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I checked out the announcement of the nominees in the 85th Academy Awards over breakfast Thursday morning and, deservedly so, "Lincoln" leads all films with a grand total of 12 nominations, but it faces stiff competition in several categories.

The nominations for Director **Steven Spielberg's** "Lincoln" include: Best Motion Picture, Best Director, Best Actor in a Leading Role (**Daniel Day-Lewis**), Best Actor in a Supporting Role (**Tommy Lee Jones**), Best Actress in a Supporting Role (**Sally Field**), Best Screenplay Based on Material Previously Produced or Published (**Tony Kushner**), Best Cinematography, Best Editing, Best Production Design, Best Costume Design, Best Original Score (**John Williams**) and Best Sound Mixing.

My kneejerk reaction has "Lincoln" taking home one written-in-stone lock and that is Best Actor in a Leading Role, because as great as **Denzel Washington** was in "Flight" and **Joaquin Phoenix** was in "The Master," this award is Day-Lewis' hands down, without question.

From there it really is a tight race this year.

The extraordinary "Life of Pi" was nominated for 11 Oscars, and "Les Miserables" and "Silver Linings Playbook" received eight nominations each. Considering "Les Miserables" is nominated in categories such as Best Cinematography, Best Editing, Best Production Design and Best Costume Design, given its nature, you can lock it in for winning those awards.

Spielberg is absolutely capable of taking home Best Director. The other films nominated for Best Director include some non-mainstream releases such as **Michael Haneke's** "Amour" and **Benh Zeitlin's**
"Beasts of the Southern Wild." Also nominated in the category is
Ang Lee
for "Life of Pi" and
David Russell
for "Silver Linings Playbook."

Jones has a steep hill to climb to beat out **Phillip Seymour Hoffman** for the latter's role in "The Master" as both are nominated for Best Actor in a Supporting Role. Honestly, if it weren't for Day-Lewis, both Phoenix and Hoffman would be easy winners in the Actor categories. Hoffman should take this award hands down though.

Without getting into every single nomination, I am surprised to see a number of names left off the list, particularly in terms of Directing and Best Picture nominees.

"Zero Dark Thirty" premiers in our community today, although it was actually released in some markets and to professional critics in December. Given reviews for the film, despite some controversy, I am shocked to see Director **Kathryn Bigelow** left off the nominees, given that "Zero Dark Thirty" is also nominated for Best Picture and Best Screenplay.

Bigelow hit the scene big in 2008 with "The Hurt Locker," a phenomenal film that won Best Picture and earned Bigelow Best Director that year. It's rare for a film to be nominated for Best Screenplay and Best Picture and find the Director missing a nomination.

Same goes to poor **Ben Affleck**, Director of "Argo." Earlier in the year when that film debuted, it was treated as a homerun, even though there were several other films left to come out that would obviously challenge it. "Argo" is also nominated in the two other major categories, Best Picture and Best Screenplay Based on Material Previously Produced or Published.

I will be writing a review for "Zero Dark Thirty" tomorrow, but having seen "Argo" in theaters, I can say with confidence that Affleck got snubbed.

Shockingly enough, "The Master" was not nominated for Best Picture and Writer/Director **Paul Thomas Anderson**
didn't receive a single nomination for writing or directing. While I am on record as stating "Master" was the second-best film in 2012, I will admit I'm not too surprised about the lack of nominations for Anderson, but I am surprised the film wasn't mentioned for Best Picture.

Truth be told, it was carried by the unbelievable performances of its two lead actors, Phoenix and Hoffman, but the film was outstanding in its vision. "The Master" had trouble finding a production company that would back it, and received criticism for its apparent criticism of Scientology, whether intended or not. I'm not sure if that had any effect on its nominations. I don't think "Life of Pi" or "Argo" were better films.

"The Master" was not written better than "There Will Be Blood" (2007) or any of Anderson's other films, and while I still think "Blood" is a better film, it's by a razor thin margin. I think at least "Master" deserved to be a Best Picture nominee.

The 85th Academy Awards are held on Sunday, Feb. 24, and from now until that time, I will catch the films nominated for Best Picture that I didn't get to see in theaters. Thankfully, after seeing "Zero Dark Thirty" last night, I will only have four of the nine to catch and most of those weren't released in our area.

I'll be making my predictions and picks in the next month, but I can tell you right now, "Lincoln" absolutely deserves one award (Best Actor) and probably deserves two others, at least (Best Director and Best Picture).

As I could not see the film until after deadline for this edition, check here for my review of "Zero Dark Thirty."

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