

NEW YORK
VULTURE

GOLD RUSH

Heated Rivalry Can't Save the Emmys



By Joe Reid, writer and gamesmaker, covering movies, TV, and awards.

8:00 A.M.

SAVE



The Television Academy shares the final word on rumors of a rule change for the Canadian production's eligibility: "There was never any discussion." Photo: HBO

Gold Rush

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Welcome back to *Gold Rush*, coming at you from the first week of *The Pitt's* offseason. After what seemed to me like a slow start, the emergency-medical series charged into its home stretch, which largely played well among critics. Meanwhile, the increasingly loud online fandom has, depending on your POV, either grown tired of the series doing its female characters of color dirty or lost the plot on their parasocial relationship with Doctor Robby. (Maybe both are true?) Regardless, people are talking about *The Pitt* again, and its status as the drama to beat at the Emmys seems secure for the moment.

Still, the relatively low simmer at which *The Pitt* played through much of its season has stood in stark contrast to the Oscar season we just wrapped up, one in which box-office behemoth *Sinners* set the all-time nomination

record, where Michael B. Jordan battled back Timothée Chalamet for young Hollywood supremacy, where Paul Thomas Anderson finally collected his first-ever Oscars for *One Battle After Another*. Despite the film industry's myriad existential crises, it produced an Oscar contest between two wildly popular, well-respected films of sweeping scope and high entertainment value. After decades of discourse about how the American public's attention has migrated away from the movies and onto TV screens, the cultural Zeitgeist seemed to exist solidly at the movies.

There was, of course, one gleaming exception to the cultural stranglehold that *Sinners* versus *One Battle After Another* held last winter. The one scripted TV show that unambiguously clicked with mainstream viewership was Canadian sports-romance smut obsession *Heated Rivalry*. Ideally, the hot topic for Emmys season would be making the case that *HR* is more than just hot and sweaty fujoshi-bait, that somewhere between the exquisitely acted declarations of lost-in-translation love and an impressively nuanced coming-out narrative, *Heated Rivalry* became a bona fide great TV show, as worthy of Emmy consideration as shows about emergency medicine and international diplomacy and AI. But we're not having that conversation for the dumbest of all possible reasons: the rules.

Heated Rivalry isn't eligible for the Primetime Emmys for the simple reason that it's not an American production. The rule states simply that "Foreign television is ineligible unless it is the result of a co-production (both financially and creatively) between U.S. and foreign partners, which precedes the start of production." Immediately, your mind is going to jump to a half-dozen or so Emmy-nominated shows that surely were foreign productions. *Shōgun*? *Squid Game*? *Adolescence*? *Downton Abbey*? Nope. Every one of those shows was backed at least in part by an American production company at the outset. *Heated Rivalry* is a production of the Canadian TV network Crave, and while episodes premiered on HBO Max on the same day and date as in Canada, HBO had merely purchased the rights to stream the show in the U.S. and select foreign territories. That agreement was reached only nine days before the *Heated Rivalry* premiere. All of the creative input and financial backing for the production came from Crave.

For his part, *Heated Rivalry* executive producer Jacob Tierney has talked about how his show benefitted from not having any American input. "We would have waited the entire season to see a kiss," Tierney told the *Ankler back in December*. "We definitely would not have had sex in the first episode. It would have been about a whole team with 20 other players and their wives and anything to dilute the essence of what this was."

For as proudly Canadian as the show is, the sizable shadow *Heated Rivalry* has cast over the current season of American television raises the question of whether the Emmys can't just bend the rules for this sexy, popular outlier. The TV Academy has certainly shown a willingness to adjust their rules to reflect an ever-changing TV landscape. Over the last 20 years, the number of nominations in the Outstanding Drama and Comedy Series categories has jumped from five to six to now eight. The Outstanding Miniseries and Outstanding TV Movie categories have been merged and unmerged, with

Miniseries evolving to Limited Series and now to Limited or Anthology Series. Requirements for the Guest Actor categories have been tinkered with, and that's not even getting into the reality categories, for which the Emmys have added or redefined categories to single out achievement in hosting, directing, editing, and cinematography for structured and unstructured reality shows. Why wouldn't everybody involved, from the *Heated Rivalry* producers to Emmys brass, want to change the rules to let our hockey boys in?

"There was never any discussion about a rules change," says TV Academy president Maury McIntyre, who told me this week that despite a good bit of online speculation, the Emmys never considered making a change to allow *Heated Rivalry* to compete, nor did anyone approach the TV Academy to request it. According to McIntyre, this is a matter solely for the governing body *Heated Rivalry* belongs to. "We have three different entities that award the Emmys," he says. "You've got the Television Academy, which does what is formally called the Primetime Emmys. You've got our sister, NATAS, the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, which does Daytime, Sports, News, and Documentary. And then you've got the International Academy of Television Arts and Sciences that oversees international productions. If you are a strictly international production, there is a competition for you, but it has to be the International competition. And because *Heated Rivalry* was wholly produced in Canada, it is an international production from our perspective. HBO just kind of picked it up and aired it."

In order for *Heated Rivalry* to compete as an American co-production at the Primetime Emmys, it would have needed HBO (or any American company) to provide financing and creative input at the outset. "If HBO had been a producer on it — if they had financed half of it, had some creative control, so they were involved in the hiring of writers and actors, etc. — then it could have done that," McIntyre says. "But it was just a complete pickup."

There are occasions when an American distributor will pick up a foreign show and take on a production commitment that would qualify the show for the Primetime Emmys. McIntyre cites Disney's pickup of *Doctor Who* as one example, or more pertinently, the case of *Schitt's Creek*. That series swept the Primetime Emmys' comedy categories in its final season, but when the show first began, it was, like *Heated Rivalry*, excluded from the American competition. "In *Schitt's Creek*'s first year, it was not eligible for our Emmy competition because it was wholly produced in Canada," McIntyre says. "But when American cable network Pop TV picked up distribution, they also committed to financing and creative control for all subsequent seasons, and that made it eligible from season two on."

HBO's relationship with *Heated Rivalry* hasn't changed going into season two, so don't expect the show's Emmys outlook to be different next year. However, if HBO (or any American network) ever does become a material partner for subsequent seasons, the door to the Primetime Emmys would then be open.

For now, *Heated Rivalry*'s loss is *The Pitt*'s gain. Not many shows possess even a fraction of *HR*'s buzz. The trio of political thrillers expected to fill out the Emmys' drama categories — Netflix's *The Diplomat*, Apple TV's *Slow Horses*, and Hulu's *Paradise* — feel decidedly second-tier, while critical darling *Pluribus* hasn't yet broken containment the way its fellow brainy sci-fi series *Severance* was able to. The one threat to *The Pitt* getting back-to-back wins may well be HBO's *Euphoria*, which certainly has the buzz (returning to air with three bona fide movie stars on your roster will do that). But does it have the gravitas? That's the question we'll spend all season trying to answer.

MORE 'HEATED RIVALRY'

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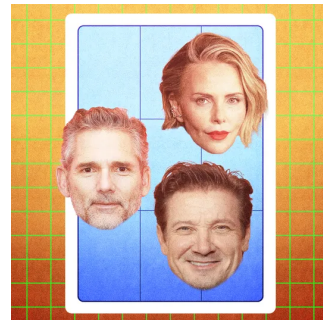
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THEATER REVIEW | YESTERDAY AT 10:38 P.M.

Joe Turner's Come Back, With Power Undimmed In this production starring Taraji P. Henson and Joshua Boone, the 1910s segment of August Wilson's Pittsburgh Cycle simmers and smolders.



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Megan Thee Stallion Accuses Klay Thompson of Cheating
“Trust, fidelity and respect are non-negotiable for me in a relationship.”

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Pari and Tina from *Love on the Spectrum* Broke Up Not so terrific news.

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Cinematrix No. 760: April 25, 2026 Can you name an Oscar-nominated Susan Sarandon movie?

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Kyle Cooke Says *Summer House* Reunion Was a ‘Rough Day’
He put his detective cap on to try to figure out who leaked the audio.



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Helena Bonham Carter Checks Out of *The White Lotus* She's reportedly leaving over creative differences.

WORKING IT OUT ON THE REMIX | [APR. 24, 2026](#)

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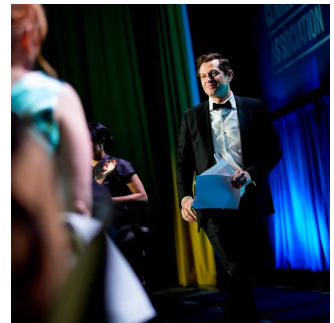
The Cascio Siblings Accuse Michael Jackson of Child Sexual Abuse They claim they were “groomed” as “soldiers” to defend him.

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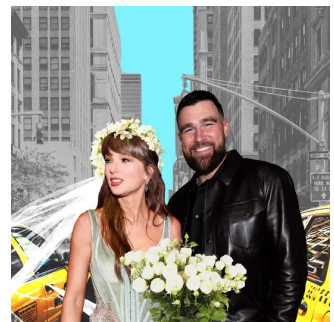
Jake Reiner on Rob, Michele Reiner's Death: 'This Truly Is My Living Nightmare' “I was robbed of so many things that day.”

BEST OF C-SPAN | [APR. 24, 2026](#)

How to Watch the White House Correspondents' Dinner Trump is attending, and Oz Pearlman is doing mentalism.

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By Alison Willmore

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***Over Your Dead Body* Is Fun Until It Isn't** Jason Segel and Samara Weaving are surprisingly convincing as a couple plotting to kill each other in the new action-horror comedy from Jorma Taccone.



UH-OH BRAVO | [APR. 24, 2026](#)

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