



BC's Leo Awards honours film, TV achievements in difficult times

BY ERIKA THORKELSON, VANCOUVER SUN MAY 27, 2012

VANCOUVER - British Columbia celebrated its achievements in film and television at the fourteenth annual Leo Awards Saturday evening in the midst of a difficult time for arts in the province and across the country.

Before the ceremony, Leo Awards President, Walter Deroshin, explained the importance of these kinds of events. "British Columbia has what I call a gorilla gesture when it comes to this industry," he said. "It pounds its chest about being a billion dollar industry, 20,000 people employed, x amount of tax dollars generated. But the complimentary gesture to that is recognizing the artistic excellence within the community. Unless we're good at what we do, it doesn't matter how much of it we do."

Amanda Tapping and Robin Dunne hosted the event. Their show Sanctuary, which was cancelled after its fourth season earlier this month, was nominated for 18 awards but only managed to snag one award at the Saturday evening ceremony.

"We're so proud of Sanctuary," Tapping said back stage before the show. "We're so proud of the little show that could and the fact that we've got to work with so many amazing talents in the community. We're 100% financed and produced, writing and post-production, everything is done in Vancouver and we're in 170 countries in the world."

Sanctuary wasn't the only cancelled show with multiple nominations. Hiccups garnered Best Music, Comedy, or Variety Program or Series. "It seems like a lot of these awards are posthumous," joked star Nancy Robertson.

Throughout the evening, Tapping and Dunne recognized the difficulties that British Columbia's arts community is facing with references to the change in Ontario's tax credits and the closure of the Vancouver Playhouse.

"With the closing of the Vancouver Playhouse actors who can really act will be looking for work," Dunne quipped. "So people like me are screwed."

Carl Bessai's Sisters & Brothers nearly cleaned up the top awards for feature length drama, including best drama, best director and best female lead. Bessai, who won for best director for Sisters & Brothers, dedicated his award to the actors because of the film's improvisational nature.

The lone aberration in the feature-length upper echelon was Ryan Robbins for his turn as a bank robber in Marilyn. "I thought for sure this was going to Ben Ratner," Robbins joked, referring to the Vancouver mainstay who won Best Guest Performance by a Male in a Dramatic Series for his work in Flashpoint. "He's an incredible actor, an incredible mentor and an incredible coach."

The Aboriginal People's Television Network series Blackstone scored the Best Dramatic Series nod. During the acceptance speech, producer Jesse Szymanski pointed out that creating a series that causes real political change "is probably the most rewarding thing you can do in the arts."

Steven Cree Molison was tipped as best male lead for his turn in Blackstone and the show also cleaned up in the best supporting performance categories with statues for Frank Cassini and Tantoo Cardinal.

Meg Tilly earned the award for the Best Lead Performance by a Female in a Dramatic Series in Bomb Girls but couldn't be in Vancouver because of theatrical commitments. Her award was accepted by Bomb Girls costar Ali Liebert.

But Tilley, who is a BC mainstay sent a note. "I am in Toronto raging around the stage in my second show of the day in a restricting garment getting a bit pungent," she wrote before going on to praise this province's film and television community.

Johannah Newmarch from the Sunflower Hour was in tears when she accepted her award for Best Supporting Performance by a Female in a Feature Length Drama.

She said of the film's minuscule \$35 000 budget, "if that's not a tribute to blood sweat and tears, I don't know what is. We're not accountants and we suffer for it, so thank you very much."

[Click here to view photos of stars arriving at the Leo Awards](#)

A rundown of the main winners:

Film

Best Feature Length Drama -Sisters&Brothers - Carl Bessai, James Brown, Emily Alden - Producers

Best Direction in a Feature Length Drama - Carl Bessai - Sisters&Brothers

Best Lead Performance by a Male in a Feature Length Drama - Ryan Robbins - Marilyn

Best Lead Performance by a Female in a Feature Length Drama - Amanda Crew -Sisters&Brothers

Television

Best Dramatic Series - Blackstone - Ron E. Scott, Jesse Szymanski, Damon Vignale - Producers

Best Direction in a Dramatic Series - David J. Frazee - Endgame - Fearful Symmetry

Best Lead Performance by a Male in a Dramatic Series - Steven Cree Molison -Blackstone - Hitchin

Best Lead Performance by a Female in a Dramatic Series - Meg Tilly - Bomb Girls - Jumping Tracks

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