



If he (Bertolucci) wins, he will be the first Italian to garner best director.



"The Last Emperor," starring Peter O'Toole as English tutor Reginald Johnston, is up for a multitude of Academy Awards, including best picture. Its director, Bernardo Bertolucci, also is vying for best director honors against the likes of John Boorman, who directed "Hope and Glory."

Bertolucci is odds on favorite to win best director nod

By Dan Greenberg
special writer

Last week I offered to help you win the Observer & Eccentric/AHC Oscar contest and a trip to Hollywood. With "Moonstruck" your firm choice as Best Picture, it's time to look at the director category.

This one's easy. If the Academy runs true to form, and if the other signs mean anything, there should be no suspense when they ask for the envelope, please, for best director.

It looks like a shoe-in for Bernardo Bertolucci as top director in this year's Oscar race. First of all, on March 12th he won the Directors Guild of America award for "The Last Emperor."

The Directors Guild of America (DGA) award was established in

1948. In its 41 years, only three times have the winners failed in the Oscar sweepstakes. That's 93 percent and you won't catch me betting against such odds.

IN ADDITION, "The Last Emperor" received more nominations (nine) than any other film this year, so the movie is well-regarded in Hollywood. Naturally, the industry looks to the people involved and that many nominations is to Bertolucci's credit. If he wins, he will be the first Italian to garner best director.

For the first time in Oscar's 60-year history, no American was nominated for best director. Adrian Lyne (British) received his first Oscar nod for "Fatal Attraction." His countryman, John Boorman ("Hope and Glory"), was nominated in 1972 for "Deliverance."

Boorman and Canadian Norman Jewison ("Moonstruck") were not nominated by the DGA, although Bertolucci, Swedish director Lasse Hallstrom ("My Life as a Dog") and Lyne were. Jewison has been selected twice before by the Academy in this category — in 1967 for "In the Heat of the Night" and in 1971 for "Fiddler on the Roof."

Hallstrom has never been picked before and his was the only film not nominated for best picture. If he does win, he will be the first Swedish director to be so honored.

But it doesn't seem likely with the limited support "My Life as a Dog" received. It's only other nomination was for screenplay adaptation while the competition has five or more with nine for "The Last Emperor" building overwhelming strength.

Just as Boorman and Jewison failed to receive a nod from the Directors Guild, two DGA contenders — James L. Brooks for "Broadcast News" and Steven Spielberg for "Empire of the Sun" — failed in the Oscar contest.

IT SEEMS as if Spielberg will have to wait until his 60th birthday before the Academy finds him worthy. Although never nominated as best director by the Oscar folks, the DGA has nominated six of Spielberg's nine films.

Another unusual dimension this year is the popularity of Lyne's "Fatal Attraction" with six picks. Down through the years, the Academy has not favored the horror/thriller genre. Just ask Hitchcock.

When Bertolucci received the DGA award he said, "This is a very nice welcome to a new member of the DGA." He caught the spirit of Oscar's 1988 international flavor.

"In the darkness of movie the-

aters," Bertolucci said, "there are no more national identities. There are no more classes. Maybe I'm an idealist, but I still see movie theaters as big cathedrals where people come to dream the same dream together."

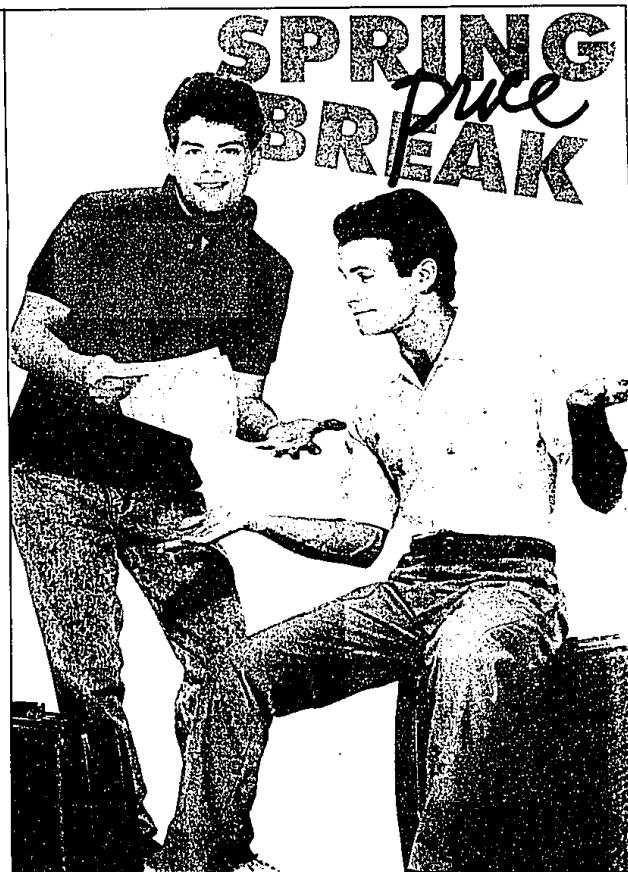
That's a pretty nice thought and just the right level of schmaltz to convince the Academy that Bertolucci's their man.

Hallstrom's nomination, just like his film, is a sleeper. "My Life as a

Dog," despite its difficulty in getting distribution and its unexpected audience popularity, hasn't generated enough general support.

Boorman's "Hope and Glory" is another unheralded film that gained tremendous attention from filmmakers and is contending in five categories. Despite Boorman's superior track record, I don't think he has much more of a chance than Hallstrom.

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