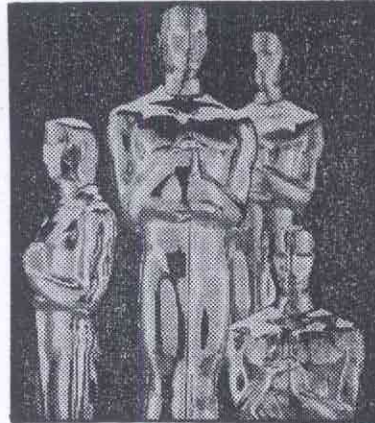# The Word on The Street: Something For Everyone

By Hal Hinson
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In Hollywood, an expert is anyone with a studio pass. This year the experts, the so-called insiders, are baffled. Baffled about Oscar and just about everything having to do with their business. Usually some kind of consensus begins to emerge, and the prognosticators will explain why so-and-so will win, as if they'd just picked the tomatoes out of Oscar's Cobb salad. This is what we call the conventional wisdom. But this year, there's a notable shortage of wisdom, conventional or otherwise. Anybody could win, and so no one's spouting off. At least not the experts.

But when it comes to the Oscars, everybody's an expert. So that's who I asked. Everybody. (That is, everybody who'd talk to me, provided I call them experts and not disgrace their families by using their names.) And, as it turns out, they're just as good at thinking like Oscar—and talking like real insiders—as the real insiders.

Of course, my insiders are just as divided as the real ones. And just as cynical about the process. As one friend says, "To think like the Academy, you have to be psychotic. That's why so many films with psychopaths are nominated this year. It's the Year of the Psychopath."

Another says, "You can't second-guess the Oscars anymore, because it's just too messed up."

Nobody thinks the voting is based on merit. The nominees for Best Picture are "Beauty and the Beast," "Bugsy," "JFK," "The Prince of Tides" and "The Silence of the Lambs," and, according to my insiders, none of them is sufficiently epic or social-minded to qualify as a true Oscar picture. "JFK" comes closest to meeting

RITA KEMPLEY SAYS	WILL WIN	SHOULD WIN
Best Picture	"Bugsy"	"The Silence of the Lambs"
Best Director	Jonathan Demme	Jonathan Demme
Best Actor	Nick Nolte	Anthony Hopkins
Best Actress	Susan Sarandon	Laura Dern
Best Supporting Actor	Jack Palance	Michael Lerner
Best Supporting Actress	Kate Nelligan	Mercedes Ruehl

HAL HINSON SAYS	WILL WIN	SHOULD WIN
Best Picture	"Bugsy"	"The Silence of the Lambs"
Best Director	Oliver Stone	Jonathan Demme
Best Actor	Nick Nolte	Anthony Hopkins
Best Actress	Jodie Foster	Jodie Foster
Best Supporting Actor	Jack Palance	Harvey Keitel
Best Supporting Actress	Diane Ladd	Mercedes Ruehl

Oscars

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these standards; it does at least have a social agenda. But the Academy is notoriously conservative, and it may feel a little queasy about the way director Oliver Stone has played Mr. Potato Head with history.

"It would seem un-Academy-like for them to vote for 'JFK,'" one expert says, taking a historical perspective. "They don't usually make the most interesting choice. Something flawed and fascinating usually doesn't make it. In 1967 'Bonnie and Clyde' was nominated, but instead, they picked safe, solid, stolid 'In the Heat of the Night.'"

By this criterion, "The Silence of the Lambs" may fall into the "Bonnie and Clyde" category. "Of all the films that came out last year," one of my younger insiders says, "'Silence of the Lambs' made the strongest impression. It's the one people remember. But it may just

be too tough to win an Oscar." A more disillusioned expert says, "It won't win simply because it deserves to, and the film that most deserves it never wins."

Most people feel that if "Silence" had come out later in the year, it would stand a better chance. Oscar's memory, they say, is notoriously short. Films released in the second part of the year fare far better than films that come out, as "Silence" did, last February. What about "Prince of Tides," then?

"No," says one of my cattier experts, "because Barbra Streisand has to have something to groan about."

And what about "Beauty and the Beast," which has the distinction of being the first animated feature to receive a Best Picture nomination? (Wait a second, wasn't "Rocky" animated?) Most feel that the nomination is honor enough. Plus, voting for a cartoon, as opposed to a flesh-and-blood person, isn't very satisfying.

"If you sat down and asked most of the Academy members what they liked best last year, my guess is they'd say 'Beauty and the Beast,' but they're just not going to allow themselves to vote for it," says one expert.

That leaves "Bugsy," and at least one of my amateur prognosticators thinks she smells a sweep. "They'll do a little tap dance around 'Bugsy,'" she says. "The best movie I saw last year was 'Barton Fink,' but 'Bugsy' was next. It's almost a great movie. And Warren Beatty's done everything right lately. He'll get it for being old but looking young. For being old and having a baby. For marrying a woman who can really act. And for cheating on Madonna."

Another reason it will win, according to one staunch "Bugsy" supporter, is that it's a real movie movie. "I think that Hollywood will go with a more Hollywood movie. It's got all the old ingredients, the glamour, the clothes, the big stars. Plus they got to drag out all of those old cars and drive them around."

And, last, "'Bugsy' will win because there is a reason not to vote for every one of the other movies."

Though I think my experts are right about "Bugsy," I can't go along with the notion of a sweep. This year will be a scattershot year with everyone coming away with a little something. "Bugsy" will win Best Picture, but director Barry Levinson won't win for Best Director, and Beatty won't win for Best Actor. The reason that Levinson won't win is because "Bugsy" is thought to be more Beatty and writer James Toback's movie than Levinson's. (Toback will win the Oscar for Best Original Screenplay.)

The leading Best Director contenders, it seems, are Jonathan Demme for "Silence" and Stone for "JFK." They