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An Untraditional Look At The 2021 Golden Globes

Claire Needs, Staff Reporter

With masked attendees, a virtual red carpet and Zoom acceptance speeches with a few mic mishaps, this year's Golden Globes ceremony was unique. The show's primarily digital format was unusual, but no less engaging. Viewers witnessed impactful speeches from numerous monumental winners, including Chloé Zhao's groundbreaking win as the first Asian and second woman to win best director at the Golden Globes and Taylor Simone Ledward's moving speech on behalf of her late husband, Chadwick Boseman, who was awarded actor of the year.

Social issues were addressed as they are no longer being swept under the rug (or red carpet). During the show's introduction the Hollywood Foreign Press Association (HFPA) was exposed for lacking diversity by none other than its hosts, Tina Fey and Amy Poehler, who declared "The Hollywood Foreign Press association is made up of 90 international no-Black journalists."

Gabby Robinson, a second-year film studies student at Seattle University, commented on Amy Poehler and Tina Fey's comedic deliveries of social issues.

"Ultimately as a society, I feel like we get our hopes up for the wrong people to be talking about the right things...it's difficult to figure out how to get people to engage [in awards ceremonies], but not tune out when something important is being discussed," Robinson said.

The winners of the 2021 Golden Globes represent a necessary shift in the industry, as there were an unprecedented amount of wins for people of color and women this year.

Communications Professor and former entertainment journalist Victor D. Evans commented on his appreciation for the show's recent emphasis on diversity. Evans was impressed by Boseman's win for "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom," Andra Day's win for "US vs. Billie Holiday" and the emphasis on LGBTQ+ representation.

"I love Jodie Foster, and I love the fact that she delivered her acceptance speech on the couch in her pajamas with her wife. That was really remarkable because for a long time, Jodie wouldn't speak about her sexuality. It's just wonderful after all these years to see her be happy in her own skin and with her wife, and no longer is there this taboo about a person's sexuality," Evans said.

The Golden Globes also recognized the work of Jane Fonda and Norman Lear. In her acceptance speech for the Cecil B. DeMille Award, Fonda emphasized the importance of film and television during a year as atypical as 2020, stating, "In turbulent crisis-warned times like these, storytelling has always been essential." Evans also commented on the eloquence of Fonda and Lear's speeches and their impact on the entertainment industry.



"They're both amazing people that have done amazing things in the media, in terms of diversity and raising awareness, I just really think juxtaposed with the fact the HFPA is lacking in diversity...I grew up watching Norman Lear's shows, and he really approaches a lot of issues that people wouldn't have ever thought about discussing on television, especially in the 60s and 70s...It almost brought tears to my eyes when I was watching his tribute because I could think back to all those shows that were my first representations of seeing African Americans and gay people on TV," Evans said.

Film Studies professor John Trafton was impressed by Chloé Zhao's win for her groundbreaking film "Nomadland".

"I appreciated Chloé Zhao's stylistic approach to the film, the very quiet understatedness to it, where it's really one of those films about the image and power of the image, rather than bombarding you with narrative information right and left," Trafton said.

Other big winners were Sacha Baron Cohen's "Borat: Subsequent Movie film" for Best Actor in a Musical or Comedy and Best Musical or Comedy, "The Trial of the Chicago 7" for Best Screenplay, "Minari" for Best Foreign Language Film and Pixar's "Soul" for Best Animated Feature.

Trafton found Riz Ahmed's performance in "Sound of Metal" especially moving, which garnered two nominations but no wins.

"That film really was carried by his performance, it was one of those films that lives or dies by the performance of its lead actor, and it's a film that was deeply impactful, resonated on all levels, and a while back when I first encountered Riz Ahmed outside of British television in the film 'Nightcrawler' with Jake Gyllenhal, and I saw that I was like, 'This guy is going to do some great performances over the next few years,'" Trafton said.

For television, "Queen's Gambit," "The Crown" and "Schitt's Creek" came out on top. Evans expressed disappointment that the academy overlooked other important shows from 2020 like "Bridgerton." He also found the nominations a bit predictable.

"The Golden Globes is also known for doing things a little bit differently than the Academy Awards and even the Emmys," Evans said. "They always kind of go with the underdogs, which is why I'm surprised they still went with "The Crown" and "Schitt's Creek" and things that have already gotten so many nominations in other places."

This year's winners also illuminated the recent domination of streaming platforms in the entertainment industry, as Netflix ended the night with ten wins.

This year's Golden Globes indicated numerous cultural progressions in the midst of a turbulent year, both in pop culture and reality. With recent calls to action for awards shows to be more inclusive, the direction of the entertainment industry will continue to be an interesting one to track.