

It's that time of year again; a time for Hollywood stars to adorn themselves with outfits conceived by high-end fashion designers and strike poses for paparazzi. A time for speculation on what films will be crowned the most culturally significant by a select number of industry insiders. Yes, it is time for the Academy Awards.

Despite its pomp and circumstance, the Oscars feels like a fixed horse race. It is no secret they aren't awarded on merit — the fact that Stanley Kubrick never received a golden statuette in his lifetime is enough proof of that. Industry considerations and Hollywood politics take prominence over cultural importance. Sometimes it is simply a matter of having distributed the most screener copies to voting Academy members (i.e. "Annie Hall").

Regardless, it is still fun to speculate on who will bring home an Oscar on Sunday and what films will receive a boost at the box office for the next few weeks. In some ways the Oscars are more fun to wager on than the Super Bowl because of myriad deciding factors that are more difficult to quantify than merely one team's athletic ability over another. Ladies and gentlemen, for your gambling pleasure, I give you my odds for "Best Picture."

American Sniper: This felt like a sequel to Clint Eastwood's "chair" speech at the 2012 Republican National Convention — a half-baked commentary on patriotism and violence that almost feels like



J.D. KINDLE
Comment

Odds at the Oscars



Michael Keaton in "Birdman."

Fox Searchlight



Ellar Coltrane in "Boyhood."

IFC Films

an attempt to troll conservatives. In the end it was just a confusing mess. It will be even more confusing if American Sniper wins Best Adapted Screenplay. (8-1)

Birdman: A rebuke of mean-spirited critics who get a kick out of putting down honest actors who are earnestly just trying to make a comeback while making some genuine high art. One can imagine

that many Academy members with a bone to pick will vote "Birdman" Best Picture out of spite of highfalutin' critics. (2-1)

Boyhood: Epic in scope and impressive in terms of its technical ability, Boyhood's ability to make the viewer feel the

passage of time is unlike anything in cinema (The "7 Up" series is a close second, though). "Boyhood" lacks a lot of the glamour and grandeur associated with big Hollywood dramas and may not get the recognition it deserves. (4-1)

The Grand Budapest Hotel: Wes Anderson, one of the last great auteurs standing in modern

American cinema, will have his films passed up a couple times before he gets his due. That's not much of a problem in his eyes because he is still allowed to churn out a "Wes Anderson film" every couple of years and they will inevitably be crossover successes between art house cinemas and multiplexes. (9-1)

The Imitation Game: The messages of tolerance and acceptance of those who are different (even if they have the capacity to win a global armed conflict) aren't too heavy-handed, but the breadth of "The Imitation Game" pales to some of its competitors. Expect Benedict Cumberbatch to win Best Actor instead. (19-1)

Selma: Not quite the sadomasochistic guilt cinema that "12 Years A Slave" was and much more enjoyable for that reason. However, the chances that for two years in a row a film dealing with America's racist past taking home Best Picture are quite low. (13-1)

The Theory Of Everything: The filler of the category. One has to wonder if this film was successful due to Eddie Redmayne's uncanny resemblance to a young Austin Powers. (99-1)

Whiplash: The dark horse of the bunch. It has the right amount of solid, non-star actors (J.K. Simmons) while sporting new faces (Miles Teller) to fly under the radar of the majority of the film going public and then come out of nowhere for a surprise finish. Bet your money on Simmons winning Best Supporting Actor if nothing else. (9-1)



J.K. Simmons, left, and Miles Teller in "Whiplash."



David Oyelowo as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in "Selma."



Eddie Redmayne as Stephen Hawking in "The Theory of Everything."



Ralph Fiennes, left, and Tony Revolori in "The Grand Budapest Hotel."

BOOK REVIEW



A massacre from all sides

By RENEE STRUTHERS

The story of the 1847 massacre at Whitman Mission, one of the first American settlements in the Oregon Territory, is a staple of local history.

The Whitman Mission National Historic Site near Walla Walla preserves a wealth of information about the missionary couple that settled on Cayuse land in 1836 at the request of the local tribes, and their untimely end. After her son returned from a field trip to the mission full of stories, author Terrie Biggs was so intrigued she subsequently spent years researching the stories of Whitman Mission from several perspectives, with the intent of telling the whole story: the native inhabitants of the Columbia Basin; the coming of whites to the Oregon territory; the arrival of missionaries; and the culture clash that ultimately led to the deaths of the Whitmans and others. The result, "Some Trails Never End," presents the tragic tale as a synthesis of several viewpoints.

Biggs did her background research with the intent of presenting the idea for a screenplay to Kevin Costner; she pored over books, diaries, letters, historical documents and the history and culture of the Indian tribes native to the area. But the resulting book isn't just a dry repetition of the information she found there: Biggs describes it as a "creative non-fictional novel" about the major players in the story of the Whitmans from a first-person perspective. While she did "modernize" the language to some extent, the attitudes of the mid-1800s are still evident and it's easy to see why the whites and the Indians had a difficult time finding common ground.

"Some Trails Never End," by Terrie Biggs. © 2014, self-published.

Festivals

Eastern Oregon Bridal Show

- Sunday, Feb. 22; noon-4 p.m.
- Hermiston Conference Center, 415 S. Highway 395 <http://eobridalshow.com>
- \$7/at the door. Discounts offered if purchased in advance. One-stop shopping for photographers, music, officiants, flowers, cakes, catering and more. Wedding style show at 2 p.m.

Beerex Fest

- Saturday, Feb. 28, 11 a.m.-7 p.m.
- Hermiston Brewing Co., 125 N. First St., Hermiston www.hermistonbrewing.com
- \$15/with event glass. Bottoms Up tasting party features beer, food, games and more beer. Many breweries have been invited to pour their best.

Tri-Cities Great Outdoors Expo

- Feb. 28, 9 a.m.-6 p.m.; -March 1, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
- TRAC Center, 6600 Burden Blvd., Pasco www.tcgreatoutdoorexpo.com
- \$5/adults, \$3/juniors, seniors, military, free/5 & under. Admission good for both days. Features products, services and information for the outdoor enthusiast. Back by popular demand, A Walk on the Wild Side, featuring exotic animals.

Art

Reflection of the Columbia Plateau

- Tuesday-Fridays, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. & Saturdays, noon-4 p.m.
- Pendleton Center for the Arts, 214 N. Main St.
- Tuesday-Fridays, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Crow's Shadow Institute of the Arts, 48004 St. Andrews Road, Mission

Free. Both galleries are exhibiting a collection of mono-prints, monotypes and block prints created during annual printmaking retreats through Pacific Northwest College of Art and Crow's Shadow. Continues through Feb. 27.

Constructed

- Monday-Fridays, noon-4 p.m.

WHAT TO DO

Jaime Stone's Lomax Project

- Saturday, Feb. 28; 7:30 p.m.
- Power House Theatre, 111 N. Sixth St., Walla Walla www.phtww.com
- \$23-28. Jaime Stone's Lomax Project perform original arrangements folk songs collected from sea captains, cowhands, fishermen, homemakers, prisoners and farmers. Beer, wine and concessions available for purchase.

ArtWORKz

- Monday - Saturdays, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Tamastslit Cultural Institute, near Wildhorse Resort & Casino. www.tamastslit.org
- \$10/adults, \$9/senior citizens, \$6/youths, free/5 and under or \$25/family of four. In its fourth year, the youth art show highlights area youth artists. Runs through Feb. 28.

Heritage Station Museum

- Tuesday-Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- 108 S.W. Frazer Ave., Pendleton www.heritagestationmuseum.org
- \$5/adults, \$2/student, \$4/seniors, \$10/family.

Music

The Big Wow Band

- Feb. 21, 9 p.m.-1 a.m. No cover
- Wildhorse Sports Bar at Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off Highway 331, Mission.

Tyler Scroggs

- Saturday, Feb. 21; 9 p.m. to midnight. 21-and-over. No cover
- Hamley Saloon, 8 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton

And And & Kelli Schaefer

- Friday, Feb. 27; 8 p.m.
- Power House Theatre, 111 N. Sixth St., Walla Walla www.phtww.com
- \$18/general, \$12/students. Middle of Nowhere Sessions features And And And, who play modern rock ranging from lo-fi garage pop to folksy ballads, and Kelli Schaefer plays a style of rock defined by passionate vocals and soul-searching lyrics. Beer and wine available for purchase.

Nuketown

- Friday, Feb. 27; Saturday, Feb. 28, 9 p.m.-1 a.m. No cover
- Wildhorse Sports Bar at Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off

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Highway 331, Mission.

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Stone Country

- Saturday, Feb. 28; 9 p.m. No cover
- Midway Tavern, 1750 N. First St., Hermiston

Night life

Thursday Night Comedy

- Thursdays, 8 p.m.
- Feb. 26: Ryan Wingfield
- March 5: TBA
- Wildhorse Sports Bar, Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off Highway 331, Mission.

Digital Karaoke

- Thursdays and Saturdays, 8 p.m.
- The Pheasant, 149 E. Main St., Hermiston

Mac's Trivia Night

- Thursdays, 8 p.m. No cover
- Mac's Bar & Grill, 1400 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton
- 21 and older. Teams of 2-8 compete in trivia contest with other teams. Live host and prizes.

Wine tasting

- Fridays, 4-8 p.m.
- Sno Road Winery, 111 W. Main St., Echo.

Open Mic

- First/third Friday each month, 8 p.m. to midnight
- The Packard Tavern, 118 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton www.facebook.com/groups/pendletonopenmic

Karaoke

- Fridays 8 p.m. (9 p.m. if game on)
- Riverside Sports Bar, 1501 Sixth St., Umatilla

DJ and dancing

- Fridays, 8 p.m.
- The Pheasant, 149 E. Main St., Hermiston

Theater, stage & film

"Twelve Angry Jurors"

- Feb. 21; 7:30 p.m.
- Feb. 22; 2 p.m.
- Bob Clapp Theatre, BMCC, 2411 N.W. Carden Ave., Pendleton
- \$10/adults, \$5/student. Courtroom drama escalates as jurors decide the fate of a 19-year-old charged with the stabbing death of his father.

"Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day"

- Saturday, Feb. 21; 2:15 p.m.
- SAGE Center, 101 Olson Road, Boardman www.visitsage.com
- \$5/adults, \$3/students, seniors. Admission includes bag of popcorn.

"The Sleeper"

- Feb. 20-21, 27-28; 8 p.m.
- Feb. 22, March 1; 2 p.m.
- Players Theater, 608 The Parkway, Richland, Wash. www.richlandplayers.org
- \$15/adults; \$12/students-seniors. The dark comedy follows a suburban housewife who is shell-shocked with post 9-11 reality. A bizarre series of events blow the lid off her previously sheltered existence and change the lives of all around her.

"Dryland"

- Sunday, Feb. 22; 2 p.m.
- SAGE Center, 101 Olson Road, Boardman www.visitsage.com
- \$15, includes screening of movie and dessert. The movie focuses on small town in rural America that is struggling for survival.

"American Winter"

- Monday, Feb. 23; 6 p.m.
- Bob Clapp Theatre, BMCC, 2411 N.W. Carden Ave., Pendleton www.americanwinterfilm.com
- Free. The award-winning documentary examines the middle class through the lives of eight Oregon families. Following the screening, a panel will discuss the issues raised by the film, including poverty, homelessness and steps to grow and strengthen the middle class.

Cirque Zuma Zuma

- Friday, Feb. 27; 7 p.m.
- Hermiston High School auditorium, 660 S. First St. www.desertartsCouncil.com
- \$40/adults, \$22.50 (\$5 discount if purchased in advance). This theatrical production is a synthesis of circus styles. Cirque Zuma Zuma, fuses African culture with acrobatics, comedy and dance.

"Theatresports"

- Friday, March 13; 7:30 p.m.
- Power House Theatre, 111 N. Sixth Ave., Walla Walla www.phtww.com
- \$25/general admission. Recommended for ages 18 and up. Relying on years of experience, wicked-sharp wit and lightning reflexes, two teams face off for competitive improvisational theater. Using audience suggestions, they create scenes and situations on the spot with a panel of local judges deciding the winner. Beer and wine available for purchase.

Hot tickets

- "Mama Mia." Thursday, March 19, Toyota Center, Kennewick. Reserved seats (\$59.50-\$82) via www.ticketmaster.com.

- "So You Think You Can Dance-Live Season 11 Tour." Wednesday, Feb. 4, 2015, Toyota Center, Kennewick. Reserved seats (\$50-\$65) via www.ticketmaster.com.

- "Sasquatch Music Festival." Memorial Day weekend, Gorge Amphitheater, George, Wash. Reserved seats (\$325 and up for 4-day pass) via www.livenation.com.

- "Creation Festival." July 30-Aug. 1, Benton County Fairgrounds, Kennewick. Reserved seats (\$45-\$150, plus camping packages) via www.creationfest.com.

- "Foo Fighters." Saturday, Sept. 12, Gorge Amphitheater, George, Wash. Reserved seats (\$45-\$75) via www.livenation.com.

Want to get your event listed in our calendar? Send information to trmalgesini@eastoregonian.com, or c/o Tammy Malgesini, 333 E. Main Street, Hermiston, OR, 97838.

A pitch-perfect Costner in moving 'McFarland USA'

By JOCELYN NOVECK
AP National Writer

"McFarland, USA" could so easily have been yet another mushy, feel-good, by-the-numbers sports underdog movie. And in the beginning, it seems like it's heading there.

But soon, thanks to the genuine heart in its (true) story and a pitch-perfect, beautifully lived-in performance by Kevin Costner, it will likely win you over. So go ahead, surrender. Cry a little. This is one feel-good movie that won't make you feel bad about feeling good.

The story begins in August 1987 in Boise, Idaho, when a high school football coach named Jim White — that name will end up being very convenient to the story — gets fired from his job after throwing a shoe in the direction of a snotty kid who's talking back to him, accidentally bloodying him. Jim, who has a history of anger issues, packs up the family and



Kevin Costner and Carlos Pratts in "McFarland, USA."

Disney

moves to McFarland, California, for a job at the only school that will hire him.

Arriving in McFarland, a farming town where the population is predominantly Mexican-American, White's daughter looks nervously out the car window and asks: "Are we in Mexico?" At a taqueria, White tries to order a burger, but can't get one. When the family encounters a group of young men

cruising in their cars, he immediately thinks they're dangerous.

These moments lay it on a little thick, but soon, director Niki Caro ("Whale Rider") hits a more comfortable stride depicting a prickly entry for the White family (the always lovely Maria Bello plays the sadly underdeveloped character of Jim's wife) into McFarland life. At the new school, White is made assistant coach of the football team, working for an ornery boss who can't win a game and sees nothing of sending a kid with a concussion back onto the field. Soon they argue, and White's off the team.

But he has a different idea. These boys, who spend all their non-school hours picking in the

fields for their parents, might not be able to play football, but they sure can run. And run, and run. White — the kids call him "Blanco" — figures they could make a great cross-country team.

And he goes for it — not that it's smooth. "Nobody wins around here, White," he's told. The principal is skeptical. The best runner in the bunch, Thomas (a truly excellent Carlos Pratts), is a troubled teen who's reluctant, at best. Families are resistant. Obstacles keep appearing. But White persists.

All of this could easily have veered into obvious formula, where you shed a few tears at climactic moments and then feel a bit silly for it. But the authentic feel we get from so many of the actors — a number are from McFarland, and had never acted professionally — helps keep the movie grounded, and so does Costner.

"McFarland, USA," is rated PG "for thematic material, some violence and language." 128 minutes. Two-and-a-half stars out of four.