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OPINION

Heated Rivalry fans are right to raise an alarmed loon call about the International Emmy Awards



J. KELLY NESTRUCK > TELEVISION CRITIC
PUBLISHED 15 MINUTES AGO



Actor Connor Storrie in Heated Rivalry.
CRAVE/BELL MEDIA/SUPPLIED

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Another *Heated Rivalry* controversy has flared up on the internet this week.

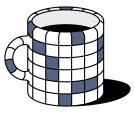
The Canadian hockey romance got the cold shoulder from the International Emmy Awards on Wednesday, coming up empty-

Diversions

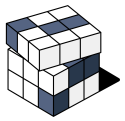
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handed in nominations in a shock that reverberated ... well, not all that far beyond the show's rabid fanbase, because few people pay all that much attention the awards in question.

"Weren't the Emmys already handed out last week in L.A. in a ceremony hosted by that woman from *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit?*" you may ask, as a casual observer of the TV awards industrial complex not obsessed with Connor Storrie.

The International Emmy nominations were announced Wednesday and notably missing was the Canadian hit Heated Rivalry.

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

But no: Those were the Primetime Emmy Awards, which are for American TV shows or, at least, those that have an American production partner.

The International Emmy Awards are a different but related enterprise. The iEmmys, as they are known for short, aim to honour the best in television produced or predominantly produced outside of the United States.

The reason the loons, as many *Heated Rivalry* fans call themselves, were paying attention to the iEmmys is that they are still stinging from the fact that *Heated Rivalry* was not eligible for the Primetime Emmy Awards - which most people just call and consider the Emmy Awards

This is because the Crave show was made entirely by Canadian companies Accent Aigu Entertainment and Bell Media.

The Primetime Emmy ineligibility of *Heated Rivalry*, a show particularly popular with award show-watching demographics, probably hurt the Emmys more than the show. The glitzy ceremony's ratings were down 10 per cent from the previous year.

By contrast, the Canadian Screen Awards – which determined *Heated Rivalry* could compete in the spring even though its first season premiered after the eligibility period had ended – saw viewership climb 202 per cent year over year.

But back to the iEmmys: *Heated Rivalry* was eligible and, according to a Bell Media spokesperson, submitted for consideration and still rebuffed by the nominators.

It feels a bit churlish to complain about *Heated Rivalry* not getting recognition over lesser-known international dramas that weren't the subject of non-stop think pieces in The Cut.

The steamy but also seriously compelling show, created by Jacob Tierney and based on Rachel Reid's books, has already been amply rewarded beyond the CSAs – by the Television Critics Association, the Peabody Awards and the GLAAD Media Awards.

And if recent social media posts by star Hudson Williams's aggravated partner are any indication, *Heated Rivalry* could maybe even stand to get a little less attention for its creatives' own sake.

But I do think the loons have done world television a service by inviting more scrutiny of the iEmmys.

It is a genuine surprise that neither *Heated Rivalry* nor *Empathie* - another huge 2025 Crave show submitted for consideration, one that's been massive in France on Canal+ – were nominated.

I suspect this came as a surprise, too, to Bell Media president Sean Cohan, who had signed up to serve as the gala chair for the upcoming iEmmys. (A request for comment from Cohan on the nominations was not returned.)

The four shows up for best drama instead are: *A Thousand Blows*, a U.K. period drama about the bare-knuckle boxing scene in 1880s London; *Carême*, a French period piece about a celebrity chef in the time of Napoleon; *Menem*, an Argentinian drama set in the circle of president Carlos Menem in the 1990s; and *Real Kashmir Football Club*, an Indian sports drama.

It's hard not to notice that three out of four were made for American streaming services with global reach: *A Thousand Blows* for Disney+/Hulu; *Carême* for Apple TV; and *Menem* by Amazon MGM Studios for Prime Video.

(*Real Kashmir Football Club* was made for Sony LIV - an Indian streaming service that has Sony as a parent company.)

Looking at the best comedy category, meanwhile, raises even more red flags: All four nominees are Netflix shows or specials, produced in Argentina, United Kingdom, Spain and India.

Are the best comedies and dramas from all over the world really all made for Netflix or other American streamers now?

Not long ago you'd find iEmmy nominations shining a light on shows that debuted on Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Japan's NHK, U.K.'s Channel 4, France's Canal+ or Brazil's TV Globo. CTV and CBC shows have been nominated in the past.

Now the iEmmys are looking like just another front in the American streaming wars.

Netflix, Prime Video and Apple TV have the financial resources to wage nomination campaigns that go way beyond, say, a broadcaster or streaming service that operates just in one country.

And, unfairly, the eligibility rules mean they get to pick and choose whether to submit predominantly non-U.S. shows they have a stake in to the Primetime Emmys or the iEmmys. So Apple TV puts in *Slow Horses* for the former, and *Carême* for the latter.

It's, now more than ever, in those American streamers' interest to promote the foreign shows they are making any way possible as they come under increasing regulation and local content requirements around the world.

But if international shows made without one of them as partners can no longer cut through the noise to get nominated for the iEmmys, that's concerning. The lack of Heated Rivalry

nominations may just be the canary in the coal mine – or perhaps loon in the lagoon?

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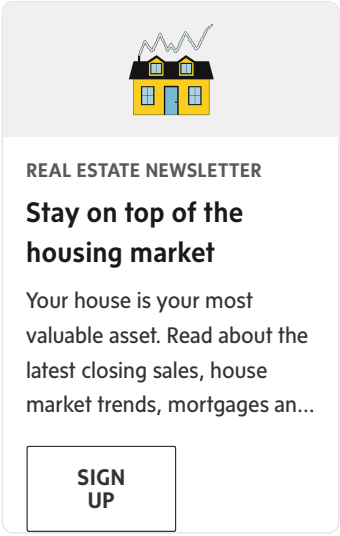
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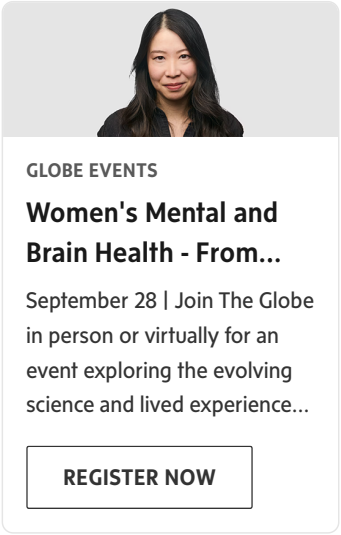


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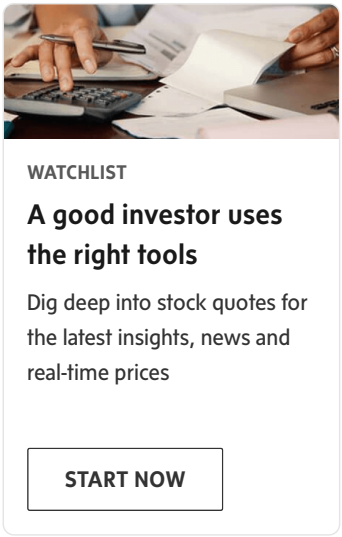


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