

Film Feature: HollywoodChicago.com Picks the 2012 Oscar Winners

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on February 23, 2012 - 12:08pm

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CHICAGO – Content Director Brian Tallerico and Staff Writers Matt Fagerholm, Tim Martens and Patrick McDonald have merged their movie-loving minds and come up with the ultimate Oscar preview. Win your office pool, impress your friends, and propose a toast to the nominees that should have been when The 84th Annual Academy Awards are broadcast on Sunday, February 26th, 2012 at 7pm CST. And be sure to use the in-feature links to see our coverage of all the nominees.

BEST PICTURE



The Artist

Photo credit: The Weinstein Company

“[The Artist](#) [12]”

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HC PREDICTIONS:**WILL WIN: “The Artist”****SHOULD WIN: “The Tree of Life”****SHOULD HAVE BEEN NOMINATED: “Drive”/”Melancholia”**

Another year, another Weinstein dominance. Just as he did last year with “The King’s Speech,” the consensus is that Harvey and company will campaign Michel Hazanavicius’ “The Artist” to five-to-seven Oscars, including Best Picture. All four of the HC experts predict that first silent, full-frame movie in generations will win the big prize on Oscar evening. Wouldn’t it be nice if none of us agreed and we could fight it out death match style? Ah well. We’ll have to look for other categories for that kind of fun.

As Tim says, “While “Hugo” has tried to make a run at the top prize (and received the most nominations) and “The Descendants” is still a possibility, “The Artist” has rolled through award season with wins everywhere.” Matt’s a little harsh on the unanimous prediction- — ““The Artist” succeeds as an endearing, ingenious homage to the silent era that leaves the viewer feeling like a million bucks. Yet there’s little substance beneath its clever style and deliberately derivative plot line.”

As for what should win, there’s a lot of consensus there as well as three out of four think that Terrence Malick’s “The Tree of Life” would be the best Oscar surprise of all. It’s a film that “brings awe-inspiring dimensions to even the most mundane of imagery,” according to Matt. Patrick goes with the Academy but gives a nod to Malick’s opus, saying, “Even though I thought “Tree of Life” was a more important and finely distinctive 2011 film, “The Artist” celebrates the joy of movies, the sheer pleasure of both film’s enduring history and the entertainment it has given us.”

What should have made the cut? Both Patrick and Matt show some love for Lars Von Trier’s striking “Melancholia” while Brian and Tim pick Nicolas Winding Refn’s amazing “Drive.” Tim takes it a step further, refusing to pick just one — “Maybe it is traditional to talk about one film that should have been nominated that wasn’t, but “Drive” “The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo” and “Martha Marcy May Marlene” were not only better than “The Help” “War Horse” and “Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close,” I feel all three will be remembered and enjoyed far longer than those nominees. The fact is “Drive” “Girl” and “Martha” all took major risks and should be rewarded for that, instead of the other three films that played it safe, toyed with my emotions, and left me feeling empty on nomination morning.”

BEST ACTOR

Jean Dujardin in The Artist

Photo credit: The Weinstein Company[Demian Bichir](#) [18], “[A Better Life](#)” [18]”[George Clooney](#) [19], “The Descendants”[Jean Dujardin](#) [20], “The Artist”[Gary Oldman](#) [21], “[Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy](#)” [22]”[Brad Pitt](#) [23], “Moneyball”**WILL WIN: Jean Dujardin****SHOULD WIN: (tie) Jean Dujardin & George Clooney****SHOULD HAVE BEEN NOMINATED: (tie) Michael Fassbender & Michael Shannon**

For a few weeks late in the year, it felt like there was a race here but all four experts at HollywoodChicago.com think that the super-charming Jean Dujardin will take the prize on a wave of support for “The Artist.” Perhaps if either of the two gentlemen that HollywoodChicago.com should have been nominated had been given what they deserved, this category would be a little more competitive.

Patrick and Tim think that Michael Fassbender’s fearless performance in “Shame” should have made the short list while Brian and Matt look to another “Michael” in Chicagoan Michael Shannon’s incredible turn in “Take Shelter.” (At least the Chicago Film Critics Association not only nominated Mr. Shannon but gave him the prize for Best Actor). Although everyone agrees that this category was CROWDED. As Tim says, anyone being left out isn’t as much of a snub, “but rather an unfortunate exclusion due to a number of other great performances.”

But back to the elite few. It may be a silent cake walk for Dujardin but there's not full agreement that he's the most deserving. While Tim and Patrick are happy with this win, Brian and Matt hope for a George Clooney upset for a performance that Tallerico considers the best of his career. As Matt says, "It's the actor's most immersive portrayal since "Syriana" (which garnered him a Supporting Actor Oscar), and the most emotionally vulnerable of his career. Like Brad Pitt, Clooney is not taking his star status for granted these days, and has chosen one challenging role after another. As a father struggling to reconnect with his daughters while discovering the reasons behind his comatose wife's infidelity, Clooney is very funny and tremendously moving, often within the same take."

BEST ACTRESS



Viola Davis in The Help

Photo credit: Disney

[Glenn Close](#) [24], "[Albert Nobbs](#) [25]"

[Viola Davis](#) [26], "The Help"

[Rooney Mara](#) [27], "[The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo](#) [28]"

[Meryl Streep](#) [29], "[The Iron Lady](#) [30]"

[Michelle Williams](#) [31], "[My Week with Marilyn](#) [32]"

WILL WIN: Viola Davis

SHOULD WIN: Rooney Mara

SHOULD HAVE BEEN NOMINATED: Elizabeth Olsen

Once again, unity reigns in the "Will Win" department as we have all given into the likelihood that Viola Davis will win an Oscar for the huge hit "The Help" (something Brian would like to point out that he's been saying for months, even as Michelle Williams and Meryl Streep looked like possibilities at different points).

Matt and Brian give the "should win" edge to one of the most startling performances of the year, the incredible turn by Rooney Mara in "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo." As Matt says, "The most fully realized performance of the five nominees belongs to the captivating Rooney Mara, who commanded the screen as one of modern literature's most iconic and enigmatic heroines. She delved into her character's volatile rage, animalistic sexuality and startling tenderness with a boldness that places her in the top rank of her generation." For the record, Tim thinks that the Academy will make the right choice with Ms. Davis (and Brian and Matt will be happier about it than any of the other three predicted acting winners) but Pat hopes for a Williams upset. The CFCA winner for Best Actress is easily one of the best of her generation. Win or lose, she'll be back in this category soon.

As for who should have been nominated — where do we begin? Tim and Brian are in agreement, giving the edge to Elizabeth Olsen's incredible work in "Martha Marcy May Marlene." As Tim says, "She will no doubt be someone to keep our eye on in the coming years." Brian's #2 choice for a snub in this category is Patrick's #1 as he notes, "Kirsten Dunst handled incredibly difficult states of being with true, raw exposure (pun intended) and was robbed." Finally, Matt looks to the early part of the year and one of its best debuts, saying, "The mixture of confusion and anger that [Liana] Liberato projects [in "Trust"] is entirely authentic, and her cathartic breakdown in a therapist's office is absolutely shattering. This is a lead performance in every sense of the word, and the only one this year that actually made me cry. "

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR



Christopher Plummer in Beginners

Photo credit: Focus

[Kenneth Branagh](#) [33], “My Week with Marilyn”

[Jonah Hill](#) [34], “Moneyball”

[Nick Nolte](#) [35], “[Warrior](#) [36]”

[Christopher Plummer](#) [37], “[Beginners](#) [38]”

[Max Von Sydow](#) [39], “Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close”

WILL WIN: Christopher Plummer

SHOULD WIN: Nick Nolte

SHOULD HAVE BEEN NOMINATED: Albert Brooks

Boy, it really is an incredibly boring year, isn’t it? ONCE AGAIN, all four of us see no chance for a surprise here as living legend Christopher Plummer takes home his first Oscar for one of his least-challenging roles (in Brian’s opinion). And, once again, none of us think that Plummer should be the one to win, even if we all love the man and his remarkable career.

Matt and Brian would give the trophy to another legend who has never given an Oscar acceptance speech — Nick Nolte for his comeback work in “Warrior.” Matt says, “The scenes between Nolte and Tom Hardy (as his hothead son) are so brutally raw that they’re occasionally difficult to watch, which is a sure sign of top-drawer acting.” Patrick shows his love for “My Week with Marilyn” again, giving the edge to Kenneth Branagh’s turn as Sir Laurence Olivier.

Tim refuses to play by the rules, giving the “Should Win” trophy to a man not even nominated — Albert Brooks. While Brian agrees that the “Drive” snubs in many categories will be looked at as yet-another Academy crime against film history, Matt and Patrick have less-expected choices — Mr. McDonald cites Paul Bettany’s stellar work in the ensemble piece “Margin Call” while Mr. Fagerholm praises Alan Rickman, “who delivered a decade of marvelous performances as malevolent professor Severus Snape in the “Harry Potter” film series. His syllable-twisting line delivery and hypnotic scenery-chewing were among the top reasons why fans kept coming back for more. In “Deathly Hallows Part 2,” Rickman had the formidable task of portraying the most talked-about plot twist of the entire saga. If he couldn’t pull it off, the film would’ve surely crumbled. Thankfully, Rickman exceeded all expectations, delivering a final performance of startlingly emotional power. He is the true magic of this franchise.”

Continue on to page two for the screenplays, director, and supporting actress:

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS



Octavia Spencer in The Help

Photo credit: Disney[Berenice Bejo](#) [40], “The Artist”[Jessica Chastain](#) [41], “The Help”[Melissa McCarthy](#) [42], “[Bridesmaids](#) [43]”[Janet McTeer](#) [44], “Albert Nobbs”[Octavia Spencer](#) [45], “The Help”**WILL WIN: Octavia Spencer****SHOULD WIN: Melissa McCarthy****SHOULD HAVE BEEN NOMINATED: Carey Mulligan**

Broken record. Four for four again. If we’re right, Octavia Spencer and Viola Davis will join an elite crew of Lead and Supporting Actress winners from the same film and, in many ways, that should be the biggest story the next morning. Not only that two women from the same film but that the long-racist Academy awarded two African-American women. Of the four of us, only Tim thinks Spencer should win but we can all recognize the history about to be made here.

Who should win? Matt makes the case for all of us but Tim, arguing for another Chicagoan, “The deserving winner here is clearly Melissa McCarthy, who delivered a performance that is the very definition of stellar supporting work. McCarthy’s hilarious onset improvisations resulted in the extension of her screen time and garnered spontaneous applause on three separate occasions at a screening I attended in the Chicago suburbs. McCarthy also displayed poignance in the scene where her character forces Kristen Wiig’s heroine to embrace life rather than wallow in self-pity.”

On the other end of the spectrum, Tim doesn’t even think McCarthy should have been nominated, saying, “The biggest disappointment here is Shailene Woodley not being nominated for “The Descendants.” Brian Tallerico called this the day before the nominations came out, but I didn’t want to believe it. Another year, another great performance by a young actor goes without any recognition from the Academy. Don’t get me wrong, I love Melissa McCarthy, but Woodley deserved this nomination over her.”

Tim may have love for Shailene, but Pat, Brian, and Matt find unity again, wishing that more people had dug out their screeners of “Shame” and nominated the great Carey Mulligan. Since her breakthrough in “An Education,” Mulligan has quickly risen to the ranks of the best of her generation, delivering stellar performances in “Never Let Me Go,” “Drive,” and “Shame.” She’ll be back in this group again someday. And probably win an Oscar in the near future.

BEST DIRECTOR



Michel Hazanavicius of *The Artist*

Photo credit: Patrick McDonald

[Woody Allen](#) [46], “Midnight in Paris”

[Michel Hazanavicius](#) [47], “The Artist”

[Terrence Malick](#) [48], “The Tree of Life”

[Alexander Payne](#) [49], “The Descendants”

[Martin Scorsese](#) [50], “Hugo”

WILL WIN: Michel Hazanavicius

SHOULD WIN: Terrence Malick

SHOULD HAVE BEEN NOMINATED: David Fincher

Look at the legends in this category. On the short list of the most influential directors of all time would be Woody Allen and Martin Scorsese. Terrence Malick and Alexander Payne deliver gems every time. And NONE of them will win. The newcomer, the Frenchman who dared to make a silent film, will take the prize.

As for who should win, we go back to the CFCA winner (surprise, surprise), picking Terrence Malick for his daring, complex, personal work on “The Tree of Life.” As Tim hopes, ““The Artist” will already get its love from the Academy with all sorts of award wins that Sunday night, the voters should give “The Tree of Life” some respect by giving its creator the top directorial award.” Matt takes it a step further, “...the real artist in this category is Terrence Malick, one of the greatest of all living filmmakers who appears in danger of being relegated to the “Lifetime Achievement Award” category occupied by underachievers such as Hitchcock. The mood that he creates onset provides a perfect space for his cinematographer to capture the sort of indelible and unexpected moments that couldn’t possibly be scripted. His film will stand the test of time long after the vast majority of this year’s Oscar bait has faded from memory.”

Who’s missing? The Academy clearly has issues with David Fincher, snubbing him for the deserved win last year for “The Social Network” and not even nominating him this year for “The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo.” Matt looks a little further afield, citing the great Abbas Kiarostami for “Certified Copy.” It would take a pretty distant alternative universe for a film as small as Kiarostami’s to garner Academy attention, but a boy can dream.

BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY



The Descendants

Photo credit: Fox Searchlight

“The Descendants” by Alexander Payne, Nat Faxon, & Jim Rash
“Hugo” by John Logan
“The Ides of March”
“Moneyball” by Steven Zaillian & Aaron Sorkin
“Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy” by Bridget O’Connor & Peter Straughan

WILL WIN: “The Descendants”

SHOULD WIN: “Moneyball”

SHOULD HAVE BEEN NOMINATED: “The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo”

We finally have a BIT of dissension in terms of what will win as Tim goes with a shocker, picking Steven Zaillian and Aaron Sorkin for their great work on “Moneyball,” which ALL FOUR of us think should win the Oscar (with Pat correctly calling it “the most nuanced of the nominees”). Matt, Brian, and Pat think Sorkin will not make it two years in a row, going with Alexander Payne’s “The Descendants.”

As Matt says, “With “The Descendants” shut out of every other major category, I predict that its consolation prize will emerge in the Adapted Screenplay category. Payne, Faxon and Rash’s humane and perceptive approach to tackling difficult subject matter is certainly worthy of accolades, though their script falls just short of perfect.”

While Zaillian deserves to win for “Moneyball,” he also wins the shut-out award as he also should have been cited for streamlining Stieg Larsson’s book “The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo.” Patrick wishes “The Debt” has found some love, Matt looks to the underrated adaptation of the often-adapted “Jane Eyre” — “My write-in vote goes to Moira Buffini’s elegant and exquisite adaptation of Charlotte Brontë’s classic melodrama. Instead of getting mired in the rhythms of a mannered period piece, Buffini injected a sense of freshness into the material by delving into the young heroine’s raw angst and budding passion with a youthful zest that is positively beguiling.”

BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY



Midnight in Paris

Photo credit: Sony Pictures Classic

“The Artist” by Michel Hazanavicius
“Bridesmaids” by Annie Mumolo & Kristen Wiig
“Margin Call” by J.C. Chandor
“Midnight in Paris” by Woody Allen
“A Separation” by Asghar Farhadi

WILL WIN: “Midnight in Paris”

SHOULD WIN: “A Separation”

SHOULD HAVE BEEN NOMINATED: “50/50”

There’s often a surprise here but does anyone think that the Academy will miss the opportunity to award one of their favorite filmmakers for the highest-grossing film of his career and one of his very few Best Picture nominees? It seems doubtful to Tim, Patrick, and Brian, but Matt goes with the sweep for “The Artist,” a definite possibility.

Brian wishes he could go out on a limb and say that “A Separation,” the most-deserving nominee here, could pull a “Talk to Her” and take home this prize. If it happens, tell your friends that HollywoodChicago.com said it was a possibility. And Brian and Matt think it **SHOULD** happen. Matt says, “Asghar Farhadi’s universally acclaimed drama, “A Separation,” is practically guaranteed the Foreign Film Oscar, yet it’s chiefly Farhadi’s script that makes the film such a smashing success. While so many Hollywood scripts feign objectivity while depicting a struggle between enemies, this film delves into the dizzying complexity of an escalating conflict between a husband and wife, a man and his housekeeper and two sets of parents—in which no one is entirely right or wrong. Their feelings are justified but their actions are often flawed. It’s the sort of picture that leaves the audience buzzing with provocative discussion for days and days.”

What missed out? Tim and Brian loved Will Reiser's work on "50/50" while Matt went back to early in the year again, praising "Win Win," and Patrick continued his love for Lars Von Trier's "Melancholia." Wouldn't those have been surprising, great choices? Then again, even more than most years, the Academy Awards are about anything BUT surprises.

What did we get right? What did we get wrong? Tell us what you think will win, should win, and should have been nominated in the space below Brian's bets for the tech categories and enjoy the show!

BEST PICTURE: The Artist
BEST ACTOR: Jean Dujardin, The Artist
BEST ACTRESS: Viola Davis, The Help
BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR: Christopher Plummer, Beginners
BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS: Octavia Spencer, The Help
BEST DIRECTOR: Michel Hazanavicius, The Artist
BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY: The Descendants
BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY: Midnight in Paris
BEST ART DIRECTION: Hugo
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY: The Tree of Life
BEST COSTUME DESIGN: Hugo
BEST EDITING: The Artist
BEST MAKEUP: The Iron Lady
BEST SCORE: The Artist
BEST SONG: The Muppets
BEST SOUND EDITING: Hugo
BEST SOUND MIXING: Hugo
BEST VISUAL EFFECTS: Rise of the Planet of the Apes
BEST ANIMATED FILM: Rango
BEST DOCUMENTARY: Undefeated
BEST FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILM: A Separation



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