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AWARDS

Oscars flashback: Raising a glass to 'Sideways'



Adapted screenplay winners Alexander Payne, right, and Jim Taylor thanked their agents and their wives after winning for "Sideways." (Laura Rauch / Associated Press)

By Randee Dawn

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By definition, the Academy Award for adapted screenplay will go to work previously created in another form. But at the 77th Oscars, held on Feb. 27, 2005, at the Kodak Theatre in Los Angeles, the source material for the five nominees was particularly wide-ranging: a novel ("Sideways"); a short-story collection ("Million Dollar Baby"); a memoir and a biography ("The Motorcycle Diaries"); a play ("Finding Neverland"); and characters created for a 9-year-old prequel film ("Before Sunset").

A certain amount of less adept adaptation went into the introduction of the nominees in the category too. Adam Sandler strode onstage to read the contenders list, with Catherine Zeta-Jones being announced as planned to help him along. But no Zeta-Jones was on hand, intentionally. That allowed host Chris Rock to join his fellow "Saturday Night Live" alum and pretend to *be* Zeta-Jones — the object of Sandler's scripted leering.

But at last, it was time for Sandler — once Rock left the stage — to read out the nominees, handing the award to first-time winners Alexander Payne and Jim Taylor for Payne's "Sideways," a film about two friends going on a bender in the Santa Ynez Valley ahead of one of them tying the knot.



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Raise a glass to the winners

As Payne and Taylor noted in their acceptance speech, the win came after 15 years of writing together, scripting such films as “About Schmidt” and “Citizen Ruth.” Clearly, they knew each other well enough to finish one another’s sentences, as they did in their shared time onstage.

After noting together that they’ve had a great pair of agents, Taylor added, “And more recently, a great pair of wives: The stunning and talented Tamara Jenkins...”

“[And the] equally stunning and talented Sandra Oh,” added Payne, who was married to the “Sideways” actor from 2003-06; Taylor has been married to director-actress Jenkins since 2002.

“My mother taught me to write,” Taylor added, getting a bit choked up, “and she died before she could see any of this. So this is for you, Mom.”

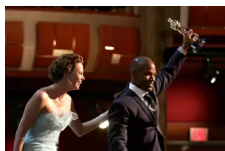
Taylor and Payne were also nominated together in 2000 for adapting “Election” and for producing “The Descendants” (with Jim Burke) in 2012. Payne would win again in 2012 for adapting “The Descendants” with Nat Faxon and Jim Rash; Taylor has no other wins.

The rest of the writers’ room

The winners of “Sideways” weren’t the only writing collective nominated; in an unusual move, writer-director Richard Linklater and co-writer Kim Krizan included stars Julie Delpy and Ethan Hawke in their credit list for “Before Sunset,” a sequel to Linklater’s 1995 film (also co-written with Krizan and starring Delpy and Hawke), “Before Sunrise.” But it also was understandable: Both films were essentially two-handers. In 2013, he’d give them credit again for the final film in the “Before” trilogy,

“Before Midnight,” for which all three would be nominated again. (Krizan was then out of the picture.)

This was Linklater’s first Oscar nomination of an eventual six; Delpy’s first nomination in any category of an eventual two; and Hawke’s first writing nomination of an eventual two, though he also has two acting nominations.



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Meanwhile, Paul Haggis earned his first nomination of five total for “Million Dollar Baby” (he’d go on to win two Oscars for “Crash” the following year, for directing and best picture, the latter of which he shared with Cathy Schulman). His most recent nomination, from 2007, is for the original screenplay (with Iris Yamashita) of “Letters From Iwo Jima.” Both “Jima” and “Baby” were directed by Clint Eastwood.

And finally, David Magee earned his first of two nominations for “Finding Neverland,” a look at part of the life of “Peter Pan” author J.M. Barrie; and José Rivera earned his first and so far only nomination for “The Motorcycle Diaries,” about the life of Che Guevara.

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