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## WGA sticks to the script

*Oscar race's front-runners pace guild's screenplay nominations*

**By Kevin Phinney**

There were few surprises when the Writers Guild of America announced its nominees for the 1991 WGA Awards on Wednesday. Winners will be announced at ceremonies March 22 on both coasts.

Contending for the award for best screenplay written directly for the screen are: John Singleton ("Boyz n the Hood"), James Toback ("Bugsy"), Richard LaGravenese ("The Fisher King"), Lawrence and Meg Kasdan ("Grand Canyon") and Callie Khouri ("Thelma & Louise").

For screenplays based on material from another medium, the nominees are: Dick Clement, Ian La Frenais and Roddy Doyle ("The Commitments"), Fannie Flagg and

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## Writers Guild Awards Screen Nominees



### Best Screenplay Written Directly for the Screen

#### Boyz n the Hood



John Singleton  
Opened July 12  
Gross: \$57.5 mil

#### Bugsy



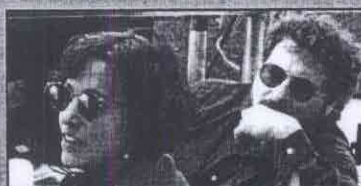
James Toback  
Opened Dec. 13  
Gross: \$40 mil

#### Fisher King



Richard LaGravenese  
Opened Sept. 20  
Gross: \$41.8 mil

#### Grand Canyon



Lawrence & Meg Kasdan  
Opened Dec. 25  
Gross: \$24 mil

#### Thelma & Louise



Callie Khouri  
Opened May 24  
Gross: \$44.7 mil

Sandra Johnson

### Best Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium

#### The Commitments



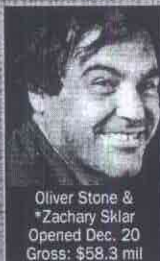
Dick Clement, Ian La Frenais, \*Roddy Doyle  
Opened Aug. 14  
Gross: \$14 mil

#### Fried Green Tomatoes



Fannie Flagg & \*Carol Sobieski  
Opened Dec. 27  
Gross: \$26.3 mil

#### JFK



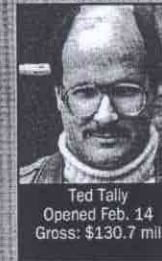
Oliver Stone & \*Zachary Sklar  
Opened Dec. 20  
Gross: \$58.3 mil

#### The Prince of Tides



Becky Johnston & \*Pat Conroy  
Opened Dec. 25  
Gross: \$59.5 mil

#### The Silence of the Lambs



Ted Tally  
Opened Feb. 14  
Gross: \$130.7 mil

\*Not pictured

## WGA

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the late Carol Sobieski ("Fried Green Tomatoes"), Oliver Stone and Zachary Sklar ("JFK"), Pat Conroy and Becky Johnston ("The Prince of Tides") and Ted Tally ("The Silence of the Lambs").

As time before the Academy Awards grows short, the WGA nominations serve as a last-minute indicator foreshadowing potential Oscar front-runners and dark horses in the writing categories. Nominees were selected by the WGA membership, numbering 10,000. Many of the Oscar voters in the writing categories are also WGA members.

Two of the WGA nominees have already won major recognition. Toback ("Bugsy") was cited for best screenplay by the Los Angeles Film Critics Assn. in December, while Khouri ("Thelma & Louise") received the Golden Globe Award in January.

Most of the nominees were first timers, with two exceptions. Stone has been nominated four times previously, and won for "Midnight Express." Lawrence Kasdan is

also a multiple nominee, with four noms and a win for "The Big Chill."

The 44th annual Writers Guild of America awards ceremonies will be on the West Coast at the Beverly Hilton Hotel and on the East Coast at New York's Waldorf-Astoria Hotel.

Although the nominations didn't surprise the experts, nominees expressed both shock and delight at hearing that their films were honored by the Guild.

Khouri's nomination, in addition to her Golden Globe award in January, should improve her chances at the Oscars — even though "Thelma & Louise" is her first screenplay. "To be among such esteemed writers is a real acknowledgment for me," she said. "This may be my first script, but it's really a kind of karmic reward, because there was major suffering going on before it. It was really time for something to go right for me, but this is all so unexpected."

Nominated with Stone for his work on "JFK," Sklar said being recognized for his first foray into screenwriting was especially grati-

fying because he and the guild have a checkered history.

"For me it's special for a couple of reasons," Sklar said. "One is that it's your peers who are making the judgment and that means the most. The other is that my father, George Sklar, who was of the early members of the guild in the 1940s, was blacklisted in the 1950s. I finally feel welcome and accepted in a world that for me growing up was very inaccessible and frightening."

Singleton, nominated in the best original screenplay category for his debut film, "Boyz n the Hood," said that for him, the writing nod was meaningful because he believes good writing is the key to good filmmaking: "I went to film school to learn how to write screenplays because I figured if I knew how to write a good script and tell a good story, directing would come as a result of that," he said. "If my films were going to have any depth to them, I knew I was going to have to learn to write."

Of the success of "Boyz," Singleton said, "I just expected the film to come out and that people

that I knew would love it. What is great about it is that it has captured the hearts and minds of more than just the people in my neighborhood."

Lawrence Kasdan, a veteran nominee recognized this year for "Grand Canyon," said "It always means a lot. You want other writers to think you've done good writing, and it's very satisfying to have done this work together with Meg and then have the recognition of the guild."

If Johnston wins for her work on "The Prince of Tides," she'll have an opportunity she hasn't had since her script was filmed. She'll get to meet Pat Conroy, the author who wrote the novel and shares screenwriting credit. And what will she tell him? "I'll say, 'Pat, it's nice to meet you.'" □

## Court TV in U.K.

Courtroom Television Network said it reached an agreement with British production company Barracough Carey Productions Ltd. and the United Kingdom's Channel 4 to televise trials on that channel. Terms were not disclosed.