

[Blackstone, Hell on Wheels win big at Alberta Film and Television Awards](#)

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PHOTO: Stuart Gradon, Calgary Herald

Michelle Thrush picked up the win for best actress at the Alberta Film and Television Awards

There was a plea for better roles for native actors, lots of nostalgia for the salad days of the Alberta film industry, music from the 1970s and even a hairy streaker to end the evening on a surreal note.

But, for the most part, the Alberta Film and Television Awards didn't hold too many surprises on its return to Calgary for its 40th anniversary at the Telus Convention Centre to honour homegrown productions and film workers, with two of the province's most established shows coming out on top. AMC's gritty western *Hell on Wheels* and APTN's even grittier drama *Blackstone* were the big winners, earning five and six trophies respectively in various categories.

Hell on Wheels, from Calgary-based Nomadic Pictures, took the prize for best dramatic series, beating out CBC's *Heartland* and *Blackstone*. The Edmonton-shot *Freezer*, a thriller starring Dylan McDermott, picked up the win for best feature film.

Other notable winners included Calgary actress Michelle Thrush, who picked up her second Rosie for her acclaimed performance as Gail Stoney in *Blackstone*. After her thank-yous, Thrush took the opportunity to

make a direct plea to Alberta producers in the audience to cast native actors and actresses as “human beings.”

“I’ve been in this business for close to 25 years working professionally as an actor,” Thrush told the Herald after the ceremony. “And I think we’re beyond the time to start casting aboriginal actors as just human beings. I am so tired every time there is a native character guest starring or a native character here or there they call us in. I want to come in and read for people who are just doing whatever and it has nothing to do with the culture I’m a part of. I’m an actress who just happens to be aboriginal.”

Blackstone, currently shooting its fourth season outside of Edmonton, tells the often harrowing story of corruption, power and addiction on a First Nations Reserve. It took home an impressive haul of hardware this year. Alongside the win for Thrush, creator Ron E. Scott was honoured in directing and screenwriting categories while Mike Shields also won two awards, for his soundtrack work in both the series and a The Making of Blackstone documentary. The show was also awarded the prize for the production that best reflects cultural diversity.

Scott says he takes pride in the series’ ability to inspire natives both in and out of the entertainment industry.

“We’re inspiring this next generation to say ‘We can do that,’” he says. “We hire actors, we train them and we try to do our best. It’s something I’m really proud of.”

Drayton Valley native Jason Cermak took home the best actor prize for his work in the tender, Lethbridge-shot family film Common Chord, beating out Tiny Plastic Men’s Chris Craddock, Kevin Davey from Hell on Wheels, Sheldon Elter from Blackstone and Heartland’s Shaun Johnston. Although that was the film’s only win, it earned an impressive seven nominations with its story about a musician forced to come of age when the mother of his young daughter is killed.

“It’s a very mature, intelligent script and a really beautiful character,” Cermak says.

The actor, who is currently shooting the sci-fi apocalyptic thriller Fallout Asylum near Calgary, lives in Vancouver where he recently scored a small role in the much ballyhooed film adaptation of 50 Shades of Grey. He says he hopes the new Calgary film studio, set to open in 2015, means that Alberta actors can stay home and have a career.

“If I live in Vancouver, I can work in Calgary,” he says. “But it doesn’t work the other way. For some reason, if you’re a Calgary-based actor they don’t hire you in Vancouver. So I’m going out there and making a name for myself and coming back every chance I get. As soon as I get enough clout there I’m going to come back to Calgary to stay.”

Speaking of Calgary, this is the third year in a row that Hell on Wheels won for best series. It also picked up wins for Bridget Durnford in editing, Frank Laratta and Michael Playfair for overall sound, Carol Case for costume design and Sharon Toohey for best make-up. It begins shooting its fourth season next week near Okotoks.

“Everybody is so passionate about it,” says producer Mike Frislev of Nomadic Pictures. “We’re just really, really proud to be part of it. I mean, we engineer a railroad every year. It’s kind of interesting. It’s a big story.”

Meanwhile, the Edmonton-produced Survival of the Fabulous, a funny documentary about the science behind homosexuality, was awarded three trophies, including wins for best documentary over 30 minutes and in cinematography and editing.

Calgary’s Pyramid Productions took the win for best documentary series for Wild Obsession, which airs on Animal Planet.

The evening, which was hosted by comedian Sean Cullen, had a distinct air of nostalgia to it to celebrate the Rosies' 40th anniversary. Music from 1974 was blared between awards while filmed testimonials about the early years of film industry came from veterans such as animal wrangler and stuntman John Scott, Edmonton documentary filmmaker Tom Radford, cameraman Jim Trustian and wildlife filmmaker Albert Karvonen. Radford, who won the first Rosie in 1974 for his documentary Ernest Brown: Pioneer Photographer, was joined on stage by Horst Schmid, Alberta's first minister of culture.

Cullen struggled to keep the crowd's interest throughout the evening ("How's the salad? It seems have gotten you nice and quiet . . . and unresponsive. What did they put in the salad, sadness juice?") only to be upstaged at the end of the night by a presumably liquor-lubricated stalker. It may or may not have been an homage to the infamous Oscars stalker of 1974 who interrupted actor David Niven, but Alberta Media Production Industries Association executive director Bill Evans insisted it was not a planned part of the evening's entertainment.

"I don't know where that came from," he said. "No idea."

Here is a complete list of winners

BEST DRAMATIC SERIES

Hell On Wheels
Mike Frislev & Chad Oakes, Producers
Nomadic Pictures

BEST DRAMATIC PRODUCTION OVER 30 MINUTES

Freezer
Lisa Byrne, Producer
Freezer Film Edmonton

BEST DOCUMENTARY SERIES

Wild Obsession
Larry Day, Producer
Pyramid Productions

BEST DOCUMENTARY UNDER 30 MINUTES

Tour of Alberta – "Making the Tour"
Guy Lavallee, Producer
City Television Edmonton

BEST DOCUMENTARY OVER 30 MINUTES

Survival Of The Fabulous!
Connie Edwards, Producer
Souleado Entertainment

BEST NEWS SERIES

Alberta Primetime
Kelsey Dyer, Producer
CTV Two Alberta

BEST NEWS FEATURE

Crystal Skulls
Allan Leader, Producer
Leader Productions

BEST DAILY NEWSCAST

CTV News at Six – “March 21, 2013”
Stephanie Prues, Producer
CTV Edmonton

**BEST INFORMATION
OR LIFESTYLE SERIES**

Eats Calgary
Laura O’Grady, Mathew Embry & Ravinder Minhas, Producers
Spotlight Productions

BEST TELEVISION COMMERCIAL UNDER \$50K

Rest in Peace
Michael Peterson, Bradley Stuckel, Michael Roik & Kelly Phelan, Producers
Plainsight Pictures, Freshdog Productions & CIFF

BEST TELEVISION COMMERCIAL OVER \$50K

Western Canada Lottery Corporation – “Not Much”
Matt Gillespie, Producer
Joe Media Group

BEST PUBLIC SERVICE OR NOT-FOR-PROFIT PRODUCTION

Alberta Health Services – “Germ Date”
Hans J. Dys, Producer
FILMBratz Productions

BEST CORPORATE OR PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTION

C&B Advertising – Calgary Stampede – “We’re Greatest Together”
Brent Kawchuk, Phil Copithorne, Leigh Blakely & Shayne McBride, Producers
Corkscrew Media & Stir Films

BEST MUSICAL PROGRAM OR SERIES

Canadian Country Music Awards
Scott Henuset, Claire Adams & Brent Kawchuk, Producers
Corkscrew Media

BEST MUSIC VIDEO

Lindi Ortega – “Tin Star”
Blake McWilliam, Producer
Back Road Productions

BEST COMEDY OR VARIETY PRODUCTION

Just Cause 2
Alexandra Lazarowich, Karl Giroux & Lese Skidmore, Producers
BearPaw Media Productions

BEST CROSS- PLATFORM OR TRANSMEDIA PRODUCTION

Alberta Flood 2013
Jenaya King, Patti Edgar, Katy Anderson & Rachel MacLean, Producers
CBC Calgary

BEST DIGITAL PRODUCTION

The Gathering
Nick Thomas, Chris Krieger, Brock Mitchell, Mark Harrison & Sheldon Lachambre, Producers
DDG

BEST SHORT

Lollipop
Michelle Wong & Scott Henuset, Producers
Corkscrew Media & Off Duty Films

BEST LIVE SPORTS EVENT PRODUCTION

Horse Racing Alberta – “2013 Canadian Derby”
Jeff Robillard, Bruce Yost & Mike Little, Producers
Horse Racing Alberta & Mike Little

BEST PRODUCTION REFLECTING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Blackstone – “Reap What You Sow”
Ron E. Scott & Jesse Szymanski, Producers
Prairie Dog Film + Television

BEST STUDENT PRODUCTION

My Life Is A Musical
Paul Davies, Producer
SAIT Polytechnic, Film & Video Production Program

CRAFT CATEGORIES

BEST DIRECTOR (DRAMA UNDER 30 MINUTES)

Brock Mitchell
Wendell Walker
DDG

**BEST DIRECTOR
(DRAMA OVER 30 MINUTES)**

Ron E. Scott
Blackstone – “Reap What You Sow”
Prairie Dog Film + Television

BEST DIRECTOR (NON-FICTION UNDER 30 MINUTES)

Phil Copithorne
C&B Advertising – Calgary Stampede – “We’re Greatest Together”
Corkscrew Media & Stir Films

BEST DIRECTOR (NON-FICTION OVER 30 MINUTES)

Blake Horobin
CBC New Faces – “Joe Nolan, Nuela Charles & Ghostkeeper”
Corkscrew Media

**BEST PERFORMANCE
BY AN ALBERTA ACTOR**

Jason Cermak
Common Chord
Gallant Productions & Northbound Studios

**BEST PERFORMANCE
BY AN ALBERTA ACTRESS**

Michelle Thrush
Blackstone – “Never Gonna Stop”
Prairie Dog Film + Television

BEST TELEVISION HOST

Jebb Fink
The Funnier Side
The Funnier Side Inc.

BEST NARRATOR

Michelle Armeneau
Compassionate Compass – “Cambodia”
Talking Light Media

**BEST SCREENWRITER
(DRAMA UNDER 30 MINUTES)**

Alexandra Lazarowich, Greg Miller & Lese Skidmore
Just Cause 2
BearPaw Media Productions

**BEST SCREENWRITER
(DRAMA OVER 30 MINUTES)**

Ron E. Scott
Blackstone – “Reap What You Sow”
Prairie Dog Film + Television

BEST SCREENWRITER (NON-FICTION UNDER 30 MINUTES)

Phil Copithorne
C&B Advertising – Calgary Stampede – “We’re Greatest Together”
Corkscrew Media & Stir Films

BEST SCREENWRITER (NON-FICTION OVER 30 MINUTES)

Tom Radford
Common Ground
Clearwater Documentary

BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER (DRAMA UNDER 30 MINUTES)

Nick Thomas
Wendell Walker
DDG
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER (DRAMA OVER 30 MINUTES)

Craig Wroblewski
Heartland – “There But For Fortune”
SEVEN24 Films

BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER (NON-FICTION UNDER 30 MINUTES)

Michael Sorel & Doug Munro
ATK Oilfield Transportation
Stir Films & Corkscrew Media

**BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER
(NON-FICTION OVER 30 MINUTES)**

Allan Leader
Survival Of The Fabulous!
Souleado Entertainment

**BEST EDITOR
(DRAMA UNDER 30 MINUTES)**

Sarah Taylor
Delmer & Marta
Mosaic Entertainment

**BEST EDITOR
(DRAMA OVER 30 MINUTES)**

Bridget Durnford
Hell On Wheels – “Fathers & Sins”
Nomadic Pictures

BEST EDITOR (NON-FICTION UNDER 30 MINUTES)

Chris Krieger
TEDxYYC Promo
DDG

BEST EDITOR (NON-FICTION OVER 30 MINUTES)

Scott Parker
Survival Of The Fabulous!
Souleado Entertainment

BEST OVERALL SOUND
(DRAMA UNDER 30 MINUTES)

Johnny Blerot
Heels
Back Road Productions

BEST OVERALL SOUND (DRAMA OVER 30 MINUTES)

Frank Laratta & Michael Playfair
Hell On Wheels – “Fathers & Sins”
Nomadic Pictures

BEST OVERALL SOUND (NON-FICTION UNDER 30 MINUTES)

Johnny Blerot
AHSA – “Safety In A Minute”
The Met Agency

BEST OVERALL SOUND
(NON-FICTION OVER 30 MINUTES)

Johnny Blerot
The Grounded
Kroschel Films

BEST ORIGINAL MUSICAL SCORE (DRAMA)

Mike Shields
Blackstone – “Burn Baby Burn”
Prairie Dog Film + Television

BEST ORIGINAL MUSICAL SCORE (NON-FICTION UNDER 30 MINUTES)

Alec Harrison & Andrea Wettstein
Fly Over Canada
Six Degrees

BEST ORIGINAL MUSICAL SCORE (NON-FICTION OVER 30 MINUTES)

Mike Shields
The Making of Blackstone
Prairie Dog Film + Television

BEST ART DIRECTOR

Trevor Smith
The Right Kind of Wrong
Nomadic Pictures

BEST COSTUME DESIGNER

Carol Case
Hell On Wheels – “One Less Mile”
Nomadic Pictures

BEST MAKE-UP ARTIST

Sharon Toohey
Hell On Wheels – “Cholera”
Nomadic Pictures

BEST VISUAL EFFECTS

Benjamin Ross Hayden, Brian Frank, & Jesse Foster
Agophobia
Manifold Picture Company

BEST ANIMATOR / MOTION GRAPHIC ARTIST(S)

Riley Beach & Deja Springfield
Tiny Plastic Men – “Business Gayer”
Mosaic Entertainment