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# Oscars rewind — 2004: A touch of sadness accompanies the original song win





Singer Annie Lennox holds her Oscar for the song "Into the West," from "The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King." The song was written by the film's co-producer/co-writer (and life partner of director Peter Jackson) Fran Walsh, the film's composer Howard Shore and singer Lennox. (Kevin Winter/Getty Images)

BY RANDEE DAWN

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Not just any old musical tune can go up for consideration at the Academy Awards. For one thing, it must be a completely original song to the film it's in, which explains why so many movies adapted from stage musicals tend to add a fresh song or two. Yet, none of the songs nominated at the 2004 Academy Awards, held on Feb. 29 at the then-Kodak Theater in Hollywood came from a Broadway musical. The list of nominees instead included three musicians better known for their rock 'n' roll chops (Annie Lennox, Sting, and Elvis Costello with T. Bone Burnett), and two for their acting résumés (Michael McKean and Annette O'Toole).

The original song winners, however, were all part of the onslaught from Middle-earth, as “Into the West,” from “The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King,” proved that there was seemingly no category hobbits and elves couldn’t conquer, with the film earning 11 Oscars overall. “Into the West” was written by the film’s co-producer/co-writer (and life partner of director Peter Jackson) Fran Walsh, the film’s composer Howard Shore and singer Lennox.

“I’m stunned,” said Lennox, who performed the song live at the ceremony; it was her first nomination and (so far) only win. “I’d like to dedicate my performance of the song to my mother, who passed away last year, and to my darling friend Michael Kamen. I’ll miss them so much.”

Music producer Kamen died in 2003.

Walsh, who won two other Oscars that night for “King” (best picture, shared with Jackson and Barrie M. Osbourne; and adapted screenplay, shared with Philippa Boyens and Jackson), provided a different kind of honor in her speech after accepting the award from presenters Will Ferrell and Jack Black.

“I just want to do one tiny thank you,” she said, returning to the microphone after the orchestra had played off Lennox. “It’s to Sharon and Reese Duncan, who are watching in New Zealand, and their son.... Their son was an inspiration for this song.”

The extended DVD edition of “King” explains further: “Into the West” was partly inspired by Cameron Duncan, a 17-year-old New Zealand filmmaker who had died from cancer. The first public performance of the song was at his funeral.

Shore, who won his first Oscar for the score of the trilogy’s first film, “The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring” in 2002, also picked up another Oscar this night for the original score of “King,” and did not give a speech.

Meanwhile, the other song nominees included “Belleville Rendez-vous” from “The Triplets of Belleville,” written by Benoît Charest (music) and Sylvain Chomet (lyrics). It was Charest’s first nomination; Sylvain, the director, was also nominated for animated feature that night and has two other nominations: for live-action short film “The Old Lady and the Pigeons” in 1998 and animated feature with “The Illusionist” in 2011.

“A Mighty Wind” fielded “A Kiss at the End of the Rainbow,” written by actors McKean and his wife O’Toole. This was the first, and so far only, nomination for each.

And finally, “Cold Mountain” fielded two songs: “You Will Be My Ain True Love” was written by Sting, who earned his third of four nominations at the ceremony. He’s also been nominated for “My Funny Friend and Me” (with Dave Hartley) from “The Emperor’s New Groove” in 2001; “Until” from “Kate & Leopold” in 2002; and “The Empty Chair” (with J. Ralph) from “Jim: The James Foley Story” in 2017.

“Scarlet Tide,” meanwhile, was written by Burnett and Costello — the first nomination for either musician. Burnett would go on to win the original song Oscar in 2010 for “The Weary Kind” (shared with Ryan Bingham) from “Crazy Heart.”