

# Here are the picks for Oscar winners, plus critic's 'best'

Amidst much hoopla and Hollywood hype, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences will present Oscars on Monday, April 9, to those the industry deems most deserving of recognition.

Forty-five films have been nominated in 20 categories. In addition, there will be three special awards. The whole thing is a lot of fun, particularly if you don't take it too seriously. My wife, who is a bigger film fan than I am (if that's possible), always dresses for the event. She calls her friends to find out what they're wearing, but I know she's going to wear her best robe to watch the event on the tube (at 9 p.m. on ABC-TV, Channel 7).

A good many awards are relatively minor. Fifteen of the 45 nominated are documentaries and shorts. There tends to be limited interest in the technical categories of editing, costume design and sound effects.

While the purported purpose of the Oscars is to recognize excellence in film production, the academy's system of balloting and the extensive campaigning for nominations and selection is such that there are elements of a popularity contest.

**CERTAINLY THERE** are box office values to winning, and even a nomination helps. But such are the vagaries of film distribution these days that many communities in the United States haven't had the opportunity to see all the nominees.

I am in one such community so my choices are based on informed ignorance. The only three films I haven't seen, among the major category nominees, are "Reuben, Reuben," "Educating Rita" and "Cross Creek."

"Cross Creek" is available for 16mm school and film-club screening, has played Chicago and elsewhere for months but only had one brief week in the Detroit area, despite its four important nominations.

So, here I go, picking winners based on limited knowledge. But that's what most people think of critics: "What does he know?" "Good critics are those who agree with me!"

Generally, critics are people whose knowledge and experience of the motion picture are more extensive than average. The problem arises when we confuse what we like with what we think is good. We can like anything we want, but that doesn't make it good. Quality is something that can be demonstrated.

There is a problem in measuring quality. Are there standards? Or is it just box office that tells the tale? I'll go with standards since box office, however important, reflects what people like, not what can be demonstrated is good.

**BUT WHO NEEDS** philosophy where the Oscars are concerned? There's a great deal of fun and politics and cam-

paigned involved so I'm going to go with the flow and pick "Terms of Endearment" to win most of the biggies even though I didn't think it was that good. It's an OK film but doesn't measure up to much of the competition.

However, who am I to argue with the New York Film Critics Circle that gave "Terms" everything except the Nobel Peace Prize. I still think "Atlantic City" was far superior to "Characters of Fire" but they say Burt Lancaster isn't popular in Hollywood so the Oscar went to "Characters" a few years ago. That seems to be how the Oscars go, popularity and sentiment.

And now, the envelope, please: Best Picture: "Terms of Endearment." My vote for "The Dresser" obviously was overwhelmed by the masses. "Tender Mercies" is my No. 2 preference.

Best Foreign-Language Film is interesting this year because "Fanny & Alexander" (Ingmar Bergman) also has nominations for five native awards: Best Director, Original Screenplay, Cinematography, Art Direction and Costume Design. Since it already won the French Academy's prize for Best Foreign Film and some British Academy awards, I'll rule it out.

All things considered, I'll go for the Spanish entry, "Carmen," an excellent, creative film by any standard.

**BEST DIRECTOR** will go to James Brooks for "Terms" although I think all four of the competitors produced better films: "The Dresser," "Silkwood," "Tender Mercies" and "Fanny & Alexander," in that order.

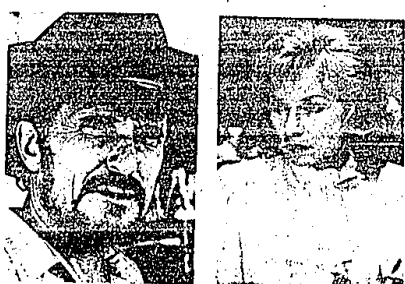
The several categories — Best Actor, Actress, Supporting Actor and Original Song — with two nominees from the same film — present a problem. I suspect the reasoning will generally go: "It's hard to decide between two such great performances, so let's give it to someone else." In the case of the song category, with two from "Ventil" and two from "Flashdance," I'll bet on "Over You" from "Tender Mercies."

As far as Best Actor — in spite of the fact that I'd stay up nights trying to decide between Albert Finney and Tom Courtenay in "The Dresser" — I'm betting on Robert Duvall in "Tender Mercies." Best Actress should go to Meryl Streep for "Silkwood," but I think "Terms" momentum will win it for Shirley MacLaine.

No question in my mind: Cher should get Best Supporting Actress for her role in "Silkwood." I'm so sure of that one that I'll probably jump in.

Best Supporting Actor is the last category, with two nominations for one film: I think the John Lithgow/Jack Nicholson competition will be resolved in favor of Charles Durning, who did an excellent comic role as the Gestapo Colonel in "To Be Or Not To Be."

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Robert Duvall is most likely to win the Oscar for Best Actor and Shirley MacLaine probably has it all wrapped up for Best Actress.

I SUSPECT Lawrence Kasdan and Barbara Benedek are in the lead for "The Big Chill" Original Screenplay, but I'll go with "Silkwood."

The academy will probably recognize the innovative and creative cinematography of "Zelig" and "Flashdance" for its fast-paced editing, that leaves Best Original Score, Art Direction and Sound for "Terms" to sweep. Best Costume Design probably will go to "The Return of Martin Guerre" and Sound Effects Editing to "Return of the Jedi." Since John Glenn dropped out of

the race for Democratic Presidential nomination, "The Right Stuff" gets nothing.

I wouldn't dream of discussing the Short or Documentary Film Categories. Not only haven't I seen any of them, I don't even recognize their titles. This is sadly indicative of the limited exposure documentary and short films get — in spite of the fact that there is a tremendous amount of excellent, informative and entertaining film shot and shown in these categories.

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ary to Hal Roach, at 92 one of the grand old men of Hollywood and happily honored for making so many laugh for so long, the Joan Harboit Humanitarian Award to Mike Frankovich, and the Gordon E. Sawyer Award to Joe G. Frayne. Since these winners have already been announced, I feel quite sure in selecting them on my ballot of this year's Academy Awards.

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Auditions for the Fourth Street Playhouse production of "The Country Girl" continue from 8-8 p.m. Tuesday, April 3, at the playhouse at 301 W. Fourth, south of 11 Mile Road and west of Washington Street in downtown Royal Oak.

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