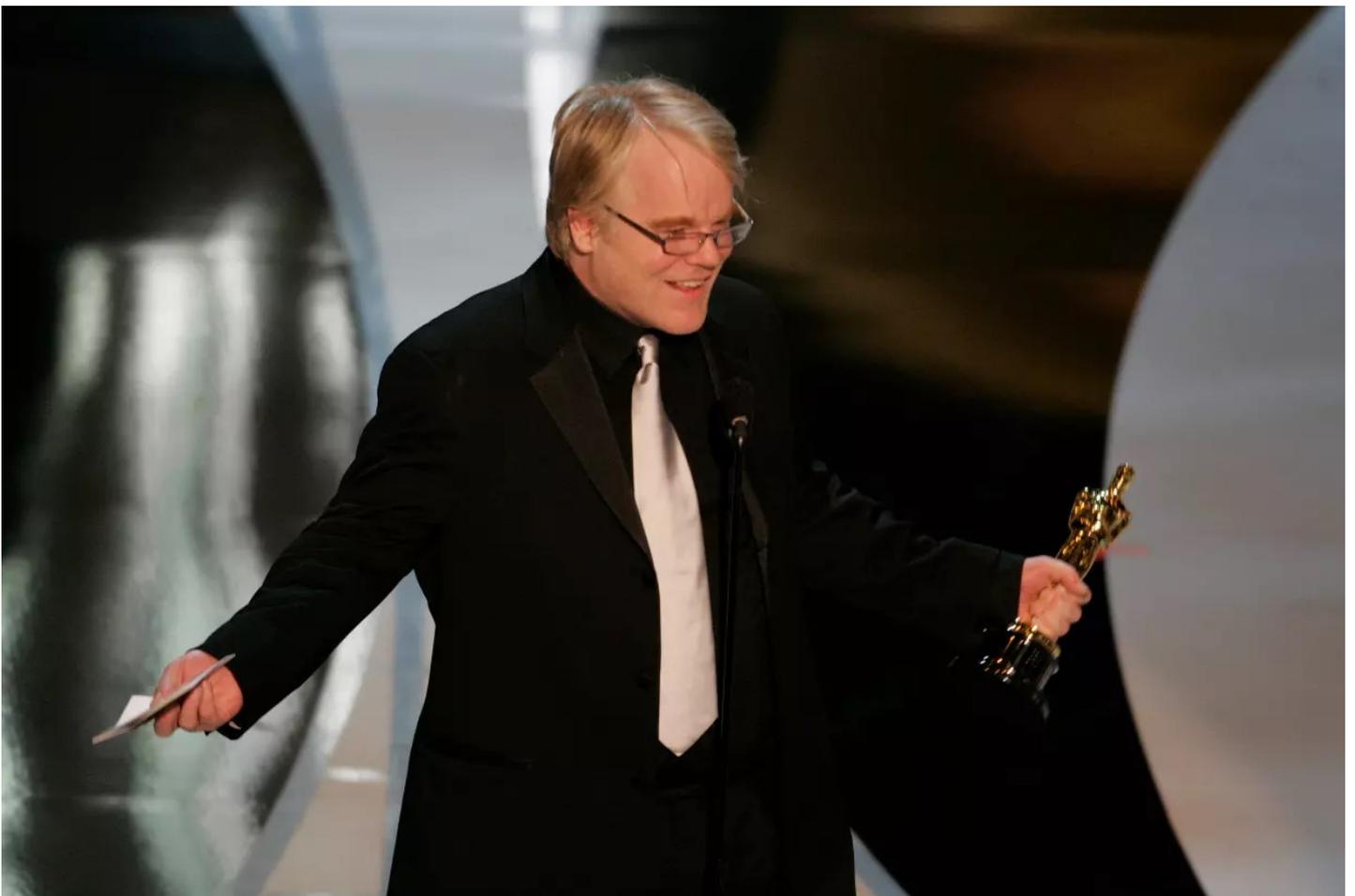




AWARDS

# Oscars flashback: When Philip Seymour Hoffman was ‘overwhelmed’ to win



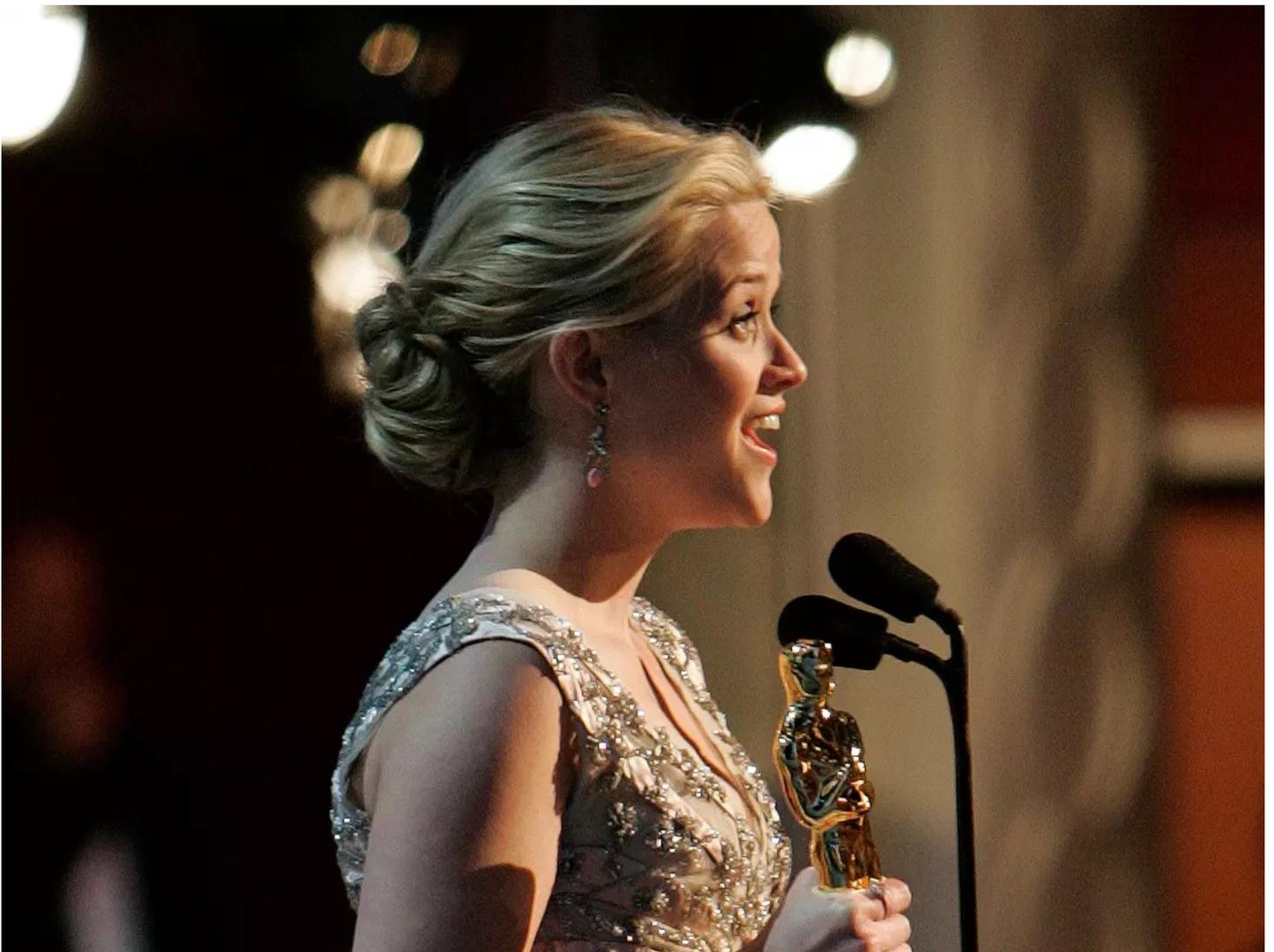
Philip Seymour Hoffman accepts his leading actor Oscar for “Capote” at the 78th Academy Awards. (Mark Boster / Los Angeles Times)

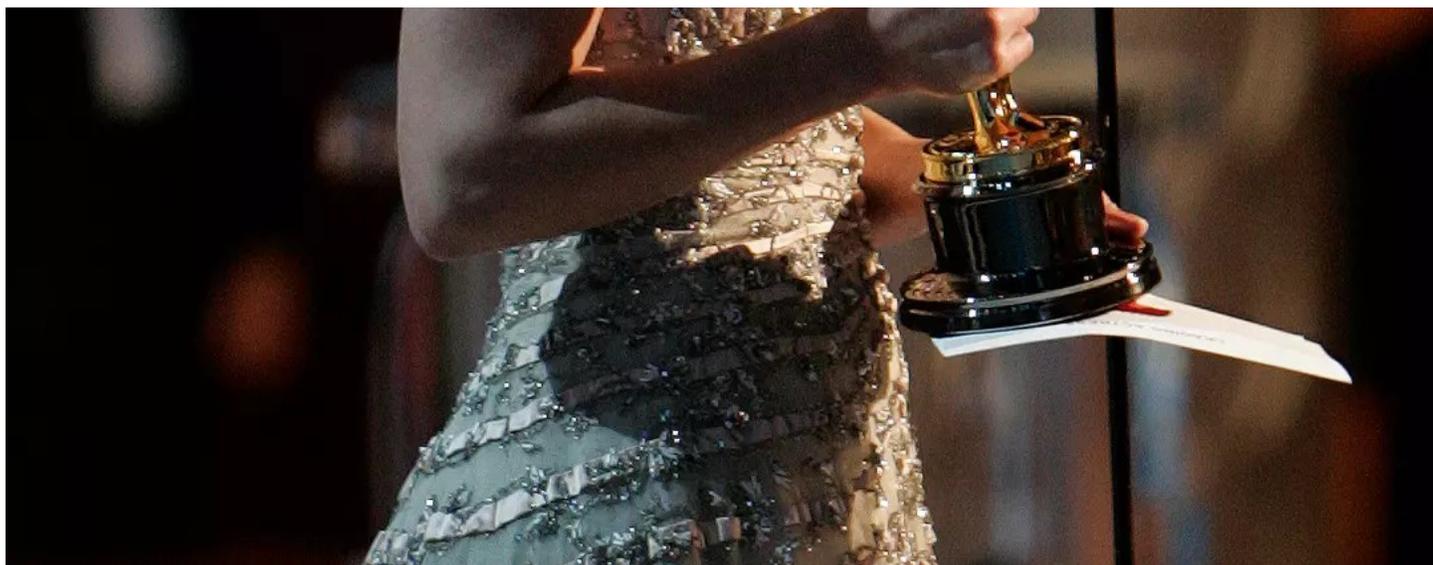
**By Randee Dawn**

Feb. 10, 2026 3 AM PT

Hollywood loves shiny new things, and when it comes to the Academy Awards each year, what's new is often notable — and worthy of shiny gold-plated statues. That was certainly the case for the acting categories 20 years ago at the 78th Oscars, held at the Kodak Theatre in Los Angeles on March 5, 2006. That night, 14 of the 20 acting nominees had never been nominated before, and all four acting winners were first-time nominees.

## Leading the way





Reese Witherspoon accepts the leading actress award for “Walk the Line.” (Al Seib / Los Angeles Times)

After this night, Philip Seymour Hoffman would go on to receive three more Oscar nominations, but in portraying the eccentric writer Truman Capote in “Capote,” he received his first bid at the prize — and ultimately, his only win.

“I’m overwhelmed, I’m really overwhelmed,” he told the audience after accepting the leading actor Oscar from Hilary Swank. Offering his thanks to friends and co-workers, he singled out his mother, Marilyn O’Connor, who he brought to the event. “I’d like if you see her tonight to congratulate her, because she brought up four kids alone and she deserves a congratulations for that,” he said. “She took me to my first play and she stayed up with me and watched the NCAA Final Four, and my passions, her passions became my passions.”

Hoffman was up against strong competition in Terrence Howard (“Hustle & Flow”), Heath Ledger (“Brokeback Mountain”), Joaquin Phoenix (“Walk the Line”) and David Strathairn (“Good Night, and Good Luck”). Had he won, Ledger would have been the youngest winner in the category, at 26. Sadly, Ledger died in 2008 and Hoffman in 2014.

Meanwhile, Reese Witherspoon triumphed for playing June Carter, the talented, long-suffering wife of Johnny Cash, in “Walk the Line.” It was Witherspoon’s first

and so far only Oscar win; she was nominated again in 2015 for “Wild.”

Like Hoffman, Witherspoon singled out a beloved family member in her speech — her grandmother — after accepting the leading actress award from Jamie Foxx. “She taught me how to be a real woman, to have strength and self-respect, and to never give those things away,” Witherspoon said. “And those are a lot of qualities I saw in June Carter. And people used to ask June how she was doing, and she used to say: ‘I’m just trying to matter.’ And I know what she means.”

Witherspoon’s competition included four other well-known names: Judi Dench (“Mrs. Henderson Presents”), Felicity Huffman (“Transamerica”), Keira Knightley (“Pride & Prejudice”) and Charlize Theron (“North Country”). Dench was the oldest leading actress nominee (then 71) since Jessica Tandy (then 80) was nominated for “Driving Miss Daisy” in 1990; Knightley (then 20) would have been the youngest leading actress winner if she’d won.

## **And lending their support...**





At the 2006 Oscars, supporting actor winner George Clooney (“Syriana”) was also nominated for directing and co-writing for “Good Night, and Good Luck.” (Mark J. Terrill / Associated Press)

George Clooney has covered so many bases in Hollywood it was hard to imagine that he hadn’t yet been tapped for an Academy Award nomination before 2006, but this year he received his first three nominations: One for directing “Good Night, and Good Luck,” one for co-writing that film with Grant Heslov (he won neither of those), and one for his supporting work in “Syriana,” in which he played a CIA officer going up against arms traffickers.

“All right, so I’m not winning [best] director,” he quipped, accepting the statue from Nicole Kidman after winning for “Syriana.” “It’s a funny thing about winning an Academy Award, this will always be sort of synonymous with your name from here on

in. It will be: Oscar winner George Clooney, Sexiest Man Alive 1997, Batman, died today in a freak accident....”

Thanks to the 2006 nominations, Clooney became the first person to be nominated for acting in and directing separate films in the same year. He was also only the fifth person to be nominated for acting, directing and writing in the same year. He won a second Oscar in 2013 for producing “Argo” with Heslov and Ben Affleck, which won for best picture.

As with Clooney, “The Constant Gardener’s” Rachel Weisz won her Academy Award for appearing in a spy thriller, with both stories based on real events. Weisz went on to receive another nomination in 2019 for “The Favourite.”

Weisz spoke of “Gardener” source material author John le Carré in her speech, noting on stage that he “wrote this unflinching, angry story.” After accepting the award from Morgan Freeman, she noted, “[Le Carré] really paid tribute to the people who are willing to risk their own lives to fight injustice, and they’re greater men and women than I.”

Weisz was competing against Amy Adams (“Junebug”), Catherine Keener (“Capote”), Frances McDormand (“North Country”) and Michelle Williams (“Brokeback Mountain”).

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