

CULT MTL



Jacob Tierney

film & tv

may 21, 2026

ACTRA Awards nominations celebrate Heated Rivalry and the Montreal star system

by **Justine Smith**

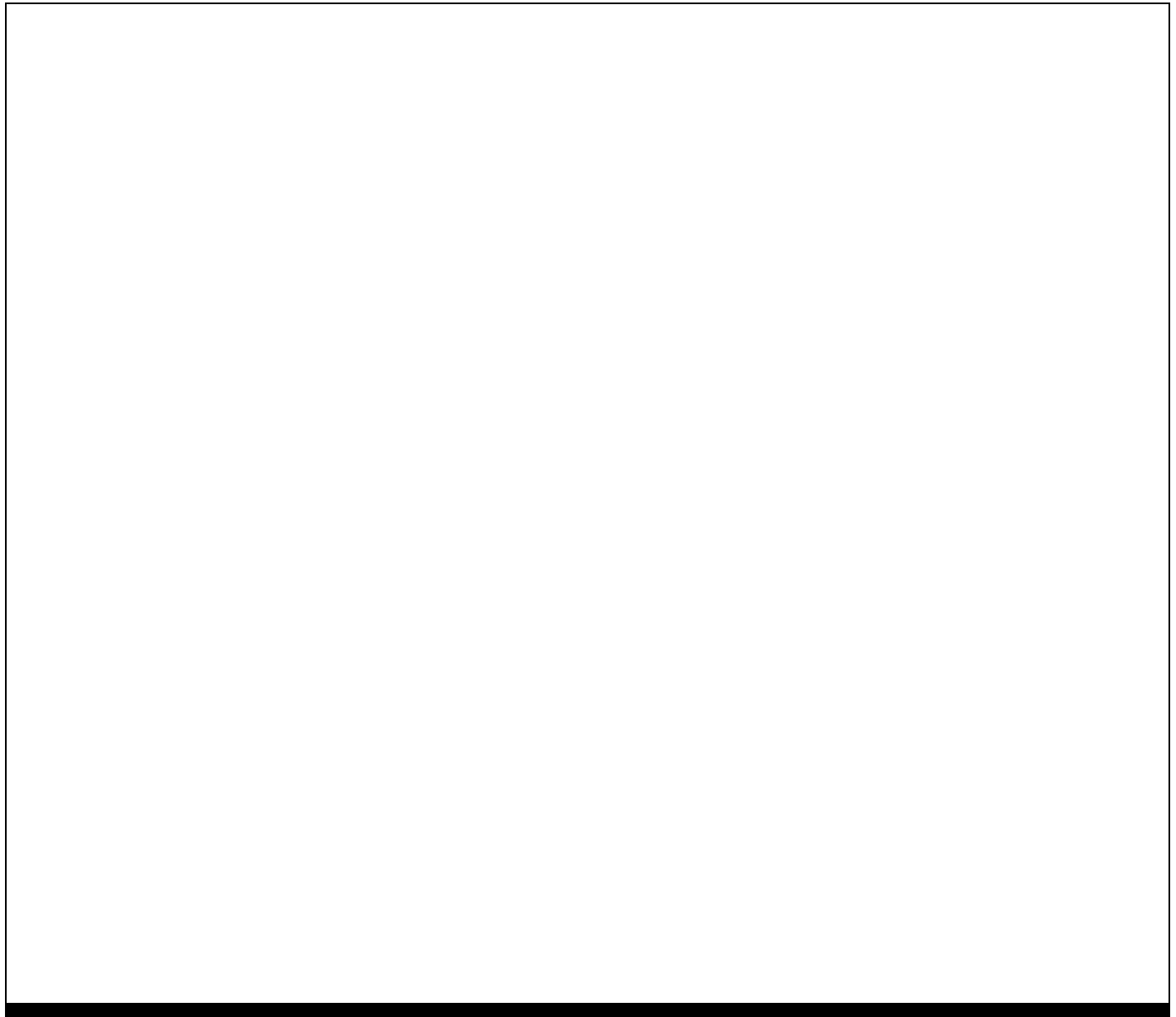
As the nominations were announced this week, we spoke with union members about Montreal's role in fostering talent and telling Canadian stories.

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In a conference room at the Hôtel William Gray in Old Montreal actors from Montreal's acting community assembled to hear the nominees for the 15th annual **ACTRA** Awards. Speaking to a primarily anglophone audience, the tone of the morning was celebratory. The event began with a note about the Habs victory the night before, a tone that helped set forth a morning of celebration, banter and looking forward.

Amidst the announcements, different speakers kept coming back to the same message: there's work to do to keep the Montreal film community alive. The CAQ's policies around language, tax credits and culture have dealt a harsh blow to the

local film industry, making it difficult for international and English-language production to thrive. As many pointed out, this impacts more than just anglophones, but the entire ecosystem, as most Québécois technicians and filmmakers have long relied on work on larger productions to sustain their lives and also develop their craft.

The big story of the morning though, was *Heated Rivalry*. Jacob Tierney will be the recipient of the Award of Excellence for his long-time contribution to Canadian film and television on work like *The Trotsky*, *Letterkenny* and *Shoresy*, as well as his acting career, which goes back to his childhood appearances on shows like *Are you Afraid of the Dark?* François Arnaud and Sophie Nélisse also received nominations for *Heated Rivalry* in the Outstanding Performances in TV.

Thor Bishopric, the former president of ACTRA and a prolific voice actor and filmmaker, sees this as a moment for Canadians to tell their own stories. “It’s about cultivating a storytelling ethic that’s a little more sincere. Instead of always attempting to do something fantastical that’s the biggest thing in the world, it’s important to tell stories that really reflect the experiences of honest people. There can be a lot more nuance and more emotion, quite frankly, that people can respond to.”

With the aggressive rhetoric coming from down south, there is a new openness to embracing Canadian stories. The success of *Heated Rivalry*, *Nirvana the Band the Show the Movie*, *Mile End Kicks* and *Blue Heron* reflect that. “What you see are relatively small initiatives telling stories that are on a human scale. But when they hit, they really hit because people can relate to them on a much more intimate and authentic basis,” says Bishopric.



Duy Nguyen in The Sympathizer

Duy Nguyen, best known for his role on HBO's *The Sympathizer*, will be the recipient of the Walter Massey Breakthrough Artist award. Born in Vietnam, he first moved to Ottawa before discovering Montreal. "I owe everything to this city," he says. Though his work has mostly taken him abroad, he feels indebted to ACTRA and the local community for helping him come into his own. After years of trying to downplay his accent and experience, he attended the Black Theatre Workshop artist mentorship program. "They taught me that what I already have is what's special about me."

From there, things shifted. "I'm going to walk in the room and show them exactly who I am, and that's what they're gonna get if they want to hire me," he explains. "And, *The Sympathizer* arrived, and they were looking for someone who speaks both languages, who is from Vietnam, who can do different accents in Vietnamese. I just

happened to fit the bill at the right time of my life when I started embracing who I am. And I then show up on set working with Robert Downey Jr and the amazing Sandra Oh. Oh my God. She's a queen!"

ACTRA also rewards stunt people, a step only recently taken by the Academy Awards. Among the nominees are Erick Meslier and Felix Famelart for *The Last Frontier*. Famelart, who won last year for his work on *Reacher*, explained the diversity in the stunt world. "We have a bit of everything. Everyone has their own speciality and we are able to express ourselves as artists through our stunt work." Meslier added, "there are certain stunts we like more than others, that we want to be discovered or to make even more grandiose. Personally, I always give it my all. I'm always pushing myself." Famelart's favourite stunt for the show was a ski-doo crash. "It was really fun and exciting and it was all practical. It went well. The most important thing was that it was safe and it looked really impressive on screen."

With other awards in dubbing and video Games, the diversity of Montreal's acting talents is on full display. Montreal stands out as one of the largest producers of video games and most important dubbing hubs in the world.

The tone of the day seemed directed towards one goal: create and celebrate a local English-language star system. ■

2026 ACTRA Award Nominees

Special Awardees

Award of Excellence: Jacob Tierney

Walter Massey Breakthrough Artist: Duy Nguyen

Victor Knight Community Builder Award: Kirwan Cox

Outstanding Performance in TV

Ayisha Issa in *Transplant* Season 4

François Arnaud in *Heated Rivalry*

Guillaume Cyr in *The Sticky*

Jack Molloy Legault in *IT: Welcome to Derry*

Sarah Booth in *Plan B* Season 2

Sophie Nélisse in *Heated Rivalry*

Outstanding Performance in Film

Alex Rice in *Meadowlarks*

Caroline Dhavernas in *Best Boy*

Kaniehtiio Horn in *Seeds*

Roc Lafortune in *The G*

Russell Yuen in *Rich Kid*

Victoria Diamond in *Lethal Lookalive: The Viktoria Nasyrova Story*

Outstanding Stunt Performance

Erick Meslier in *The Last Frontier*

Felix Famelart in *The Last Frontier*

Marie-Eve Beckers in *The Last Frontier*

Marc-Andre Brisebois in *The Last Frontier*

Maxim Savaria in *The Last Frontier*

Maxime Laurin in *Frankenstein*

Outstanding Performance in Dubbing

Carlo Mestroni in *El Refugio Atomico*

Holly Gauthier-Frankel in *Mini-Jon and Mini-Maple Season 3*

Lucinda Davis in *Mini-Jon and Mini-Maple Season 3*

Stephen Booth in *Goyo*

Victoria Sanchez in *Las Muertas*

Xiao-Yi Hernan in *10 Dance*

Outstanding Performance in a Video Game

Daniel Brochu in *The Outlast Trials*

Don Shepherd in *The Outlast Trials*

Olivia Lepore in *Lost Records: Rage & Bloom*

Tristan D. Lalla in *Tales of Kenzera: Zau*

Victoria Barkoff in *The Outlast Trials*

Wyatt Bowen in *Monster Hunter Stories*

The 15th edition of the ACTRA Awards in Montreal, hosted by comedian Wassim El-Mounzer, will take place on Friday, June 12.

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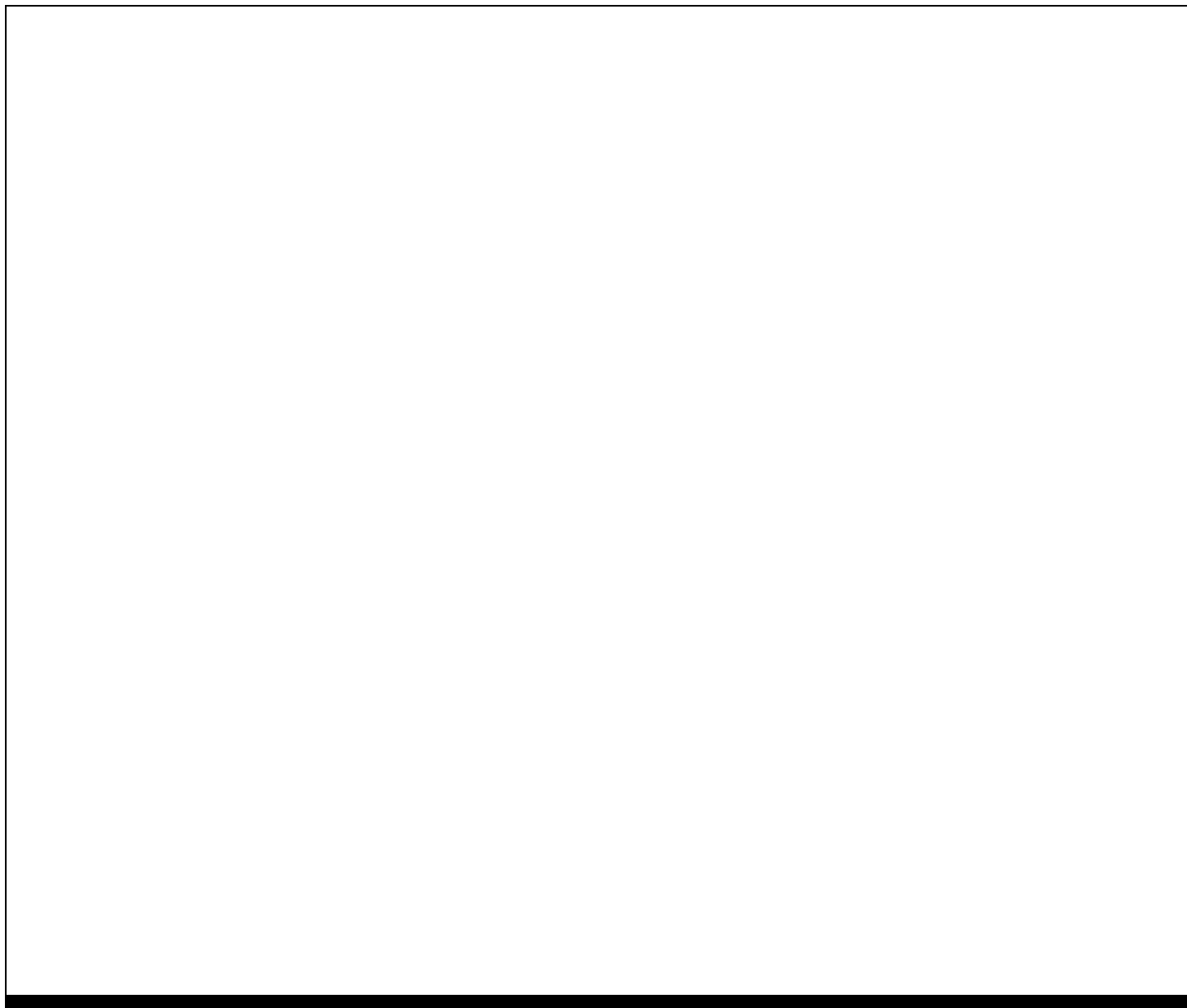


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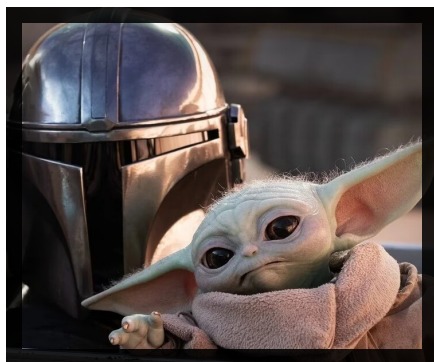
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may 22, 2026

by [Sasha](#)

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