

Another opening, another show: pros handicap the Oscars

BY SUZANNE GILL
Television's annual "Academy Awards" ceremony, airing this year on ABC, Monday, March 21, is easily the most scrutinized production on the small screen. Movie critics watch it to see how widely the Academy's tastes differ from their own, and TV critics watch it to see who flubs a line, turns maudlin, streaks or just fails to show up. Indeed this is the show that makes everybody a critic: See just one of the nominated movies, and that's credential enough. After all, criticism is by nature subjective.

"I think people like to tune in," says Bob Laurence, TV critic of the San Diego Union-Tribune, "because they've seen the movies, so they're interested in how they do. The movies did a really huge box office this year, and there are a lot of really good pictures."

One movie, though, appears to stand above the rest, a favorite in most every category in which it is nominated. Steven Spielberg's Holocaust epic, "Schindler's List."

"I expect a 'Schindler's List' sweep," says Tom Walter, TV critic for the Memphis Commercial Appeal. "I think they're gonna want to make it up to Spielberg for ignoring him in the past. And I think that will

be legitimate. It is clearly one of the best movies of the year."

Bob Curtwright, TV and movie critic for the Wichita, Kan., Eagle, agrees.

"I think (Spielberg) has clearly earned it. I think pay-back time would have been if they had done it for something like 'E.T.' - a commercial success. Here, they are recognizing art."

There is less agreement on the new host's chances of success. After writing his signature on the Oscar broadcast with several delightful performances as host, Billy Crystal stepped down this year and left producer Gilbert Cates to look for a replacement. Cates chose Whoopi Goldberg.

Says Cates, "I wanted someone who's a movie star, and someone who could run a room, which is a phrase they use in comedy circles - controlling a room. And I thought of Whoopi right away. I think she's going to be terrific."

Walter isn't so sure. "I don't think Whoopi ad libs that well, and I think she can't keep herself from ad libbing."

"(Goldberg's) movies are very popular," says Erik Bergman of TV Host magazine in Portland, Ore., "and I think she has a very wide

base of fans, and it keeps growing, so I think the audience accepts her for her movie-star quality. But unlike Billy Crystal she's got much more of a rough side to her, and she's made a reputation out of not keeping that in check."

Laurence expects the Goldberg factor to be one of the show's drawing cards.

"I think there's going to be a lot of curiosity about Whoopi Goldberg. I know I'm curious to see how she does as a host. I think it's going to be a real novelty to have a new face in there."

"I think she'll make a wonderful host," says Curtwright. "I think she's brilliant, and she has a real good presence in a room. We don't want to go back to having somebody up there who's only a host... (The host) has to be up there for three hours, so they have to be entertaining, too."

Speaking of entertainment, what about those production numbers?

★ LEGEND ★		
Channel	Station	City
2 (3)	WJBK	Southfield
3 (4)	WDIV	Detroit
3 (4)	WKBD	Southfield
3 (4)	WXON	Southfield
3 (4)	WXYZ	Southfield
3 (4)	CBET	Windsor
3 (4)	WTVS	Detroit
3 (4)	COMMTV	Farmington
3 (4)	WGPR	Detroit
3 (4)	CSFAN	Governments
3 (4)	TBS	Atlanta
3 (4)	WGN	Chicago
3 (4)	WADL	MT. Clemens
3 (4)	CICA	Toronto
3 (4)	CTHD/EWTH	Birmingham
3 (4)	TNN	Nashville
3 (4)	VH-1	Video Hits 1
3 (4)	LIFE	Lifetime
3 (4)	DISC	Discovery
3 (4)	CNN	News
3 (4)	USA	New York
3 (4)	ESPN	Sports
3 (4)	MTV	Music
3 (4)	NICK	Nickelodeon
3 (4)	TNT	Atlanta
3 (4)	AMC	Classics
3 (4)	FAM	Family
3 (4)	HBO	Premium
3 (4)	SHOW	Premium
3 (4)	MAX	Premium
3 (4)	TMC	Premium
3 (4)	DISN	Premium
3 (4)	PASS	Art Arbor
3 (4)	VCI	Pay-per-View
3 (4)	HOT	Pay-per-View
3 (4)	FLIX	PREMIUM
3 (4)	COM	Comedy
3 (4)	YCON	Atlanta
3 (4)	SCI	New York
3 (4)	A&E	New York
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