



AWARDS

Oscars rewind -- 2004: Three trophies for three writers of a third film





"We had no idea that we were going to go gray trying to make [these books] into movies," Philippa Boyens said in her adapted screenplay acceptance speech, speaking for co-writers Peter Jackson and Fran Walsh. (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

BY RANDEE DAWN

FEB. 27, 2024 5 AM PT

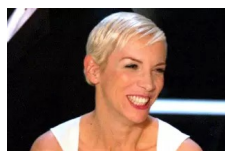
Adapting the epic tale of J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings" was an enormous undertaking and in the end it took three movies to tell — and three screenwriters to bring it to life. And on Feb. 29, 2004, three adapted screenplay Oscars were handed out to the writing team trio behind the final installment in the megahit series, "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King": Fran Walsh, Philippa Boyens and director Peter Jackson.

All three earned their first writing Oscars that night, though for Jackson and Walsh (his longtime life-work partner), those weren't the only awards they would take home. "Return of the King" was a juggernaut that evening, ultimately winning 11 awards, a feat that tied it with "Ben Hur" (1959) and "Titanic" (1997). It was likely a satisfying way to cap more than six years devoted to creating the franchise and finally go beyond the nomination phase: Jackson, Walsh and Boyens had also been

nominated in 2002 for writing the first film of the series, “The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring.”

It was the first time since 1957’s “The Bridge on the River Kwai” that a group of three screenwriters had won in this category, too.

Meanwhile, Walsh — who began working with Jackson in the 1980s and shares two children with him — earned a special accolade of her own: the original song Oscar, shared with Howard Shore and Annie Lennox for the film’s “Into the West.” She and Jackson both earned their third Oscars that night (shared with producer Barrie M. Osborne) when the film was named best picture of the year.



AWARDS

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

Nov. 14, 2023

After the envelope was opened and presenters Sofia Coppola (who would go on to win her own writing award moments later, for “Lost in Translation’s” original screenplay) and Francis Ford Coppola announced the trio had won the adaptation Oscar, all three hurried to the stage to get a few words in.

“We grew up loving these books,” Boyens said of the J.R.R. Tolkien series. “We had no idea that we were going to go gray trying to make them into movies.” Boyens has been writing scripts for Jackson films for years, including “King Kong,” “The Lovely Bones” and — later — the three-part “The Hobbit” adaptation. This was her second nomination, and so far her only win.

Jackson gave a shoutout to his and Walsh’s children “for putting up so much with Mum and Dad working on this film all their lives, because they’re only 7 and 8 years old.” He added that the cast also deserved a special cheer, for getting “their tongues

around this rather awkward text.” Jackson had been in the academy’s sights for nearly a decade, starting with his first original writing nomination in 1995 (with Walsh) for “Heavenly Creatures.” In 2010 he would earn another nomination, this time for best picture, for “District 9.” But all of his other nominations thus far have been for the “LOTR” series.

The competition in the category seems to have barely had a shot, thanks to the way “Rings” steamrolled over everyone in the room that night. “American Splendor’s” Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini, who co-directed their film, were nominated for the first time each; “City of God’s” Bráulio Mantovani was also a first-time nominee; “Mystic River” scribe Brian Helgeland earned an Oscar (with Curtis Hanson) in 1998 for the adapted screenplay “L.A. Confidential”; and Gary Ross, writer-director of “Seabiscuit,” went home empty-handed again. He’d previously been nominated in writing categories for “Big” (1989), “Dave” (1994) and had an extra nomination with “Seabiscuit” in the best picture category as he’d also been a producer on the film.

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