

ST. MARYS FILM THE SANCTUARY NABS THREE CANADIAN SCREEN AWARD NOMINATIONS

St. Marys-based Akoofilm Company first film, The Sanctuary, has been nominated for Canadian Screen Awards across three categories: best TV movie, best direction for a TV movie, and best writing for a TV movie.



A little more than a day after learning their first film, *The Sanctuary*, has been nominated for three Canadian Screen Awards, Akoofilm Company founder and director Allen Kool and executive producer Michael A. Charbon work behind the scenes Wednesday on the set of *The Sanctuary* sequel, *The Taste of Blood*, at the Westover Inn in St. Marys. Galen Simmons/The Beacon Herald/Postmedia Network

Excitement is running pretty high this week on the set of Akoofilm Company's upcoming film, *The Taste of Blood*. As the St. Marys production company rounded out 10 days of filming at the Westover Inn and elsewhere in town, cast and crew learned their first film – the predecessor to their current project – has been nominated for Canadian Screen Awards across three categories: best TV movie, best direction for a TV movie, and best writing for a TV movie.

“We’re trying to build something that’s here in the community and work with people that are new and emerging while mentoring the young people to help them in their lives and their careers, but I couldn’t believe when I woke up the other day and saw the message on my phone (that we had been nominated). ... I’m still in shock. ... I’m incredibly honoured that the academy and the voting members looked at our little picture and found it worthy of being nominated for such high awards,” director and company founder Allen Kool said on set Wednesday afternoon

Nominated alongside *Glass Houses* and *No Good Deed on Crave*, *La Bohème* on CBC Gem and *Christmas Jars* on Citytv, all of which were produced by film and production giants like CBC, Bell and Rogers, *The Sanctuary* is proof that the right people with the right talents under the leadership of the right director –

and with the backing of a broadcaster like Hollywood Suite – can create art that rivals the best in the country, Akoofilm executive producer Michael A. Charbon said.

“What Allen has accomplished is he’s taken the little film that could in little St. Marys and aggregated people from Stratford, St. Marys, Kitchener and London and brought them all here to make this something which has grown to be larger than life,” Charbon said.

Having first premiered in 2019, *The Sanctuary* tells the story of Wade Overton (Dylen Guiry) while he’s on the run from the law after killing his girlfriend. Overton ultimately finds refuge in the farmhouse of the seemingly unsuspecting Edna (Lawrene Denkers) and Harley Whalen (Rick Amsbury), where he begins plotting their demise. The couple, though, is not what they seem and Overton quickly discovers he has more to fear than the local sheriff (John-Riley O’Handle). *The Sanctuary* – written by Robin E. Crozier – has won more than 70 international awards across a host of categories at film festivals in the U.S., Europe and even as far away as India. While the international accolades have been welcome, Charbon said the Canadian Screen Awards nominations hit just a little closer to home for the local cast and crew. “(As a production company), you strive to get some acknowledgement at home to have someone recognize the work that you did,” he said. “This is why this is so important, and this is why it is a tribute to the talent in Stratford and St. Marys. . . . What (Allen has) accomplished here and to get this acknowledgement is huge. It is as important to be nominated as it is to win.” This year’s Canadian Screen Awards ceremony will be held on May 17.

Production of *The Taste of Blood* – a sequel that picks up roughly 30 years after the events of *The Sanctuary* as police hunt for Edna and Harley Whalen – will continue in St. Marys over the coming weeks.



Executive producer Michael A. Charbon and director Allen Kool discuss post production on a shot that will be included in Akoofilm Company’s upcoming film, *The Taste of Blood*.

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Lead actress Amelia Philips shoots a creepy close-up on the set of Akoofilm Company’s upcoming film, *The Taste of Blood*, at the Westover Inn in St. Marys Tuesday night. Submitted photo.