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HERE COMES LINCOLN!

BY JON STEELY PHOTOS COURTESY OF WALT DISNEY PICTURES

Abraham Lincoln is trending right now. I'm not sure what he'd think about his name alongside Honey Boo Boo and Lindsay Lohan on America's Internet, but that's neither here nor there. The fact is that, with a flood of numerous new books about Lincoln gracing the bestseller lists, our 16th President is a hot topic. Not too long ago, in *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*, he was on the big screen slaying the undead!

Now, Abraham Lincoln is going to receive even more attention with the release of Steven Spielberg's *Lincoln*, a sweeping historical drama starring two-time Academy Award-winner Daniel Day-Lewis as Lincoln—based on historian Doris Kearns Goodwin's biography "Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln."

In the hands of master storyteller Steven Spielberg, *Lincoln* reveals a stunning look at the final four-month period of Abraham Lincoln's life as he struggles and fights to get Congress to approve the 13th Amendment to abolish slavery, while a bloody Civil War rages on in the battlefields. With sharp historical accuracy, Spielberg, beloved for intense dramas such as *Schindler's List* and *Saving Private Ryan*, shines light on the lesser known details and nuances of Lincoln's political efforts and examines the inner workings of his mind, offering an intriguing glimpse into his personal life darkness.

It's no secret that Daniel Day-Lewis (*Gangs of New York*, *There Will Be Blood*) is an intense method actor known for the almost otherworldly commitment he gives his roles – a master at immersing himself into a character. In *Lincoln*, he disappears so deeply he's not even recognizable. He is Abraham Lincoln—period! Between his indelible portrayal and Spielberg's cinematic genius, you feel like you're actually watching history unfold.

Surrounding Day-Lewis are powerful performances from Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Tommy Lee Jones, David Strathairn, James Spader, Hal Holbrook and Jackie Earle Haley. Standing out – even amongst this magnificent supporting cast – is Oscar-winning screen legend Sally Field (*Norma Rae*, *Steel Magnolias*), who is transfixing as Mary Todd Lincoln, one of American history's most complex and fascinating women. In preparation for her role as Lincoln's first lady, Field is said to have taken a tour of Ford's Theatre and Museum in Washington D.C., a private tour given by an expert on all things Mary Todd Lincoln. There is speculation that she's likely to be nominated for Best Supporting Actress for her work in this biopic.

And Sally Field is not the only one generating Oscar buzz surrounding *Lincoln's* highly anticipated release. Many major film critics are predicting Oscar nods for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor and a Best Supporting Actor nomination for Tommy Lee Jones, who plays Congressman Thaddeus Stevens.

Steven Spielberg, of course, is an Oscar winner famous for big, mainstream films with big special effects. This time, he's taking a different approach, teaming up with Lincoln screenwriter Tony Kushner – a Pulitzer Prize winning playwright (“Angels in America”) – to tell an intimate political story. No extraterrestrials, no extravagant war scenes, no feel-good Hollywood magic. It's a brave new path for Mr. Spielberg, one we are going to be hearing a lot about.

We all know Honest Abe delivered the Gettysburg Address and that he issued the Emancipation Proclamation. Now, thanks to Spielberg and Day-Lewis, we'll get an opportunity to see the story from another angle—with new information, exceptional acting and top-notch filmmaking craftsmanship.

Abraham Lincoln is a fascinating personality and figure who remains as popular today as ever. Maybe it's because we're still craving his kind of leadership? About the only place you don't see his face anymore is on the penny, but that's only because you hardly ever see pennies anymore.

Lincoln opens nationwide November 16.