

PLAYBACK

Skogland wins at VIFF

by: Cheryl Binning

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Kari Skogland's IRA drama *Fifty Dead Men Walking* took the Citytv Western Canada Feature Film Award at the Vancouver International Film Festival.

This \$12,000 juried cash prize -- annually handed out to a film from a western director -- was one of several awards announced on Friday as the 27th annual festival came to a close.

Audiences chose Vancouver filmmaker Carl Bessai's family drama *Mothers & Daughters* as most popular Canadian film. One of the film's lead actresses, Tantoo Cardinal, was honored with the Women In Film & Television Vancouver's Artistic Merit Award.

The People's Choice Award for most popular film was presented to the French family drama *I've Loved You So Long*. The debut feature from Philippe Claudel, the film centers on a woman released from prison -- after serving 15 years for a heinous crime -- who attempts to reconcile with her family.

The Mexican documentary *Born Without*, directed by the late Eva Norvind, was honored with the juried nonfiction feature award. The film is a portrait of three-foot tall street musician Jose Flores, who was born with no arms.

Special Mention in the non-fiction award category was given to B.C.'s Velcrow Ripper for *Fierce Light: When Spirit Meets Action*, exploring spiritual activism. *Fierce Light* was also named the National Film Board's most popular Canadian documentary. This audience-chosen prize comes with \$2,500 in NFB technical services.

The inaugural Inspiration Award for "unique visual style, daring content and expansive execution by an emerging filmmaker" was awarded to Cameron Labine of B.C. for *Control Alt Delete*, a romantic comedy exploring fetishism, addiction and love in the information age.

Another prize new to VIFF, the Documentary Audience Award, went to the American film *Throw Down Your Heart*, directed by Sascha Paladino, and following banjo virtuoso Béla Fleck's musical journey to Africa. American Sam Bozzo's documentary *Blue Gold: World Water Wars*, exploring the politicizing of the world's dwindling water supply, was chosen by festival-goers for The Environmental Film Audience Award.

The juried prize for most promising director of a Canadian short -- which comes with \$2,000 cash and a \$2,500 Avid Media Composer software package -- was awarded to Vancouver director Drew McCreadie for *The Valet*.