

MOVIES

Gallagher Meets Oscar: the 1983 Pix Picks

By Michael Gallagher

New York (NC) — There is something rather extraordinary this year about the five films nominated for best picture. "E.T., the Extra Terrestrial," "Gandhi," "Missing," "Tootsie" and "The Verdict."

With the exception of "Tootsie," all of them are on the Best 10 List of the U.S. Catholic Conference, the first time, to my knowledge, that there has been so high a degree of conformity since we started picking a best 10 about seven years ago.

Actually, conformity should be 100 percent. "Tootsie" is absent only because we weren't able to evaluate it in time to get it on our list. "Gandhi," "Missing," and "The Verdict," moreover, ranked one, two, three with us.

But now for the high point of my presentation, sticking my neck out. As I've done in past years in the Oscar sweepstakes, I'll make two picks for each main category: the first my own preference; the second one I think will probably win.

For best picture, I think my own preference and the probable winner are a good bet to coincide. Sorry, "E.T." lovers everywhere, I think it's

going to be "Gandhi." Director-producer Richard Attenborough's labor of love is not only a class act, but it's doing quite well at the box office, a combination that I think will prove irresistible to the academy members. I think that this is the closest thing to a sure thing.

The only picture with a chance to beat it out, I think, is "Tootsie," which no one has a bad word for and which has over "E.T." the advantage of having a human star. Dustin Hoffman, a significant factor I think with Hollywood, traditional beneath all that tinsel.

Best director, Costa Gavras, the director of "Missing," has the melancholy distinction of being the only director of a nominated film who did not get a best director nod, edged out by Wolfgang Petersen ("Das Boot," which, by the way, was also on our best 10). The other four are Steven Spielberg ("E.T."), Richard Attenborough ("Gandhi"), Sydney Pollack ("Tootsie"), and Sydney Lumet ("The Verdict").

I have no problem here with my own choice, Attenborough — and Costa Gavras would be second had he been nominated. But as to who I think is going to get it, that's another matter. Spielberg might well take the

Oscar, since it might be difficult for Hollywood (however much it admires class and tradition) to withhold some gesture of appreciation for all that money that cute little creature E.T. — not Spielberg — has brought into the industry coffers.

Best actor. Here, as with "Gandhi," my own choice and the probable winner once more coincide: Ben Kingsley for his portrayal of the Mahatma. And this despite three other very strong male feature performances: Dustin Hoffman ("Tootsie"), Jack Lemmon ("Missing") and Paul Newman ("The Verdict"). Any one of these three might beat out Kingsley, but I don't think there's much chance. (Peter O'Toole was very good in "My Favorite Year," but the picture itself was too uneven.)

Best Actress. It was the greatest of years for female performances, but that's something more justly laid at the door of producers, directors and writers than actresses.

Meryl Streep ("Sophie's Choice") seems to be well ahead of everybody else. Personally I think Miss Streep was too mannered as well as being hampered by a less than ideally defined role. My choice is Sissy Spacek, but her vehicle, "Missing," was a controversial, quite political

film. It is surprising to me that the academy has given the recognition it has, but to expect more would probably be too much.

As for the supporting Oscars, they seem up for grabs with some good contenders, so I'll just limit myself to picking my own preferences: best supporting actor, Louis Gossett Jr. ("An Officer and a Gentleman"), and best supporting actress, Glenn Close, marvelous as Garp's singular singular mother in "The World According to Garp."

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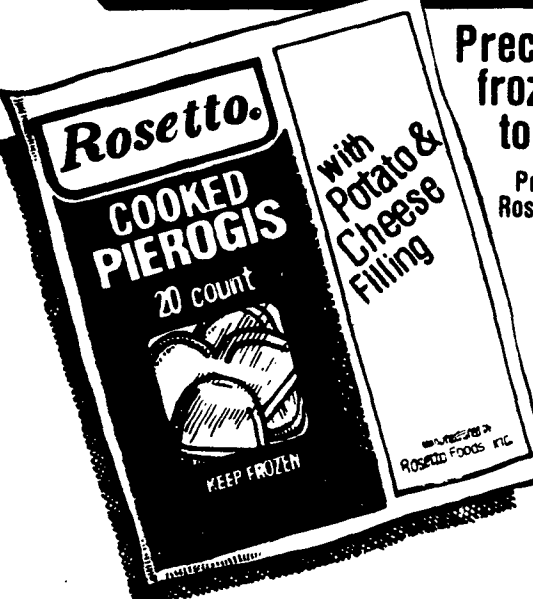
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