The Oscars

Will 'Wolves' lead the pack?

By Julia Spencer

Well, it's Oscar time again, and as usual, the air is rife with speculation as to which nominees will carry away the coveted gold statuettes. The Academy Awards Ceremony will be broadcast live from the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles Monday night.

Will Kevin Costner's **Dances With Wolves**, the spectacular and moving story of a U.S. Cavalry lieutenant who joins a tribe of Sioux Indians, nominated for an epic 12 Oscars, ride away with voters' hearts and most of the awards? Or will other deserving films not nominated in the top category, such as **Avalon**, **Reversal of Fortune** and **Dick Tracy**, share in the spoils?

This year's list of nominees is notable as much for its surprising omissions as for those artists and technicians included among the honorees. Nevertheless, the 1991 awards ceremony promises to be fairly suspenseful, with plenty of close races and star-watching for movie buffs and glamour buffs alike.

For those of you who wish to discuss the nominees knowledgeably, compete with friends or roommates, or merely place a friendly wager, here is a complete list of nominees to refresh your memory, annotated with random notes by your trusty reviewer.

But don't come running to me waving betting slips; with few exceptions, I cannot promise to target winners with Patriot-missile accuracy. This year the competition is too steep in some key races, and the nominations themselves are too perverse to exhibit a reliably predictable pattern.

BEST PICTURE

If I had my druthers, this category's nominees would have included **Reversal of Fortune**, a beautifully made film with a terrific script and superb performances by Ron Silver, Glenn Close and Jeremy Irons, and **Edward Scissorhands**, a delightfully imaginative fantasy and visual tour-de-force from eccentric former animator Tim Burton. Instead, we have the box-office smash **Ghost**, a movie which was entertaining, but mixed unabashed sentimentality, comedy and tragedy in what I felt was a jarring, disconcerting manner, and certainly not Oscar caliber.

The Godfather Part III, which has distinguished ancestors and some truly brilliant touches, was perhaps a token nominee, but falls short of Best Picture quality due to serious flaws in the script, aggravated by the weak interpretation of a key character.

That leaves three outstanding pictures, of which veteran director Martin Scorsese's visceral Mafia story **GoodFellas** is probably the best. But

Though Barry Levinson's critically acclaimed *Avalon* was overlooked in the major categories, it earned Oscar nominations for Best Original Screenplay, Cinematography and Costume Design.

sentimental favorite **Dances With Wolves** will almost certainly take the Oscar here.

BEST ACTOR

Robert DeNiro's incredibly moving performance as awakened patient Leonard Lowe has amazed audiences and critics everywhere, and despite his two previous statuettes for "The Godfather Part II" and "Raging Bull," this suddenly prolific actor fully deserves to be honored again. Whether he will or not depends on how much momentum **Dances With Wolves** picks up, since Kevin Costner is commonly held as his closest competitor.

French thespian Gerard Depardieu's swashbuckling performance as Cyrano is marvelous, but Best Actor honors went to a foreign actor (Daniel Day-Lewis) last year, so I think the award will return to our shores this time around.

BEST ACTRESS

Joanne Woodward, who played Mrs. Bridge to husband Paul Newman's Mr. Bridge, is the sentimental favorite here. But in a year when **Ghost** is a top nominee, anything could happen. Julia Roberts, who previously was nominated for "Steel Magnolias" and stole America's heart in the smash hit **Pretty Woman**, just might steal the Oscar, too.

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR

Bruce Davison, who portrays a compassionate gay man comforting his AIDS-afflicted lover in **Longtime Companion**, is reportedly the front-runner in this extremely close race. I say close because all five actors turn in powerhouse performances and truly deserve the award. Unless "Wolves" fever strikes, Davison will very likely win. But the three gangsters — Garcia, Pacino and Pesci — shouldn't be counted out, either.

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS

This category should be subdivided; that way all the nominees could win. Annette Bening would win Sexiest/Most Cunning; Diane Ladd - Most Outrageous; Whoopi Goldberg - Funniest; Lorraine Bracco - Most Dramatic; and Mary McDonnell - Most Linguistic. There are rumors that this is finally Whoopi's year, but she has some stiff competition. If you haven't seen the other performances, be sure to catch them at second-run theaters or on video.

BEST DIRECTOR

Costner may very well win this one, and he does deserve it. He is in some pretty aristocratic company here, including previous winners Coppola and Scorsese.

Stephen Frears has a number of outstanding films to his credit, in-cluding "My Beautiful Laundrette" and "Dangerous Liaisons." His latest film, **The Grifters**, about a triangle of treacherous con artists, is very well-crafted, but will probably not net him the Oscar. I would like to see Barbet Schroeder ("Barfly") win for **Reversal of Fortune**, but I'm certainly not holding my breath.

ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY

Ghost and **Green Card** don't deserve this award, so that leaves three films which were little-seen outside of major markets. I loved **Alice**, but doubt that Woody Allen will add to his Oscar collection this year. **Metropolitan**, although well-received, is a very dark horse. I'm betting on **Avalon**, which was largely snubbed in the more prestigious categories.

ADAPTED SCREENPLAY

It's anyone's guess who will nab this one, but my favorite had to be **Reversal of Fortune**, in which comatose Sunny Von Bulow narrates from her hospital bed.

FOREIGN FILM

Cyrano de Bergerac and **The Nasty Girl** are the leaders of this pack of nominees. The former deserves to win on the strength of Depardieu's title role performance alone, but the additional beauty of the language and the setting should sweep Academy voters away.