

Sisters&Brothers and Blackstone dominate lively Leo Awards



From Sisters&Brothers, l to r: Kacey Rohl, producer James Brown, Leena Manron, Ben Ratner, Carl Bessai, and Gabrielle Rose

By Adrian Mack, May 27, 2012

Not too surprisingly, Carl Bessai's feature film Sister&Brothers dominated the 14th annual Leo Awards on Saturday night (May 26).

The third in the director's family trilogy—"This is the last, I promise," he told the audience at the Fairmont Vancouver Hotel during a three hour gala celebration—Bessai walked away with both the Best Director and Best Feature Length Drama prizes (the latter shared with co-producers James Brown, and Emily Alden).

"For me, not making a movie is kind of like starving," Bessai later told the Straight. "But it's not just about eating and money, it's about creative starvation. So, I dunno, if you're a writer, you write, if you're an actor, you act, and for me, I gotta direct a movie. So yeah, I'm super-driven. Even if I kinda have to do it myself with a camcorder and no money, I wanna do it."

On that note, Bessai had earlier thanked L.A. resident Amanda Crew for coming up here and working "for, like, 10 cents" when he accepted the award on her behalf for Best Lead Performance by a Female. Co-star Tom Scholte's uncannily accurate and painfully funny turn as a motor-mouthed asshole was another well-deserved win, while Leo also honoured Bend Sinister's Dan Moxon for the film's score.

It wasn't a sweep, mind you. Ryan Robbins and Johanna Newmarch both nabbed prizes—him for his Lead in Marilyn, her for her Best Supporting role in Sunflower Hour.

In his speech, Robbins paid tribute to Ben Ratner, who'd earlier won Best Guest Performance for his appearance in the series Flashpoint. "Ben's an incredible actor, he's an incredible mentor, and an incredible coach, and I don't think I've ever had a chance to say that to him," Robbins said.

Presenting an award shortly after, Ratner was almost as moving when he told his Sisters&Brothers co-star Gabrielle Rose that he hoped his breasts were as perky as hers "when I'm your age," and then announced that he was wearing a diaper.

He wasn't awarded for it, but Michael Eklund was probably the night's drunkest presenter, wandering onstage about five minutes before he was meant to (in a dissolutely cool way). By this time, the evening had a nicely ragged edge, especially after actor MacKenzie Gray put his Mick Jagger physiognomy to good use and led the band through a version of the Stones' "Miss You". We can't remember what he was presenting. The wine was free, incidentally.

Hosts Amanda Tapping and Robin Dunne set the tone early on as a matter of fact, with Dunne referring to his Sanctuary co-star at one point as an "English MILF" and then offering a \$5000 reward to anyone who brought him Leo president Walter Daroshin's pony-tail.

Brent Butt, Nancy Robertson, and their co-producers on Hiccups kept the ball rolling when they picked up the Best Music, Comedy, or Variety Program trophy—for a show that was cancelled this year. "I remember when I started Hiccups I could close this suit," Butt said, while his partner Robertson stood next to him, looking slightly insane. "So that's a pretty good run."

It wasn't all silliness. Accepting his award for Best Lead Performance by a Male in a Dramatic Series, Blackstone's Steven Cree Molison told the crowd, "Fifteen years ago, I was in the hospital with a brain injury, in a coma. Eleven years ago I graduated from theatre school. Eleven years later, here I am."

The APTN production was the biggest winner in the TV category, also taking Best Series, and two Best Supporting Performance trophies for Frank Cassini, and Tantoo Cardinal. Judging from the uproar that greeted each of the awards, Blackstone clearly had the audience of industry folk well on its side.

The full list of winners is here.