

 Print

CLOSE WINDOW

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2010: The Honour Roll

By Our Staff

AS THE YEAR draws to a close, we recognize talented members of our arts and cultural communities who took giant steps forward this year.

- Honourees, listed in alphabetical order:

2b THEATRE

Halifax's 2b theatre celebrated its 11th season in style.

Within a year, it had four productions in 10 cities and a total audience of over 5,000 for shows and events.

"And it's not slowing down," says Anthony Black, co-founder of 2b with Christian Barry.

The company took Black's one-man show *Invisible Atom* to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, where it received a Herald Angel Award, recognizing outstanding work, from the Scotland Herald.

At the fringe, Black was invited to take *Invisible Atom* to Sydney, Australia this January and he's also taking it to Nashville's Vanderbilt University.

He has already performed the play in Toronto, Victoria, Vancouver, Regina, New York and Cork, Ireland.

AMELIA CURRAN

Hunter, Hunter by Halifax singer-songwriter Amelia Curran was released in Sept., 2009, but it couldn't stop racking up trophies in 2010. After four East Coast Music Awards nominations, the Newfoundland native scored on home turf at the Juno Awards in St. John's for roots/traditional solo album of the year, picked up four Music Newfoundland and Labrador Awards in October and three Nova Scotia Music Awards in November, when she was also named solo artist of the year at the Canadian Folk Music Awards.

But awards shows were just a blip on the horizon of a long road of touring, as Curran kept her focus on that greatest honour of all, being able to play for as many people in as many different places as possible, starting at the Cultural Olympiad in Vancouver and crossing the country, through the U.S. and the U.K.

TANYA DAVIS

It started out as an eloquent and visually stirring ode to the pleasures of enjoying a little "me time" but it didn't take long for *How to Be Alone*, a collaboration between Halifax-based poet/musician Tanya Davis and filmmaker Andrea Dorfman to rack up over two million hits on YouTube. Helped along by thumbs up from the likes of Roger Ebert and UK paper *The*

Guardian, the clip was also raked over the coals by Globe and Mail columnist Russell Smith, who called Davis's sentiments about solitude "anti-feminist", thereby prompting an additional flurry of blogging, theorizing and, best of all, more attention for Davis and Dorfman.

How to Be Alone earned the P.E.I. native video and digital artist of the year honours at the Nova Scotia Music Awards, providing the perfect tee-up for the release of her third release *Clocks and Hearts Keep Going*.

LISA DRADER-MURPHY

Nova Scotia fashion designer Lisa Drader-Murphy rubbed shoulders with a lot of stars in 2010. And the owner of Turbine Fashion Design Studio & Cafe in Falmouth and Turbine Boutique on the Halifax waterfront will be showing her wares to an even bigger group of A-listers in the celebrity gifting lounge at the 68th Golden Globe Awards in Los Angeles, Calif., Jan. 13-15.

Under the Turbine label, which she established in 1997, Drader-Murphy designs and produces collections of ready-to-wear, leather handbags and jewelry.

She started 2010 by providing swag bags for 15 media moguls, including representatives from *Us Weekly* and *People* magazine. More than 200 celebrities attending the Carnibowl celebrity gifting suite at the Super Bowl in Florida also saw her designs, as did those in the celebrity gifting lounge at September's Toronto International Film Festival.

BRUCE EWERT

Bruce Ewert is among those proving that Nova Scotia can produce great wine. Owner of L'Acadie Vineyards in the Gaspereau Valley, Ewert won gold at the Canadian Wine Awards for his 2007 Prestige Brut.

It's only the third time in the awards' history that a sparkler has been awarded a gold medal. The award proved the assertion that the province's climate is ideal for the production of traditional method sparkling wines.

Jurg Stutz of *Domaine de Grand Pre*, with his *Champlain*, and Jean-Benoit Deslauriers of *Benjamin Bridge*, with that winery's *Brut Reserve* and *Blanc de Noirs*, are also producing traditional method sparkling wine, which is champagne in everything but name.

THOM FITZGERALD

Award-winning Nova Scotia filmmaker Thom Fitzgerald not only shot a movie this year, he made a splash in the local theatre scene when he opened a new independent theatre.

Plutonium Playhouse, on Halifax's Hunter Street near Cunard, ran a season of four plays, was a venue in the Atlantic Fringe Festival and recently produced the *Sex Festival*, a series of plays, readings, photos and videos exploring sexuality, relationships and gender.

Fitzgerald, whose movies include *3 Needles*, *The Event* and *The Hanging Garden*, is the artistic director of Plutonium and playwright Lee-Anne Poole is the associate producer. She produced Fitzgerald's play *Cloudburst* and *A Rescue Demonstration* by Stewart Legere and Katie Swift. Poole also had two of her own works at the venue, her first full-length play *Splinters*, and *The Obedients*, a spin on Jean Genet's *The Maids*.

After directing the play *Cloudburst*, Fitzgerald shot the movie *Cloudburst* with Olympia Dukakis and Brenda Fricker.

JRDN

JRDN certainly seemed to have it all this year.

The Halifax R&B singer, formerly known as Jordan Croucher, released IAMJRDN (Kuya Productions/Fontana North) in November, did a hometown show and performed at the Nova Scotia Music Week Awards Gala in Yarmouth.

The first single from IAMJRDN, U Can Have It All, was released in August, and made iTunes' R&B Top 5 alongside Usher, Cee Lo and Trey Songz.

Now, the song's been nominated for two Canadian Radio Music Awards in the dance-urban-rhythmic and contemporary hit radio categories. JRDN moved to Toronto a year ago.

A basketball star at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, who played professionally in France, JRDN started making music in 2005, working with Halifax producer Trobiz. In 2007, he released his first disc No Dress Code, produced by Enfield rapper and Juno-winner Classified.

The album earned him an ECMA nomination, a Galaxie Rising Star Award and an appearance on CBC TV's Barenaked East Coast Music.

He was featured on ET Canada on Nov. 8 and the video for U Can Have It All, directed by Halifax's Cazhmere, reached No. 15 on the MuchMusic Countdown. JRDN was also the No. 1 Emerging Artist in Canada on Billboard charts for five weeks straight.

LAST CALL CHERNOBYL

It was a little over a year ago that the members of the Halifax progressive metal band Last Call Chernobyl were considering going into meltdown, figuring a slot in a local battle of the bands contest would be one of its last gigs.

They hadn't counted on winning, and wound up with a slot on one of the summer's most popular rock extravaganzas after they were handpicked by Warped Tour founder Kevin Lyman at the Nova Scotia Music Week Battle to Warped Tour finale.

Last Call Chernobyl played 12 dates of the annual travelling celebration of punk and metal, from Ventura, Calif. up to Montreal, having the time of its half-life and making piles of new fans.

It's not hard to see why. The band has an intense stage dynamic and a magnetic presence in the form of singer Kyle Mahar, while its debut CD Drowning Beneath the Sound of Change on Diminished Fifth Records shows a lot of confidence and range for a band that claims to have just been doing it for fun prior to the Warped win.

Hang on to your hazmat suits; currently the band is in the midst of writing new material with plans to record demos for a follow-up release in the new year.

GEORGETTE LEBLANC

Church Point author Georgette Leblanc won the \$25,000 Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia Masterwork Arts Award for her books Alma and Amédé.

Leblanc, who teaches literature at Université Sainte-Anne, took the risk of not getting published or read when she decided to write in the French language she learned growing up

in Church Point.

"I'm writing in the French we speak in the Baie Sainte-Marie, and it's a French that dates back to the 17th- and 18th-century French that we still speak," she said after winning the award.

In the francophone world, it's considered an unusual language for French literature.

"To choose to write in that language was a big deal. It was a personal decision. I was saying, 'OK, if I only get read by 9,000 people, that's OK.' The kind of joke is that it worked, and instead of being read by 9,000, it's been read by many, many more."

Leblanc's Acadian poem-stories have been compared to the work of Antoinine Maillet, Michel Tremblay and anglophone Nova Scotia writers Ernest Buckler and George Elliot Clarke.

The multiple prize-winning *Alma* (2007) and *Amédé* (2010) are bestsellers in Quebec and the Atlantic region and have won acclaim in poetry festivals in France, Belgium and Canada.

JOSH MACDONALD

Dartmouth's Josh MacDonald had two big premieres to attend at the Atlantic Film Festival in Halifax in September.

He wrote the screenplays for feature films *Faith*, *Fraud* and *Minimum Wage* and *The Corridor*.

Faith, *Fraud* and *Minimum Wage* was directed by George Mihalka (*My Bloody Valentine*) and starred Martha Maclsaac and Callum Keith Rennie. Based on MacDonald's play *Halo*, it was shot in Spryfield and Shubenacadie over 19 days in March 2009.

The film was released commercially to theatres in Halifax and Sydney earlier this month.

The Corridor, directed by Halifax's Evan Kelly, stars local actors Stephen Chambers, James Gilbert, David Patrick Flemming, Matthew Amyotte and Glen Matthews.

MacDonald also wrote the script for *This 2*, a short film directed by Jacob Owens that was part of the CBC Atlantic Shorts gala.

In October, MacDonald, who is also an actor, became the first North American writer to participate in the eQuinox Germany Screenwriters Workshop.

WILLIAM MACGILLIVRAY

Lunenburg's William MacGillivray has been busy collecting raves and awards for his film *The Man of a Thousand Songs*.

MacGillivray, who directed 1987's *Life Classes*, won the Rex Tasker documentary award and the award for outstanding direction at the Atlantic Film Festival in Halifax in September for his feature-length film about Newfoundland troubadour Ron Hynes.

The Picture Plant/Get Set Films production earned a standing ovation at each of its three screenings at the Toronto International Film Festival, where it had its world premiere, and at the Atlantic film fest and St. John's International Women's Film Festival.

In early December, the movie had a special one-night-only presentation in cinemas in seven cities across Atlantic Canada.

A German company is looking at distributing *The Man of a Thousand Songs* in Germany and Austria. And the film will be showcased at the European Market at the Berlin International Film Festival for about 6,500 buyers from around the world in February, MacGillivray says.

And 2011 will be another big year for MacGillivray.

He wrote the script for *Hard Drive*, based on the novel *Ditch* by Hal Niedzviecki. The low-budget feature is expected to begin in March.

His Picture Plant company is developing *What You Need*, a feature by Sherry White (Crackie) based on Eliza Clarke's Giller-nominated novel of the same name.

Two other projects he's working on are: *Happy Clean*, *The Last Chinese Laundry*, and a screen adaptation of Canadian writer Marion Engle's feminist novella, *Bear*.

MOCEAN DANCE

Mocean Dance turned 10 this year.

And the Halifax contemporary troupe, founded by Carolle Crooks Fernando, Sarah Rozee, Sara Harrigan, Alicia Orr MacDonald and Lisa Phinney Langley, celebrated in November with Decennium.

The show featured excerpts from nine favourite works of years past and a film created by choreographer Phinney Langley and Gemini Award-nominated filmmaker Rohan Fernando. A resident company at Halifax Dance, Mocean presented its first major show, *Quintecentric*, to rave reviews at the Sir James Dunn Theatre in October 2003.

The company has toured extensively, appearing in San Francisco, Toronto, Vancouver and Guelph, Ont., as well as in theatres across the Atlantic provinces.

Melanie Ferro of St. Margarets Bay and Tania Jean of Quebec joined the company, which has changed composition as the founders have focused on motherhood or new career directions at different times.

This year, Mocean became the first dance company east of Quebec to receive annual creation production support from the Canada Council for the Arts. The company has received annual project contributions from the Canada Council. In the fall of 2011, the company plans to participate in a project with Canadian dance icon Tedd Robinson

PARDIS PARKER

In 2010, Halifax humorist Pardis Parker steadily took the comedy world by storm one triumph at a time.

As 2009 was drawing to a close, Parker was one of 13 performers chosen out of 3,000 to take part in CBS's annual industry Diversity Showcase in Los Angeles, while in 2010 his short films *Afghan* and *Two Men, Two Cows, Two Guns* proceeded to rack up piles of awards and nominations at festivals across North America. It won best short film at the *Wet Your Pants Comedy Film Festival*, best film/comedy/audience choice at the *Montgomery Film Festival*, a jury award at the *South Dakota Film Festival* and silver at the *JamFest Indie Film Festival*.

In England, Parker performed for 3,700 people at the London premiere of *The Infidel*, starring British-Iranian comic and actor Omid Djalili. Back home, Parker received four

nominations at the Canadian Comedy Awards and was the only Atlantic finalist in Canada's Next Top Comic contest

Currently Parker is working in the digital realm with his latest short *Implants* and a planned project inspired by Bollywood musicals. He's also a cast member on *Moderation Town*, the Halifax-shot web-series for Showcase, with roles in Rohan Fernando's upcoming feature film *Snow*, Mike Clattenburg's *Afghan Luke* and the Burgundy of Hash and Picnicface's *Roller Town*.

JOHANNA SKIBSRUD

When Johanna Skibsrud's first novel *The Sentimentalists* won the \$50,000 Giller Prize this fall, the native of Meadowville, Pictou County, became the youngest winner in the prize's 17-year history.

Skibsrud, 30, based her book, in part, on her father's experiences in the Vietnam War. Skibsrud's U.S.-born parents emigrated to Nova Scotia in the early 1970s after her father trained as a wooden boat builder in Norway and got a boat-building job in Pictou County.

Skibsrud, who is working on another novel and a story collection, attended West Pictou District High School and did the foundation year at the University of King's College in Halifax before taking an undergraduate arts degree at the University of Toronto. She has a master's degree in creative writing from Montreal's Concordia University and is working on her doctorate in American poetry at the Universite de Montreal.

It was a good year for Nova Scotia Giller-wise. Saint Mary's University professor Alexander MacLeod's debut short story collection, *Light Lifting*, also made the Giller short list.

THE STANFIELDS

The Stanfields' members come from all corners of the province, and their music made it to all corners of the country as it surfed on the wave of the catchiest drinking song this side of Barrett's *Privateers: The Dirtiest Drunk (in the History of Liquor)*.

The band had a lot more up its sleeve than a hidden flask though, as its debut full-length *Vanguard of the Young & Reckless* showed the Maritime quintet to be master storytellers, wrapping ghost tales and bittersweet narratives in raging folk-rock fury.

Topping the nominees at the Nova Scotia Music Awards with six, the Stanfields snagged an alternative artist/group of the year trophy at the November ceremony in Yarmouth, which they would have missed if not for the outpouring of support from fans who donated funds to get the band and its busted van back home from B.C. They threw a party for supporters after the dust settled, and donated the surplus cash to the music education charity MusiCounts. Luck was also on the side of the band when it was added to the Saturday half of the Halifax Rocks concerts on the Commons, after the Friday portion headlined by Kid Rock was scuttled due to a wave of public disinterest. The Stanfields' success at rousing crowds on outdoor stages continues on New Year's Eve when the band rings in 2011 with Jimmy Rankin, Gordie Sampson and Matt Andersen.

ALAN SYLIBOY

Mi'kmaq artist Alan Syliboy had a huge year in 2010. It included the Olympics, the queen and a retrospective.

Syliboy was commissioned by the Vancouver Olympic Committee to create a 30-metre long mural People of the Dawn for permanent display at the new Trout Lake Community Centre.

The Millbrook First Nation artist, whose studio is in Truro, presented a portrait of Grand Chief Membertou to Queen Elizabeth II during her visit to Halifax on the last day of the Membertou 400 celebration.

Earlier this year, he and filmmaker Nance Ackerman of Heartstring Productions, with animator Paton Francis, created a National Film Board animated short titled Little Thunder for the Olympics. It was screened at the Atlantic Film Festival and won best animation film at the First Peoples Festival in Montreal.

Little Thunder has been selected for special programs at the 6th annual Children's Film Festival Seattle in late January and is playing the Roy and Edna Disney Arts Center in downtown Los Angeles in February. He and Ackerman are now working on a short film, Brainstorm, about bringing together art and medicine.

Syliboy is among the almost 20 artists commissioned to do artwork for the new People's Place library in Antigonish and is painting a mural that he calls "a family portrait of the community of Afton."

Syliboy's band Lone Cloud released its debut CD, Live at North Street Church, with cover artwork by the artist.

He wound up the year with a retrospective show at Klu'skap Art Gallery in Moncton. In late October, Syliboy was at the Creative Nova Scotia Awards Gala because People of the Dawn was shortlisted for the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia's Masterwork Award.

KIM WEMPE

Since she moved to the Maritimes, life has been good to Saskatchewan roots singer-songwriter Kim Wempe.

This year she won the 2010 ECMA Galaxie Rising Star of the Year award and early next year she performs as special guest with Rawlins Cross on the band's Atlantic Canada tour, which comes to Halifax's Rebecca Cohn Auditorium on Jan. 13 and Glace Bay's Savoy Theatre on Jan. 20.

Wempe's 11-song album Painting With Tides (GroundSwell/Warner) was recorded at the Echo Chamber studio in Halifax with Charles Austin (Buck 65, Matt Mays, Jenn Grant). It features collaborations with Joel Plaskett, Old Man Luedecke and Thom Swift along with Saskatchewan's Geoff Hilhorst.

Born in Saskatchewan, Wempe uprooted to Alberta and then to Nova Scotia, initially to study music at St. Francis Xavier University. The change of scene and people provided the theme of Painting With Tides.

Her song Oh Heart was featured this year on the Showcase TV series Crash and Burn and earned her a semi-finalist spot in the International Songwriting Competition. She also performed at the Vancouver Olympics and Junofest in St. John's as well as touring out West. Next year's slate includes performances at Canadian Music Week in Toronto from March 9 to 13.

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