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Movie fans give Oscar to "Juno": E-Poll/Reuters

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By Mike Collett-White

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) - Lighten up, Oscar voters. If movie fans picked the best film this Sunday, comedy "Juno" would eclipse grim front-runners "No Country For Old Men" and "There Will Be Blood," according to an E-Poll/Reuters survey.

"Juno" star Ellen Page, who plays a pregnant teen in the movie, would triumph over Cate Blanchett in "Elizabeth: The Golden Age" for best actress, and Johnny Depp for "Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street" would edge out George Clooney in legal thriller "Michael Clayton" among best actor nominees.

Julie Christie and Daniel Day-Lewis, the presumed front-runners for the top acting awards for their starring roles in "Away From Her" and "There Will be Blood," are not as well-liked among everyday moviegoers, E-Poll Market Research found.

The survey conducted for Reuters found a huge disconnect between fans and voters at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, who give away the world's top film awards.

About 72 percent of those surveyed said the academy's best film choices were influenced by critics and Hollywood insiders.

"With the darker and more violent movies up for nomination, the lighter fare 'Juno,' with very relatable and interesting characters, is the audience's choice," said Gerry Philpott, president of E-Poll.

The survey of 1,100 adults was conducted between Thursday and Saturday, and showed 29 percent of respondents favored "Juno," 25 percent chose "No Country For Old Men" and 20 percent "Atonement." The Oscars will be presented on Sunday.

"Juno" tells of a pregnant 16-year-old who encounters problems with the couple who want her baby. Other best film nominees are "Michael Clayton," grisly "No Country For Old Men," "There Will Be Blood" with Day-Lewis as a ruthless oilman and romance "Atonement," partly set in World War Two.

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In the best actor category, Johnny Depp captured 31 percent of fans' votes to Clooney's 29 percent. Day-Lewis, with several awards already under his belt, was in fourth with 15 percent.

Depp, the voters thought, was a more talented and funny actor than Clooney.

Yet few of the voters had actually seen "Sweeney Todd," and were probably choosing Depp based on his work as Capt. Jack Sparrow in the enormously popular "Pirates of the Caribbean" movies, pollsters concluded.

Canadian actress Page was considered "cute" and "down-to-earth," and ranked higher than Blanchett as someone regular people "can identify with." Blanchett was seen as "classy."

In overall appeal, Depp scored a 71 percent ranking to Clooney's 70 percent and Day-Lewis' 38. Page scored 70 percent to Blanchett's 54 percent and Christie's 45.

When selecting best actor or actress, movie fans believed academy voters looked mostly at talent (52 percent), but also at experience and attractiveness, while they more strongly favored talent (71 percent) over a body of work and good looks.

In the supporting categories, there was no clear favorite, with Javier Bardem ("No Country For Old Men"), Philip Seymour Hoffman ("Charlie Wilson's War") and Hal Holbrook ("Into the Wild") each receiving 22 percent of the vote. Pundits favor Bardem to win the Oscar.

Twenty-nine percent of survey respondents said they would like to see double nominee Blanchett win the best supporting actress award for her portrayal of singer Bob Dylan in "I'm Not There."

About half said they were likely to watch the Oscars, with women more likely to tune in than men. Fifty-four percent of respondents, aged 35 to 54, expected to watch, but only 38 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds said they would.

(To read more about our Oscars coverage, visit our blog "Fan Fare" online [here](#))

(Editing by Bob Tourtellotte)

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