'Lincoln', 'Master' best films of 2012

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There were definitely some huge hits at the theaters in 2012, and it was certainly a much better year at the movies than 2011, and looking back, “Lincoln” and “The Master” stand as the year’s most outstanding films.

With the Academy Awards coming up next month, nominees for categories will soon be announced and you can bet these two films will be in the running for Best Picture, but they are not without their flaws.

“The Master” was written and directed by **Paul Thomas Anderson**, who is becoming a force to be reckoned with and whose films truly speak volumes. In “Master,” Anderson created a tragic waltz between wayward drifter Freddie Quell (
Joaquin Phoenix
) and charismatic cult leader Lancaster Dodd (
Phillip Seymour Hoffman
).

From its opening sequences, “The Master” was the only film I saw this year where the entire theater sat in complete silence until the credits rolled. It was mesmerizing, beautifully acted and filmed and something I simply couldn’t take my eyes from for a second.

Much is to be said for supporting actress **Amy Adams**, playing Dodd's wife Peggy, who at times, is able to pull the strings of Dodd as he leads his followers. She is a powerful woman who is reserved in public, but behind the scenes is able to assert her will on her husband.

The film's greatest flaw was its lack of direction, while moving forward, it never feels resolved and ends without much of a climax or real consensus of where its characters have landed. While it is a fascinating portrait of two forces, "The Master" was not Anderson's best outing, which is saying a lot.

It was a portrait of two forces. One is a collection of natural urges and violence while the other an intellectual prowess determined to achieve order in the chaos of human nature. They collide in a small cabin on a ship at sea, both staring across a table, trying to discover what we are and master the world around us and the feelings within us.

While "Master" was an outstanding film, I have to give the edge to "Lincoln" as the best film of 2012, and I expect it to be the top award-winner in February.

Directed by **Steven Spielberg** and written by **Tony Kushner**, the film is based on **Doris Kearns Goodwin's** book "Team of Rivals" and tells the story of Abraham Lincoln's attempt to pass the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

"Lincoln" begins and ends with the absolutely brilliant performance of **Daniel Day-Lewis**, who is truly a virtuoso, and the best actor alive. He brought the American icon to life in a way never seen before and one that can never be matched.

The film is teeming with great actors, each giving outstanding performances, especially **Sally Field** as Mary Todd Lincoln. Her grief and marriage with Abraham are complex and heartbreaking. She moves from inconsolable sadness to a wit so sharp, she not only stands her ground with Congressmen, but overpowers them in a war of words.

While wholly serious and depicting the politics of the time in thrilling fashion, “Lincoln” is funny and an enjoyable film, that creates a balance between the gravity of the situation and the attempts to curry favor with Congressmen over the amendment by some questionable characters.

Even though its main purpose is the chronicle of the amendment’s passage, the real truth lies in the man himself. Day-Lewis turned in the best performance I’ve seen and his personal best, topping his otherworldly presence in “There Will Be Blood” (2007).

Lincoln was a man broken by war, depression and carried a weight few presidents have known, but his strength and will was unbelievable. Of course, there are still who question him, but how could anyone deny his achievements?

From sitting in the war room, reading correspondence late into the night or crawling to the floor, his frame slowly bending and folding at each angle, lying beside his youngest son, Lincoln was a man to admire and Day-Lewis cannot be beaten when awards are handed out.

This year may have been dominated by “The Avengers” and “The Dark Knight Rises” but the true hero of 2012, and the true winner this year was “Lincoln,” thanks to Spielberg’s outstanding vision and Day-Lewis’ unbelievable skill.

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