think Daniel Day-Lewis is a brilliant actor but his announcement late last year that he was going to retire from acting was a nice way of planning in advance that "Phantom Thread" would win an Oscar for its leading man but nah, not gonna happen. Daniel Kaluuya was OK, but not outstanding. However, the movie he was in, "Get Out" was great. All of this leaves veteran actor Gary Oldman the guy to get the prize. He was not only amazing as British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill in "Darkest Hour" but his entire being was miraculously transformed into the man. Yes, I understand he's had some controversy in his past regarding an

ex-spouse, but I'm going with Oldman the actor in the now and his performance was undeniably brilliant.

•**Winner for Best Actor: Gary Oldman**

Let's move on now to the category of Best Actress or where the nominees are:

Sally Hawkins, "The Shape of Water"

Margot Robbie, "I, Tonya"

Meryl Streep, "The Post"

Frances McDormand, "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri"

Saoirse Ronan, "Lady Bird"

This is one of the toughest categories to choose from. Streep has been nominated an amazing 21 times and has taken home three Oscars, so don't rule her out. She gave a stellar performance as Katharine Graham, the publisher of the *Washington Post* during the 1971 publication of the Pentagon Papers. Sally Hawkins, who it seemed virtually came out of nowhere and gave an incredible performance playing a mute janitor in "The Shape of Water" could be the spoiler, but my money's on one of the best: Frances McDormand who played a determined, fiercely angry mom (and rightfully so) with pure, unbridled emotion who's had it with the bumbling small town cops doing nothing regarding the unsolved brutal death of her daughter who takes matters into her own hands. I'm getting chills just remembering her performance.

•**Winner for Best Actress: Frances McDormand.**



“The Shape of Water” has the opportunity to win multiple awards.

The nominees for Best Supporting Actor are:

Willem Dafoe, “The Florida Project”

Sam Rockwell, “Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri”

Woody Harrelson, “Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri”

Richard Jenkins, “The Shape of Water”

Christopher Plummer, “All the Money in the World”

Plummer should win just for coming in during the eleventh-hour to reshoot all the scenes that were originally shot with disgraced and fallen actor Kevin Spacey in the role that Plummer took over for. And the mere fact that two guys, Woody Harrelson and Sam Rockwell, were nominated from the movie, “Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri” speaks volumes how good that film was. Many expect Sam Rockwell to take home the statue but man, if you haven’t seen “The Florida Project” well all I can say is Willem Dafoe brought everything out in his soul for this movie and honestly, had Dafoe not been nominated (the only one for this movie) I don’t think this movie would have remained on the screens for as long as it did. The movie stars a relatively bunch of unknowns with Dafoe playing the manager of a cheap Florida occupied mainly by homeless

families struggling to make ends meet. It's an over simplification, but trust me, well worth a looksy. So, my pick?

•Winner for Best Supporting Actor: Willem Dafoe

The nominees for Best Supporting Actress are:

Mary J. Blige, "Mudbound"

Lesley Manville, "Phantom Thread"

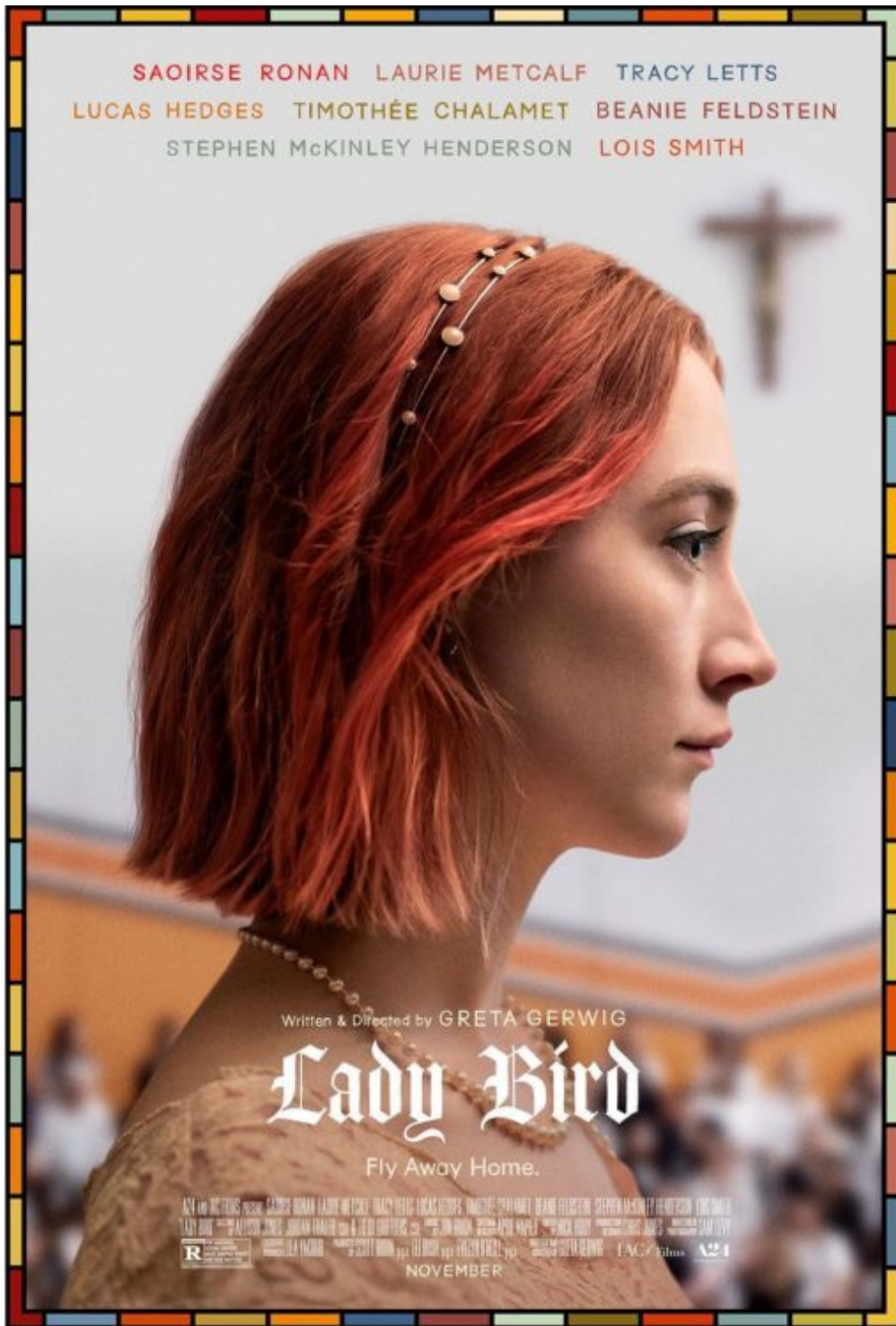
Laurie Metcalf, "Lady Bird"

Allison Janney, "I, Tonya"

Octavia Spencer, "The Shape of Water"

Wow, this category definitely belongs to the moms with an edge. I was literally blown away with not just singer Mary J. Blige's first dramatic role in "Mudbound," but she was unrecognizable playing it plain. I hope there are more movies in her talented future. In a movie shot close to home just down the mountain in Sacramento, Laurie Metcalf nails it in the very timely movie given today's environment, "Lady Bird" and she could bring it home but man, to see Allison Janney, who won a Golden Globe in the same category as disgraced ice skater Tonya Harding's mom is a game changer for Janney. And dare I say, whatever you felt (or didn't) about Tonya this flick could very well challenge your thought process on the topic. And don't rule out Octavia Spencer from "The Shape of Water." But my decision is final.

•The winner for Best Supporting Actress goes to Allison Janney.



The director of “Lady Bird” could join a handful of women to be named the best in her field.

The nominees for Best Director are:

Jordan Peele, “Get Out”

Paul Thomas Anderson, “Phantom Thread”

Guillermo del Toro, “The Shape of Water”

Greta Gerwig, "Lady Bird"

Christopher Nolan, "Dunkirk"

Although the consensus seems to be that both Guillermo del Toro and Christopher Nolan are long overdue this being the year of powerful women you have to go with Sacramento's Greta Gerwig for her magnificent "Lady Bird." Gerwig is just the fifth woman nominated in this category in the 90 years the Oscars have been in existence. She's also on the cover of the latest edition of *Time* magazine showcasing women's new emergence in Hollywood in a very male dominated field so c'mon Academy members, don't be a bunch of tools and give it to Gerwig. Oh, I do find it odd that considering that "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri" garnered seven Oscar nominations (including Best Picture) there was nothing for its director, Martin McDonagh. Actor turned director Jordan Peele's "Get Out" rocked it, but I'm still going with Gerwig. I'll be voted out but I'm sticking to my guns.

•**The winner for Best Director is Greta Gerwig.**

The nominees for Best Original Screenplay are:

"Lady Bird"

"Get Out"

"The Shape of Water"

"Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri"

"The Big Sick"

Because the average age of the Academy members is close to death and the majority are white guys it's a long shot that Jordan Peele's "Get Out" has a chance, but damn, that was one great satirical horror flick wasn't it? "Lady Bird" has a great shot at it too and Paul Thomas Anderson's screenplay for "Phantom Thread" is also good. But, I'm still going (with some trepidation not picking "Get Out") with "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri" even though "The Shape of Water" was something Hollywood needs to do more of.

•The Winner for Best Original Screenplay goes to “Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri”

The nominees for Best Adapted Screenplay are:

“Mudbound”

“Call Me By Your Name”

“The Disaster Artist”

“Molly’s Game”

“Logan”

OK, I’m still reeling from the shock of seeing an “X-Men” movie, “Logan” even being considered! Was that a typo? There’s hope! Seriously though this category is finally going to acknowledge “Call Me By Your Name” hands down. “Mudbound” maybe, but it’s on Netflix and some elitists at the Academy probably look down on their movies streaming online.

•The winner for Best Adapted Screenplay goes to “Call Me By Your Name”

The nominees for Best Cinematography are:

“Blade Runner 2049”

“Dunkirk”

“Darkest Hour”

“Mudbound”

“The Shape of Water”

Like “Logan” I was mildly surprised to see “Blade Runner 2049” make the cut. Being a student of history seeing “Darkest Hours” spend a lot of attention to detail I was also jazzed it too was nominated. Still, seeing a fantasy/fairytale movie that just took me to another place in the way of “The Shape of

Water” sealed it for me.

•The winner for Best Cinematography goes to “The Shape of Water”

The nominees for Best Animated Film are:

“Coco”

“The Boss Baby”

“The Breadwinner”

“Ferdinand”

“Loving Vincent”

If you knew the work that went into making “Loving Vincent” you’d probably want it to win. This animated feature bypasses the usual computer generated techniques instead going old school, painting it all by hand. In fact, it took 65,000 oil-painted frames to make the film! It’s a mind trip. However, at times the interest wanes some and when you watch an animated story that looks more familiar sure enough, your attention stays more focused. That said (and since I didn’t see the other three) I gotta go with Lee Unkrich and Darla K. Anderson’s “Coco” not just for this category but also for Best Original Song too.

•The winner for Best Animated Feature goes to “CoCo”

The nominees for Best Original Score are:

“Star Wars: The Last Jedi”

“Dunkirk”

“Phantom Thread”

“The Shape of Water”

“Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri”

Finally! I’m glad the latest “Star Wars” flick got a nod. Unfortunately, the Academy will shy away from a sci-fi flick

yet will go with a fantasy world (hey, "Star Wars: The Last Jedi" could skate that category) feature film in the way of "The Shape of Water" instead. You know who should snag this category? Yes, "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri" but sliding toward the water flick.

•The winner for Best Original Score goes to "The Shape of Water."

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. He has been reviewing movies for years. They may be heard on four other stations each week where he does "A Jew Doing a Movie Review," and he occasionally writes reviews for Lake Tahoe News.