Beta Test creators make the grade at indy film awards

Sci-fi thriller earns best student film as well as best acting honours

ASHLEY MARTIN

Joel Makar and Kenton Evenson's film Beta Test won twice at Friday night's Saskatchewan Independent Film Awards in Regina.

They beat out three other nominees for best student film, while Josh Strait won best acting for his role in Beta Test.

Strait's previous appearances include the Saskatchewan-made films Talent and WolfCop and Corner Gas (the series and film).

Filmmaker Gerald Saul wrote on his blog that Beta Test was "quite sophisticated — a sort of black mirror sort of thing but had me really hungry for virtual pie."

SuperGrid, directed by Lowell Dean and co-produced by Hugh Patterson and Trinni Franke, won best feature film.

"It's basically the imagined worst possible case scenario for a future of provinces like Saskatchewan or states like North Dakota 40 years down the road," Dean said during filming in June 2017, as they're "sold off to countries like Russia for fracking and things like that."

The award for best short film went to Mike Rollo's Farewell Transmission, about the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's CBK Transmitter Station, which opened in 1939 and was demolished in 2015.

According to Rollo's website, "Farewell Transmission is equal parts indexical record of the demolition of CBK in 2015 and subjective response to the residual media documenting the event."

Best technical achievement went to Matt Ripplinger for film manipulation in his film Sir Bailey.

According to the Antimatter media arts festival website, Sir Bailey is a "portrait of the filmmaker's old friend.

"The film's surgical cutting and state of decay symbolizes Bailey's suffering from bone cancer, consisting of homemade emulsion, contact printing and reticulation. Sir Bailey embarks on an existential journey through the shattering photo-chemical plane during his last day of life."

Actor and comedian Shawn Koch hosted the fifth annual SIFA event at The Artesian on Friday. The five awards were presented after the 18 jury-selected nominee films were screened.

"This event demonstrates that we have a lot of great talent to celebrate in this province," Sask Filmpool executive director Gordon Pepper said in a news release.

All films were in the running for the audience choice award; the results were not available at press time.

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