



**Press Release**

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## **AUBREY NEALON WINS FIRST DON HAIG AWARD**

Toronto, May 16, 2004: Aubrey Nealon is the Winner of the first Don Haig Award with a cheque for \$10,000.

The award is being presented today (Sunday) at the Worldwide Short Film Festival picnic at the Canadian Film Centre.

“I can’t think of a better candidate to kick start this – Don would have picked him,” said Joan Schafer, Chair of the Don Haig Committee which began the award.

The award is the legacy of Don Haig. He was a major force in films such as *I’ve Heard The Mermaids Singing*, *Artie Shaw: Time Is All You’ve Got*, *The Twist*, *125 Rooms of Comfort*, and many more.

“His passion over 40 years was to give chances to emerging talent – he was the godfather of indie Canadian film,” said Ms. Schafer. “And that’s exactly what we’re honouring.

The Don Haig Award has been established by Don’s life companion Bill Schultz, his family, colleagues and the filmmakers he so vigorously supported. Nealon, 32, of Vancouver, is being flown in for the award.

“Filmmaking has the unusual quality of being a very cruel industry full of very wonderful people,” Nealon said. “Don Haig was by all accounts a shining example of the latter. I count myself among the many aspiring filmmakers whose lives he touched.”

Nealon was one of 12 nominees from across the country selected by experienced filmmakers. The final winner was then chosen by an independent jury.

Nealon went to the Canadian Film Centre’s directing lab in 2000, where he co-wrote and directed *In Memoriam*. Debuting at the 2001 Toronto International Film Festival, the film received rave reviews, and was part of the Roger’s Video compilation *Made in Canada: The Best of the CFC*.

(more)

He directed three episodes of the Comedy Network series *Patti*. Two of his feature scripts are under option, *The Motherland* and *Idaho Peak*, winner of the 2002 Jim Burt Screenwriting Prize. He teaches part-time at the Vancouver Film School, and is writing his latest full-length script, *The Royal Corpse*.

The son of American draft dodgers, Aubrey Nealon was born in BC's remote Slocan Valley, where he was raised free of such modern contrivances as telephones, electricity, and regular meals. At 15, he went to Vancouver and became an actor, played Olaf, the Finnish exchange student on the teen soap opera *Fifteen*.

In 1995 he went to the Vancouver Film School. He later worked as the assistant to director Jonathan Tummuz on the feature *Rupert's Land*. He got a Canada Kick Start grant and made his first short film *House Arrest*. With his *Abe's Manhood*, Aubrey won a 2000 Shavick Award. The film debuted at the Toronto International Film Festival and went on to screen at over 20 international festivals, including in Montreal, Torino, and Uppsala. It was broadcast on Film Four in England and on the CBC.

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