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### Pros and Cons of the 91<sup>st</sup> Academy Awards

2018 was a great year for film, and with great films comes celebrations of those films through award shows and the biggest show of the bunch are the Academy Awards or better known as the Oscars. With 91 years of Oscars they have been great highs and all-time lows and with this year's it seems to be a mixture of both, particularly with the Best Picture category. I am not saying that the eight films that have been nominated are bad, (Except for *Bohemian Rhapsody*), but looking at the nominees, I was left feeling cold.

With the nominees in all twenty-four categories, it feels like there were not only snubs, but also nominated films they have not been recognized the way that they should be. Plus, there are some drastic mistakes that have been made regarding this year's Oscars along with some kinks that the Academy still need to work out.

Regarding the eight nominees for Best Picture, the only ones that are truly worthy of the award are "*Black Panther*" and "*Roma*." Both films are this year's purest examples of great characters and stories that show the importance of representation in film. With "*Black Panther*'s" themes of choosing between tradition or innovation and globalism vs isolationism and how to live up to and move on from a complicated legacy and "*Roma*'s" themes of family and how they change through the circumstances of their society, the loss of innocence, the passing of time,

how fragile life can be and the passing of time can each film a masterpiece worthy of the Oscar for Best Picture.

“Blackkkklansman” is another honorable mention for the Oscar as it tackles the true story of how Ron Stallworth, the first African American police officer made a name for himself by infiltrating the Ku Klux Klan through his partner who the KKK believes to him, even tricking the Klan’s leader of the time David Duke. It’s themes of confronting racism and how it relates to these divisive times and working in the system while still maintaining progressive beliefs makes this film a return to form for legendary director Spike Lee.

The rest of the nominees, however, just seem like the safe standard for the Academy. While it is always nice to have updated versions of classic stories, the fact that “A Star is Born” was nominated for Best Picture is a little hypocritical of the Academy as they have had a history of looking down on sequels, prequels, remakes and reboots. But it’s a romantic musical drama and a classic story, so as long as it fits the Academy’s standards, it looks like it doesn’t really matter. While Yorgos Lanthimos has always been a very experimental filmmaker, with strong competition from films like “Black Panther” and “Roma,” “The Favourite” could be end up being a “Shakespeare in Love” situation if it ends up winning Best Picture. “Green Book” and “Vice” are just standard biopics that only bring good performances to the table.

The biggest travesty with this year’s nominees is “Bohemian Rhapsody.” This film is as safe as it comes when it comes to cinema. For those who know the story of Queen, particularly front man Freddie Mercury, it was incredibly disappointing to watch. The legacy of Queen and

Mercury is a complicated one with Mercury's personal life mixed in with his stellar performances is completely glossed over in the film. It also fails to capture the creative process as Mercury just writes down his ideas in a notebook without ever showing his musical genius with the rest of the band coming with iconic riffs out of nowhere. While the concert sequences, particularly the Live Aid were fun to watch, they were the biggest examples of a lack of innovation and perspective in the film as they were just simple recreations of the concert. The only thing that was truly Oscar worthy in "Bohemian Rhapsody" was Rami Malek's performance as Freddie Mercury, as he becomes Freddie Mercury reincarnated. But unfortunately, it was not enough to save this safe and forgettable film that has no place as a nominee for Best Picture. Also, that fact that it was directed by Bryan Singer, a known pedophile who is still making millions and denying the clear evidence against him just adds fire to the flames.

While other great films this year have been nominated for awards, the truly great films that have been nominated are not necessarily getting the awards that they deserve. "Black Panther," while it has a nomination for Best Picture and a lot of technical nominations, the things that truly made the film special such as its directing, acting and writing did not get recognized by the Academy. While the nominees for those awards are pretty solid for the most part, the fact that "Black Panther" was not recognized by the awards is outrageous. Other films that were either snubbed or were not properly recognized in these particular categories include "First Reformed," "Hereditary," "Spider-Man: Into the Spideverse," "Mandy," "Sorry to Bother You," "Eighth Grade," "Won't You Be My Neighbor" and "Mission Impossible: Fallout."

In the directing category, there was no one for deserving of a nominee, let alone the award itself, than Ryan Coogler. The fact that his personal and intimate style of directing along with “Black Panther” being his third masterpiece at thirty-two years old was a. Mistake on the Academy’s part. Alfonso Cuarón also brought a directing style to “Roma” that felt very personal and brought the audience into the world and is very deserving of the Oscar for Best Director. At the same time, there were a lot of impressive directorial debuts as well. Ari Aster’s debut with “Hereditary” was an instant classic that is everything that horror films should be and Bo Burnham brought a unique take to the coming of age genre with “Eighth Grade.” Chris McQuarrie practicality reinvented the action film with “Mission Impossible: Fallout, Boots Riley made a worthy directorial debut with his progressive style with “Sorry To Bother You” and Panos Cosmatos created a whole new world with his second film “Mandy” that is worthy of the Oscar. Spike Lee’s return to form for “BlacKkKlansman” was a well-deserved and long awaited nomination as well. It Paul Schrader’s snub for “First Reformed” was the most devastating as his claustrophobic and subtle approach to film truly made it masterful.

In the Screenplay category, “Black Panther” should have been nominated with its great use of complex themes and its character work for the Adapted Screenplay award. “Roma’s Best Original Screenplay for Alfonso Cuarón was well deserved for its character work and how the audience felt like they knew the characters in the film. “First Reformed’s” existential crisis of faith and redemption along with the simple but powerful question “Will God forgive us?” makes the film not only one of Paul Schrader’s best screenplays but the absolute best choice the Best Original Screenplay Oscar. “Sorry To Bother You’s” challenging approach on the capitalist

system, “Mandy’s” slow but innovative take on revenge films, “Hereditary’s” themes of family and horror and “Eighth Grade’s” relatability make each film worthy of a Screenplay Oscar.

While the nominees for Best Actor and Supporting Actors is solid the biggest snubs with Ethan Hawks in “First Reformed” for Best Actor, Chadwick Boseman for Best actor for “Black Panther” and Michael B. Jordan for Best Supporting Actor for “Black Panther.” Each actor made career defining performances that the Academy refused to not acknowledge. While Adam Driver’s nomination for Best Supporting Actor for “Blackkkklansman” was well deserved, the snub of John David Washington for Best Actor for “Blackkkklansman” was disappointing as it was his chemistry with Driver was one the things that made the film special. Nicholas Cage in “Mandy” and Lakeith Stanfield in “Sorry To Bother You” are great mentions for Best Actor. Jorge Antonio Guerrero in “Roma” and Linus Roache for “Mandy” are worthy actors for the Best Supporting Oscar.

The Best Actress and Supporting Actress nominees are in the same boat as the Best Actor nominees with a solid list of performers. The Academy could have nominated any of the actresses from “Black Panther” and they all would be deserving of it. Elsie Fisher for “Eighth Grade,” Andrea Riseborough for “Mandy” we’re equally worth of a nomination if the Academy recognized them and Tessa Thompson for “Sorry To Bother You” and Marina de Tavora were worthy performers of the Supporting Actress Oscar. But it was Yalitza Aparicio’s debut performance in “Roma” that stood out the best in the Best Actress category.

For the Best Animated Feature Oscar, if “Spider-Man: Into the Spiderverse,” the most creative and innovative animated film in recent memory that also deserves a Best Picture

nomination does win the Best Animated Feature Oscar, it will be another line of terrible mistakes made by the Academy. If Disney wins the award once again, then there is no hope for animated films that are not under Disney.

But the most anger inducing, mind hurting most disgraceful snub by the Academy was the snub of “Won’t You Be my Neighbor” for Best Documentary Feature. In these divisive time the fact that a documentary about one of the purest men on the planet who always lifted people’s spirits and always meant it when he said, “air love you just the way you are,” is just disgraceful. It is one of the worst decisions in the history of the Academy Awards.

Along with its nominees and snubs, the Oscars still has some technical stuff to work out. When it comes to its Best Picture nominees, the Academy wither need to expand its numbers of nominees so that the best of all films can be included, instead of trying to come up with a Best Popular Film category that just looks down on certain films. Or they can limit the number to five so that the absolute best films of the year get a spotlight and terrible stragglers like “Bohemian Rhapsody” do not get a nomination. Also the fact that not all the categories will be shown at the show, which is very disappointing for people who love all aspects of film. Also, the fact there is no host at this years awards show is extremely bothersome. It has always been fun seeing the best of hosts such as the legendary Bob Hope and Billy Crystal bring their best of humor all while celebrating the best of film.

Overall, I hope this year is a great year for the Oscars. While it is important to nominate films that follow the rules, but at the same time break the rules as well. It has been a great year

for film and even when the Academy does not recognize all the best films, they will still be considered the best of the year and will be remembered for years to come.

Ten best nominees for Best Picture: “Black Panther,” “Roma,” “First Reformed,” “Spider-Man: Into the Spideverse,” “Mandy,” “Sorry to Bother You,” “Hereditary,” “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?,” “Eighth Grade” and “Mission Impossible: Fallout”

Five nominees for Best Picture: “Black Panther,” “Roma,” “First Reformed,” “Hereditary” and “Won’t You Be My Neighbor”

Winner: “First Reformed”