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Commotion

Who are the Canadians pushing culture forward right now?

Culture critics Eugénie Lépine-Blondeau, Riley Yesno and Jackson Weaver react to the country's leading artists

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The cast and crew of *Heated Rivalry* pose on the red carpet at The Canadian Screen Awards, in Toronto on Sunday, May 31, 2026. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Chris Young (Chris Young/The Canadian Press)

Canada Day has arrived, and that means we're halfway through the year already.

As the country turns 159 years old, a few prolific Canadians are having their moment in the limelight. From Hudson Williams, to Charlotte Cardin to Drake, Canadian artists are seeing a surge in popularity both at home and across the globe in film, television and music.

Today on *Commotion*, culture critics [Eugénie Lépine-Blondeau](#), [Riley Yesno](#) and [Jackson Weaver](#) join host Elamin Abdelmahmoud to reflect on the Canadian artists who have made the biggest impact on pop culture so far this year, and what they're looking forward to in its latter half.

We've included some highlights below, edited for length and clarity. For the full discussion, [listen and follow Commotion with Elamin Abdelmahmoud on your favourite podcast player.](#)

The *Heated Rivalry* team

Eugénie: There's so much to say, but the thing that I want to highlight the most is: I think that *Heated Rivalry* is truly anchored in real Canadian values, and I think that's why it made us so proud this year.

A lot of talent comes from Canada. Hudson Williams, of course, but also Rachel Reid — the one that wrote the books — she's from Halifax. [The director] Jacob Tierney is from Montreal. And I [also] want to talk about François Arnaud. He's a great actor from Montreal. He's bilingual. He is an amazing actor. He's been working in the U.S. for a couple of years now. And he was very popular there through another show that was called *The Borgias*. But I think that finally, with *Heated Rivalry*, he was meant for that success.

And I want to talk about the music. [It] was composed by Peter Peter, who's also a musician from Montreal. And he and Jacob Tierney, they really wanted to put Canadian music in the soundtrack, so we have Wolf Parade, Dumas, Alfa Rococo — so many bands from Montreal, also. And I think that it's so great. So, hooray for *Heated Rivalry*.

Drake

Jackson: Drake. the Iceman. Resident 6 God. He [was] advertising his new comeback-ish album with a bunch of chunks of ice in downtown Toronto — within which was embedded some information about his album — in this weird, odd, annoying-to-a-lot-of-people series of promotional activities throughout the city of Toronto, meant to get everybody jazzed and excited about it. Some people, I guess, were a little bit peeved by [it].... I will say, personally — hot take — I am very much for it.

I liked the oddity, the strange way, the spectacle [and] the weird art installation that was the promotion for an album that, personally, I don't even really care about. I'm not a big fan of Drake.

I like [waking] up in the morning and seeing somebody exercise their free will, and having the bounds of what is “normality” day-to-day being stretched. I talk all the time about Dadaism coming back — just weird for the sake of weird. It brings me back to the Dude Chilling Park era in Vancouver, where someone just replaced the park sign of a local park and said it was now called Dude Chilling Park, because there was a statue that looked like a dude chilling.

People were like, oh, you can just do stuff. You can just be weird. You can be weird in public, and it's kind of nice. Be weird. And I like how this Drake album was promoted in

a weird, in-your-face, strange way, and I think they should have let that whole ice thing melt. They got rid of it too early.

Matt Johnson and *Nirvana the Band the Show the Movie*

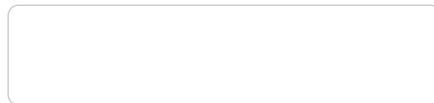
Riley: I only actually watched this very recently to be honest ... and I got it.

I think the movie resonated for people not only because, yes, it's funny, and yes, it's so Toronto and so Canada, but also, I think people really want to see male friendship right now. And they want to see repair.

There's actually a very heartfelt, huge throughline to this, and in the wake of the crushing manosphere, I feel like it was really quite nice to see these two men value their friendship as one of their most important — if not the most important — relationship in their life.

You can listen to the full discussion from today's show on [CBC Listen](#) or on our podcast, *Commotion with Elamin Abdelmahmoud*, [available wherever you get your podcasts](#).

Panel produced by Jane van Koeverden.



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