

The Oscars and My 10 Best Films of 2013

Some wonderful films get the attention they deserve

By DARLEEN ORTEGA

I'm terrible at Oscar pools; I'm not good at predicting the winners because I'm too distracted by my opinions of who should win. So, it is my tradition to release each year at Oscar time my own list of the best films of the year.

This year, there happens to be more overlap between my list and the Academy Award nominees than

usual. It's a pleasure to see so many wonderful films get the attention they deserve, though I imagine I'll still have plenty of occasions to shake my fist at the TV during the awards ceremony.

The first four on my list -- all Oscar nominees for best picture -- are so good that I had trouble ranking them. I could make a case for any of them as the best picture of the

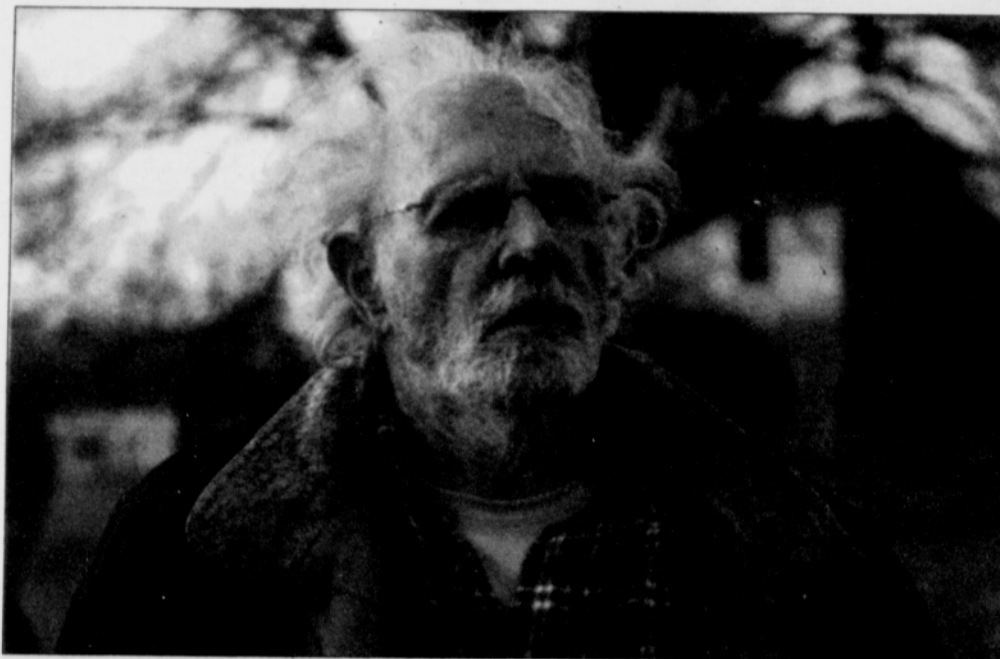


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Bruce Dern is a cantankerous old man who suddenly springs forth a fearsome determination in life in 'Nebraska,' the best film of 2013 as rated by movie reviewer and Portland Observer columnist, Opinionated Judge Darleen Ortega.

year. I've forced myself to rank them but, in a sense, all four are arguably the best picture of the year. The rest are less celebrated, but also wonderful -- a gem from the Coen brothers, an inspiring story of intellectual courage, two wrenching documentaries, a lesson in mindfulness, and a dazzling Indian romantic comedy that packs an unexpected wallop.

1. I give *Nebraska* the edge as my favorite film of the year because it has everything. It depicts ordinary people with a kind of gentleness that few films attempt and fewer still achieve. It is funny but doesn't make fun, and captures a rather bleak swath of American life in a way that reveals its beauty and dignity.


The film is marked by a remarkable, career-capping performance by Bruce Dern, who deserves the Oscar for best actor in my book (though I'll be pleasantly surprised if he wins

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SUNDAY, MARCH 9TH, 2014
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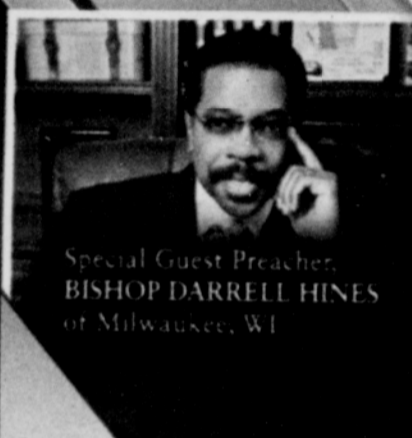
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