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"Roma"

OSCAR season comes into FOCUS

From 'First Man' to 'Roma,' films shine at Telluride festival

By Josh Rottenberg
 Los Angeles Times

TELLURIDE, Colo. — The Telluride Film Festival, which concluded Monday, proudly sets itself apart from bigger and flashier festivals. There is no backroom deal-making or juries doling out prizes at the scenic Rocky Mountain gathering, where Hollywood directors and stars mingle with local hikers and their dogs, and the unofficial dress code of jeans and untucked shirts is as far from the glamour of Cannes as you can get.

"We know what we want to remain, and where things don't jibe with our ethos and culture, it's pretty easy to keep them out," said the festival's executive director, Julie Huntsinger. "I feel like we're still in a sweet spot."

For all its efforts to stay true to pure, unadulterated movie love, though, Telluride — which has played host to eight of the last nine best picture winners — can't deny its increasingly critical position on the awards-season calendar. As the 44th edition of the fest unfolded over Labor Day weekend, all eyes were on the 33 movies in the festival's main program to see which might get an early boost in the pursuit of Oscar glory.

Two of this Oscar season's most anticipated films — Damien Chazelle's sweeping Neil Armstrong biopic "First Man" and Alfonso Cuarón's poetic, deeply personal period family drama "Roma" — screened simultaneously on the festival's opening night, a prime slot that in the past two years propelled "Moonlight" and "Lady Bird" to acclaim. And, following their strong receptions at the Venice Film Festival, both films were embraced by the Telluride crowd.

"This film is autobiographical, in the sense that 90 percent of the scenes come out of my memory," Cuarón told the audience of the black-and-white, Spanish-language "Roma," which many are predicting could land Netflix its first spot in the best picture race after it hits theaters and the streaming service in December. "We shot in the places where these scenes took place."

In a sign of the streamer's increasing push into this year's awards race, top Netflix executives Reed Hastings, Ted Sarandos and Scott Stuber were all on hand to support "Roma" and the company's other films at the festival, including Orson Welles'



"First Man"



"The Old Man & the Gun"



"The Favourite"



"Destroyer"



"Boy Erased"



"Can You Ever Forgive Me?"



"The Front Runner"