

The Gazette

BoyGroove tops at Fringe

Spoof named best comedy, best show

GAETAN L. CHARLEBOIS SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

The 2005 edition of the Montreal Fringe Festival ended in style last night with the handing out of the Frankie Awards at Parc des Ameriques.

The boy-band spoof BoyGroove won the Centaur Theatre "Off the Main" Award for best production. The prize includes a one-week run at the Centaur during the Wildside FeStival. Runners-up were Stop Not Going and TORCHED.

The Chapters/Metropolis Bleu Prize for best text - which includes a gift certificate to the bookstore and a public reading of the play there - was awarded to To The Winners, FilipinoAmerican Wilson Loria's outre yet haunting recitation. Runners-up were Russell Bennett and C'illian Stevens-Guille's The Reefer Man, as well as the collective creation Au detour de juin, en plein coeur des ambivalences (titre provisoire pour creation A geometrie variable).

The Studio 303 Dance Award - including a performance within the studio's 2005-06 season for the winning company - was given to choreographer Dana Michel, whose work The Greater the Weight appeared in the production Upstream and Blurred Shutters.

The Spirit of the Fringe Prize, given to the company that best incarnates the spirit of the festival, was handed to Never Surrender Saves a Baby They get a free slot in next year's fest.

In a unique twist, the Just for Laughs Award for best comedy - which earns the winning company a slot in the upcoming Just

for Laughs Festival - had a tie. BoyGroove will be invited to this year's yuks extravaganza and Man 1, Bank 0 to next year's.

This year's edition has been the most highly attended Fringe festival of the Montreal wing's history. The festival included more productions than ever - 94 compared with 78 last year - and there was at least a 20-per-cent hike in attendance at the halls, organizers said.

Attendance at outdoor events also increased, despite the blistering heat last weekend the rain this week, with the final figures being tallied.

Said Fringe boss Jeremy Hechtman: "Houses were playing to an average 40-per-cent capacity" - a phenomenal number for such a festival, considering that several pieces always flop because they are simply bad or are not covered by the press, and that most audiences in the early going are small no matter what.

Added Hechtman: "We have to consider taking the next jump in the size of the festival, adding more venues for next year."