

Picnicface eating up the industry recognition

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TV show, film get numerous nods

Last year was a big year for Picnicface.

The sketch comedy group from Halifax opened the Atlantic Film Festival in September with its feature film *Roller Town* and sold out five screenings.

The eight-member troupe also launched an eponymous 13-episode TV series in September on the Comedy Network. In October, they released a book, *Picnicface's Canada*, and won the Canadian Comedy Award for best sketch troupe. It was their fourth consecutive nomination in the category and first win.

On Thursday, the TV show and the movie combined for six Canadian Comedy Award nominations and other funny Nova Scotians were well represented.

Picnicface was nominated for Best TV Show and Best Ensemble Performance (TV) while troupe members Andrew Bush, Garry Campbell, Kyle Dooley, Cheryl Hann, Mark Little, Brian Eldon Macquarrie, Evany Rosen, Scott Vrooman and Bill Wood were nominated for Best Writing in a Television Program or Series.

Roller Town was nominated for: Best Film, Best Writing (Film) (Vrooman, Little and Bush) and Best Director (Film) (Bush).

Picnicface will compete against the New Minas-shot HBO Canada dark comedy series *Call Me Fitz* in the Best Ensemble Performance category.

Lower Sackville-raised Nikki Payne, now based in Toronto, was nominated for Canadian Comedy Person of the Year and will compete against Gerry Dee.

Dee's Halifax-shot series *Mr. D*, seen on the CBC, was nominated for best performance by a male and female, Darrin Rose and Naomi Snieckus, respectively.

Halifax filmmaker Pardis Parker received nominations for Best Writing (Film) and Best Performance by a Male (Film) for his short, *The Dance*, that premiered at the 2011 Atlantic Film Festival. The film, which Parker directed, is a comedic love story with no dialog that also stars Picnicface's Rosen.

Robb Wells of *Trailer Park Boys* fame will compete against Parker in the Best Performance by a Male (Film) category for his role in *Beat Down*.

The Newfoundland-shot feature film, written by Deanne Foley and Pictou County's Iain MacLeod screens June 22 in Toronto at the Female Eye Film Festival.

Foley was nominated for Best Director (Film) and Marthe Bernard was nominated for Best Performance by Female (Film) for her role in the movie about wrestling, family and following your dreams

The public can vote for the Best TV Show, Best Film, Canadian Comedy Person of the Year, Best Radio Program and Best Web Clip awards from June 14 to July 29 by registering at www.canadiancomedy.ca (<http://www.canadiancomedy.ca>).

Other awards are voted on by industry members.

The beaver statuettes will be presented live on Aug. 26 in Toronto, capping off Canadian Comedy Awards & Festival Week, running Aug. 23-26.

Picnicface's Vrooman said the nomination that means the most is for best ensemble performance.

"We think of ourselves as a team. We love performing together so that would be particularly nice to win," he said, by phone from Toronto where he, Little, Rosen, and Dooley are living.

Wood, Hann, Bush and Macquarrie are still based in Halifax.

Vrooman said the nominations for the Picnicface series mean more because “five years of

preparation went into the series, learning how to do sketch, to work with each other. The series was the culmination of that.

“Roller Town was a huge project, but it was a one-off, so the nominations for (the TV series) are even more special.”

The Picnicface series was cancelled in May and the group went online with a Save Picnicface campaign aimed at finding the show a new home.

“Most of our fans have signed the petition already so we’ve let the campaign coast, but there are still things happening behind the scenes,” Vrooman said. “I can’t release details, but the producers are still in talks. It’s not dead yet.”

Vrooman thinks it’s ironic that all five of the series nominated for Best TV Show have been cancelled. Michael Tuesdays and Thursdays is the TV leader with seven nominations.

The nods can’t hurt Picnicface’s prospects, said Vrooman.

“It’s always nice to be recognized by other comedians. Comedians are the toughest audience so if they find us funny that’s extra special. This is yet another thing to help the producers make their case. We have built something worthwhile, so if it does get a chance to keep going, it will grow.”

Meanwhile Roller Town will be released theatrically across the country by Canadian distributor D Films Corp. in August. A sneak preview of the film at Park Lane Cinemas in Halifax on June 6 sold out.

And Roller Town has a video-on-demand deal in the U.S. with Warner Brothers Digital Distribution. Warners has access to more than 100 million homes in the U.S. and the movie’s release through Warners also begins in August.

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