



AWARDS

# Four first-timers adjust to the words 'Academy Award nominee'



Andra Day, Victoria Kirby, Amanda Seyfried and Maria Bakalova. (Photos by Jay L. Clendenin and Christina House/ Los Angeles Times, Matthew Lloyd and Mike Nagle / For The Times)

By RANDEE DAWN

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Earning an Academy Award nomination is always a big deal. Yet on the morning they were announced in March this year, Amanda Seyfried — who earned her first ever nod for “Mank” — was far from glued to the TV set.

“I was absolutely sleeping,” says Seyfried, who adds that she’d agreed to let her mom wake her with any good news when this year’s nominations were announced. And she’s not alone — [first-timer Andra Day](#) (“The United States vs. Billie Holiday”) was also zonked out when the nominations were read. Meanwhile, fellow first-timers [Vanessa Kirby](#) (“Pieces of a Woman”) and [Maria Bakalova](#) (“Borat Subsequent Moviefilm”) were busily filming their next projects and had to learn the news from coworkers.



Amanda Seyfried in in “Mank.” (Netflix)

Once awake and not actively shooting, all three of these newbie nominees began struggling to absorb the career-shifting news. After all, henceforth they will all be known at the very least as Academy Award nominees. But the ways in which they’ve reacted seem to correlate with their ages. Although each has a different level of experience in the industry — “Borat” is Bakalova’s first Hollywood feature; “Holiday” is Day’s first starring feature role — being in your 30s, apparently, makes an industry

accolade like this resonate differently.

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“I was a pretty arrogant son of a bitch in my 20s,” laughs Day, 36. “I don’t know if it would have been good to give that person an Oscar nomination. It’s like God or the universe waited until I was older.”

[Seyfried, 35](#), who’s been a model and actor since her teens, admits it would have been hard to balance the weight of an Academy Award nomination if she’d been 10 years younger. “It would have absolutely felt more like a joke and not earned,” she says. “I’ve always been really insecure, and that insecurity has dissipated as I’ve gotten older. If it had happened in my 20s, I would have been gracious about it — but I don’t know if I would have been able to accept it for what it is.”

There’s some sense to that: Increasing age generally confers a greater level of comfort in one’s own skin and the ability to understand seismic shifts in the grand scheme of an individual life. But it still can be shocking: Kirby remembers crying after learning the news. “It was really surreal,” she says.

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Imagine someone like Meryl Streep, Kirby suggests, who has been nominated 21 times (and has three Oscars). “I can’t imagine what it’s like to have it happen several times,” she says. “I still haven’t gotten my head around it.”

Sacha Baron Cohen and Maria Bakalova in "Borat Subsequent Moviefilm." (Amazon Studios)

But there is a 20-something in the bunch, and at 24, Bakalova believes age isn't a factor at all. "I'm not sure it would be different for me [if I'd received the nomination when I was older]," she says. "I've been working for half of my life. The view with me is it doesn't matter that I'm 24; my whole life I've been doing the same thing. I'm not educated in anything else. When you're passionate about something, there's no difference in ages."

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Age aside, receiving a nomination tends to boost name recognition, which often leads to more prime roles — and plenty of advice from all corners.

"There already has been some cool things coming in," says Day. "And, yeah, definitely advice — warranted and unwarranted. I appreciate all of it."

Shia LeBeouf as Sean and Vanessa Kirby as Martha in 'Pieces of a Woman.' (Benjamin Loeb / Netflix)

But, she notes, there's one more bonus: She feels more confident in her abilities as an actor. "It affirms things for me," she says. "If you pray extremely hard and work extremely hard and are willing to sacrifice for the people you work for, trust your director and your cast, that gives me confidence, in my God and my process."

Not so much so for Seyfried, though. "That's the beautiful thing about where I'm at in my life," she says. "It didn't make me feel more confident. I'd already reached a place in my life where I measure success by how I feel as a parent. It didn't change how I feel about my skill set, which is good. Because if things now go the other way and I have a box office bomb, it won't matter."

Bakalova sees it pretty much the way Day does — as an affirmation that she’s on the right path. “You have to invest the same amount of heart and energy in different projects,” she says. “I’m a perfectionist and a workaholic, so I’m going to bring the most unique performances to my producers and director.”

Andra Day stars in “The United States vs. Billie Holiday.” (Takashi Seida/Hulu)

And, she adds, she’s ready to take on whatever great, juicy roles are now going to

come down the road. “I’ve had a lot of meetings with people I’ve been admiring my whole life, and I want to work as much as possible,” she says. “I’m in my 20s. I don’t need a lot of sleep. I’m energetic, so this is where I develop my career. I’m going to grab the moment and take the risk.”

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