

Oscar nominations hurt commitment to art

Well, it's sour grapes time once again. This report comes every February tenth, when all the film critics gather around the campfire to moan over the truly awful nominations chosen by the members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for their an-

is the nomination for the German group "Tangerine Dream" for their devastating score in "Thief?" The original score for "Dragonslayer" was quite uninspired, so why the nomination?

Even "Heaven's Gate" had a better score than "On

By Thomas A. Rhodes

annual awards ceremony March 29.

Last year, the moans were loud, indeed. Naturally everyone can't be nominated for various awards, but certain omissions are almost pitiful when the objective of the awards is to applaud excellence in a specific field.

The biggest moan of the 1980 ceremony was the missing name of Shelly Duvall from best actress category. Her joint performances in "Popeye" and "The Shining" were unsurpassed, yet she wasn't even nominated.

Other foolish deletions were Australia's great film "Breaker Morant." It received only one nomination (for screenplay) when it deserved a half dozen more, most notably "Best Picture."

If anything became evident from last year's ceremony, it is the slippery slope approach to nominations. If a film gets nominated for Best Picture, it must be nominated for director, actor, actress, photography, and on down the line.

The same thing has happened this year. Of all the films released last year (I've seen about 70 of them), only five films received more than five nominations. Two films were given three nominations apiece, "Dragonslayer" was awarded two nominations, and a handful of films were given one nomination apiece. Not only is that poor choice quality wise, but it makes the rest of the year's films look pretty bad.

To start at the top. Reds was given 12 nominations. One is reminded of a line Nicol Williamson delivered when kidnapper Klaus Kinski made his demands in "Venom." Williamson said in his best Welsh "Oh, you must be joking!"

I was hoping so, but Kinski's next line proved "It is no joke." A nomination for longest movie or most scenes with members of the socialist party involved is possible, but best original musical score? The composer was one of Broadway's best in Stephen Sondheim, but his music was really limp in the film.

Why wasn't Randy Newman nominated for his witty score for "Ragtime?" Where

Golden Pond!" Yes, "Pond" had a nice theme, but if you want nice themes, how about "Rich and Famous" or "True Confessions" by Georges Delurue? Both were sweeping and moving in their own right.

As far as editing went, "Reds" could have been cut down one-third, with many needless scenes cut out. You want sharp editing? Try "Zoot Suit."

The editing for "On Golden Pond" was absolutely nothing special. After a few viewings of "Raiders," one notices more and more editing mistakes. Chase scenes through the streets of Cairo, and the fight under the airplane had many needless mistakes. In their places would have been the editing for "Prince of the City" and "Zoot Suit."

Under photography, nothing was more usual than the photography for either "On Golden Pond" or "Reds." For slick photography, why wasn't Owen Roizman, who photographed "True Confessions," "Absence of Malice,"



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and "Taps" nominated? All three of those films were photographed better.

Why wasn't the photographer for "Thief" nominated? Worse yet, Vilmos Zsigmond was not recognized for his (quite literally) great photography of "Blow Out" or "Heaven's Gate." That is the worst omission yet.



Nominating "Chariots of Fire" for seven awards was the only thing they really did right this year. If it were an American made film, it would win some of them. Being made in Britain, gives it virtually no chance.

For slick photography, "Outland" was outstanding, as was Freddie Francis's "The French Lieutenant's Woman." Yet, neither were awarded nominations. Another possible nominee that was overlooked was the photographer for "Cutter's Way."

Only one complaint one the nominees for art direction. "Raiders" was filmed on location. The other nominees were "Heaven's Gate," "Reds," "French Lieutenant's Woman," and "Ragtime." "Heaven's Gate" deserves it, but just who will win it is really up in the air.

But now comes the meanest part. The actors and actresses. Who was left out for supporting actress? Kristy McNichol, the only bright thing in "Only When I Laugh," was left out. Candice Bergen was slighted for "Rich and Famous." Kate Reid gave "Atlantic City" some wonderful moments.

Frances Sternhagen was far more impressive in "Outland" than Jane Fonda was in "On Golden Pond." The same goes for Tyne Daly in "Zoot Suit." Joan Hackett was nominated for "Only When I Laugh." Why I'm not sure, but she never came close to Cyril Cusack in "True Confessions."

As for supporting actor, the biggest mistake was the nomination of Howard Rollins for "Ragtime." As the pianist, he was the film's protagonist and should have been up for best actor. Another joke was the nomination of James Coco. It was not that he was bad, but Nicol Williamson was so much better in "Excalibur,"

as was James Olsen for "Ragtime."

Just about every one of the supporting cast of "Prince of the City" deserved nomination. Better yet, where was the nomination for Robert Preston as the good doctor in "S.O.B." How about George C. Scott for "Taps?" Boothe Powers absolutely dominated every scene in "Southern Comfort." John Colicos deserved a nomination for "Postman Always Rings Twice."

In the best actress category, no real complaints except for the nomination of Katherine Hepburn for "On Golden Pond." She has been

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Under best actor, Robert Duvall's performance in "True Confessions" was far superior to Warren Beatty's in "Reds," as was Treat Williams in "Prince of the City," John Heard's in "Cutter's Way," Anthony Quinn's in "Lion of the Desert." Outside of Beatty's all other nominations are understandable. On the whole, "On Golden Pond" didn't deserve ten nominations any more than "Reds" deserved 12. A few films received most of the nominations, which adds an air of disrespect to the other talents involved with filmmaking in 1981.

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so much better before, her performance here was quite sad to watch in comparison with "Love Amont the Ruins." Here, she gives a lesson in overacting.

Also under question was the nomination of Marsha Mason for "Only When I Laugh." When she is overshadowed by Kristy McNichol, you know she is in trouble.

Who could have filled their shoes? Lisa Eichorn for "Cutter's Way" for one. Jessica Lange gave the year's most surprising performance in "Postman Ring Twice." Kate Nelligan was the strongest aspect of "Eye of the Needle." One interesting note, Glenda Jackson, who won the New York film critics award and the Nation Society of Film Critics

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Either way, here is the run sheet on the people who are up for awards this year, and their chances of winning:

In the odds, I looked a the other awards, the sentiment, involved and the popularity of the films involved. For best film, whoever, wins best director from the Directors Guild always wins at the Oscars. The director's film wins best picture also.

