

OSCAR EXTRAVAGANZA

The following are predictions on the outcome of the 76th Annual Academy Awards, to be aired Feb. 29 at 5 p.m. on ABC

BEST MOVIE

RETURN OF THE KING



"Lord of the Rings: Return of the Kings" should steal the show on Oscar Sunday.

That much makes sense. It was by far the best picture to come out this year. No, it wasn't as good as the book, but is it still one of the best movies of all time? Absolutely.

What doesn't make sense is that not a single actor was nominated for best actor, supporting or otherwise. Ian McKellen, Viggo Mortensen, Elijah Wood and Sean Astin all could have been great contenders (and Astin should take the award home, for his performance as Samwise Gamgee). Miranda Otto could have taken home best supporting actress.

This film has everything going for it. Peter Jackson did a brilliant job directing. Howard Shore composed a moving score. The visual effects were incredibly modern, but incredibly realistic at the same time, in a medieval sense. This film was nominated for all of these categories, and it is a surefire bet for all three. It deserved but didn't get a nomination for best cinematography.

YEAR OF THE RING



BEST DIRECTING

PETER JACKSON



Since Quentin Tarantino's "Kill Bill: Volume 1" didn't even get a second glance from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the award for best director should go to Peter Jackson by default.

The culmination of Peter Jackson's magnum opus "The Lord of the Rings" was, in a word, "breath-taking." The directorial skills exhibited throughout the series was inspiring, but with the completion of this final installment, Jackson left fellow nominee Clint Eastwood unforgotten. I also hope that Peter Weir got a chance to witness "The Return of the King," maybe he should put a few more orcs in the next installment of "Master and Commander."

Sofia Coppola does deserve some credit for her artistic innovations and had Jackson not been nominated, she would likely get more than a nomination. As it is, however, she'll have to fight it out with "Finding Nemo" for best original writing.

Yes, Mr. Jackson has come a long way from his zombie masterwork, "Dead Alive" and has since made a name for himself among greats like George Lucas and Sam Raimi. If the Academy neglects Jackson's genius again, they might be