

THE CampChuck REVIEWER

A nonprofit subsidiary of CampChuck

Forty Fifth ANNUAL EDITION

<http://www.startlets.com>

March 3, 2024

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Editor, critic, layout, distribution, and general factotum ...



Meryl Streep Pleads for “The CampChuck Reviewer” to Continue

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The 96th ANNUAL ACADEMY AWARDS NOMINATIONS

Oscar Night: Sunday, March 10

Best Picture

Best Picture	Best Director
<i>American Fiction</i>	
<i>Anatomy of a Fall</i>	Justine Triet
<i>Barbie</i>	
<i>Holdovers, The</i>	
<i>Killers of the Flower Moon</i>	Martin Scorsese
<i>Maestro</i>	
<i>Oppenheimer</i>	Christopher Nolan
<i>Past Lives</i>	
<i>Poor Things</i>	Yorgos Lanthimos
<i>Zone of Interest, The</i>	Jonathan Glazer

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Best Actor

Bradley Cooper	<i>Maestro</i>
Colman Domingo	<i>Rustin</i>
Paul Giamatti	<i>The Holdovers</i>
<u>Cillian Murphy</u>	<i>Oppenheimer</i>
Jeffrey Wright	<i>American Fiction</i>

Best Actress

Annette Bening	<i>Nyad</i>
<u>Lily Gladstone</u>	<i>Killers of the Flower Moon</i>
Sandra Huller	<i>Anatomy of a Fall</i>
Carey Mulligan	<i>Maestro</i>
Emma Stone	<i>Poor Things</i>

Best Supporting Actor

Sterling K. Brown	<i>American Fiction</i>
Robert De Niro	<i>Killers of the Flower Moon</i>
<u>Robert Downey, Jr.</u>	<i>Oppenheimer</i>
Ryan Gosling	<i>Barbie</i>
Mark Ruffalo	<i>Poor Things</i>

Best Supporting Actress

Emily Blunt	<i>Oppenheimer</i>
Danielle Brooks	<i>The Color Purple</i>
America Ferrera	<i>Barbie</i>
Jodie Foster	<i>Nyad</i>
<u>Da’Vine Joy Randolph</u>	<i>The Holdovers</i>

(Underlined nominees equal CampChuck predictions)

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Email: jaffee@startlets.com (that’s 3 “t’s” in startlets).

The End of the CampChuck Road

This is the final edition of “The CampChuck Reviewer.” Perhaps this 45th annual edition misses the resonance of reaching a 50th edition as the last. Even quitting when I’m 75 years old (and my being 74 is so close to that) might have delivered something of a milestone feeling.

The 44th edition could have been the last without any fanfare, leaving people who wait for their Oscar-time newsletter in an unexpectant lurch. (Could I have died?) Perhaps a more fitting finish to the tradition that has been “The CampChuck Reviewer” could have been that the tradition ceases without punctuation.

No, here I announce it. It’s only 4 pages long instead of the standard 8 and greatly compresses the narrative around predicting the winners in the major categories.

A Very Different Kind of Road to Travel

In 2024, more than any of CampChuck’s 45 years of writing mostly just about the movies, CampChuck angles emphatically political: rally around the vote for Joe Biden.

Were you already going to vote for Joe Biden? OK, also encourage others to vote for Joe Biden. Turnout matters. If Joe Biden isn’t who you really prefer to be your President, support him because he’s the designated candidate. Don’t get bogged down by preferring someone else. Support him for more than Biden being so much more suitable than T****. Biden, political roiling notwithstanding, has a strong record of accomplishment as President and otherwise. VOTE FOR JOE BIDEN. ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO DO THE SAME.

Might you not vote? What is your vote FOR?

(continued, page 2)

Some of Joe Biden's Accomplishments:

- *Most aggressive climate & environmental justice investment ever
- *Infrastructure bill for pipes, waterways, bridges roads, trains, fast internet
- *Inflation reduction act addressing clean energy, drug costs & more
- *Lowest unemployment in 50 years (3.5%)
- *11 million jobs created since 2021
- *CHIPS act encouraging US manufacturing of chips
- *Debt relief for 40 million students
- *Lowered gas & household energy prices
- *79% of American adults Covid vaccinated
- *Federal workers get \$15 minimum wage
- *Rallied the world in support of Ukraine against Putin's aggression
- *1st major gun violence legislation in 30 years

Reject Trump's celebrity, his character, criminality, his incapacities as a businessman, as a booster to the economy, as a vehicle of statecraft. Ignore his middle finger stirring what angers, frustrates, worries you.

Encourage others in vocal support of Joe Biden. **Encourage a landslide.**

OK, it's March. We don't even know yet whether Biden and Trump will be the candidates in the November 2024 election. It's March, and this is a movie newsletter. Besides writing about movies, CampChuck likes supporting things that matter and appreciates that many of you have supported something that CampChuck supports.

CampChuck continues as it has **since 1992, matching every subscription dollar for dollar**. All subscriptions – over \$47,000 plus CampChuck's 100% match of \$47,000 -- have funneled through CampChuck to RMI and Food Banks. Whether you subscribe at the official \$5 level or the average participation of \$30, think sustainable economic practice and the golden rule. And think about this being the last CampChuck newsletter.

Note:

Different than other years that CampChuck has been encouraging subscription/donations, I'm only listing Rocky Mountain Institute as a place to show your support.

I'll still honor checks made to the "Food Bank of Nevada County." Pressing need shouts to lend a helping hand to the hungry – to the "food insecure" (how's that for modern terminology). I'll still honor checks made to "Futures Without Violence." Curiously, this issue/organization has not drawn your CampChuck attention nearly so much as the other two in recent years.

The existential crisis of Climate Change threatens our lives, our complacency, our children, like no other affliction. In the shadow of pandemic & the pox of war, consider upgrading behavior and commitment big time.

Please, send "subscription" donations via CampChuck at 16669 Patricia Way, Grass Valley, CA 95949
make checks payable to...
Rocky Mountain Institute

This nonprofit helps individuals and communities and businesses and governments to, make money, yes, make money, by being smart about the environment. By research and science, by education and negotiation, by example, the Rocky Mountain Institute helps us ... and the U.S. ... and the world "us" to make long term economic sense by making long term environmental sense.

Dear Editor,

My husband didn't think I should bother you asking how it is with your cancer. How is it with your cancer?

Kaypin, Tabbs, Alware, MO

Dear Kaypin,

Five years. It's been over five years since my massive cancer surgeries. I've had essentially good quality life for five years. In September, I did start chemotherapy every 3 weeks but have essentially not been bothered by side effects.

Ed.

Dear Editor,

You have fun, don't you?

Iphealia Shinon, Ritere, RI

Dear Iphealia,

I don't know if fun is the word. Whatever the word is we're looking for, I have it.

Ed.

Dear Editor,

Man, I have been on you for like decades. It's been real, man, but there's, I don't know, something in the air, and well, I'm moving on. Stay real, man, whatever it is. Thanks. Really.

A friend, beyond Los Angeles

Dear friend,

Something in the air, indeed. Here's to you and your timing. Here's my thanks to every friend out there. Who knows what's real. Hey, my thanks is real. Really.

Ed.

Best Picture & Director, Actor & Actress, Supporting Actor & Actress



On Oscar night, look for “Oppenheimer, Oppenheimer, Oppenheimer.” In epic yet intimately personal style, it seers the story, the history, of “I am become death, the destroyer of worlds” ...



the era of nuclear power. With Best Picture, Christopher Nolan commands Best Director.

**Best Picture
Best Director**

Only director Martin Scorsese and his “Killers of the Flower Moon” can be called a contender against “Oppenheimer.” Also epic in a personal way, also scripted from history in needs-to-be-told fashion, also heavy but engrossingly so, and not incidentally, also big box office, the excellence of “Killers,” however, shines dimmer than “Oppenheimer” by comparison.

The epic of “Killers” is smaller despite its spotlight on exploitation and injustice. The treatment of Native Americans feels shockingly familiar though it’s a story we probably didn’t know. Scorsese’s masterly touch helps us relate, although his film is too long. (Also longer than it should be, length doesn’t diminish “Oppenheimer.”) Not incidentally, “Killers” made for big box office, although “Oppenheimer” scored blockbuster big box office.

Only one other Best Picture nominee did well at the box office (with Greta Gerwig being snubbed in the Best Director category). That snub puts a cork in “Barbie” as a Best Picture contender. “Barbie” ain’t got serious Best Picture legs. Stylish, yes, impressive for what it chose to be, yes, this phenomenon deserves its popularity, but don’t underrate its annoying qualities and please don’t overrate its substance.

All the seven other Best Picture nominees fared poorly at the box office. The only one worth a bit of Oscar Gold talk is “Poor Things,” because it shakes up an audience with a challenging kind of fun. Challenging an audience in an offbeat way seems to have garnered quite a bit of winning attention in recent years (“Everything Everywhere All at Once” “Parasite,” “The Shape of Water,” and “Birdman” in the last ten years.)

With Emma Stone channeling weird physicality and attitude because a mad scientist regenerated her life, “Poor Things” has a “why not” chance of winning, except for Oppenheimer, Oppenheimer, Oppenheimer.

It’s also fair to notice the flair of “Maestro” as Bradley Cooper wields his cinematic wand across the biopic of Leonard Bernstein’s life. Curiously, the best thing and what distracts most from Oscar-contending focus on Leonard Bernstein is that the Maestro’s wife carries the film’s momentum more than the Maestro.

The rest, all recommendable for different reasons, don’t particularly warrant Best Picture discussion. Cleverly rendered, “American Fiction” satirizes well both the world of book publishing and the stereotypes and shallowness of cultural (racial) bias. With a fresh take on the frequently visited theme of the whole Nazi thing, “The Zone of Interest” makes a somewhat obvious artistic point about the routine day-to-day of Nazis. That said, it is a discomforting point.

A relationship flick with a modest poignance through childhood and beyond, “Past Lives” delivers what you want from a nice, small film. Another small story, but with the effective movie contrivance of explaining a fall to death, “Anatomy of a Fall” also showcases advantages having films appreciated for more modest storytelling triumphs without bothering too much about the Oscar-winning possibility. Then there’s the likeable formula comedy-drama pic, “The Holdovers.” It serves, what, to remind us that the movies offer quality entertainment that doesn’t need being on a Best Picture list.

**Best
Actor**



Back to the Oscar resonance of “Oppenheimer,” “Oppenheimer,” J. Robert “Oppenheimer,” look for Cillian Murphy, to win Best Actor in the title role. Look at Murphy’s look. That by itself is almost enough to win. Look at the size and weight of this role. Look at the isolation and interconnectedness of this role. He can’t lose.

As to other Best Actors, it is fair to guess that Jeffrey Wright will trail behind the juicier roles in the Best Actor category, even though he anchors the even keeled satire of him being an author in “American Fiction.” Paul Giamatti is not a lead actor type, but he’s not only what you might call an actor’s actor. He’s only been nominated one other time (Supporting Actor in “Cinderella Man”), despite being impressive every time you see him. As a curmudgeonly teacher in “The Holdovers,” being impressive seems too ordinary.

(cont. from page 3) **Best Picture & Director, Actor & Actress, Supporting Actor & Actress**

Only Bradley Cooper, as “Maestro” Leonard Bernstein, is a serviceable bet against frontrunner Murphy. Cooper overplays the facets of his lavish acting gig well, but by comparison, Cooper is only play acting while Murphy is serious acting.

Colman Domingo in the title role of “Rustin” seems easy to dismiss but would be the nicest surprise of Oscar night, if he could be handed the statue. As the man behind Martin Luther King’s March on Washington, Rustin was a dynamic organizer and activist. Domingo delivers Rustin’s complexity seamlessly.

Best Sup Actor



For Best Supporting Actor, back to “Oppenheimer, Oppenheimer, Oppenheimer.” Look for the calculated political maneuvering evoked by Robert Downey, Jr. to win. As the counterpoint to Cillian Murphy’s portrayal of an intensely surreal responsibility, Downey Jr. catalyzes a sense of the odds against J. Robert Oppenheimer.

Sterling K. Brown can’t beat Downey though, as the agent of the “American Fiction” author with a plot problem, he handily helps the story function well. Mark Ruffalo can’t beat Downey, though his trace of caricature is effective in “Poor Things,” and he does offset Emma Stone’s bizarre turn well. (The amusing extreme of Willem Dafoe deserved a nomination more than Ruffalo.)

If there’s a wildcard amongst 8 “Barbie” nominations, it’s Ryan Gosling. Amidst the oh so female Barbieness of it all, Gosling is satiric eye candy compared with Margot Robbie’s flat-out beautiful. It doesn’t ding Gosling’s Oscar chances that he’s so clearly having a great time making this movie. Toughest to ignore, there’s Robert DeNiro. He grounds the horrible vibe that underwrites “Killers of the Flower Moon.” Maybe Robert DeNiro should win his 3rd Oscar (“Raging Bull,” “Godfather Part II”), except “Oppenheimer,” “Oppenheimer.” Downey, Jr. will ride the “Oppenheimer” momentum.

Best Sup Actress

Despite the nuclear juggernaut, don’t look for Emily Blunt as Best Supporting Actress. She’s a solid ensemble asset in “Oppenheimer,” but not enough to grab the Gold. America Ferrera is the main channel for lending substance to “Barbie,” but the substance in the script runs rather thin. Unlike Da’Vine Joy Randolph’s supporting part, Danielle Brooks in “The Color Purple” fits more like a piece in an ensemble puzzle. Though she’s a more forceful presence in her film, she won’t track above the story dynamics to win the Oscar.

Best Supporting Actress should go to Jodie Foster as coach to distance-swimmer Diana Nyad in “Nyad.” Not only does Foster gush in a juicy acting opportunity, her fit in the story is, like, the definition of a supporting role.

Da’Vine Joy Randolph in “The Holdovers” will win Best Supporting Actress, but not for being the best actress. Yes, she’s good. Da’Vine Joy Randolph will win as an effective formula counterpoint in “The Holdovers.” She’ll win as the dignified, fat, grieving, Black mama, massaging perspective into two floundering White guys – a troubled student and a troubled teacher. Oscar voting does include an undercurrent of taking such things into account. Although she’s a fair contender in this list of nominees, that “fairly standard formula” descriptor should have shifted winning to someone else.



Best Actress

The most interesting “who’s gonna win” of all the acting categories is Best Actress. Only Sandra Huller, as a wife suspected of killing her husband in “Anatomy of a Fall,” stands no chance winning an Oscar. In a solid, internally lit portrayal, she merely anchors a good film.

Will it go to Carey Mulligan’s adaptive wife, the coping wife of the flamboyant “Maestro” Bernstein? Or to Lily Gladstone’s intensely forbearing portrayal of a Native American with suspicious deaths, her own illness, and White men all around her in “Killers of the Flower Moon”? Or to Annette Bening’s dramatically tugged Diana “Nyad,” the title role, trying multiple times to swim 100 miles from Cuba to Florida? Or to Emma Stone, who shakes up the category the most with peculiar acting salience as a “Poor Thing” created by a mad scientist?

Any of the four would represent the top honor well. Perhaps dismiss Bening for her more overtly expressive acting performance. Perhaps pass over Stone for a mostly comedic turn, which she did NOT undermine through less than perfect acting nuance. Perhaps Mulligan couldn’t help playing merely the wife, though her characterization so richly complements the title personality of the film. Perhaps it’s unfair to note that Lily Gladstone will win the Oscar, partially, because she’ll be the first Native American ever to do so. That aside, she communicates with Oscar-deserving nuance. She communicates profound humanity, symbolically and in day-to-day actuality. Who her character is and what her life has to be is where the Best Actress Oscar will land.

