



WARNER BROS. PICTURES

Sandra Bullock and George Clooney star in "Gravity."

# Oscar contenders PULL THEIR WEIGHT

## '12 Years a Slave,' 'Gravity' lead Academy Awards field

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The depth of the Academy Awards' Best Picture nominees makes it tough to pick a probable winner from the pool.

Remarkably, while three contenders — "Gravity," "12 Years a Slave" and "American Hustle" — clearly lead the field, "Captain Phillips," "Her," "Dallas Buyers Club" and "Nebraska" all have a chance to play the dark horse role and spring an upset.

The 86th Academy Awards ceremony takes place Sunday night at the Dolby Theater in Los Angeles. The broadcast on ABC-TV (locally on WQAD) begins with the red carpet show at 6 and the awards at 7:30 p.m.

The key difference this year is how culturally significant most of the standout films are.

By contrast, Quentin Tarantino's 2012 nominee, "Django Unchained," capitalized on the filmmaker's penchant for mixing storytelling

with genre mash-ups and sprinkles of unadulterated violence. The title character is freed from slavery in an effort to hunt down a slaver.

But we've come to expect such tactics from Tarantino, a director who hasn't really been relevant since "Pulp Fiction."

At the other extreme, British-born director Steve McQueen's ("Hunger" and "Shame") "12 Years A Slave" stars Chiwetel Ejiofor as Solomon Northup, a free African-American man who is kidnapped and sold into slavery.

The adaptation of Northup's 1853 memoir packs a star-studded cast, including Michael Fassbender, Paul Giamatti, Paul Dano, Benedict Cumberbatch and Brad Pitt, but they are primarily in B-roles, keeping the spotlight on Ejiofor.

"12 Years a Slave" and films like it serve as a reminder of the horrible events perpetrated by man on his fellow humans,

— OSCARS | C2



FOX SEARCHLIGHT

Chiwetel Ejiofor, center, stars in "12 Years A Slave."

### HANDICAPPING THE OSCARS

A look at box office take and other award wins, which can be a predictor of an Oscar win.

2013-14 awards Guild Critics \$40M gross

Gravity	■■■■■	■■■■■	■■■■■
American Hustle	■■■■■	■■■■■	■■■■■
The Wolf of Wall Street	■■■■■	■■■■■	■■■■■
Captain Phillips	■■■■■	■■■■■	■■■■■
12 Years a Slave	■■■■■	■■■■■	■■■■■
Philomena	■■■■■	■■■■■	■■■■■
Dallas Buyers Club	■■■■■	■■■■■	■■■■■
Her	■■■■■	■■■■■	■■■■■
Nebraska	■■■■■	■■■■■	■■■■■

### Best Director

Alfonso Cuarón ■■■■■

GRAVITY

Steve McQueen ■■■■■

12 YEARS A SLAVE

Martin Scorsese\* ■■■■■

THE WOLF OF WALL STREET

Alexander Payne\* ■■■■■

NEBRASKA

David O. Russell ■■■■■

AMERICAN HUSTLE

### Best Actor

Matthew McConaughey ■■■■■

DALLAS BUYERS CLUB

Chiwetel Ejiofor ■■■■■

12 YEARS A SLAVE

Bruce Dern ■■■■■

NEBRASKA

Leonardo DiCaprio ■■■■■

THE WOLF OF WALL STREET

Christian Bale\* ■■■■■

AMERICAN HUSTLE

### Best Actress

Cate Blanchett\* ■■■■■

BLUE JASMINE

Amy Adams ■■■■■

AMERICAN HUSTLE

Judi Dench\* ■■■■■

PHILOMENA

Meryl Streep\*\*\* ■■■■■

THE UPSIDE OF DOWNHILL

Sandra Bullock\* ■■■■■

GRAVITY

### Best Supporting Actor

Jared Leto ■■■■■

DALLAS BUYERS CLUB

Barkhad Abdi ■■■■■

CAPTAIN PHILLIPS

Michael Fassbender ■■■■■

12 DAYS A SLAVE

Bradley Cooper ■■■■■

AMERICAN HUSTLE

Jonah Hill ■■■■■

THE WOLF OF WALL STREET

### Best Supporting Actress

Lupita Nyong'o ■■■■■

12 YEARS A SLAVE

Jennifer Lawrence\*\* ■■■■■

AMERICAN HUSTLE

June Squibb ■■■■■

NEBRASKA

Julia Roberts\* ■■■■■

AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY

Sally Hawkins ■■■■■

BLUE JASMINE

### \*Past Academy Award wins

NOTE: Guild awards include Directors, Producers, Screen Actors, American Cinema Editors guilds and the BAFTA. Critics awards include Golden Globes, Critics Choice, Chicago, Los Angeles and New York film critics, Satellite, National Board of Review. Not all awards vote on all categories or for films nominated for Academy Awards.

—Compiled by Nate Bloomquist, Quad-City Times

## OSCARS

From C1

and as the gap between that time period and the present continues to increase, such films become more important.

We, as a society choose, to push those memories to the back of our mind, more willing to think about the day ahead. Films such as "12 Years a Slave" will not allow us to forget the tragedy of slavery, and for good reason.

The audience becomes privy to the cruel early treatment of Northrup by his captors, his survival despite a hanging and being forced into lashing a fellow slave — a huge turning point in his character and the sympathy we feel for Northrup. Some viewers have complained that the violence goes on too long, but one could argue that it doesn't last nearly long enough to truly capture how loathsome the American slavery system was.

"12 Years a Slave" is nominated for nine Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Director (McQueen), Best Actor (Ejiofor), Best Supporting Actor (Fassbender), Best Supporting Actress (Lupita Nyong'o), Best Adapted Screenplay, Best Production Design, Best Costume Design and Best Film Editing. The film won the Golden Globes award for best drama.

"Gravity," another of the top contenders, pulls its weight in more ways



WARNER BROS. PICTURES

Sandra Bullock is nominated for Best Actress for her role in "Gravity."

than one.

The latest film by Alfonso Cuarón stars Sandra Bullock and George Clooney in a 3-D science-fiction thriller that maintains its intensity from start to finish. Bullock, who plays Dr. Ryan Stone, accompanies Clooney, who plays veteran astronaut Matt Kowalski.

Primarily a vehicle for spectacular three-dimensional effects (which are tremendous) and for the acting chops of Bullock, the film sucks you in with the CGI as well as the chemistry between the leading lady and her wisecracking counterpart. You end up staying for the drama and suspense carried largely on Bullock's shoulders.

Bullock previously won a Best Actress Oscar for her work in "The Blind Side," and this nomination brings the total for "Gravity" to 10. Cuarón is nominated for Best Director while the film is

also up for cinematography, production design, film editing, original score, sound editing, and visual effects awards.

"Gravity" may be Cuarón's best chance at nabbing the Best Director statuette, particularly inasmuch as he had not directed a film since "Children of Men," which was released in 2006.

The other top contender in the Best Picture-Best Director hunt is "American Hustle," a 1970s-'80s era film about a couple of con artists directed by David O. Russell, who was nominated for the Best Director award for "The Fighter" in 2011 and "Silver Linings Playbook" in 2013.

"American Hustle" is also up for 10 Academy Awards — the aforementioned Best Picture and Best Director nominations, Best Actor (Christian Bale), Best Actress (Amy Adams), Best Supporting Actor (Bradley Cooper), Best Supporting Actress (Jennifer Lawrence), Best Original Screenplay, Best Film Editing, Best Costume Design and Best Production Design.

In addition to its chance of pulling the upset in the Best Picture category, "American Hustle" certainly has a quality stable of actors and the technical/production highlights to snag several other awards.



FOX SEARCHLIGHT

Chiwetel Ejiofor, left, with Michael Fassbender, is nominated for Best Actor for his starring role in "12 Years A Slave."

## WEEKEND classifieds

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THROUGH TO: THIS WEEK IN THE U.S.

**TAKE FIVE**  
OSCAR NOMINEES

**OSCAR CONTENDERS PULL THEIR WEIGHT**  
"12 Years a Slave," "Gravity" lead Academy Awards field

**AT THE MOVIES**

**Summer festival acts to include Thorogood, Anderson**

**\*Past Academy Award wins**  
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