



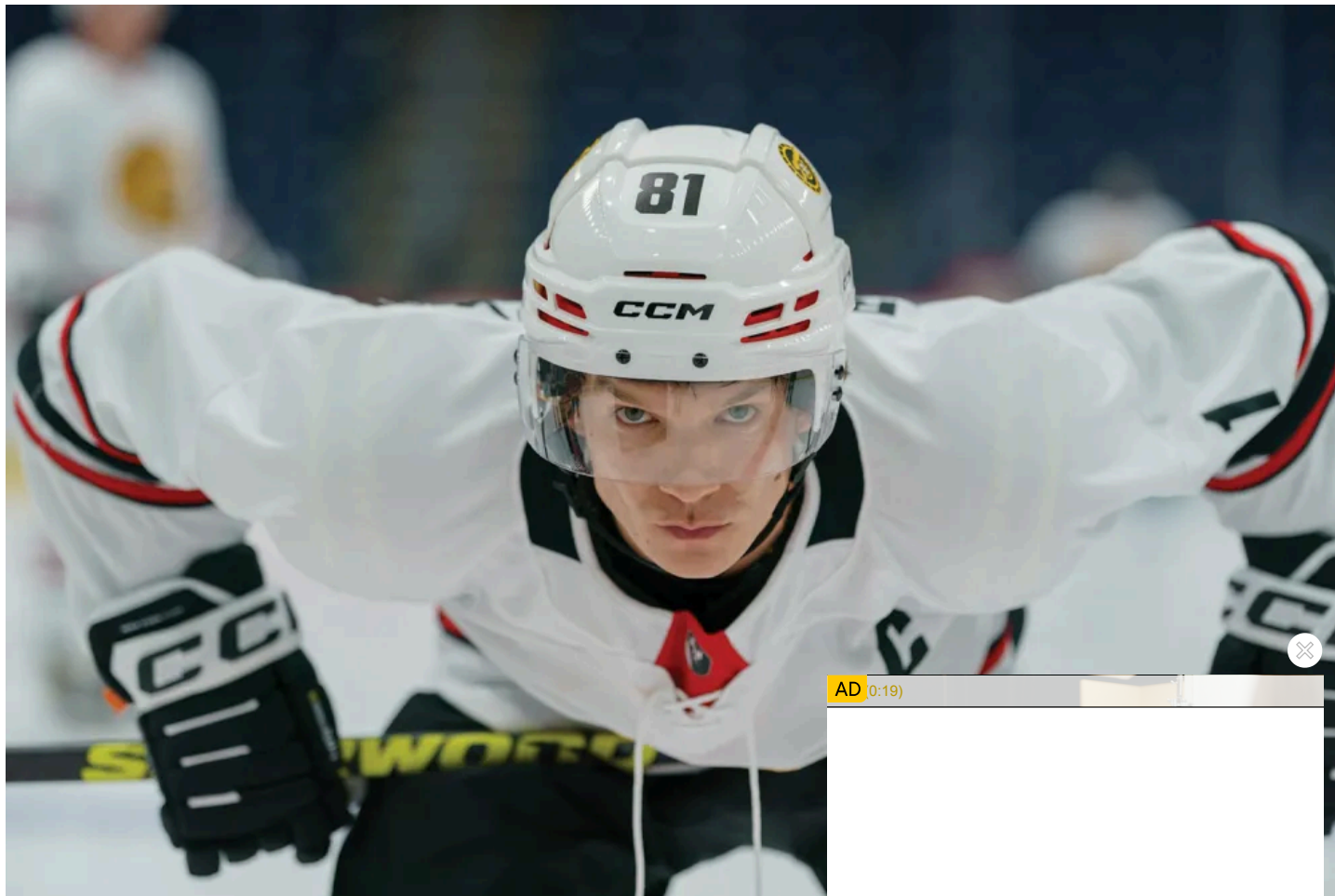
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May 27, 2026 9:45am PT

How ‘Heated Rivalry’ Is Still Having an Impact at the TV Academy — Even Though It’s Not Emmy-Eligible

Awards Circuit Column: The hit HBO Max series is a Canadian original, keeping it seated during this (and next) year's race.

By Michael Schneider ▾



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The Television Academy really, really wants to honor hit hockey romance “[Heated Rivalry](#).” But because it was produced solely by Canadian producers and didn’t originate on a U.S. network, the show isn’t Emmy-eligible.

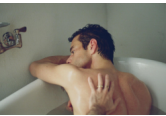
It’s actually quite head-scratching: International projects these days don’t seem to have a problem getting into the Emmy race — just add an American studio or network to your list of producers, and boom, you’re eligible for a Primetime Emmy. “Downton Abbey,” “Squid Game,” “Baby Reindeer” were all shows that clearly originated overseas, but were still winners here.

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“Heated Rivalry,” to its credit, has remained exclusively Canadian — without a U.S. production partner. Created by Jacob Tierney, the show is a production of Accent Aigu Entertainment for Canadian conglomerate Bell Media’s Crave streamer.

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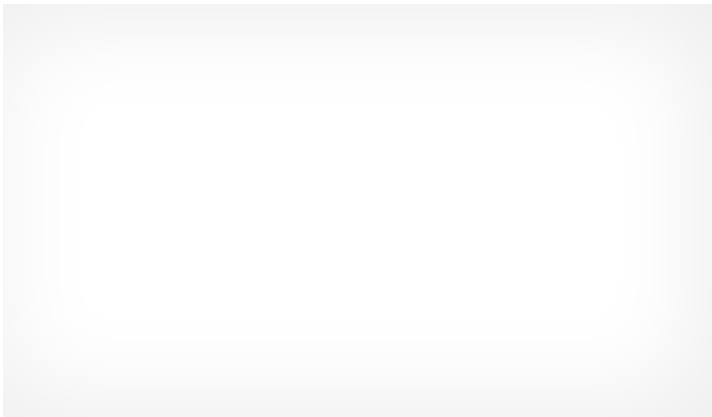


Of course, during the development process, there was a chance that a U.S. financier might board the show, which would have made it Emmy-eligible. But when those potential producers wanted to mess with the show's creative, Bell and Accent Aigu decided to go it alone.

HBO didn't acquire U.S. broadcast rights to the show just weeks before launch, which makes it complicated — as they clearly weren't involved in the show's Season 1 production. Maybe HBO could have still strong-armed a production credit — or at least demanded to be a partner in Season 2. But in a remarkable act of restraint, HBO's Casey Bloys decided he didn't want to mess with success.

"I think the last thing the show needs is people meddling in what works," he told me in December as "Heated Rivalry" mania hit full tilt. "Clearly, they've got a good sense of the show and what works. So I will be excited to receive my episodes and highlight them on HBO Max."

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And good for them, even if it means HBO Max won't be able to goose its Emmy tallies with potential "Heated Rivalry" nominations or wins. Let the Canadian show be Canadian. HBO Max, after all, is still benefitting greatly from the unexpected monster success of the show: At last check, "Heated Rivalry" averaged 10.6 million viewers a week on the network, according to Warner Bros. Discovery.

It's been nearly half a year since the Season 1 finale of "Heated Rivalry" ran on HBO Max. Since then, Connor Storrie has been talking about the show and its stars. Connor Storrie hosted a February episode of "The Late Late Show" and has been an ambassador for brands like Tiffany & Co. and Yves Saint Laurent and has been in-demand. Williams is similarly in-demand, appearing in a music video for Laufey, starring in a new film, and booking a bounty of new TV and film work.

Together, Williams and Storrie are inescapable: They were torchbearers at the 2026 Winter Olympics, on the carpet at the Met Gala and currently are some of the most in-demand presenters on awards shows.

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HBO can take solace in knowing that it climbed onboard another international production, Richard Gadd's U.K.-set "Half Man," early enough for eligibility. "Half Man" appears to be an Emmy frontrunner, with Gadd potentially on track to pick up a few new trophies alongside his "Baby Reindeer" wins from a few years ago.

As for "Heated Rivalry," it might not be up for [Emmys](#), but place your bets now: I can't imagine this year's ceremony won't have Williams and Storrie front and center as presenters. They'll probably even make a few jokes about being at the Emmys, but not being allowed to get one.

On the awards circuit, other kudos are making up for the Emmy absence: "Heated Rivalry" recently picked up a Peabody, a GLAAD Media Award and a ton of Canadian Screen Award nominations.

And by the way, the Television Academy also made sure it still gets a taste, Emmy eligibility be damned. On May 20, the org handed out six Television Academy Honors, which single out "exceptional television programs and their producers who have harnessed the extraordinary power of television to advance social change" and just as importantly, don't have to follow the Emmy rules.

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At the top of that list: "Heated Rivalry."

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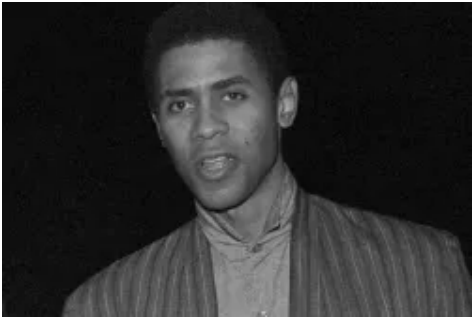
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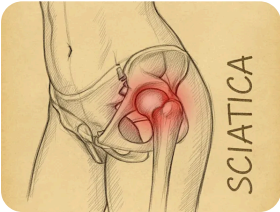
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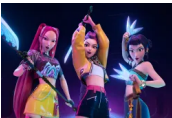
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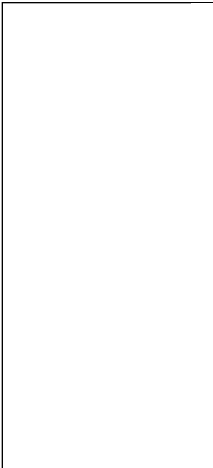


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