

Gunless takes best feature at Leos

Star-studded evening honours B.C.-produced film and television shows

BY GLEN SCHAEFER, THE PROVINCE JUNE 12, 2011



Paul Gross on the Osoyoos set of the western comedy, Gunless.

Photograph by: Handout photo, The Province

The Osoyoos-filmed comic western Gunless was the feature-film favourite at the Leo Awards for B.C.-produced film and television Saturday night at the Fairmont Hotel Vancouver.

B.C.'s Shawn Williamson and Stephen Hegyes teamed up with Toronto's Niv Fichman to produce writerdirector Bill Phillips' best- feature winner about an American gunslinger (Paul Gross) looking vainly for a showdown

after he mistakenly wanders across the border to a peace-loving Canadian town.

The movie also took prizes for Greg Middleton's cinematography, Danny Virtue's stunt co-ordination and Matthew Budgeon's production design.

Gunless was the anomaly among the nominated features -wellfinanced, with a budget at around \$10 million, and with a wide Canadian theatrical release last year.

The CBC's Bill Richardson hosted the awards, now in their 13th year. The evening featured a 22-piece orchestra and a red carpet.

Among the other feature awards, Vancouver's Raul Ingles won best director for his direct-to-video thriller Transparency, starring Lou Diamond Phillips and B.C.'s Deborah Kara Unger. Ingles is a loner among B.C.'s creative community, bankrolling his feature projects with foreign distribution deals.

"I'm not expecting to win," he said earlier this week. "We were a film that nobody really knew about. We planned to make it as a straight-to-DVD movie and we just wanted to make the best movie we could. So it is kind of lovely that they acknowledged it, saying you know, this isn't a bad movie at all."

The director, who is ramping up to shoot the offbeat romance The Apologist this summer with actor Giovanni Ribisi, counts himself a fan of the local scene and was heading to last night's event with an eye to meeting fellow directing nominees Carl Bessai and Terry Miles. "I think those guys are great," he said.

Ingles' movie also won best editing for Richard Martin.

Vancouver writer Dennis Foon won best screenplay for *Life, Above All*, a Cannes hit that was shortlisted for this year's best foreign film Oscar. The drama, set in a South African township, was directed by Germany's Oliver Schmitz and was originally set to be a Canadian-German-South African co-production but Canadian financing couldn't be secured.

Also on the feature side, Tyler Labine was named best actor for his portrayal of a backwoods innocent in the Alberta-filmed, B.C.-produced horror comedy *Tucker & Dale vs Evil*.

April Telek took best actress for playing a fading B-movie actress in the indie drama *Amazon Falls*.

Supporting actor went to Jay Brazeau for director Bessai's festival hit ensemble comedy *Fathers&Sons*, in which he played a mysterious Russian who clashes with his longlost son.

Bessai helmed the paranormal thriller *Repeaters*, which won Alexia Fast a best supporting actress prize for her role as the younger sister to a recovering junky.

The best TV series prize went to *Smallville*, the Vancouver-filmed U.S. series that includes a number of behind-the-camera Canadians.

Vancouver's David Winning won best director for an episode of the Winnipeg-filmed series *Todd and the Book of Pure Evil*, while writerproducer Damon Vignale won best screenplay for an episode of his Alberta-filmed APTN series *Blackstone*.

Blackstone also took a best actress prize for its star, Vancouver's Carmen Moore. Best actor in a TV series went to Callum Keith Rennie for the Vancouver-set cop drama *Shattered*.

Best supporting actor was Ryan Robbins, for the Vancouver-produced gothic sci-fi series Sanctuary, while Lucia Walters took best supporting actress for her role in the U.S. family drama Life Unexpected.

Best guest performance went to Michael Eklund for some intense work in an episode of the FOX TV drama Fringe.

Creator Brent Butt's Vancouver-set sitcom Hiccups took the prize as best TV comedy or variety series, with the show's star (and Butt's wife) Nancy Robertson named best performer. Hiccups also took awards for best direction (James Dunnison), best screenwriting (David Moses) and best editing (Lisa Binkley).

Mighty Jerome, producer Selwyn Jacobs and director Charles Officer's look back at the life of legendary B.C. track athlete Harry Jerome, was named best documentary feature and also took prizes for editing (Jesse James Miller), sound (Jon Ritchie, Eric Harwood Davies) and musical score (Schaun Tozer).

The retro Cold War short drama A Fine Young Man took a mittful of prizes, including best short, best actor (Paul McGillion), as well as writing and directing prizes for Kevan Funk.