

2018 in Cinema: The War Against Infinity

The world and business of going to the movies is currently going through a conflicting yet fascinating change of size. On one hand, fewer and fewer people are making the effort to leave their homes and go see movies, as intended, on the big screen. On the other hand, the money rolling in is higher than ever, with record profits being reported from higher quest spending.

Yet that's not the only scale-based paradox taking place now. This year saw a record number of films released in cinemas - almost 800 in all. And yet, the percentage of those films with excellent reviews isn't growing proportionally. Nor are those that manage to turn a profit.

Welcome to the new infinity war in Hollywood: how can the changes stabilize? How can this be a win-win for the studios and audiences alike?

This change has to work together because both the industry and the customers rely on each other for mutual support. If one falters, so does the other. The war is about Hollywood's need for sufficient growth against the public's lack of interest to sustain it.

As for the new trends of digital media, fuelled by the instant gratification of streaming services, the proof is in the pudding. Something about this new formula that shaped and supported filmmaking for 100 years isn't working anymore.

Amidst this revolution of contrast, however, there is a silver lining. For every four movies that fail to or barely inspire and excite us, the fifth does so remarkably. Even below that top 20%, there are some truly terrific things being made to entertain the public.

The world is a more exciting place when we get to tell stories. The greatest single benefit to this new system of surplus on the movie lot is that more people than ever are getting the opportunity to tell stories.

Even I, as a reporter and professional audience member, see the benefit these opportunities allow to artists and citizens alike. The chance to expand what we think the world looks like to what it can be on the silver screen broadens our horizons. And that horizon is a world far more important than the world of scale that is jeopardizing the Hollywood system.

Finally, it is the innovation of old stories and recreation of old properties that thrived this year. Sometimes it's the new author and new voice of something that previously failed to reveal a movie's potential. That's promising too. Just look at *Mission Impossible: Fallout*. Or *A Star is Born*. Or *Halloween*. Or *Bumblebee*. Or *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*. Who knew what these would become?

Courage and discipline are needed to make works of art like this, and it's a new frontier for filmmakers. In all great art, the skill is not in the creation. The skill is in the revision and the editing; how can you take something good and make it into something great?

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This is now my fifth annual essay, and while they don't get more concise, I'm always astonished how each year brings something new to say. Since I began documenting movies in 2014 I've seen a total of nearly 700 movies, most of which are new releases. Sometime in late 2019 I expect to cross the lifetime 1,000 movies mark. That's a lot of time in a cinema.

However taxing it is, I look forward to writing this annual paper more than (I think) most people do reading it. These are my many thoughts and musings about the movies in 2018. But this is also not a professional publication - here I'm free to say whatever I like.

I've been lucky to have a platform sharing my thoughts about the movies with Oakville News - but this is still my definitive essay that looks at the year as a whole. Don't worry, though. If you need some help with your Oscars ballot, that's waiting for you in Part Four.

But the Academy Award is the second bookend to a year in the movies. First we need to start from last year's ceremony: where a new cycle of cinema usually begins.

PART ONE - A SHORT HISTORY AND RECOUNT OF THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS

2018 would mark the fourth year I kept a complete record of my movie-watching habits, now in a revised system from when I started. Using blank business cards to organize information meant I could track up to five films on one page, greatly saving space in the journal. (If I'm going to seriously continue doing this, I need to start thinking about my bookshelves of the future.)

Most of this year was based in Oakville, Ontario (where I live and attend school, just outside Toronto.) There were more shorter trips I took to several locations, but while I enjoy going to the movies in a multitude of places, this year I wasn't concerned on making that conscious effort. Sometimes there are more important things to do where you are. So too I'm neither desperate nor anxious to re-visit cinemas in places I've already seen movies.

It remains something of an experiment to see what movie going and movie watching is like in different cities, parts of the country, and even parts of the world. Some new highlights this year included Vancouver, Montreal, Lincoln Park in New York.

As a result, I saw movies in more individual cities than any other year previously. I saw movies at 28 different theatres in 21 different cities, spanning eight provinces and states in two countries.

There was a surprising diversity in style, price, and attitudes wherever I went, but found the biggest differences mostly between different parts of the United States. In the USA, going to the movies is more expensive and touted as special event than in Canada. But the intensity and pressure of spectacle didn't vary. Theatres in Buffalo, NY and Niagara Falls had the same vigour and pizzazz that I experienced at downtown, metropolitan cities..

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My Toronto movie going also continued and intensified this year, most notably in September, beginning with the Toronto International Film Festival, and continuing to now. I widely experimented at this year's festival in the ability to see more movies on a shoestring budget, greatly exploiting rush lines.

This new strategy proved immensely successful, managing to see a record six titles in two days at TIFF. Of those, two tickets were free, and three of those films were world premieres. I ended up spending less than \$100 going to see all six films, including the parking. Two of those movies were the first screenings for *A Star is Born* and *Green Book*, two of my favourite films this year, and the screenings even featured their directors and stars. Wowza.

The September festival also marked my second anniversary as the film critic for Oakville News, leading to more invitations to screenings in the downtown area. This also became true for special events and new release films in the city. It really is a privilege for me to work in this way.

Movie going was a regular event about every twice a week in the spring and early summer. I continued at a consistent pace until July and August, where a work position in Muskoka forced me to slow down, seeing only six films over those two months.

But starting in September, my rapid pace returned like previous fall seasons, sometimes seeing as many as five movies every seven days. (I also had several double feature days, helping to balance my work schedule. There wasn't really any pattern between viewing dates.) This September also helped me set a new record: I saw 22 movies in 30 days.

With far less travel around the holiday season this year, I was able to watch considerably more Oscar-hopeful films ahead of Christmas.

Lastly, it's worth noting how widely my diversity of films and events in cinemas became this year. I attended several live events and feature shows, as well as five repeat movies. It was less concentrated than last year, though still dedicated and planned with great care. I've expected and hoped to maintain this pace moving forward, and while this was a slower year than usual, I'm happy to say I have done so.

PART TWO - THE NUMBERS AND STATISTICS, PREFERENCES, AND COMPANIONS

Listed below are some of my habits, and some small details I found interesting. To save some space and not bore you with overly specific statistics, I have stuck to the standout points and general comments. It should be also noted special events on screen and repeat viewings of the movies are not included in this set of data. This is an account of the one hundred and forty-five (145) different films I saw this year.

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Right away, there is a noticeable drop in the total number of movies I saw this year, hitting a three year low. As described in part one, that's largely due to being away in July and August, then working an aggressive schedule with school for October and November.

There are more observations than last few years as my records have become more complete. All facts come from my saved movie tickets and journals from my diverse experiences. Some categories, like genre and days of week, I again omitted this year, mainly for fluidity here in this essay. Neither have been particularly missed when they were not included.

Briefly for those curious, I had the most shows this Tuesdays and Thursdays, and the least on Sundays. Tuesdays are a popular discount night, and Thursdays often have preview screenings for new movies.

Saturdays were my least popular day in 2017, but this year my schedule just allowed fewer Sundays to see movies. What hasn't changed is that my movie watching is more concentrated mid-week. There was also a large bump to Friday showings and a dip in Wednesdays.

For the second year in a row, my most common genres were Drama and Animation. My least common was a tie between Western and Spy because so few were made. Like last year, my horror film watching continues to increase, but the percentage jump is due to how few I saw in the past.

But my greatest genre increase this year was Documentary. This was a terrific year for the genre, with several high-profile ones being snubbed by the Oscars and a wide variety of topics being explored. (I saw a total of nine this year, doubling my previous records.)

MY PERSONAL RATINGS

After my initial viewing of each film, I would grade them on a scale between zero and four stars, going up in half star increments. This is the same rating scale used by many acclaimed journalists, including the late Pulitzer Prize winner Roger Ebert, hailed perhaps as the greatest movie writer in the history of film.

Simply because I saw a 50% increase on the number of movies from last year, the number of exceptional films was diluted, and even more so than previous years. There's still an overwhelmingly obvious trend to scores higher on list, because I prioritize seeing films I have better senses (or reviews) will be good movies as opposed to less so.

I was surprised by the tightened balance from movie between 2 and 3 stars, but something also happened closer to the bottom of the list. There was a higher number of 1/2 and 1 star movies, but I credit this to unlucky film selections. It's true no matter what the title is I can't predict what a movie will be until I see it.

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Below are the averages of the 145 seen films this year.

4 Stars (Near Perfect) :	7.2%
3 1/2 Stars (Excellent) :	12%
3 Stars (Great) :	18.4%
2 1/2 Stars (Good) :	18.4%
2 Stars (Okay) :	14.4%
1 1/2 Stars (Bad):	11.2%
1 Star (Very Bad):	11.2%
1/2 Star (Dreadful):	4%
0 Stars (Brendan Fraser):	3.2%

Since the year ended, I have also seen several others on Netflix, etc. If these titles were included, the whole scale would be far more balanced. Because of the higher number between 1/2 - 1 1/2 stars, I don't think the percentages would widely vary. It is also worth noting, by sheer luck, the tie scores in films that earned 3 and 2 1/2 stars, as well as 1 1/2 and 1 star.

SHOWTIMES

The other major detail I noted was the time of day in which I watched these movies. I put them into five categories of times of the day: Before 2:00PM, between 2:00 and 6:00PM, between 6:00 and 8:00PM, between 8:00 and 10:00PM, and after 10:00PM. My first two essays had the late night time begin at 9:30PM, but it made the count disproportionately low, and when I wanted was a number reflecting the number of late night shows, it wasn't being accurately reflected.

These numbers were sourced far more thoroughly than last year with a collection of tickets to show the data. The patterns, oddly enough, were much different from my findings 2014-2017. Most of the shows (almost a quarter) began between 6:00PM and 8:00PM, different from last year's trend of afternoon shows.

What was different this year was the greater number of morning shows across the year that began before 2:00PM. There was no instant source I could detect on the reason, other than the reliable smaller crowds and discounted prices. This is particularly strange because of how few morning shows are regularly screened in Canada.

For the third year in a row, the most found tickets documented was between 7:00 and 7:15. This is because many event screenings and special preview shows (one of my favourites to attend) usually have a start time in this window.

PEOPLE AND VIEWING COMPANIONS

I'd like to elaborate here a little more than I have in the past. While I'm still not revealing any specific names, I'd like to share some surprising details from this year.

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One thing that hasn't changed is the proportion of how many movies I see by myself. About 65-70% of my visits are alone, without a companion I've invited or I plan to see movies with. Part of that, yes, is due to the irregularity of my movie watching schedule. But this year I also saw five movies **TOTALLY** alone - without literally another person in the cinema.

But this year's biggest surprise was the variety of different people who came to the movies with me. Over the course of this year, I saw a movie with more than 50 different people. Many of them are friends of mine or my siblings. But I also saw movies with most of my parents (I have four) and siblings (there's five of them, too.)

Another returning category is girlfriends. I've had a new one since October, and over the last few months we've seen about a dozen movies together. Movie watching is also a great interest of hers, and many of those visits have been to the theatres itself.

My most frequent companion, however, is the same as the last three years: a close friend of mine whom I often spend movie nights with. For the purpose of character, we'll just call them "Chris." They saw sixteen movies with me in 2018.

Those are the practical numbers and technical data of my movie-going this year. Now on to the fun part...which ones were the best.

PART THREE - MY FAVOURITE MOVIES, AND WHAT I THINK ARE THE BEST

A staple fixtures of anyone writing about movies is their annual Top 10 List. These lists are the most concise and straightforward way to talk about the best movies of the year. It's easy to compare lists side by side, it's fun to look for similarities and differences, and it's an exciting challenge to hold the list year after year.

Having now done this several years, it's also fun going back and looking at my previous lists and how they've held up. For the time being now, I'm trying not to think about how the list may look in the future. The most important thing is how I feel about them now, and also how I felt right after watching them for the first (and sometimes the second) time.

The first part of this section is my list of this year's best movies; including any movies I gave my highest score to (4 of 4 stars; a 9.5/10 or higher.) Following that is my Top 10 List of the ten best movies from 2018.

This is the second year I'm creating only one definitive list. In previous years, this list appeared with either two or three different versions, ranging from my personal favourites, personal bests and unbiased 10 best.

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As I've gained confidence publishing and writing my observations in film, I've decided I can now write one concise list. I was pleased, however, with the appearance and conciseness of my single list last year, and I will be continuing as such into the future.

FOUR STAR MOVIES

When reviewing my list of the movies I've seen and my scores from this year, I looked to see what movies I had - upon my initial viewing - deemed worthy of a perfect score. This does not mean they were the best movies of the year, but simply that I reviewed them at four stars out of four. This also doesn't mean movies with a lower rating may be inferior.

While I enjoyed many movies this year, my number of four star films dropped to a mere nine titles from the 11 that have made this list the last three years running. It is worth noting, there was a disproportionately high number of 3 1/2 star films this year.

Throughout the year, I see fewer bad movies than I do commonly recommended and/or acclaimed ones. I suppose, however, with the greater quantity of films I've seen of both good and bad, the majority of them are either good or average ones.

It's also true that as Hollywood releases an increasing total number of new movies, the number of good and bad movies will also increase proportionally. Each year sets new records, and nearly 800 titles were released last year.

The movies are listed below in chronological order of their release dates from the year. These are my four star movies for 2018. (A * marks a Best Picture nominee).

BLACK PANTHER*
A QUIET PLACE
BLACKKKLANSMAN*
A STAR IS BORN*
THE HATE U GIVE
FREE SOLO
GREEN BOOK*
IF BEALE STREET COULD TALK
MARY POPPINS RETUNRS

There were particular qualities of each that earned them the designation here, but all listed showed a number of exemplary qualities. They were entertaining, engaging, important, poignant, palatable and well produced motion pictures, and I'm glad to have seen all of them.

In a coincidence with a surprising statistic from last year, only four of the nine Best Picture nominees made the list. This is unusually small for my reviews, though it should be noted all there other candidates received either a 3/4 or 3.5/4.

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In previous years, I've also listed broadcasts, plays, events, and special screenings I gave a perfect score to in this section. This year, only one event scored a perfect rating: the Lincoln Centre Theatre revival of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *THE KING AND I*. It was broadcast in December live from London's West End after its 2015 production in New York.

Kelli O'Hara, Ken Watanabe and Ruthie Ann Miles all reprised their acclaimed performances for the broadcast. It was a stunning, expertly staged production and a true delight.

TYLER'S TOP TEN FAVOURITE MOVIES OF 2018

This is it. The best of the best. Factoring skill, art, enjoyment, quality, technique, and legacy thus far, these are what I believe to be the best movies of 2018.

As mentioned earlier, this list is my "official top 10", combining both my ten personal favourite movies this year and the best in all. This accounts for extreme preferences and opinions that may skew my ratings or thoughts in movies. This was an ongoing list I kept, adjusted, and changed as I saw new movies throughout the year.

Here are my ten favourite movies of 2018.

1. *Green Book*
2. *A Star is Born*
3. *If Beale Street Could Talk*
4. *Roma*
5. *The Hate U Give*
6. *A Quiet Place*
7. *Tully*
8. *Black Panther*
9. *Free Solo*
10. *BlackkKlansman*

Honourable Mentions: (Movies that almost made my Top 10)

Amateur, *Mary Poppins Returns*, *On the Basis of Sex*, *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*, *Vice*.

My greatest challenge in aggregating this year's list was deciding the #1 spot between *Green Book* and *A Star is Born*. I enjoyed both films immensely, finding them as entertaining and timely as they were poignant and ethereal. They were expertly made and both delighted me just as richly on second viewings.

What ultimately made the difference was my strong emotional response to *Green Book*. While *A Star is Born* may very well be the better made film, it is the former's tasteful sentiment that I find totally irresistible. That too is a valid point when distinguishing the very best in filmmaking.

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I also thoroughly enjoyed *If Beale Street Could Talk*, and I believe it is outlandishly underrated and sparsely seen. I would go as far to say it is superior to Barry Jenkins last film, 2016's *Moonlight*. (You know, the one that famously ACTUALLY won Best Picture?) To have it overlooked as one of this year's Best Pictures by the Oscars is absurd. But more on that later.

Speaking of Best Picture nominees, you may notice only five of the eight nominees are on my top ten list. *Vice* is listed among my honourable mentions, though *The Favourite* misses that designation from me solely of its questionably watchable weirdness. I will concede it is, at least, a worthy film that's made with clear thought and purpose.

The final nominee is *Bohemian Rhapsody*, which is among the least deserving Oscar nominees of this century. It's a fine film with a few great scenes and a wonderful lead performance. It is also overlong. It is poorly structured. It has cheap dialogue and producer bias. To call it among this year's best is insulting.

One obvious trend I found among 2018's movie elite was film exploring and depicting the variety of the black experience. While mainly focused in America, black cinema thrived with stories throughout history, and several of them acclaimed as the year's best. It's a great counterpoint to the #OscarsSoWhite campaign from just a few years ago.

And what a smorgasbord! Beyond the previously discussed Green Book and Beale Street, what about the true life story of BlackKlansman? Or the frighteningly close reality from *The Hate U Give*? Or even the fantastic worlds of *Black Panther* and *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*? There's even the lesser *Widows* and *Amateur* in the conversation.

This, to me, is the biggest story in 2018 of mainstream Hollywood. This was a year of great success for diversity in many respects. But among the very best? This is an obvious similarity that can't be - and shouldn't be - overlooked.

Finally of note is *Free Solo*. This is the first time I'm including a documentary in the top 10 list, but it shows so many great qualities of what a story on film can be. It's a romance. It's a biography. It's an adventure. It's a sports drama. It's great journalism, entertainment, and most of all, storytelling.

One other title worth highlighting briefly is *Roma*. This is a great achievement in Mexican film and the Netflix business model. We'll discuss this much deeper in Part Four.

THE ACTORS

Next up is my list specifically about acting. This is the area I have the most insight to being a performer and actor myself, and find there is the most worth mentioning here than any other job. (Movies need one director, for instance. But they need a lot of actors).

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There's no maximum, minimum, ranking, order, or restriction to this list. Any actor whom I found exceptional, noteworthy, memorable, or worth making an effort to see I've included below. Each of these is organized into one of five categories - lead and supporting roles for either gender, and then cameo appearances (smaller, memorable roles.)

I've also included a list of "Winners" and "Losers" - these are actors from multiple projects this year who were either featured in a number of great things...or a number of bad things. You'll find both examples later. (Of note: If they are listed in these sections, you'll find them omitted from the regular lists of individual performances.)

One thing that helped considerably was keeping an ongoing list throughout the year. I've reviewed my choices more recently to make my final list from any suggested name I made throughout the year.

The lists are also much longer than they've been in previous years; this is a natural side effect of seeing more movies each subsequent year. Still, everyone listed below has more than earned their right to be featured, and some overdue for the unrecognized work. You can see all the names and their characters below. These are my favourites of the year, listed and organized alphabetically.

LEAD ACTOR

Chadwick Boseman as T'Challa/Black Panther (Black Panther)
Sam Claflin as Richard (Adrift)
John Cho as David Kim (Searching)
J. Michael Finley as Bart Millard (I Can Only Imagine)
Lucas Hedges as Jared Eamons (Boy Erased)
Hugh Jackman as Gary Hart (The Front Runner)
Rami Malek as Freddie Mercury (Bohemian Rhapsody)
Richie Merritt as Richard Wershe Jr. (White Boy Rick)
Lin-Manuel Miranda as Jack (Mary Poppins Returns)
Michael Moore as Himself (Fahrenheit 11/9)
Shamiek Moore as Myles Morales (Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse)
Viggo Mortensen as Tony Lip (Green Book)
Michael Rainey Jr. as Terron Forte (Amateur)
Ryan Reynolds as Wade Wilson/Deadpool (Deadpool 2)
Kodi Smit-McPhee as Keda (Alpha)
John David Washington as Det. Ron Stallworth (BlackkKlansman)

LEAD ACTRESS

Yalitza Aparicio as Cleo (Roma)
Emily Blunt as Mary Poppins (Mary Poppins Returns)
Glenn Close as Joan Castleman (The Wife)
Jaime Lee Curtis as Laurie Strode (Halloween)
Elsie Fisher as Kayla Day (Eighth Grade)

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LEAD ACTRESS (Cont'd)

Lady Gaga as Ally (A Star is Born)
Anna Kendrick as Stephanie Smothers (A Simple Favour)
Kiera Knightley as Colette (Colette)
Jennifer Lawrence as Dominika (Red Sparrow)
Leslie Mann as Lisa Decker (Blockers)
Debra Messing as Det. Rosemary Vick (Searching)
Amandla Stenberg as Starr Carter (The Hate U Give)
Charlize Theron as Marlo (Tully)
Bella Thorne as Katie Price (Midnight Sun)
Constance Wu as Rachel Chu (Crazy Rich Asians)
Shailene Woodley as Tami Oldham (Adrift)

SUPPORTING ACTOR

Mahershala Ali as Doctor Don Shirley (Green Book)
Josh Brolin as Thanos (Avengers: Infinity War)
Henry Cavill as August Walker (Mission Impossible: Fallout)
Charlie Day as Newton (Pacific Rim: Uprising)
Gerard Depardieu as Gaston Baptiste (Sgt. Stubby: An Unlikely Hero)
Russell Hornsby as Maverick Carter (The Hate U Give)
Michael B. Jordan as Erik Killmonger (Black Panther)
Daniel Kaluuya as Jatemme Manning (Widows)
Billy Magnussen as Ryan Huddle (Game Night)
Chris O'Dowd as Gordon Mundy (The Cloverfield Paradox)
Dennis Quaid as Arthur Millard (I Can Only Imagine)
Sylvester Stallone as Rocky Balboa (Creed 2)
Iwo Uwais as Li Noor (Mile 22)

SUPPORTING ACTRESS

Zazie Beetz as Domino (Deadpool 2)
Kristen Bell as Jade Wilson (Teen Titans GO! to the Movies)
Mackenzie Davis as Tully (Tully)
Elizabeth Dubecki as Alice Gunner (Widows)
Isla Fischer as Anna Malloy (Tag)
Hannah John-Kamen as Ava Starr/Ghost (Ant-Man and the Wasp)
Catharine Keener as Evelyn Deavor (Incredibles 2)
Andi Matichak as Allyson Nelson (Halloween)
Helen Mirren as Mother Ginger (The Nutcrackers and the Four Realms)
Isabela Moner as Lizzie (Instant Family)
Millicent Simmonds as Regan Abbott (A Quiet Place)
Geraldine Viswanathan as Kayla Mannes (Blockers)
Michelle Yeoh as Eleanor Sung-Young (Crazy Rich Asians)
Zendaya as Meechee (Smallfoot)

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CAMEO APPEARANCE

F. Murray Abraham as Cardinal Franklin (Robin Hood)
Mamoudou Athie as A.J. Parker (The Front Runner)
Julie Andrews as Karathen (Aquaman)
Moreno Baccharin as Vanessa Carlisle (Deadpool 2)
Alec Baldwin as Dr. Kennebrew Beauregard (BlackkKlansman)
Paul Bettany as Dryden Vos (Solo: A Star Wars Story)
Heidi Gardner as Lenore (Life of the Party)
Charles Dance as Agent (Johnny English Strikes Again)
Gugu Mbatha-Raw as Mom (A Wrinkle in Time)
Jibrail Nantambu as Julian (Halloween)
Nick Offerman as Felix O’Kelly (Bad Times at the El Royale)
Michelle Pfeiffer as Janet van Dyne (Ant-Man and the Wasp)
Meryl Streep as Topsy (Mary Poppins Returns)
Jeffrey Wright as “FBI Agent” (Game Night)
Kyanna Simone Simpson as Brenda Moore (White Boy Rick)

THE ENTIRE CAST

A Star is Born	The Hate U Give
Avengers: Infinity War	Mary Poppins Returns
The Ballad of Buster Scruggs	Mission Impossible: Fallout
Black Panther	Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse
Blockers	Ocean’s 8
Crazy Rich Asians	The Old Man and the Gun
Disobedience	Tag

WINNERS

Awkwafina (Ocean’s 8, Crazy Rich Asians)
Emily Blunt (A Quiet Place, Mary Poppins Returns)
Steve Carrell (Beautiful Boy, Welcome to Marwen, Vice)
Common (Smallfoot, The Hate U Give, Hunter Killer)
Bradley Cooper (A Star is Born, Avengers: Infinity War)
Linda Cardellini (A Simple Favour, Green Book)
Cynthia Erivo (Bad Times at the El Royale, Widows)
Henry Golding (Crazy Rich Asians, A Simple Favor)
John Hamm (Beirut, Tag)
Brian Tyree Henry (White Boy Rick, Widows, Beale Street..., Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse)
Nicole Kidman (Destroyer, Boy Erased, Aquaman, The Upside)
Rachel McAdams (Game Night, Disobedience)
T. J. Miller (Ready Player One, Deadpool 2, Underwater)
John C. Reilly (The Sisters Brothers, Ralph Wrecks t. Internet, Holmes & Watson, Stan & Ollie)
Caliee Spaeny (Pacific Rim: Uprising, Bad Times at the El Royale, Vice, On the Basis of Sex)

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LOSERS

Sterling K. Brown (Hotel Artemis, The Predator)
Walton Goggins (Maze Runner: The Death Cure, Tomb Raider, Them That Follow)
Jake Lacy (Rampage, Johnny English Strikes Again)
Melissa McCarthy (Life of the Party, The Happytime Murders)
David Oyelowo (The Cloverfield Paradox, Gringo, A Wrinkle in Time)
Robert Sheehan (Bad Samaritan, Mortal Engines)
Jenny Slate (Hotel Artemis, Venom)
Jordin Sparks (Show Dogs, God Bless the Broken Road)
Jacob Tremblay (The Predator, Life and Death of John F. Donovan)
Michelle Williams (I Feel Pretty, Venom)

As much as I've enjoyed the movies I've seen in this year, not of them were enjoyable. I've listed below what I think are the ten *worst* titles of 2018 alphabetically. The titles in bold are ones I'm expecting to win at least one Razzie Award for the worst movies of the year.

Keep in mind, I tend to avoid movies I know will be dreadful unless required, saving my money for better ones. That being said, I saw a long lost of astonishingly terrible movies this year.

THE BOOKSHOP

GAME OVER, MAN!

THE HAPPYTIME MURDERS

HOLMES & WATSON

LIFE ITSELF

RAMPAGE

SHOW DOGS

SOLO: A STAR WARS STORY

VENOM

WINCHESTER

Some honourable mentions among the worst films this year include *Mile 22*, *The Miracle Season*, *Sherlock Gnomes* and *Welcome to Marwen*. An astounding surprise that's so forgettable it's almost worth ignoring entirely is Netflix's *Paradox* starring Neil Young. (No, not *The Cloverfield Paradox*, but that wasn't considerably better.) It's one of the laziest films ever shot.

Speaking of bad movies, there's one other now annual filmmaker I like to mention right about now. Three years ago I was lucky to discover the hilariously awful Frank D'Angelo. He's the Tommy Wiseau of Canada; a Toronto producer of the worst independent films made today, but so hysterically compelling his films are unmissable for true fanatics.

His primary investor, Barry Sherman, unfortunately died earlier this year, and his future releases are somewhat in question. But his 2018 entry, *The Joke Thief*, delivered all the disappointment his fans were craving.

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THE BEST SCENES

Part three concludes with my ten favourite scenes from movies this year. These are listed alphabetically, and chosen for various reasons described underneath each one. It's these kind of breathtaking moments ranging across the emotional and thematic spectrum that makes going to the movies so satisfying.

This year's collection of scenes was the hardest to narrow down I've ever had. I also found most movies on this list had several standout moments - it shows a narrative strength and true talent from the directors. For the sake of showing diversity across the landscape, only the best scene from each film is listed. If I liked more than one, second or thirds were omitted from the list.

Before those scenes, I'm (like last year) including some honourable mentions that I will simply name and not describe. I'd encourage you to try some of these films to see what surprises they have to offer.

Honourable Mentions:

"Luis Takes the Truth Serum" from *Ant-Man and the Wasp*

"Kentucky Fried Chicken" from *Green Book*

"Badge 115" from *The Hate U Give*

"Strange Sensation" from *Holmes & Watson*

"Lane, Lark and Hunt" from *Mission Impossible: Fallout*

"Go on, Mrs. Ginsburg" from *On the Basis of Sex*

"Let it Lie" from *Smallfoot*

"Jerry in the Forest" from *Tag*

I swear picking this list gets tougher every year. Without further delay, here are, alphabetically, the ten best scenes from the movies in 2018.

WARNING: The description of these scenes may include major spoilers about the movies they mention, and some describe graphic, intense, or disturbing events. To skip this list and move on to part four, read ahead to midway down page 16.

"America would never elect someone like David Duke"

BlackKlansman

Detective Stallworth is having his first candid conversation with a fellow officer. As a black man, is he naïve to think politics can't be infiltrated? Imagine what would happen if the policies and ideas became mainstream and "a bigot would be elected to the White House?"

With Donald Trump in the oval office, that very idea resonates today like never before. This short scene in a staircase shows Spike Lee at his most gregarious. It's also a rare occasion when a direct connection to a current audience - and disregard for a film's timelessness - works with a knockout punch.

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“Breaking into the Kitchen”

Blockers

In a futile attempt to stop a prom night sex pact, three parents break into Austin’s family kitchen. Things go wrong, however, while trying to steal a cell phone. Once inside, they are forced to participate in a sultry game with diabolical consequences. It’s one of the funniest scenes of the year - and subtitles have never been more helpful.

“Live Aid Concert”

Bohemian Rhapsody

I haven’t been shy about my distaste for *Bohemian Rhapsody*’s overwhelming popularity. But this finale is a whopper. For nearly 20 minutes we’re treated to an introspective recreation where Freddy knows he’s making history. Suddenly we have the opportunity to be centre stage for the greatest performance in all of rock n’ roll.

“Why were those his last words?”

Disobedience

After a tumultuous week, Rabbi is delivering a painful eulogy for his mentor at his high-calibre funeral. Instead, in a fascinating monologue, he talks about the last words his mentor said before he died. Once he finishes, he makes a painful decision that will test his faith, but hopefully, improve the live of his wife forever.

“The Boulder Problem”

Free Solo

Here we meet a master climber explaining the toughest section climbing the El Capitan face in Yosemite Park. This is a highlight scene from a documentary that truly finds art in discussing technical information. If you have no context for how complex and dangerous free climbing rock faces are, Alex’s explanation of the climbing sequence on Pitch 23 can give you an idea.

“Revisiting St. Jerome’s”

Indian Horse

Most of this Canadian film focuses on Saul’s journey from small town to the major league hockey profession. But now Saul has gone back to the residential school where he once lived, now abandoned, and recalls a memory from his former hockey coach. What makes the memory so powerful is how cleverly the film hints at a turning point in the story so cleverly the audience is totally surprised when it happens. It’s an agonizing plot twist that really packs a punch.

“Royal Daulton Bowl”

Mary Poppins Returns

Recapturing the whimsy and sincerity of the original *Mary Poppins* was always going to be an intimidating task. But midway through Mary’s return, a collection of scenes inside their mother’s porcelain bowl send the children on an adventure with carriages, a chase, and learning “A Cover is Not the Book” at the music hall. As Jack says, “They ARE in China, so to speak.”

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“Buying a Crib”

Roma

In a film full of artful moments and poignant images, Cuarón has one masterful moment of staging as Cleo goes shopping. A sudden danger arrives while purchasing a new baby crib. And if that wasn't pulse-pounding enough, the real danger arrive when a ghost appears to confess a cruel secret.

“The Newborn”

Tully

Speaking of babies, here's another scene that depicts the danger of motherhood...only this time, this kids are already here. Early in the movie, Margo is looking after her newborn in what feels like a never-ending montage of her day-to-day life with the kids. It's unglamorous. It's exhausting. And Charlize Theron's expression show each objective with nothing more than a defeated look. It's heartbreaking to see.

“End Credits”

Vice

It's not often you'll see an epilogue and end credits halfway through the movie. But director Adam McKay is no stranger to cutaway scenes that deliver a knockout punch. There's a deeper comment to what could have been a very happy ending indeed - then simply wasn't. It's so funny I cried laughing in the theatre - this is the best joke from any movie this year.

PART FOUR - ROAD TO THE OSCARS, AND PREDICTIONS

I would argue there's no award more prestigious in Entertainment today than the Academy Awards. While the Academy's annual award show is famously boring and poorly hosted, the awards themselves are the benchmark for movies across the Globe. And more often than not, they reflect wise choices in honouring the best in the art and science of movies.

It's a darn shame the producers work so hard to make the show relentlessly boring. But changing that requires answers to some deeper moral questions.

One unique characteristic of this year's ceremony is there isn't going to be a host. After a controversy with Kevin Hart and how he really feels about his tweets, he withdrew from the job in December. And because the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences was so aroused by their own embarrassment, they decided not to name a replacement.

Jimmy Kimmel has hosted the last two years with moderate success, often being the best part of the show. But without his clean charisma and creative segments, what's going to happen at this year's show? Their efforts to entice viewers have backfired stupendously, leaving a puzzling effect and minimal enthusiasm for this year's show.

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First came last summer's suggestion of a "popular film" category. Then came the omission of acceptance speeches and original song performances to cut down the ceremony time. All of the ideas were met with immediate backlash.

So what IS the best way to revamp the ceremony? This is a question the Academy has been wrestling with for years, and viewership continues to plummet. Something drastic needs to change to keep the public interested in the accolades the institution has to offer.

Each year I love trying to see all the films I think will be nominated for Best Picture before the nomination announcement in California, and it's like a sport between my family, friends, and especially my grandfather. It's fun guessing who will win each of the prizes. This year was the fourth time I achieved this goal, though working for the paper it's now a rarity to fail.

This year's awards are divided between one of two games: either wildly obvious for a clear winner, or impossible to guess a winner from some tight, fascinating races. Picking winners is going to be looking at some preferences, but also more gut instinct over what's been popular the last few months.

Here I've listed my complete predictions for all 24 categories, including three distinct marks: Who Will Win, Who Should Win, and Who I Want to Win. These three sometimes overlap, and sometimes they directly oppose each other. While I give clear ideas in each category, there have been dozens of cases where the Academy surprises even me by actually awarding the Oscar who who should or I want to win instead of who is widely expected to.

I explain my choices and background for all categories, and ultimately choose my official predictions for the 91st Academy Awards. (There are some extreme cases where the possible winner is just too close to accurately predict. This is one of those shows where, truly, anything can happen.)

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR

WHO WILL WIN: Mahershala Ali - *Green Book*, as Doctor Don Shirley
WHO SHOULD WIN: Mahershala Ali - *Green Book*, as Doctor Don Shirley
WHO I WANT TO WIN: Mahershala Ali - *Green Book*, as Doctor Don Shirley

Mahershala Ali won in this category two years ago for *Moonlight*, but his performance in *Green Book* this year shows his polar opposite. His musicality is seamless and he plays so vividly with Viggo Mortensen. With no other popular choice, he's likely to join Christoph Waltz as the second two-timer in this category. But his win here does pose an interesting question: Don Shirley is the second billed character, and one of only two principles. While Ali deserves to be recognized, should it be from the reason the studio made him eligible only in an acting category where he doesn't belong?

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BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS

WHO WILL WIN: Regina King - *If Beale Street Could Talk*, as Sharon Rivers
WHO SHOULD WIN: Regina King - *If Beale Street Could Talk*, as Sharon Rivers
WHO I WANT TO WIN: Emma Stone - *The Favourite*, as Baroness Abigail Masham

For a pool of talented actresses, there are shockingly few details that would suggest an obvious choice. I believe Emma Stone actually does the best job at crafting a character with clear objectives and relationships that are interesting to watch. But Regina King does it with more class, and unlike Stone, she's clearly a supporting part.

BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY

WHO WILL WIN: Deborah Davis and Tony McNamara - *The Favourite*
WHO SHOULD WIN: Deborah Davis and Tony McNamara - *The Favourite*
WHO I WANT TO WIN: Deborah Davis and Tony McNamara - *The Favourite*

For a film with such weirdness and peculiarity in the story (and cinematography!) the script is the only think that made *The Favourite* watchable. It's a clever story that was well researched and designed with intelligence. Like the movie or not, that's hard work worth winning an Oscar.

BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY

WHO WILL WIN: Spike Lee, David Rabinowitz, Charlie Watchell and Kevin Willmott - *BlackkKlansman*
WHO SHOULD WIN: Spike Lee, David Rabinowitz, Charlie Watchell and Kevin Willmott - *BlackkKlansman*
WHO I WANT TO WIN: Spike Lee, David Rabinowitz, Charlie Watchell and Kevin Willmott - *BlackkKlansman*

Spike Lee and friends are similarly deserving of the screenplay award because of the diligence that went into the script. Lee has been overlooked by the Academy before, but given its likely to be overlooked in the other categories, this is where *BlackkKlansman* will likeliest be recognized.

BEST DOCUMENTARY FILM

WHO WILL WIN: *Free Solo* OR *RBG*
WHO SHOULD WIN: *Free Solo*
WHO I WANT TO WIN: *Free Solo*

I'm passionate about my love for *Free Solo* which is unquestionably the most unique and best made documentary this year. It's also the best case for existing as a movie. The popularity of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, *RBG*'s subject, may be enough to steal a win. But I wouldn't count on it.

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BEST DOCUMENTARY SHORT SUBJECT

WHO WILL WIN: *Period. End of Sentence.*
WHO SHOULD WIN: *Period. End of Sentence.*
WHO I WANT TO WIN: *Period. End of Sentence.*

Documentary Short Subject is one the categories famous for its obscurity. How do you choose a winner from five movies you've never heard of, let alone seen? This year, the common choice for its acclaim on the awards circuit is *Period. End of Sentence.* It's cleaned up most awards to this point, and though I haven't seen it myself, it's your best bet to win.

BEST LIVE ACTION SHORT FILM

WHO WILL WIN: *Marguerite*
WHO SHOULD WIN: *Skin*
WHO I WANT TO WIN: *Marguerite* OR *Skin*

All five short films this year focus on similar topics of neglected or abused children - more notably in the current treatment of immigrant children in various countries of the world. It takes nerves of steel to watch all five of them, and it's hard to differentiate which one handles the subject matter best. *Marguerite* and *Skin* are the two frontrunners, and while it's hard to call, it'll definitely be one of the two.

BEST ANIMATED SHORT FILM

WHO WILL WIN: *Bao*
WHO SHOULD WIN: *Bao*
WHO I WANT TO WIN: *Bao* OR *Late Afternoon*

There's a rule of thumb in this category: When in doubt, pick the Pixar. It's no different this year, and as an added bonus, this year's short is set the fair city of Toronto, Canada! Beyond a famous parent company, director Domee Shi's tale of a bao bun growing up truly is the best animated short film this year.

BEST ANIMATED FEATURE FILM

WHO WILL WIN: *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*
WHO SHOULD WIN: *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*
WHO I WANT TO WIN: *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*

It's crazy to think Sony Animation winning an Oscar. But somehow a Spider-Man movie, bursting with courage and creativity, became the most exciting surprise of the year. The film is colourful and ingeniously made...and brings a win for the team snubbed on *The LEGO Movie.*

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BEST FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILM

WHO WILL WIN: *Roma* (Mexico) in Spanish
WHO SHOULD WIN: *Roma* (Mexico) in Spanish
WHO I WANT TO WIN: *Roma* (Mexico) in Spanish OR *Shoplifters* (Japan) in Japanese

This is another one of those categories which is sometimes a shot in the dark. But *Roma* is so deeply embedded into the minds of the film community that it would be insane if it didn't win (especially since it's a nominee in so many other categories.) This year featured a cavalcade of five worthy winners. But if you're also up for Best Picture, this one's a lock.

BEST VISUAL EFFECTS

WHO WILL WIN: Dan DeLeeuw, Russell Earl, Kelly Port - *Avengers: Infinity War*
WHO SHOULD WIN: Ian Hunter, Paul Lambert, Tristan Miles, JD Schwalm - *First Man*
WHO I WANT TO WIN: Dan DeLeeuw, Russell Earl, Kelly Port - *Avengers: Infinity War*

Here lies a tricky puzzle. The more deserving nominee is the exceptional effects that brought the mayhem of *Avengers: Infinity War* to life. But is that too mainstream for the Oscars? If so, the far classier pick would be *First Man*. Hopefully the team that made the fight against Thanos so darn cool will be rightly rewarded.

BEST FILM EDITING

WHO WILL WIN: Hank Corwin - *Vice* OR John Ottman - *Bohemian Rhapsody*
WHO SHOULD WIN: Hank Corwin - *Vice*
WHO I WANT TO WIN: Hank Corwin - *Vice*

The best editing this year can be found in Adam McKay's cross-cutting and (nearly) inter dimensional *Vice*. The structure of how the scenes were put together all builds to one aggravating climax, and that emotional response is strong enough because the editing was committed to that one moment. It also takes great skill to stitch a sixty-year story in an interesting way.

BEST SOUND MIXING

WHO WILL WIN: John Casali, Tim Cavagin, Paul Massey - *Bohemian Rhapsody*
WHO SHOULD WIN: John Casali, Tim Cavagin, Paul Massey - *Bohemian Rhapsody*
WHO I WANT TO WIN: Steve A. Marrow, Tom Ozanich, Jason Ruder and Dean Zupancic - *A Star is Born*

Most audiences can't tell the difference between this award and Sound Editing. The Mixing prize goes to the best actual mix - the blending of audio tracks to create a product. While I have a soft spot for the music of *A Star is Born*, no mix was better than Freddie Mercury's legendary vocals.

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BEST SOUND EDITING

WHO WILL WIN: Nina Hartstone and John Warhust - *Bohemian Rhapsody*
WHO SHOULD WIN: Erik Aadahl and Ethan Van der Ryn - *A Quiet Place*
WHO I WANT TO WIN: Erik Aadahl and Ethan Van der Ryn - *A Quiet Place*

Sound EDITING, on the other hand, has nothing to do with mixing. This is the actual art of creating sound effects in unorthodox ways so the sounds you hear in movies sound like how audiences suspect they should. While *Bohemian Rhapsody* may win because of a misconception between categories, the best design was in *A Quiet Place* - especially with those monsters.

BEST ORIGINAL SONG

WHO WILL WIN: “Shallow” by Lady Gaga and Mark Ronson - *A Star is Born*
WHO SHOULD WIN: “Shallow” by Lady Gaga and Mark Ronson - *A Star is Born*
WHO I WANT TO WIN: “Shallow” by Lady Gaga and Mark Ronson - *A Star is Born*

It’s shameful really that such an outstanding movie is going to be overshadowed to a mere single win for Best Original Song. This is truly one of the best movies of the year, and it’s simply playing second fiddle to some great aspects that don’t amount to as good a whole. But theatres around the world were shaken as Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper sang their souls to the heavens through the shallows. And it’s an Oscar she well deserves.

BEST ORIGINAL SCORE

WHO WILL WIN: Nicholas Britell - *If Beale Street Could Talk*
WHO SHOULD WIN: Nicholas Britell - *If Beale Street Could Talk*
WHO I WANT TO WIN: Nicholas Britell - *If Beale Street Could Talk*

There isn’t really a standout in this category this year. Without a clear favourite, that usually means either the most exciting or the most complex technique is awarded. It’s not exciting, but Britell’s piano playing through 70s New York set the entire ambience for the film.

BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY

WHO WILL WIN: Alfonso Cuarón - *Roma*
WHO SHOULD WIN: Robbie Ryan - *The Favourite*
WHO I WANT TO WIN: Alfonso Cuarón - *Roma*

Part of what made *The Favourite* so unique were the crazy camera angles all over the place. But the best camerawork was done by director Cuarón in his love letter to Mexico. Many shots were intended to be artful above immediately clear. But they were certainly intentional. The sweeping Mexican landscape and the romance of the monochromatic colouring are stunning.

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BEST PRODUCTION DESIGN

WHO WILL WIN: Fiona Crombie and Alice Felton - *The Favourite*
WHO SHOULD WIN: Hannah Beachler and Jay Hart - *Black Panther*
WHO I WANT TO WIN: Hannah Beachler and Jay Hart - *Black Panther*

This is a tough category to call. According to GoldDerby tracking, more journalists predict *Black Panther* will take home this prize, but the others suspect it has no chance. Meanwhile, all but one reporter who contributed data has *The Favourite* as a first or second choice. The latter also has a colossal advantage being a period piece.

BEST COSTUME DESIGN

WHO WILL WIN: Ruth E. Carter - *Black Panther*
WHO SHOULD WIN: Ruth E. Carter - *Black Panther*
WHO I WANT TO WIN: Sandy Powell - *The Favourite*

Meanwhile, the same two movies will be jostling each other for costumes as well. *Black Panther* and *The Favourite* are the two frontrunners in both of the last two categories - but costuming is usually where greater creativity can be rewarded. While production usually wins with authenticity, Best Costume Design leans more towards fantasy when the nominations allow it.

BEST MAKEUP AND HAIRSTYLING

WHO WILL WIN: Kate Biscoe, Greg Cannom and Patricia Dehaney - *Vice*
WHO SHOULD WIN: Kate Biscoe, Greg Cannom and Patricia Dehaney - *Vice*
WHO I WANT TO WIN: Kate Biscoe, Greg Cannom and Patricia Dehaney - *Vice*

Maybe there's a good reason why this category is the only one remaining that limits itself to three nominees. Whatever it is, worthy ones continue to be discredited while one great use of the art often is rewarded. This year, that one great up of makeup is the maniacal transformation of Christian Bale into Dick Cheney.

BEST ACTRESS

WHO WILL WIN: Glenn Close - *The Wife*, as Joan Castleman
WHO SHOULD WIN: Glenn Close - *The Wife*, as Joan Castleman
WHO I WANT TO WIN: Lady Gaga - *A Star is Born*, as Ally Maine

Audiences fell in love with Lady Gaga who gave a smashing performance as soon-to-be star Ally; it wasn't just her voice either. But then came dynamic Glenn Close. Her mission in *The Wife* shows determination and control that takes a lifetime to perfect, and after seven nominations, she is overdue for a win. Tonight? Hopefully she'll get it.

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BEST ACTOR

WHO WILL WIN: Rami Malek - *Bohemian Rhapsody*, as Freddie Mercury
WHO SHOULD WIN: Christian Bale - *Vice*, as VP Dick Cheney
WHO I WANT TO WIN: Rami Malek - *Bohemian Rhapsody*, as Freddie Mercury

This year's Best Actor race is all about the biographies. Of the five nominees, everyone except Bradley Cooper is playing someone who is or was a real person. While Bale's focused and unbiased portrayal of the villainous, brilliant Dick Cheney was his greatest transformation yet, Rami Malek obliterates everything in his path. He is unquestionably the best part of the otherwise "good enough" *Bohemian Rhapsody*, and he's got a massive fanbase to win.

BEST DIRECTOR

WHO WILL WIN: Alfonso Cuarón - *Roma*
WHO SHOULD WIN: Spike Lee - *BlackkKlansman*
WHO I WANT TO WIN: Spike Lee - *BlackkKlansman*

I strongly believe that Spike Lee's vision for the true-life crime story of *BlackkKlansman* is the most cohesive and clear of any movie this year. His astounding career in film also has gone unjustly overlooked ever since *Do the Right Thing* 30 years ago. This is his best film since then, and while Cuarón is a skilled director, he's already winning tonight. Give Lee directing.

BEST PICTURE

WHO WILL WIN: *Roma*
WHO SHOULD WIN: *A Star is Born*
WHO I WANT TO WIN: *Green Book*

Having been wrong in this category the last three years in a row, I'm definitely feeling the pressure to get this one right. Unfortunately, this Best Picture race is almost as close as last year's, when a last minute guess tripped me. The top three titles are so close with each other.

The last three years have featured surprise winners, first with the actually better *Spotlight* winning over blockbuster *The Revenant*, and last year's unbelievable steal of *Moonlight* from the better made (although less deserving) *La La Land*. The Shape of Water was loved, yes, but beating *Three Billboards* was a surprise.

So now here's three movies where opinions split. As a whole movie, *Roma* was the best made. *Green Book* was the most likeable. *A Star is Born* found that happy middle. Since the question, however, is who the Academy will choose, *Roma* seems the closest based on other awards it will win and what kind of movies the voters like. Remember: a winner that's too mainstream may look disheveled to outsiders.

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The likely winner is going to be *Roma*, but don't be surprised if any of these three titles win. What'll be the MUCH bigger story if *Roma* wins though is how Netflix will have completely changed entertainment. The year's Best Picture from a streaming service? Naysayers said never.

But this year, the digital revolution in filmmaking may have the last laugh.

Final Thoughts for the Year

At the beginning of this year's paper I teased there's a war brewing against an infinity. The reality is there are multiple infinities that may benefit or damage the movie-going world we know and love. But we just won't know until we give it a try.

Roma winning Best Picture would surely be a start. But then what? What are the economic ramifications for studios and cinemas? What are the social implications? And this is just one movie at one moment in time.

I commented last year how 2017 had been a year of change in how movies and what they show us. As 2019 is starting out, that sentiment is only picking up steam. But as an author and reporter, I'm continually humbled and amazed I have the great fortune to do what I do.

Three years ago I shared my desire to make this a permanent fixture in my life; getting to talk about and share movies to a larger audience. I'm sincerely grateful I've been able to do so, and I keep telling myself how lucky I am to have my job. I must also thank everyone who read my reviews, stories about the movies, and this annual essay. For everyone who takes the time to read this, thank you. I can't tell you how gratifying it is sharing my work with you.

The list of great movies I encourage audiences to see only grows over time. These movies are the stories that share human life and extend empathy to the furious world we live in. For those the movies you may have already seen, I hope you enjoyed them as much as I did. I'm eager and desperately excited to what next year has to offer, especially with so many new major pictures already in development for the next few years ahead.

Hollywood is far from perfect, but the world cinema is finally starting to press the importance of change, and it seems like we're moving in the right direction. So can we adapt? And how can we support an industry and challenge it as it prepares for the battle? And what about the war?

With the new pressure and expectations from audiences to make better and more original movies, there's more than one new status quo being implemented in Hollywood. Only time will tell how effectively this new attitude will begin to influence the motion picture industry.

And whatever that attitude, I bet Netflix is already beta testing it. :)