

Repeat contenders

Last year, Jessica Chastain was seemingly everywhere during awards season, promoting her work in "The Help," "Tree of Life" and "Take Shelter." She's nowhere near as ubiquitous this season, but other thespians have filled the void.

John Goodman: The former "Roseanne" star has memorable turns in "Argo," "Flight" and "Trouble With the Curve," also voicing a character in "ParaNorman."

Scot McNairy: One of *Variety's* actors to watch, McNairy plays a dim-witted robber in "Killing Them Softly," Farsi-speaking embassy worker in "Argo" and a skeptical farmer in "Promised Land."

Kyle Chandler: Ex-"Friday Night Lights" star plays late White House

chief of staff Hamilton Jordan in "Argo" and a CIA analyst in Kathryn Bigelow's "Zero Dark Thirty."

John Hawkes: Oscar-nominated star of "Winter's Bone" pulls off the potentially awkward role of a paralyzed man seeking his first sexual experience in "The Sessions" and Col. Robert Latham in "Lincoln."

Amy Adams: Three-time Oscar nominee plays sprightly Big City Lawyer in "Trouble With the Curve," determined Woman Behind the Man in "The Master" and Earthy Backwoods Wife in "On the Road."

Ben Whishaw: Actor's luxurious locks show up throughout "Cloud Atlas" and at key moments as programming whiz in "Skyfall."

—Diane Garrett