Oscar Week 2021: Spotlight on Best Actress Nominee Viola Davis

Submitted by PatrickMcD [1] on April 22, 2021 - 6:16pm

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CHICAGO – Building a career role by role, Viola Davis has emerged at the top of her profession as an actress, with four Oscar nominations in her journey – and one win for "Fences" (2016) – including this 2021's nod for her shape shifting performance as a real-life 1920s Blues Singer in "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom."

Davis portrays the title character, recording a new record on the Southside of Chicago during the era. Her Ma Rainey lives in a segregated society, and in this adaptation of the August Wilson stageplay the singer is exploited by white record producers, and is lost, angry and burnt out. Davis is able to convey all of those emotions is a remarkable portrayal, embodying both the physical form and spirit of an old-timey entertainer who had to contend with both business humiliations and societal dismissal.



Viola Davis in Chicago, circa 2018

Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com

Viola Davis the actress is at a career peak, after beginning modestly with small parts in TV and and indie film in the 1990s and early 2000s. Supporting roles began to get more expansive in name films like “Antwone Fisher” (2002), “World Trade Center” (2006) and “Disturbia” (2007), culminating with her first high profile breakthrough in a stunning 11 minute role in “Doubt” (2008), which secured her first Oscar nomination. From there she was featured in “Trust” (2010), “The Help” (2011), “Ender’s Game” (2013) and “Widows” (2018) on her way through “Fences” and “Ma Rainey.” In 2021, she will reprise her role in “The Suicide Squad”” and will portray Michelle Obama in a TV miniseries entitled “The First Lady.”

In a 2012 interview with Patrick McDonald of HollywoodChicago.com, Davis said this about her craft, “You have to understand being an actress, and being an African American actress of a certain hue, I think that you have to be bold with your choices. Even when you’re not bold with your choices, have people see it as bold. That background influenced me because from a very young age I had to take those chances. I had to envision myself in situations and ways that other people couldn’t see, in order to break through and get what I wanted in life.”

In 2018, Viola Davis walked the Red Carpet at the Chicago International Film Festival for director Steve McQueen’s film “Widows.’ Here is the video interview with Patrick McDonald …

The 93rd Academy Awards is on Sunday, April 25th at 8pmET/7pmCT on ABC-TV, and will take place at the Los Angeles Dolby Theatre and Union Station.

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By PATRICK McDONALD [20]
Editor, Film Writer
HollywoodChicago.com
pat@hollywoodchicago.com [19]

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