



# Natural Selections

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY



## Mental Health Awareness

SARAH BAKER

Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW) falls on the first full week of October, meaning that this year it will occur October 7-13. MIAW was established by Congress in 1990 after the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) pushed to increase public awareness about mental health and illness and to reduce stigma in talking about mental health issues. In 2018, NAMI is promoting the theme of [CureStigma](#) to get rid of the environment of shame or fear that prevents individuals from seeking help. There are several other days in October further dedicated to the focus on mental health in our society. [World Mental Health Day](#) falls on October 10 with the emphasis this year on young people and mental health in a changing world. Recent previous themes include mental health in the workplace (2017), psychological first aid (2016), dignity in mental health (2015), and living with schizophrenia (2014). Furthermore, October 11 is [National Depression Screening Day](#), and October 9 is [National Day Without Stigma](#).

The goal of these October events is to increase awareness about mental illness, promote community outreach and public education, advocate for treatment and recovery, and fight stigma that prevents people from seeking help for mental illness. At the Rockefeller University, we have the chance to do that too. Rockefeller has many resources available to those struggling with mental health, if one just knows where to look. One common complaint I have heard from the campus community is that these resources may be hard to find, so I have worked with Human Resources to compile this list below:

### Psychiatry

#### 1. Dr. Nisha Mehta-Naik

Private confidential sessions on-site in OHS, HOS118.

Tuesday and Thursday, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Call x8414 for an appointment.

No copay

#### 2. Weill Cornell Psychiatric Center

(646)962-2820

315 East 62nd Street, 5th Floor

Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

\$15 copay (RU Choice and RU Managed Care Plans)

20% coinsurance after deductible (Oxford Plan)

#### 3. Employee Assistance Program Consortium

(212)746-5890

409 East 60th Street, Room 3-305

Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

On-call therapist available after hours

No copay

### Occupational Health Services

OHS serves to promote a culture of physical, mental, and emotional wellness. Two nurse practitioners and an occupational health nurse are available to help with any stress you may find yourself dealing with. The office is located in HOS 118 for drop-ins, or call x8414 to schedule an appointment.

<http://inside.rockefeller.edu/hr/occupationalHealthServices>

### Mindfulness Practices for Stress Reduction

Tuesdays, 12pm or 12:30pm, RRB110; September – May

Stress is one of the biggest contributors to poor health. Its effects can cause physical illness, damage relationships, and negatively impact work performance. Mindfulness meditation is a means to reduce stress, boost the immune system, im-

prove attention, and promote well-being.

### Nutrition Series

To help manage stress through healthy eating habits, the University offers a nine-month lecture series and one-on-one nutrition counseling sessions. The series begins in the fall.

### Yoga

This is a seven-week series throughout the year designed to focus on different parts of the body. The fall series begins September 10, 2018 in the Great Hall, Welch Hall.

Beginner Class at 12 p.m.; Intermediate Class at 1 p.m.

Must register at x7788.

### Run/Walk Club

Tuesdays 12pm – 1pm. Meet at Security booth at 66<sup>th</sup> Street.

Step away from the stresses of your day and walk or run with a group or solo at your own pace. See Tim Blanchfield, Fitness Manager, for more information.

### Fitness Center

Exercise is also vital for maintaining mental fitness, and it can reduce stress.

Located on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of Founders Hall, from free weights to cardio equipment and classes, the gym contains several options to fit everyone's fitness needs. For more information and to find classes you may be interested in, click here: <http://inside.rockefeller.edu/hr/aboutGym>.

### Stressed over childcare?

Bright Horizons offers backup daycare for when your regular arrangements are unavailable. They have center based and at-home care available. Call 877-BH-CARES for more information.

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### Stressed over Eldercare?

Bright Horizons offers assistance in finding a home health care provider. Call 877-BH-CARES for more information.

### Financial Well-Being

*Retirement Planning* - A TIAA representative is available on-site to discuss your personal financial situation. This includes discussions about saving for college, purchasing a home, etc. while continuing to save for retirement.

*Saving for College* - Applying for college can be stressful, but what about paying for college? The University offers you the option of payroll deductions for the NY State 529 plan. Find out more at [www.NYsaves.org](http://www.NYsaves.org). Additionally, the University offers tuition reimbursement for fulltime staff employees.

While most of these resources are available to students, post-docs, faculty, and employees at Rockefeller, the options may differ

based on your position or immediate needs, so please reach out to Human Resources if you are unsure which option would be best for you.

We do have fantastic resources available at Rockefeller, but from my experience, some students are hesitant to use them. Cost should not be a factor, as the psychiatry services available are either free or a small co-pay. Some people are afraid of their mentor or peers finding out that they are struggling, as this may affect the perception of them as a scientist. As a community, let's break the stigma of being able to talk about mental health. Mental health is just as important as physical health and Rockefeller is working hard to foster an environment of overall well-being for its community. Academia can be a highly stressful place in which to work, especially if one lacks encouragement from a superior or peers. The university is a place where support can come from many levels that all contribute to the current and future success of its trainees. One of the most protective things that I have found for my own mental health is feeling a sense of community, both inside and outside of the lab. So look out for each other, find things to engage in that you are passionate about, and take advantage of the resources Rockefeller has to offer. This is how we will set up trainees to be successful, productive, and satisfied.

## Natural Selections

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## Keep the Secrets, But Share the Magic

MELISSA JARMEL

With another academic year under way and Halloween at our heels, what better time to see *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*? In this two-part play, the Hogwarts students that we came to know so well through J.K. Rowling's seven book series now have kids who are attending the same school of witchcraft and wizardry and having their own adventures.

Like many Potter fans, I picked up the script when it was published, hoping for a nostalgic hit of the magical world from my childhood. And like many fans, I was disappointed with what I read because it didn't have the feel of J.K. Rowling's writing, making it easier to start nitpicking at the plot and some character developments. I still knew I was going to see the show because I'll see anything Harry Potter related, but I had reservations. Would John Tiffany and Jack Thorne's script be translated to magic on the stage? Or would it feel like a commercial cash cow? Did it need to be two shows?

The most affordable way to see the show is by entering the Friday Forty on the TodayTix app. Every Friday from 12:01 a.m. until 1 p.m., you can put in an entry for the following week's shows, and then they contact the winners between 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. that same Friday. New blocks of tickets are released every few months from the box office if you want to avoid paying marked-up resale prices, but you might have to wait a few months for your date. However, another Broadway secret to getting a ticket to a nearly sold out show is cancellation lines. The show's popularity and the day's weather usually determine how early people start forming a line at the box office for cancellation tickets. These are tickets that are returned to the box office on the day of the show; the box office will sell these tickets to the first person in the cancellation line as the tickets are returned. Most cancellation tickets aren't sold until minutes before the show is about to start, and frequently these are

center orchestra tickets at face-value. The number of returned tickets fluctuates every day (though rainy days tend to have more), and this is not a guaranteed option. You could wait all morning and go home empty-handed.

This was the option I decided to go with to see the show this summer. I always bring something to read with me to pass the time, but I've also had many wonderful experiences meeting new people in theatre rush or cancellation lines because everyone already shares a common interest in the show. There is also often a sense of camaraderie in waiting so you can pop out of the line to get food or coffee or find a restroom. This summer, I got in line around 9:30 a.m. and about five minutes before the show started, I was called into the box office to get a ticket that was ten rows from the stage, directly in the center

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of the theatre for face-value. Still a splurge, but definitely worth it.

My reservations about seeing the show quickly vanished as I watched the magic unfold on stage. The costumes are stunning and the staging is impressive. Even the carpets around the theatre are on theme; the Lyric Theatre was specifically redone for \$33 million dollars for this production, and it shows. They even have a cafe inside where drinks, sandwiches, and snacks are surprisingly available for prices that may be cheaper than

what you can find around Times Square otherwise. This play is promoting a #KeepTheSecrets social media campaign that encourages people who have seen the show to not reveal the visual effects and moving moments so that everyone who comes to see the play can share the same experience, even those who have read the script. I want to respect that tradition, so I will avoid sharing details. But I will say that the acting and staging dramatically change the experience of the story from just reading the script, and the visuals are some of the most impressive I've ever seen on stage. I found myself being more

drawn into the themes of how PTSD affects parenting (because how could Harry not have PTSD) and how being raised by people of fame changes childhood more than I was when just reading the script. So if you're coming to see the original book series or movies on stage, you might be disappointed, but if you let a new story be told in the same realm you are familiar with, you'll get your hit of nostalgia with a great day of theatre. Does it need to be two shows to tell the story? Probably not. Does it need to be two shows to let you soak in the magic that theatre and Harry Potter can pull off in just a few hours? Probably.

## Kelvin Droegemeier, Trump's pick for Director of Office of Science and Technology Policy

AILEEN MARSHALL

On July 31 of this year, Trump nominated Kelvin Droegemeier, a meteorologist, for Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. This position has been vacant for 19 months since Trump took office, an unprecedented length of time. At this time, Droegemeier will need to be confirmed by the Senate.

Droegemeier, age 60, was born and raised in Kansas, and earned a bachelor's in meteorology from the University of Oklahoma in 1980. He received a master's in atmospheric science in 1982 at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and then a Ph.D. in the same field there in 1985. That same year, he joined the faculty at the University of Oklahoma and became their Vice President of Research in 2009.

Most of the work over his career has been developing ways to use computers and other technology to predict severe weather events, particularly for businesses. He has been active with the National Science Foundation (NSF), a government agency that supports scientific research and awards grants. In 1989, he started the NSF's Center for Analysis and Prediction of Storms. He was that Center's director from 1994 to 2006. In 2000, he started his own private company, Weather Decisions Technologies, which now has offices worldwide. He founded the Engineering Research Center for Collaborative Adaptive Sensing of the Atmosphere at the NSF in 2003. He was that center's deputy director from 2006 to 2012. He was appointed to the National Science Board, which oversees the National Science Foundation, and acts as advisors to the president and congress, in 2004 and 2011, under both Presidents George W. Bush and

Barak Obama, and was the board vice chairman from 2012 to 2016.

At the University of Oklahoma, Droegemeier created the Sasaki Institute to develop "application and knowledge, policy and advanced technology for the mutual benefit of the government, academic and private sectors." He also established a supercomputing center there. According to his biography at the National Science Board, Droegemeier has more than 75 journal articles and book chapters, and over 200 conference publications. He has worked as a consultant to several companies, including American Airlines, Continental Airlines, Honeywell, as well as with the National Transportation and Safety Board. He is currently Oklahoma's Secretary of Science and Technology and on a state committee to encourage the growth of private weather companies.

Last year, Droegemeier wrote an editorial to the *Des Moines Register* encouraging federal research funding. "Though the benefits of short-term savings in the yearly federal budgets may be appealing, they result in insidious, long-term consequences.... Our country is losing ground rapidly to other nations... Due to underfunding, we risk losing an entire generation of researchers... Balanced, predictable and stable funding, is essential for the United States to remain a world leader in research and a translator of research outcomes into practical products and services that benefit all of our citizens."

Reactions to his nomination by his peers have been positive. John Holdren, Ph.D., a previous director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, called Droegemeier "a solid choice." He said that Droegemeier was a



Kelvin Droegemeier, November 19, 2014.

Photo Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

serious climate scientist and advisor. Kei Kozumi, who previously worked with Droegemeier, while working at the Office of Science and Technology Policy, said that "He is an excellent scientist, communicator, and public servant, and therefore a superb choice to be the next director of OSTP." Roger Wakimoto is the President of the American Meteorological Society and has known Droegemeier for many years. He said that Droegemeier "has often been the voice of reason with indisputable and comprehensive facts at congressional hearings and other venues....I give him my unqualified support."

So far, during his Senate committee hearings, Droegemeier has strongly supported keeping science free of political influence and sexual harassment. He said that having researchers from other countries is an important part of science, but should be done "with care." He has avoided a response when asked about climate change. Droegemeier is expected to have his full Senate confirmation hearings starting the last week of September.



## Word of the Month

DAKOTA BLACKMAN

### hearing

[heer-ing]

noun

1. The process, function, or power of perceiving sound; *specifically* : the special sense by which noises and tones are received as stimuli
  2. a : Opportunity to be heard, to present one's side of a case, or to be generally known or appreciated
  - b (1): a listening to arguments (2): a preliminary examination in criminal procedure
  - c : a session (as of a legislative committee) in which testimony is taken from witnesses
- chiefly dialectical* : a piece of news

Over the course of the past year, activism has erupted around topics that have slowly but steadily been creeping into the public consciousness. In the era of activism surrounding the #MeToo movement and Black Lives Matter, hearings—as well as the absence of them—have been permeating the news. Trials and convictions for the shooting of unarmed black men and women, as well as those for cases of sexual harassment and assault, have been both present (in frequency) and elusive (in the follow through). Notably, most recently, and what sparked my curiosity about the word “hearing,” has been the four-day Senate Judiciary Committee confirmation hearings for Brett Kavanaugh, the slated replacement for Justice Anthony Kennedy on the United States Supreme Court.

During these hearings, Senators questioned Kavanaugh regarding his stance on various political and legal issues that would affect his time on the bench. At a base level, this process is consistent with the second definition listed above: a hearing is the “opportunity to be heard, to present one's side of a case, or to be generally known or appreciated.” It further

defines a hearing as “a listening to arguments” or “a session (as of a legislative committee) in which testimony is taken from witnesses.”

Based on this definition, a hearing takes a conceptual step away from the simple nominal form of the word “hear” and adds on the process of listening for the purpose of making a decision. The process of explicitly connecting the simple act of listening to the law took about three hundred years, starting as early as the 1200's. In the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, the verb “hear” was defined as “the perception of sound by ear,” or “the action of listening.” Originating from the old English *heran*, it also meant “to obey, to follow; to grant, accede to,” and—most interestingly—“to judge.” In the 1570s, the verbal noun used in the context of the law surfaced, defined as “a listening to evidence in a court of law.”

It is clear from these definitions that the verb “hear” is not just a general awareness of sound. It is also referring to the perception and understanding of that sound, meaning the act

of listening is intentional, not passive. When thinking about this definition in the context of the law today, and specifically in the context of Kavanaugh's hearings, one must question whether this definition is truly applicable. Listening with the intent to understand does not seem to be a skill in the wheelhouse of many of our politicians. White House officials and Republican Senators alike have withheld hundreds of thousands of documents about Kavanaugh's record; conversely, confidential documents have been leaked anonymously. Kavanaugh is supported by conservative Republicans almost exclusively, and opposed by Democrats almost exclusively. The Republican agenda to push him through to confirmation seems to be motivated not by a willingness to truly listen to the arguments of those who may suffer with another conservative judge on the bench (due to his stance on *Roe v. Wade* or his definition of birth control, for example)—ironically, in this regard, these politicians have turned a deaf ear.



Photo Courtesy of Mark Wilson | GETTY IMAGES

## UPCOMING EVENTS



### FUTURE OF CARE

Technology in Medicine Conference

## Tri-Institutional Future of Care Conference

Date(s): October 20th, 2018

Time(s): 9:00am - 5:00pm

Location: The Rockefeller University

This conference highlights the potential of NYC to be a central hub of healthcare innovation with its research institutions, healthcare networks, and strong ties to investment opportunities. What ideas can we take from our labs and clinics and how can we transform them into actionable progress? Morning talks and networking opportunities will allow participants to engage with leaders in these fields, and the afternoon is filled with skill based workshops. Key speakers include David Solit, Ali Brivanlou, and Olivier Elemento as well as the CEOs of CityMD, Celmatix, and COTA. Apply to the conference free of charge and find more information at [www.futureofcare.nyc](http://www.futureofcare.nyc)

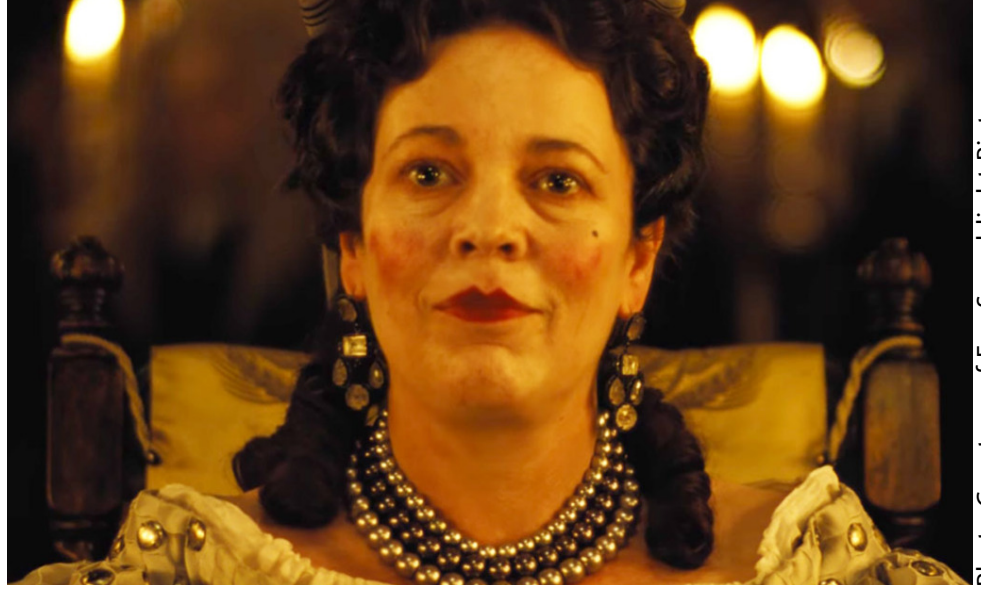
## For Your Consideration – Ones to Watch, Vol. 1 Edition

JIM KELLER

Following the Venice International Film Festival (August 29 – September 8, 2018) and the Telluride Film Festival (August 31 – September 3, 2018), the Oscar race is unofficially (or officially, depending on with whom you speak) underway. In many ways, the last Oscar race took place during the year of the woman. For one, people across America took part in the Women's March—widely considered the largest single-day demonstration in the history of the U.S. But for another, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) tied a record for nominations of women set in 2016 by nominating them across most Oscar categories, including those traditionally dominated by men such as cinematography, directing or film editing. The official Academy tally shows that forty women received nominations in competitive, non-acting categories. Brava, but if the impending confirmation of Brett Kavanaugh to the highest court in the land is any indication, sadly there is a long, long, long way to go. So, let's keep our attention on women and begin this first of a four-part series focused on the leading ladies of the Best Actress race.

Last year, we saw #OscarsSoWhite kept at bay for a second year in a row with people of color represented in the major categories, and of course, #MeToo was front and center with many stars wearing black at the Academy Awards in solidarity. I had asked in my first column of this series whether the Academy would shy away from the state of the nation under Trump's thumb with their nominations or look him square in the eye. I would argue the latter based on how things shaped up. The critical reception of the films that will screen over the next couple of months will tell this year's tale. For now, let's examine last year's Best Actress nomination results.

The Best Actress race saw Frances McDormand leading the field with her powerhouse performance in *Three Billboards outside Ebbing, Missouri* as Mildred, a mother who goes on a warpath against the complacent police department in her small town who failed to solve her daughter's murder case. McDormand went on to win the Oscar but not without competition from Saoirse Ronan, who plays the titular teenager in the coming of age drama *Lady Bird*.



Olivia Colman in "The Favourite."

Photo Courtesy of Fox Searchlight Pictures

Of the roles that were discussed here, only two secured Best Actress nominations: the aforementioned McDormand and Meryl Streep for *The Post*. *Mother!* was too divisive for Jennifer Lawrence to get her foot in the door, and Kate Winslet's shot with *Wonder Wheel* went down along with helmer Woody Allen who became embroiled in the #MeToo controversy. Meanwhile, Emma Stone was overlooked for her remarkable portrayal of Billie Jean King in *Battle of the Sexes*, likewise Jessica Chastain as Molly Bloom in *Molly's Game*. The Academy also couldn't find room for Dame Judi Dench in *Victoria and Abdul*, likely because the film itself was a bit stilted. That left only Emma Thompson, whose film *The Children Act* was pushed to this year and fell out of contention. Instead, the last two slots were filled by Sally Hawkins (*The Shape of Water*) and Margot Robbie (*I, Tonya*).

**THE RED QUEEN:** Olivia Colman – *The Favourite* (director: Yorgos Lanthimos):

**FYC:** This biographical drama focuses on the behind-the-scenes politics between two cousins who compete to be court favorites during the reign of Queen Anne (Colman) in early 18th century England.

Most of Colman's film accolades have been for 2011's *Tyrannosaur*, which won the British Independent Film Award for Best Actress and the Sundance Film Festival's World Cinema – Dramatic Act-

ing award (shared with co-star Peter Mullan). However, most of her overall acclaim has come from television. All told, Colman has earned two British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) awards 1) in 2013 for two separate performances in *Accused* (Best Supporting Actress) and *Twenty Twelve* (Best Female Performance in a Comedy Programme), and 2) in 2014 for *Broadchurch* (Best Leading Actress), three additional BAFTA nominations for Best Female Performance in a Comedy Programme (*Twenty Twelve* in 2013, *Rev.* in 2015, and *Fleabag* in 2017), and a Primetime Emmy nomination for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Limited Series or a Movie. That's a pretty lengthy list, but with critics singing Colman's praise in Venice and Telluride for her performance in *The Favourite*, her list of film accolades is about to get much longer. There has been a lot of chatter about whether she or either of her two co-stars (Emma Stone and Rachel Weisz) is the lead in this Golden Lion nominee of the Venice Film Festival, so Colman could end up in the Best Supporting Actress category but a nomination seems inevitable.

**THE FIRST-TIMER:** Glenn Close – *The Wife* (director: Björn Runge):

**FYC:** In this drama, based on Meg Wolitzer's novel of the same name, a wife questions her life choices as she accompa-

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nies her husband to Stockholm where he will receive the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Would you believe me if I told you that Close has been nominated for six Oscars but has never won? It's true. Beginning in 1983 for her supporting role in *The World According to Garp*, Close earned three consecutive nominations in the category for *The Big Chill* and *The Natural*. She then earned her first of three Best Actress nominations in 1988 for *Fatal Attraction* followed by *Dangerous Liaisons* in 1989 and *Albert Nobbs* in 2012. Close is already receiving rave reviews for her performance, including my own: "Glenn Close packs a perfect punch in *The Wife*. Her low simmer heating to a boil has never been better, and she is headed straight for the Best Actress Oscar race!" that combined with her perpetual bridesmaid status should be more than enough to land her in the top five.

**THE MUSICIAN:** Lady Gaga – *A Star is Born* (director: Bradley Cooper):

**FYC:** Yes, *that* Bradley Cooper. The actor has stepped behind the camera for the first time to tackle one of Hollywood's timeless tales of love and stardom in which a musician helps a young singer and actress (Lady Gaga) find fame as age and alcoholism cause his own career to spiral downward.

This is the fourth time the film has made it to the silver screen. The first, in 1937 starred Janet Gaynor and Fredric March, both of whom earned Oscar nominations (six Oscar nominations and two wins, including an Honorary Oscar for W. Howard Greene's color photography, Metacritic Score: 77). The second, in 1954, starred Judy Garland and James Mason who were also nominated for their roles in this musical version of the classic (six Oscar nominations, Metacritic Score: 89). The last version, in 1976, starred Barbara Streisand and Kris Kristofferson, neither of whom were nominated for acting (three Oscar nominations and one win for Streisand for Best Music, Original Song, Metacritic Score: 58). Forgive the pun, but critics from Venice to the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) have been going gaga over the latest version, and Gaga's performance in particular. She has been nominated for Best Achievement in Mu-



Lady Gaga in "A Star is Born."

sic Written for Motion Pictures, Original Song for the documentary *The Hunting Ground* in 2015, and has found success as an actress on television winning a Golden Globe for Best Performance by an Actress in a Limited Series or Motion Picture Made for Television for *American Horror Story* just two years ago. The film is easily one of my most anticipated of the year, and with even skeptics falling for it, it looks to be a major awards contender this season (current Metacritic Score: 87).

**THE WIFE:** Viola Davis - *Widows* (director: Steve McQueen):

**FYC:** Set in contemporary Chicago, this heist drama based upon the 1983 ITV series of the same name, follows four desperate women who pick up the slack after their criminal husbands were killed and conspire to forge a future on their own terms.

Davis finally won her first Oscar in 2017 for Best Supporting Actress (even though her role was really a lead) in *Fences*. I suspect the category fraud was to make room for her in a crowded field. Davis was previously nominated for Best Supporting Actress for 2008's *Doubt* and famously lost Best Actress for *The Help* in 2012 to Meryl Streep. She has also been a regular in the television awards circuit, receiving back-to-back nominations for Best Performance by an Actress in a Television Series – Drama for her role in ABC's *How to Get Away with Murder*. This same role netted her a Primetime Emmy in 2015. Most recently, Davis earned an Outstanding Guest Ac-

tress in a Drama Series nomination for her crossover role on *Scandal*. One could argue that Davis is overdue for a Best Actress Oscar and reviews out of TIFF for *Widows* suggest this may be the role to do it.

**THE COMEDIENNE:** Melissa McCarthy – *Can You Ever Forgive Me?* (director: Marielle Heller):

**FYC:** Based on Lee Israel's memoir of the same name, this drama tells the true story of best-selling celebrity biographer Israel (McCarthy) who resorts to forgery to revitalize her failing writing career.

McCarthy was nominated for Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Role for *Bridesmaids* in 2012, a role that also netted her BAFTA, Screen Actors Guild (SAG), and Broadcast Film Critics Association (BFCA) nominations. In 2011, she won the Primetime Emmy for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Comedy Series for *Mike & Molly*, a role she was nominated for subsequently in 2012 and 2014—both years where she earned double nominations for *Saturday Night Live* as Outstanding Guest Actress in a Comedy Series. McCarthy also earned nominations for SNL in 2013, 2016, and 2017 for her hosting duties, and a Golden Globe nomination for *Spy* in 2016 for Best Performance by an Actress in a Motion Picture – Comedy or Musical. Here, McCarthy steps into the dramatic arena having built a successful career as a comedian, and following the film's premiere at Telluride, many

critics consider it the best performance of her career. It could very well be her ticket to a Best Actress Oscar, but could the roles of other women in the category be considered more important?

**THE DETECTIVE:** Nicole Kidman - *Destroyer* (director: Karen Kusama):

**FYC:** In this crime thriller, a police detective (Kidman) reconnects with people from a previous undercover assignment to make peace with her demons.

Kidman's 35-year career is on an upswing. Last year she was nominated for Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Role for *Lion* and just this year she won the Golden Globe for Best Performance by an Actress in a Limited Series or a Motion Picture Made for Television for *Big Little Lies*. She was first nominated for Best Actress for *Moulin Rouge!* in 2002 and won in that category the next year for *The Hours*. Kidman was also nominated for Best Actress in 2011 for *Rabbit Hole*. Following the premiere of *Destroyer* at Telluride, Kidman was lauded for her performance. Although a nomination is not out of reach, a win could be a bit difficult because the film itself is said to have some issues. Kidman is also competing against herself and may instead be nominated for her supporting role in Joel Edgerton's *Boy Erased*.

**THE NEWCOMER:** KiKi Layne - *If Beale Street Could Talk* (director: Barry Jenkins):

**FYC:** Based on James Baldwin's novel of the same name, this drama follows an African-American woman (Layne) who scrambles to prove the innocence of her fiancé, who was wrongly-convicted of a crime, while carrying their first child.

Jenkins' last film *Moonlight*, featuring a cast of relatively unknown actors, took the world by storm when it won Best Picture in 2017 following what is now known as the worst flub in Oscar history: when *La La Land* was mistakenly announced as Best Picture at the Academy Awards. *Moonlight* was nominated for seven other Oscars, two of which it won: Best Supporting Actor for Mahershala Ali and Best Adapted Screenplay for Jenkins and Tarell Alvin McCraney, and included a Best Supporting Actress nod for Naomie Harris. Given the success of the film,



Kiki Layne in "If Beale Street Could Talk."

all eyes were on *Beale Street* at TIFF, and early word is that it doesn't disappoint, announcing Layne as a star in the making. The film, Layne's first feature film, currently boasts a Metacritic score of 86, well within the realm of a Best Picture contender. Given what Jenkins accomplished with *Moonlight*, which is only his second film, could lightning strike twice?

**THE WHITE QUEEN:** Saoirse Ronan - *Mary Queen of Scots* (director: Josie Rourke):

**FYC:** This epic historical drama, based on John Guy's biography *My Heart Is My Own: The Life of Mary Queen of Scots*, chronicles the 1569 conflict between Mary Stuart (Ronan) and her cousin Elizabeth I, who had Stuart imprisoned and facing execution for plotting to overthrow the Queen of England.

Ronan first earned a Best Supporting Actress nomination for 2007's *Atonement*, and she has since been nominated for Best Actress twice: last year for *Lady Bird* and in 2016 for *Brooklyn*. Those same roles earned her BAFTA nominations as did her role in *The Lovely Bones* in 2010. The latter, along with *Lady Bird*, earned her SAG nominations, and she has been nominated in three different categories: Best Young Actress (*Atonement*, *The Lovely Bones*, which she won for, and *Hannah*); Best Actress (*The Lovely Bones*, *Brooklyn*, and *Lady Bird*); and Best Actress in a Comedy (*Lady Bird*).

Unlike the other films discussed here, this one has yet to screen so we don't really have much to go on outside of Ronan's

stature in the Oscar field. But she looks very strong in the trailer and appears to showcase a lot of range. Ronan joins Amy Adams and Jessica Chastain as an actress who is likely to win at least one Oscar for her work—she just needs the right role at the right time. Could this be it?

The leading roles discussed here are a snapshot of safe bets as the Oscar race begins. There are many others to consider, including Claire Foy in Damien Chazelle's space biopic *First Man* based on James R. Hansen's book *First Man: The Life of Neil A. Armstrong*, which examines the life of Neil Armstrong leading up to the Apollo 11 mission that led him to become the first man to walk on the Moon in 1969. Foy has received raves out of Venice and Telluride for her performance and with the film a likely Best Picture contender, she should figure prominently this season. It will be interesting to see if Toni Collette can hold on for a nomination following the premiere of *Hereditary* at the Sundance Film Festival back in January. The last time an actress was nominated for a horror film was in 2010 when Natalie Portman won for *Black Swan*—a film that was originally seen as not "Academy friendly". There's also a shot for Felicity Jones who plays Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg in *On the Basis of Sex*, Carey Mulligan in *Wildlife*, Mary Elizabeth Winstead in *All About Nina*, and the aforementioned Thompson for *The Children Act*. Oh, and if it has an Oscar-qualifying run, Taraji P. Henson in *The Best of Enemies*.

Stay tuned in November when I examine the Best Actor race and the leading men that drive it.



## Culture Corner

### Camila Cabello's *Havana* Wows Pop Music

BERNIE LANGS

The first time I heard the pop song *Havana* by Cuban-American recording artist Camila Cabello was on a radio tuned to one of my 20-year-old daughter's stations. I was immediately floored by the the great groove and the unusually complex, smooth, and melodic vocals. I've lamented for many years that most contemporary rock and pop songs bounce back between two or three chords and depend on singing lines that border on the monotonous. I've also long held the opinion that the main concern in today's music is tilted towards the emotional state of the lead singer, too often an expressive lament over a broken relationship or other adolescent issues that have long ceased to concern, amuse, or interest me. Therefore, as an old-school rock-and-roll geezer, my attention was pleasantly caught by *Havana* as it played that first time for me over the airwaves. When I got home, I located the song on Spotify and found it sounded even better on good audio speakers. My daughter popped into the room as I listened, informing me that she too loved the song, and suggested I find Cabello's version in English, rather than the Spanish one I was listening to. I had been so transfixed by the entirety of the music that it didn't register that I hadn't comprehended a word.

*Havana* was released in the summer of 2017 and was composed by Cabello and nine other writers. But the magic, along with her fantastic singing, is in the tune's brilliant production by Frank Dukes. Much of the song is done with just a few instruments, a minimalist and smart use of piano, horns, and creative bass playing. The bass line hits many wonderful lower fret notes, and they buzz and reverberate while remaining softly cool, calm, and completely unaggressive. Cabello's voice is stunning, displaying multi-faceted and multi-dimensional textures and emotions. The lead vocal is powerfully up front in the mix, teeming with a Latin pop feel expressing sensuality and confidence, along with a big dollop of subtle and clever humor. In the sections with just a sparse piano and bass accompaniment, her singing is bold and forceful. Each time I listen, I look forward to two of her well-produced vocal twirls in the melody, nailed by Cabello with delightfully awesome wonder and beauty. Her multi-tracked backing vocals are best listened to with good headphones with the singing "placed" and separated by producer Dukes to the far left and right sides of one's internal listening space, making it startling, fresh, and surprising every single time.

Soon after I fell for *Havana*, I read an interview with Cabello in *Rolling Stone* magazine and learned how she has deftly handled the social media attention and drama sur-



Photo Courtesy of Sony Music Entertainment

rounding her leaving a girl group that we rock-and-roll geezers don't give an old man's hoot about. But she also spoke about choices and chances and more on the art and craft of music than many of her contemporaries about whom I've read interviews.

Last month, I hunted down the song's video, which is truly clever, downright funny, and does justice to the song. I've since learned that the video won many music industry awards and has been viewed 680 million times on YouTube. Cabello plays several roles in the short film, and there is a telenovela-in-a-video, a family sage-in-a-video, and a movie-in-a-video in *Havana* as well as other unexpectedly funny turns. Cabello's Spanish-speaking grandmother in the video is played by a bearded man wearing a wig and a nightgown and his heartfelt concern about Cabello's lonely, homebound alter-ego makes you forget it's a young man doing the worrying. There is a short rap break in the song performed by Young Thug that is tasteful and fits in well with the groove of the recording. Once again, the production makes the transition from Cabello's singing to the rap a seam-

less one, and Young Thug's appearance in the video works nicely within the framework of its many shifting themes.

*Havana* is the best song I've heard in twenty or thirty years. The only great rock and pop songs in recent memory for me have been by Joe Strummer and The Mescleros, which were composed and recorded between 1999 and 2002. *Havana* delights with each listening experience. As one who records and writes his own music, I find it inspiring on many levels, from composition, performance, and in cleverness and production. I hope to hear many more songs in the coming years from this young talent expressing her good vibes and playful humor. I recall that as a teenager in 1975, I read a music review in *Rolling Stone* by its editor, Jann Wenner, of a concert in Los Angeles by the Rolling Stones, which he felt was the best show of their entire tour at the time. The last line read something like, "For days I talked about it to anyone who would listen." Since hearing *Havana* I am doing the same, telling friends, colleagues at work, and even random strangers just how great this tune is.



## Life on a Roll Fair Warning

MEGAN ELIZABETH KELLEY

Cold Spring Harbor, NY

Where the trail ended there stood a handful of trees in a field, one seemingly impaled by the fragment of another. Under the chainsawed end of fragment there was a glinting light. Upon

closer inspection, the light revealed itself to be a glass hemisphere, and when viewed from the right (wrong) angle, the hemisphere displayed a warning. Maybe not all that is intriguing deserves investigation.



Photo by Megan Elizabeth Kelley | NATURAL SELECTIONS



## ARE YOU REGISTERED TO VOTE AT YOUR CURRENT ADDRESS?

**If not, and you live in New York, you have until October 12th to register to vote in the November 6th election!**

Go to <http://www.elections.ny.gov/VotingRegister.html#VoteRegForm> for more information about eligibility and registration and to access a registration form. Forms must be postmarked by Oct. 12 in order to vote in the November 6th election.



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