

Arts & Entertainment

Individual SAG Movie Nominations Fall Short on Diversity

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AP Film Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Ensemble nominations for the Screen Actors Guild Awards highlight diversity in both film and television, including nods for “Beasts of No Nation,” “Straight Outta Compton” and “Orange is the New Black.” Yet, individual nominations, especially for movies, remained largely white — only adding to concerns this will be yet another monochromatic awards season.

Idris Elba was nominated for best supporting actor in the child soldier drama “Beasts of No Nation.” He is the sole individual minority nominee in the movie categories of the 22nd annual SAG nominations announced Wednesday.

Elba said in a statement that he was “floored” and “humbled” by the recognition.

“It goes without saying that my performance is shared with the tremendous actors I work with,” wrote Elba, congratulating his “Beasts” co-stars



Actors Anna Faris, left, and Anthony Mackie announce the cast of “Straight Outta Compton” as nominees for Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture during the nominations for the 22nd Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards on Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2015, in West Hollywood, Calif. The show will be held on Jan. 30, 2016, in Los Angeles.

Abraham Attah and Kurt Egyiawan as well.

Elba was also nominated for his leading role in TV’s “Luther.”

Hollywood’s lack of diversity has become of critical concern following last Oscars’ all-white acting slate. But while the predominantly black casts of both “Beasts” and “Straight Outta Compton” were recognized for their ensemble work,

alongside “Trumbo,” “Spotlight” and “The Big Short,” individual acting nominations in most film categories exhibited a striking lack of diversity. Thursday’s Golden Globe nominations could bring more attention to the issue.

Though “Straight Outta Compton” was a box office and critical hit, its award season prospects were a big unknown.

On Monday, the African-American Film Critics Association named the N.W.A. drama their best of the year, but it’s been mostly overlooked by other critics’ awards.

Overall, there were more diverse individual nominees in television than film, thanks in part to the fact that TV divides nominees into comedy and drama, which provides more inclusion. In addition to Elba’s nod, other TV nominees included Queen Latifah for “Bessie,” Uzo Aduba for “Orange is the New Black” and Viola Davis for “How to Get Away With Murder.”

The SAG nominations also helped bring a murky awards season into a bit better focus. Nominees are selected by separate movie and TV nominating panels, each comprised of more than 2,000 randomly selected SAG members, and the organization’s choices

highlighted a few underdog performances.

Leading female performance nominees included Cate Blanchett (“Carol”), Brie Larson (“Room”) and Saoirse

Jacob Tremblay for playing a child in captivity in “Room.”

Supporting actress contenders included Rachel McAdams (“Spotlight”), Kate Winslet

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Ronan (“Brooklyn”), all of whom have dominated awards buzz, but also Sarah Silverman for the depression indie “I Smile Back,” and Helen Mirren for “Woman in Gold,” about an elderly Jewish woman looking to reclaim art once stolen by the Nazis. Mirren was also nominated for a supporting performance for “Trumbo.”

“I was in shock. I try really hard in therapy to not let myself self-esteem be informed by outside forces. But (expletive) it. I’m going to let myself feel it today and let it fortify me,” said Silverman on Wednesday morning.

The lead actor nominees were a bit more expected, with recognition for Bryan Cranston (“Trumbo”), Johnny Depp (“Black Mass”), Leonardo DiCaprio (“The Revenant”), Michael Fassbender (“Steve Jobs”) and Eddie Redmayne (“The Danish Girl”).

In the supporting category, Christian Bale was nominated for “The Big Short,” Mark Rylance for the Cold War thriller “Bridge of Spies,” Michael Shannon for playing a predatory real estate agent in “99 Homes” and young star

(“Steve Jobs”), Alicia Vikander (“The Danish Girl”) and Rooney Mara (“Carol”).

Many members of the SAG movie panel also vote for the Academy Awards and as a result, the SAG nominees have traditionally served as a helpful indicator of potential Oscar acting nominees. “Spotlight” is also emerging as one of the top contenders this year, too. The critical favorite about the Boston Globe’s investigation into the Catholic Church’s sex abuse scandal should be a front-runner for best picture.

On the television side, Netflix’s political drama “House of Cards” led with three nominations, including best drama ensemble, best male performance for Kevin Spacey and best female performance for Robin Wright. With work in both movies and television, Netflix scored particularly well, earning a leading eight nominations.

The 22nd annual Screen Actors Guild Awards will be broadcast live from Los Angeles on TNT and TBS on Jan. 30.

AP Writer Mike Cidoni Lennox contributed from Los Angeles.

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‘Thriller’ Sets New Sales Record

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Michael Jackson’s “Thriller” is still scaring up sales and giving the King of Pop’s legacy a new milestone.

The album has sold 30 million copies in the United States, making Jackson the first artist to attain 30-time multiplatinum status, the Recording Industry Association of America and Jackson’s estate announced Wednesday.

The album has proved even more popular overseas, with a total of 100 million copies sold worldwide since its 1982 release. It includes some of Jackson’s most recognizable hits, including “Beat It,” “Billie Jean,” “Wanna Be Startin’ Somethin’” and the title track, which inspired one of the most famous music videos of all time.

“What an exceptional achievement and testament to ‘Thriller’s’ enduring spot in our hearts and musical history,” RIAA chairman and CEO Cary Sherman wrote in a statement. The group monitors music sales and

bestows gold status on albums that have sold 500,000 copies and platinum status if they reach 1 million sales.

John Branca, co-executor of Jackson’s estate noted that Jackson wrote the album to appeal to a broad audience, which helped fuel its popularity abroad.

“He didn’t want to sell records to Blacks or Whites or Americans,” Branca said. “He wanted to sell records to everyone, Africa, Asia, everywhere. It’s just continued to sell and sell and sell.”

Branca was cautious about declaring that Jackson and “Thriller” had set an unbreakable record.

“You can’t say never,” he said, noting Adele’s album “21” has sold 11 million copies in the U.S. since 2011. “Nobody saw that coming.”

A greatest-hits collection of songs by the Eagles is Jackson’s closest competitor at the moment, with 29 million albums sold, according to the RIAA.