Film Feature: HollywoodChicago.com 2020 Oscar Predictions

Submitted by PatrickMcD [1] on February 8, 2020 - 4:01pm

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CHICAGO – Let’s make this important! The 92nd Academy Awards are on Sunday, February 9th, 2020, and HC.com film/entertainment contributors Patrick McDonald, Michael “Spike” Walters and Jon Lennon Espino are ready to add their Swami-like powers to eight major categories, plus three wild cards. Let the predicting begin.



ABC-TV

Nine films of 2019 – “1917,” “Ford v Ferrari,” “The Irishman, “ “Jojo Rabbit,” “Joker,” “Little Women,” “Marriage Story” “Once Upon a Time in Hollywood” and “Parasite” – will vie for the Best Picture Award. The HC.com team together will opine on eight categories … BEST Picture, Actor/Actress, Supporting Actor/Actress, Director, Original/Adapted Screenplay. As in previous years, the predictions are broken down into thoughts on who WILL WIN, SHOULD WIN and SHOULD HAVE BEEN NOMINATED (for one last gasp of WTF?). Separately, Patrick, Spike and Jon will comment on a WILD CARD guess for three other categories, and the latest odds on the rest of the field will be highlighted to fill out your ballot for Oscar Night. Have a great Oscar weekend…

PREDICTOR GUIDE: Patrick McDonald = (PM), Spike Walters = (SW) and Jon Espino = (JE)

BEST PICTURE
NOMINEES: “1917” … “Ford v Ferrari” … “The Irishman “ … “Jojo Rabbit” … “Joker” … “Little Women” … “Marriage Story” … “Once Upon a Time in Hollywood” … “Parasite”

Will Win: “1917” (PM, SW) “Joker” (JE)

Should Win: “Joker” (PM) “Parasite” (JE, SW)

Should Have Been Nominated: “Uncut Gems” (PM, SW) “The Farewell” (JE)



1917
Photo credit: Joaquin Phoenix, Title Character of ’Joker’
Photo credit: Roadside Attractions

Spike seems perturbed …

***SW:** Since I’m not three sheets to the wind on a river of vodka, the Academy’s infatuation with Renee Zellweger’s Judy Garland imitation is lost on me. As an impersonation it’s great for about three minutes, and then the boozy-and-difficult Judy – who can’t stop turning her life into a never-ending dumpster fire – becomes a world class bore, much like the movie itself. I found literally any of the other actresses in this category provided more nuanced and better performances than this spectacle of superficial overacting. For example, Charlize Theron’s utter disappearance into the role of Fox News maven Megyn Kelly was something to behold. And then there’s Awkwafina, who out acted them all in a role that she not only should have been nominated for, but probably should have won too.*

***PM:** “Judy, Judy, Judy” says Cary Grant and me. None of the other nominees come close to what Renée achieved in her portrayal of Ms. Garland, even though the story in the film didn’t rise to the same standard. Double actress nominee Scarlett and “Little Women” Saoirse did their roles proud, while Erivo/Theron were handcuffed with story issues. Florence Pugh was amazeballs in “Midsommar,” having to embrace about 1000 emotions in a criminally overlooked film. She’s once and future, as the old saying goes.*

***JE:** The Academy always seems to favor prestige films about old celebrities, and “Judy” is essentially only that. Zellweger will likely win, though Ronan’s performance has more range and scope. But if Awkwafina were in the mix, she would deserve the win with the emotional complexity she displayed.*

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR
NOMINEES: Tom Hanks, “A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood” … Anthony Hopkins, “The Two Popes” … Al Pacino, “The Irishman” … Joe Pesci, “The Irishman” … Brad Pitt, Once Upon a Time in Hollywood

Will Win: Brad Pitt (PM, SW), Tom Hanks (JE)

Should Win: Al Pacino (PM), Pitt (JE, SW)

Should Have Been Nominated: Kelvin Harrison Jr. “Waves” or “Luce” (PM), Song Kang-ho “Parasite” (JE), Alec Baldwin “Motherless Brooklyn”



Laura Dern in 'Marriage Story'
Photo credit: Netflix

Think of Laura, in this clean sweep …

SW: *This is Laura Dern's trophy to lose, because none of these performances managed to get under the skin quite like her villainous and cutthroat divorce attorney in "Marriage Story." And yes, Margot Robbie deserved a nomination, but got it for the wrong movie … she was put much better to use in Quentin Tarantino's Hollywood fairytale.*

PM: *This is a little tougher but I'm still going with Dern, an industry favorite in the midst of a major renaissance. She is memorable in "Marriage Story," fashioning a divorce attorney whose "California Girl" appeal is part of her pragmatism. Kathy Bates was stellar in "Richard Jewell," but again Florence Pugh is an actor of the future, and put a righteous spin on a literary character in "Little Women." Also I say again, why no love for "Uncut Gems"? Julia Fox sneaks up as a powerhouse by the end of the film.*

JE: *Laura Dern is a monumental actress, and if she were being nominated for her role in HBO's "Big Little Lies," she would deserve to win hands down. Counter to Dern, Florence Pugh basically played two roles in "Little Women," each perfectly nuanced. I don't even need to explain why JLo was should have been nominated, especially since her lack of nomination is pretty criminal.*

BEST DIRECTOR
NOMINEES: Martin Scorsese, "The Irishman" …Quentin Tarantino, "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood" … Bong Joon-ho, "Parasite" … Sam Mendes, "1917" … Todd Phillips, "Joker"

Will Win: Sam Mendes (PM, JE, SW)

Should Win: Mendes (PM, JE, SW)

Should Have Been Nominated: Lulu Wang "The Farewell" (JE), James Mangold "Ford v Ferrari" (SW), Trey Edward Shults "Waves" (PM)



Universal Pictures

Director Sammy M gets all the accolades …

JE: In this rare case – since Pedro Almodóvar wasn't even nominated – Sam Mendes will win and should win, and you'd agree if you've seen even ten minutes of "1917." Of all the female directors snubbed in this category, Lulu Wang should have been nominated for her deeply personal and culturally resonant film, "The Farewell."

SW: Sam Mendes put his time on the Bond movies to good use to create a thrilling one-shot wonder in the war drama "1917." It's got the kind of easily recognizable flourish that's been winning over voters and audiences for years. The car racing in "Ford v Ferrari" is a lot tougher than it looks to make suitably thrilling to an audience, but director James Mangold put viewers in the drivers seat … even if you aren't a gear head, you may feel the call of the track after this movie.

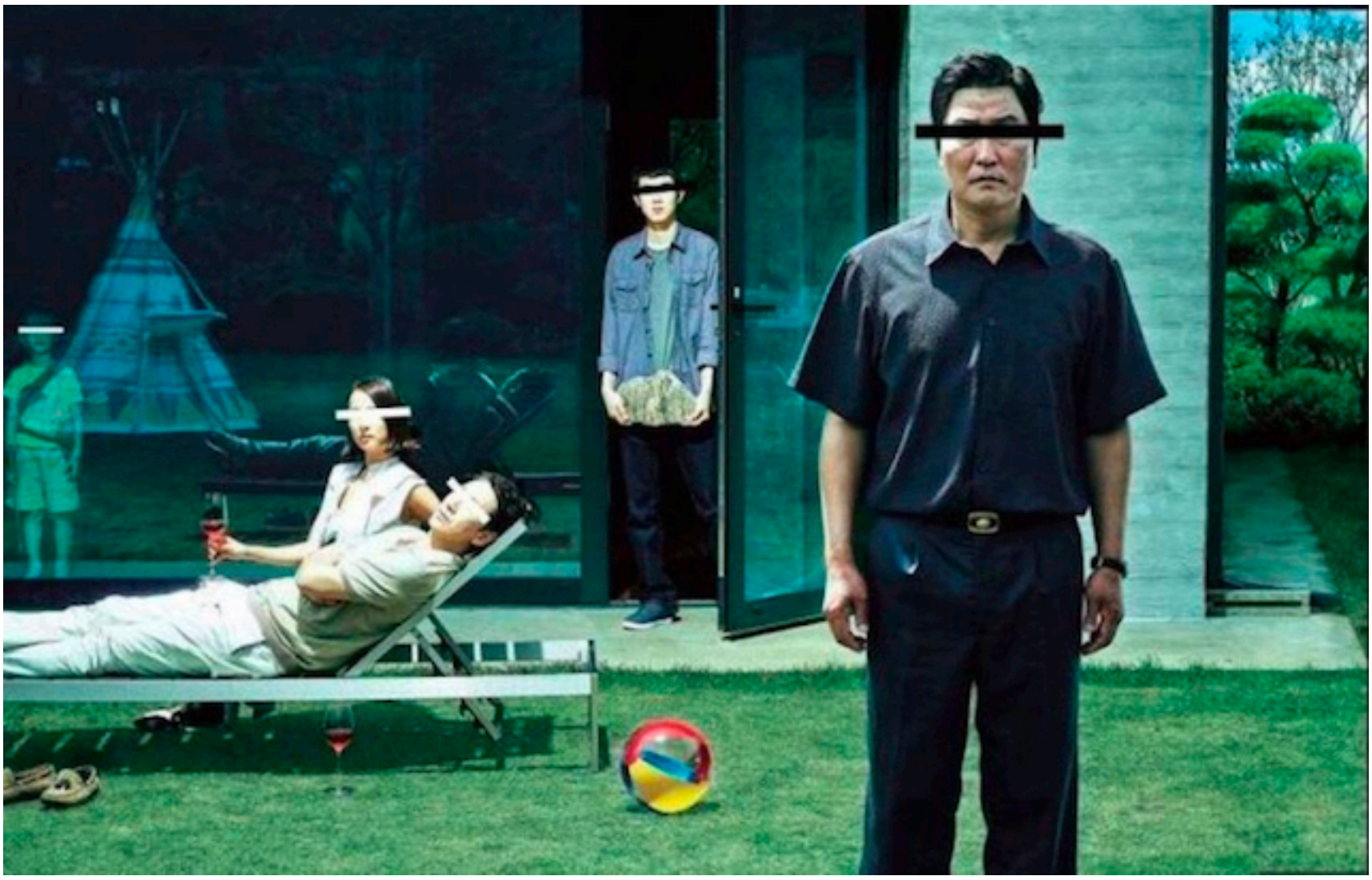
PM: Another tough one, a contest between traditional (Sam Mendes of "1917") and the new (Bong Joon-ho, "Parasite"). I'm swaying toward the traditional Sam just because I admired the film so much, both in experimentation (it seemed to be one shot) and message (the waste of war). What do they say about heart bets? All the others belong in this category, with Tarantino and Scorsese treading again. Trey Edward Shults of "Waves" was criminally overlooked (as well as the entire film), as he steered two distinct stories toward a redemptive power that's a blessing.

BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY
NOMINEES: "Marriage Story" … "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood" … "Parasite" …"Knives Out" …"1917"

Will Win: "Parasite" (PM, JE), "Once Upon A Time In Hollywood" (SW)

Should Win: "Parasite" (PM, JE), "Marriage Story" (SW)

Should Have Been Nominated: Joe Talbot, Jimmie Falls, Rob Richert "The Last Black Man in San Francisco" (PM), Pedro Almodóvar "Pain and Glory" (JE), Emily Halpern, Sarah Haskins, Susanna Fogel and Katie Silberman "Booksmart" (SW)



’Parasite,’ Written and Directed by Bong Joon Ho
Photo credit: Neon

Jon and Patrick are down for “Parasite.”

JE: There are only a couple of films that should beat out “Parasite” in any given category, and while many of them didn’t even make the nomination list, “Once Upon A Time In Hollywood” is definitely not one of them. Pedro Almodóvar poured every bit of himself into “Pain and Glory,” so to see it missing from key categories like this feels like such an insult.

PM: “Parasite” will be honored in this category, which for writing’s sake doesn’t really have that much competition (and really, how are we to know what is interpretive in the original language of “Parasite”? Regardless …) For powerhouse writing, the lyrical, almost Shakespearian prose poetry of “The Last Black Man in San Francisco” was actual stylistic screen writing. As the Bard said, “… [the] web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together.”

SW: No one knows his way around dialogue quite like Tarantino, and his “Once Upon A Time…” is such a love letter/wish fulfillment for Hollywood itself it’s bound to seduce just enough voters to withstand a sizable challenge from “Parasite.” For my money, Noah Baumbach’s “Marriage Story” was chock full of subtle turns of phrase and devastating monologues of genius. And while the premise of “Booksmart” may be basically “Superbad” but with girls, it delivers heaps of laughs, deserved more attention than it got, and managed to come up with memorable characters in the process.

BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY

NOMINEES: “The Irishman” … “Jojo Rabbit” … “Little Women” … “The Two Popes” … “Joker”

Will Win: “Jojo Rabbit“ (SW), “Little Women” (PM, JE)

Should Win: “Little Women” (SW), “Jojo Rabbit” (JE), “Joker” (PM)

Should Have Been Nominated: “Hustlers” (JE), “Toy Story 4” (PM), “Motherless Brooklyn” (SW)



‘Little Women,’ adapted by Greta Gerwig
Photo credit: