



Oscars >

2024 Oscar nominations

Snubs and surprises

Lily Gladstone makes history

Osc

AWARDS

Oscars rewind -- 2004: When costumes joined a rush of accolades



Ngila Dickson and Richard Taylor of New Zealand accept the Oscar for costume design in 2004 for their work on "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King." (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

BY RANDEE DAWN

JAN. 30, 2024 6 AM PT

The Academy Award for costume design was handed out early in the evening on Feb. 29, 2004, at the 76th Academy Awards — but it signaled something big was afoot at

the ceremony. “Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King” had already picked up an art direction award moments earlier — and when Ngila Dickson and Richard Taylor’s names were called out for “King’s” costumes, it seemed clear that the film was on a roll.

Dickson and Taylor accepted their Oscars from Renée Zellweger, and each had something to say up on the stage of the then Kodak Theatre.

“Mr. Peter Jackson and Fran Walsh, you are amazing people,” said Dickson, referring to “King’s” director and his co-writer and co-producer (and life partner). This was Dickson’s third nomination and first win; she’d also been nominated in 2002 for the first “LOTR” film, “The Fellowship of the Ring.” She and Jackson worked together for the entire “LOTR” trilogy, but it wasn’t their first collaboration: She also provided costumes for one of his earliest films: “Heavenly Creatures” (1994).

Dickson also had the distinction of competing against herself in the category this year, as she was also nominated for her costumes in “The Last Samurai.” While actors are not permitted to appear in competing roles in the same category, this isn’t true for costume designers — and it’s happened several times since the category was first introduced at the 1949 awards.

Taylor also had a few words to share, nodding to his Weta Workshop workers and the cast and crew of the “LOTR” trilogy of films “that supported us through the last seven years.” He then gave a shout-out to his wife (and Weta partner) Tania, who sat smiling in the audience: “Tania, my partner, the young girl who, at the age of 13, I bought two live rats as my first present to her. You’re still with me. What a great treat. Onwards and upwards. I love you.”

Oscar wasn’t done with Taylor, though; he’d go on to pick up a second Oscar that evening (also for “King”) when he shared the makeup award with Peter Swords King. Taylor had also won for visual effects *and* makeup in 2002 for “Fellowship of the

Ring.” In 2006, he picked up a further Oscar (making five total thus far) for visual effects in Peter Jackson’s “King Kong.”

It was hard to stand in the way of the “LOTR” sweep. Competition in the costume category also included Dien van Straalen (for “The Girl with a Pearl Earring”); it was van Straalen’s first and only nomination. She died in 2010. Wendy Stites was nominated for “Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World.” The artisan, who has also worked in production design, has been nominated only once. She’s married to “Master” director Peter Weir. Finally, Judianna Makovsky picked up her third Oscar nomination (but no wins so far) for “Seabiscuit.” She’s also been nominated for “Pleasantville” (1998) and “Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone” (2001).

Each of these nominees were for costumes from historical eras or fantastical realms, a trend that has dominated the costume category for decades. Prior to 2004, the last time a “contemporary” or non-fantastical costume design picked up an Oscar win was in 1995, for “The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert,” which, admittedly, was full of fantastically over-the-top designs.