

Generations

My pick of movies you may have missed

The Academy Awards show airs tonight, and all of Hollywood has been abuzz getting ready for the red carpet and Hollywood's biggest party of the year. Although I admit that I haven't seen any of the movies up for best picture, most of them are in my queue with the notation "long wait" from Netflix.

After decades of watching movies that critics loved, and scratching my head wondering if I missed something because it wasn't such a smash hit to me, I've amassed a collection of oldies but goodies in my DVD library (no streaming yet for this gal) that some of you may not have seen. If you refuse to watch black-and-white films, this column isn't for you.

My favorite director, hands down, was John Huston, who also wrote the screenplays for most of the 37 feature films he directed, many of which are considered classics. During his 46-year career,

Huston received 15 Oscar nominations, won twice (both as director and for screenplay for "Treasure of the Sierra Madre"), and even directed his father, Walter Huston, in it (Walter



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received an Oscar as Best Supporting Actor). "Treasure" is at the top of my list. Who would have guessed that a city girl would select an old 1948 Western as her favorite movie of all time? According to www.thecinematicholics.com, it's "a searing study of greed tinged with bitter irony" and remains Huston's greatest film. Sure, it has my favorite actor, Humphrey Bogart, and although he's good in it, Walter Huston steals the show. Let me know if you agree.

John Huston's "The Maltese Falcon," again

with Bogart, is a classic and also tops my list. This one started the genre film noir, described by Webster as "a type of crime film featuring cynical malevolent characters in a sleazy setting and an ominous atmosphere that is conveyed by shadowy photography and foreboding background music." Yes — that's a perfect description of this film, and Bogart shines in it.

That's Westerns and crime, but what about romance? A top contender in the romance category has got to be "Ship of Fools" directed by Stanley Kramer and nominated for eight Oscars. The romance in this tense 1965 drama was delicate yet deliberate between Simone Signoret and Oskar Werner, who were both nominated for Oscars. The eyes of both are filled with pain, sadness, compassion and passion, and every scene they're in grips you like a vise. They only kiss once, keeping all their clothes on, and

yet it is perhaps the best moment of any movie on my list that truly defines romance.

Signoret was also in "Room at the Top," a 1959 British film that won her an Oscar for her amazing performance. Laurence Harvey plays a cad and was also nominated for an Oscar. Signoret's gritty performance makes it a classic.

Many will claim that Marlon Brando's greatest films were "On the Waterfront" or "The Godfather," and yes, they were powerful pieces of work. However, these people might not have seen "The Men," which I would vote as his best performance. Brando plays a man who becomes injured in World War II and is paralyzed from the waist down. The film is a tour de force for Brando, who cannot accept his limitations and the fact that he will be spending the rest of his life in a wheelchair. He is remarkable, bringing to the screen every emotion his character would

experience.

Oscar-worthy performances encompass actors and actresses from around the world, and one actress import from Italy is also high on my list. "The Rose Tattoo," a 1955 American film adaptation of a Tennessee Williams play of the same name, starred Anna Magnani and Burt Lancaster. Williams wrote the play for Magnani to play on Broadway in 1951, but she rejected the offer because of her difficulty with the English language at the time. By the time of the film adaptation, she combined Italian and English perfectly and won the Academy Award. When you watch her performance, you cry with her and laugh when Lancaster comes into her life and turns it completely upside down.

These films are my treasures, and a couple more I can only briefly list due to space: "Mrs. Brown" starring Judi Dench playing Queen Victoria after the death of her beloved

husband; Paddy Chayefsky's "Middle of the Night" released in 1959, starring Kim Novak and Frederic March about an older man falling in love with a much younger woman; and finally, Noel Coward's play "Brief Encounter," made into a British 1945 film directed by David Lean. After a chance meeting on a train platform, a married doctor (Trevor Howard) and a suburban housewife (Celia Johnson) begin a muted but passionate, and ultimately doomed, love affair. Not only do you get two amazing performances, but Rachmaninoff's "Piano Concerto No. 2" is featured throughout the film, bringing added sentiment to the simplicity of the story.

Try any one or all of the above and let me know what you think. Suggestions from you are very welcome.

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