

Entertainment

Hollywood looks to rebuild prestige with Oscars

■ CHRISTOPHER ERBIN

Staff Reporter

Hollywood may not seem to be the epitome of high class entertainment these days, what with Owen Wilson's suicide attempt, psychotic Britany's meltdowns and the Branjolina controversies in the Mideast, but it is still the center of film making genius. "The Daily Show's" John Stewart will host the 80th Annual Academy Awards at the Kodak Theatre, Hollywood, Calif. on Feb. 24 as those in the entertainment industry gather to celebrate their achievements.

Although the writer's strike was feared to put the telecast in jeopardy, it looks like megastars Johnny Depp, Julia Roberts and even Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie will still walk the red carpet.

Despite fear of writers picketing the ceremony and actors boycotting the show, recent actions, including the resuming of negotiations between the Writers Guild of America and Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and the tentative deal between the AMPTP and the Directors Guild of America, have fueled hope that the strike may not affect

the ceremony. Even if writers and producers still cannot get along, those Oscars have to be given out one way or another.

The WGA denied a waiver requested by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences granting excerpts of films and previous award ceremonies to be shown. The material could still be used, however, as the denial only affected the conditions under which the clips are shown, and not the clips themselves.

The awards show will be televised worldwide by ABC beginning at 6 p.m. "No Country For Old Men" and "There Will Be Blood" received the most bids, each earning eight nominations. Big box office hits like "American Gangster" and "Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End" received only two bids each, while the popular animated film "Ratatouille" surprised critics with five nominations.

Nominees by category include:

Best Picture

- "Atonement" - The sweeping epic of love and war drama has survived some harsh criticism, but it has the versatility and pedigree which pushes it to the center of the Oscar stage.

- "Juno" - This year's "Little Miss Sunshine" holds the sentimental touch that may push it ahead of the rest of the pack.

- "No Country For Old Men" - Violence and mayhem, throw in some dead bodies, a stash of heroin and more than \$2 million in cash near the Rio Grande and you've got yourself an Oscar-worthy thriller.

Best Actor:

- Viggo Mortensen, "Eastern Promises" - His "Lord of the Rings" days may be over, but this is his biggest role since then, and maybe the biggest of his career, in his first Oscar-worthy performance.

- Johnny Depp, "Sweeney Todd" - Nominated year after year, this is his third nomination for Best Actor. Even though a serial killing barber may be a stretch for the judges, the depth of his performance is far beyond his days as Jack Sparrow.

- Daniel Day Lewis, "There Will Be Blood" - This frontrunner reminds us that the greatest screen performances don't settle for capturing one trait, a dominant emotion or an easy way in.

Best Actress:

- Ellen Page, "Juno" - She made us laugh, she made us cry, she left a smile on everyone's face...how can she not win?

- Julie Christie, "Away From Her" - She's the only contender in the category over the age of forty, and the Academy has always appreciated a wiley veteran. Her role as an aging woman suffering from heartbreak and Alzheimer's could show that age and experience always counts for something, if not an Oscar.

- Amy Adams, "Enchanted" - Laugh if you will, but she is a dark horse and also a definite contender. Her acting may have been overshadowed by her animated surroundings, but starring in a Disney animated film didn't hurt Julie Andrews now did it?

Supporting Actor:

- Phillip Seymour Hoffman, "Charlie Wilson's War" - What's left to be said? The man's a genius.

- Javier Bardem, "No Country For Old Men" - A serial killer who flips a coin to decide his victim's fate. Bardem's dramatic performance leave the

Academy staring in Oscar winning awe.

- Casey Affleck, "Assassination of Jesse James" - Ben's younger brother steps into his first Oscar nominated performance.

- Tom Wilkinson, "Michael Clayton" - Another actor who may not get the attention he deserves because the film did not go big. Hmm...pity.

Supporting Actress:

- Cate Blanchett, "I'm Not There" - A chick playing a dude? Not only does she sell her role, but she is flat out Oscar deserving.

- Julia Roberts, "Charlie Wilson's War" - It's hard to find a person who isn't a fan of Julia Roberts and she's always a favorite to take home Oscar gold.

- Saoirse Ronan, "Atonement" - All people are talking about is Kiera Knightly - surprise. But Ronan could have them buzzing if she pulls off a well-deserved Oscar win.

- Amy Ryan, "Gone Baby Gone" - Intense, charismatic acting and a bubbly personality makes for an award winning combo.

- Tilda Swinton, "Michael Clayton" - Finally, the once young and promising actress, may have finally made the break through critics have been expecting from her for so long. Reserve her a seat at Kodak, assuming the show actually happens!

Director:

- Mike Nichols, "Charlie Wilson's War" - He's the only nominee to win Best Director (Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? - 1967) but this would top anything else Nichols has achieved in his lengthy and award filled career.

- Jason Reitman, "Juno" - It never hurts to be the crowd favorite, but Juno probably wasn't big enough to win.

- Ethan and Joel Coen, "No Country For Old Men" - Dramatic thriller could make Coen's first brother-duo winners.

- Tim Burton, "Sweeney Todd" - The man has contributed so much to the industry and this may be his best work yet. It is his time, and he is due. There is no reason that Burton shouldn't finally be taking home some Oscar hardware.

- Ridley Scott, "American Gangster" - Well, the Academy went for this kind of film last year when "The Departed" won. Maybe Scott will find some of the luck that won Martin Scorsese Best Director last year.

Portland's "Untraceable" doesn't meet expectations

■ MARY WOOD

Staff Reporter

If you're looking for a movie that finds you saying to yourself, "Hey, I've been there!" *Untraceable*, a murder thriller filmed in the Portland area, is a great choice. However, apart from that, and the disturbing images of a dying cat (from West Linn, according to the movie) and three dying men, it's a fairly forgettable film.

The basis of the movie is the work of an FBI agent named Jennifer Marsh (Diane Lane) who fights cyber crimes with her teammates Griffin Dowd (Colin Hanks) and Eric Box (Billy Burke). One evening while fighting internet criminals, they come across a website called killwithme.com, that allows anyone who visits to witness a murder. The more hits the site gets, the faster the victim dies. Furthermore, the FBI is unable to trace where the site originates. It begins with the previously mentioned cat, but becomes more serious as the site becomes more popular, and more dangerous to Jennifer when the killer's intentions become

personal.

When I say the movie is forgettable, I don't mean it's terrible. In fact, I enjoyed watching it. The selection of actors was pretty good. Lane gave a genuine performance, which made the character seem

computer skills to create an untraceable website.

The murders shown on the site were obviously violent and revolting, but were more realistic than campy. There was one that included the mixture of water and sulfuric acid



Jennifer Marsh (Diane Lane) and her coworkers at the FBI watch the latest murder video from a cyber killer's website in *Untraceable*. The movie was filmed in Portland and released on Jan. 25. Opening weekend brought in only \$11.2 million, a fraction of the \$60 million it took to make.

Photo courtesy of Sony Pictures

believable. Joseph Cross, who portrayed the cyber-murderer, was a perfect choice; he looked creepy enough to be a convincing murderer, but nerdy enough to convince you he had the

creating an appetizing skin-shedding effect. The effects of these murders were pretty gruesome, so I wouldn't recommend the movie to anyone who is easily grossed out.

Of course, *Untraceable* has its flaws. There were some obvious thriller cliches throughout it, like characters who lack any form of common sense. I suppose they needed dumb characters to make the plot work, but some of their actions just weren't believable, especially when they're supposed to be FBI agents who should know a bit about necessary safety measures to take into one's daily life.

The ending of the film was a bit disappointing, ending abruptly and in a very cheesy way. To give it credit, though, it could have been a whole lot cheesier.

Though a pretty decent film overall, it didn't do as well as its studio expected. It cost \$60 million to make, and on opening weekend it only brought in \$11.2 million. (When I went to see it on Jan. 26, the day after it opened, the theater wasn't nearly as crowded as it should have been for a new release.) Though it may not earn what was spent on it, it should at least be praised for being an above average thriller in a time filled with awful ones.