



As many as 35 percent of Prelude to Axanar's awards are from "award events," a term used by film festival submission site Film Freeway to distinguish them from traditional film festival competitions. Image/Film Freeway

The Story Behind Prelude to Axanar's '47 Awards'

By Peters' Own Reckoning, Prelude's Film Festival Awards Prove 'Meaningless'

Analysis

By  Carlos Pedraza

In a New Year's Day social media rant, OWC Studios head [Alec Peters](#) criticized others' filmmaking awards, asserting that only top-tier, well known awards count, and again touting *Prelude to Axanar's* "47 film festival awards from around the world."

AxaMonitor undertook an analysis of those [supposed 47 awards](#), and whether they meet the criteria for prestige to which Peters claimed other filmmakers are not entitled. In his January 1, 2018, Facebook post, Peters wrote:

If you have to say "award-winning" in front of your name, chances are those awards are meaningless. Because if your awards mean something, they have a name everyone recognizes, like "Academy Award winner" or "Golden Globe winner."¹⁾

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Alec Peters

Award Winners 'Delusional'



Without naming anyone specifically, Peters nevertheless said filmmakers with LinkedIn profiles describing themselves as award winners are delusional:

So when you say on your LinkedIn that you are “an award-winning writer & producer” and your awards are from competitions no one has heard of, for projects no one has heard of, you are deluding yourself.²⁾

How Many Awards Did Prelude Actually Win?

AxaMonitor compiled [its list](#) of *Prelude's* awards because until January 3, 2018, Peters' [Axanar Productions](#) website did not name all the awards about which he boasted.³⁾

The list posted on Axanar's [press website](#) following AxaMonitor's inquiry corrected Peters longtime boast to only 46 awards. That list also [proved inaccurate](#), counting a nomination as an award; that reduced *Prelude's* actual award count to 45.

47, er, 46, um, 45 Awards

Peters then went on to congratulate himself for not taking personal credit for the 47 awards “from around the world” won by the short film, *Prelude to Axanar*, which was released in 2014:

You will never hear me calling myself an “award-winning filmmaker” but you will hear me say that *Prelude* has won 47 film festival awards. It is the work that gets the credit since film making is a collaborative effort.⁴⁾

In his own LinkedIn profile, however, Peters calls himself the “creator of *Prelude to Axanar*, winner of 47 film festival awards”⁵⁾ — no mention of its being a collaborative effort.

Award Count Revised Downward

Two days after his Facebook rant, and following **AxaMonitor's** inquiry, Peters [edited his post](#) to

revise the number of *Prelude's* awards downward to 46, but even that number **was wrong**, counting a festival nomination as a win, and counting merely appearing at another festival the same as winning an award.



Founder Marketwors, Propworx, Axanar Productions. Creator of Prelude to Axanar, winner of 47 film festival awards. 8 years in eCommerce and technology as an entrepreneur. Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the year win...



MEANINGLESS? Alec Peters' own LinkedIn profile touts his 47 awards but do they meet his own criteria for meaningfulness? *Click image to view full size*

Meaningful Awards

Moreover, how do *Prelude's* own awards stack up to Peters' own definition of a meaningful award, that they are won from festivals "everyone recognizes"?

Suspect Festivals and Awards

Of *Prelude's* 45 awards, which came from festivals "everyone recognizes"?⁶⁾ Arguably, none. More importantly, however, some of the awards came from festivals that aren't even really film festivals as most people think of them (i.e., an event where films are screened in theaters before audiences and juries, both of which vote to grant awards to a small number of the participating movies).



DISCLOSURE Though Alec Peters named no particular filmmaker in his anti-awards rant on Facebook, it is possible he was referring to **AxaMonitor** editor and independent filmmaker Carlos Pedraza, whose LinkedIn profile summary describes him as an "award-winning writer [and] producer."⁷⁾



More Than One-Third of 'Prelude's Awards

Of the 45 confirmed awards won by *Prelude*, 16 (or 35 percent) came from sources that didn't appear to be traditional film festivals but rather what some in the industry refer to as "award factories."⁸⁾

'Award Factories'

Ten of the 24 festivals granting awards to *Prelude* appear to be what are known in filmmaking circles as “award events,” in which filmmakers submit their work and getting one of many awards — all for at least one fee, sometimes more. That’s 42 percent of the festivals or “award events” from which *Prelude* received honors.

The film festival submission site, [Film Freeway](#), has a special category, “Online Festivals / Awards Events,” devoted to these award sources to distinguish them from traditional film festivals.

« A high quantity of awards diminishes its impact and often feels more like a bait to reel in filmmakers. » — *Film Festival Founder Henry Wong*

Film journalist and director of the scifi festival Out in Austin, Bears Fonte, goes so far as to deride such events as “awards factories [with] names that sound legitimate enough, like including ‘International Film Festival’ in the title. Many even claim they have Live Screenings ... but a quick jaunt to their website reveals very little about these screenings, where they are and what sort of attendance is there.”⁹⁾

IndieWire: 'The Dark Underbelly'

Such suspicious festivals were investigated by the independent film news site Indiewire in a two-part investigative report, “An IW Investigation: The Dark Underbelly of the Film Festival Circuit,” in which reporter Jason Guerrasio described the problem like this:

Since 2008, a string of film/screenwriting competition events, or events that call themselves film festivals but do not screen films to the public, have popped up on [the festival submission website] Withoutabox that are misleading filmmakers into thinking that they are submitting to regional festivals set in beautiful locales when in fact they are sending their work to mere online competitions that may or may not have an event to celebrate the award winners. These operations seem to have flown under the radar of most in the film community.¹⁰⁾

« It’s like Oprah shouting, ‘You get an award, and you get an award, and you get an award ... as long as you pay me first.’ » — *Independent film producer Jody Wheeler*

Making Money

What’s the point of these not-quite film festivals? Toronto Youth Shorts founder Henry Wong put it simply in his Inkspire article, “Scam Festivals: Signs of a Fake Film Festival” — making money off unwitting filmmakers:

The number of filmmakers I’ve met that have blindly spent hundreds of dollars on film festivals that bore no fruit is astounding. You can Google “scam film festivals” and find a ton of horror stories.

There are no showings that I can see for this first batch, though many claim to have “on-line” showings. One promises to have your film screened for distribution execs and sent out a press release on your win ... for a small additional fee.”¹¹⁾



Jody Wheeler

HOW AWARD FACTORIES WORK

AxaMonitor contributor Jody Wheeler is himself an indie filmmaker whose work has toured and won awards from legitimate film festivals. He pointed to the questionable activities of some of the festivals from which Prelude to Axanar won awards:



Accolade, IndieFest, and Best Shorts are all run by the same firm, the same way, four times a year — per Award Event. Axanar won the Best of Show for April of 2015. There were six Award of Excellence Special Mention winners awarded at the same time, plus 36 Award of Excellence Winners. There were also 100-plus Award of Merit / Award of Merit Special Recognition winners, and another 30 Awards of Recognition given. That same thing repeated three more times that year. And there are two other festivals just like it that look to award the same way. It’s like Oprah shouting “You get an award, and you get an award, and you get an award ... as long as you pay me first.” I hate things like this. It just sucks filmmaker money up in exchange for awards that don’t really mean much.

Identifying Phony Festivals

Wong points to the following markers of a “scam film festival”:

- **Super-High Submission Fees**
- **Lack of Transparency**, such as a festival website that doesn’t list its staff, and may use generic language or stock photos to describe its event, or sends emails without signing off with a real name.
- **No Public Screenings**. “This is a no-brainer,” Wong writes. “You can’t call yourself a film festival if you don’t screen films. Many scams will claim to be an awards event, or an online [awards] listing.”¹²⁾
- **A Year-Long or Rolling Submissions Period**. “Many shady festivals may keep their submissions period going for a really long time, even a whole year,” Wong writes. “They’ll also list a ton of deadlines, which is a way to keep their festival listing at the top of Film Freeway and Withoutabox. ... A year-round submission process is more likely to be managed poorly, or simply an attempt to take in as many as possible.”¹³⁾
- **Huge Number of Awards**. “Awards only have meaning and merit if they are hard to get,” says Wong. “A high quantity of awards diminishes its impact and often feels more like a bait to reel

in filmmakers.”¹⁴⁾

Axanar's Awards

Of Axanar’s suspicious festival awards identified by **AxaMonitor** seven were pretty explicitly “award events,” the first three owned by the same operation in La Jolla, Calif.:

1. Best Shorts Competition (one award to *Prelude*)
2. The IndieFEST Film Awards (one award)
3. Accolade Global Film Competition (one award)
4. Maverick Movie Awards (one award)
5. Creative Arts Film Festival (five awards)
6. Depth of Field International Film Festival (three awards)
7. Nevada Film Festival (one award)

The Nevada Film Festival was specifically identified as a “questionable entity” in IndieWire’s investigation.¹⁵⁾

More than one-third of *Prelude*’s awards may have come from these ‘award factories,’ which represent 42 percent of the sources of the film’s honors.

The remaining three questionable festivals were a mix of awards and some kind of public event:

8. Annual Widescreen Film & Music Video Festival (one award)
9. Los Angeles Independent Film Festival Awards (one award)
10. Los Angeles Film and Script Festival (one award)

The last two appear to be set up for filmmakers to pay to get an award, which is then presented at a live event. It was difficult to confirm whether the “festivals” hold any public screenings. The Annual Widescreen event did appear to hold some screenings in addition to its award event, but it could not be confirmed if every award-winner received a screening, as they do at traditional festivals.



SPONSORED BY After winning six awards at this event, Peters paid to have Axanar Productions appear on every plaque awarded the following year. *Photo/Treklanta. Click image to view full size*

Festivals Delegated to Axanar Fan

According to Axanar spokesman Bawden, Peters himself did not handle the festival submission process. “An Axanar fan ... took on the responsibility for submitting entries and tracking them,” Bawden told **AxaMonitor**. On Axanar’s PR website, the fan was identified as a volunteer, Horace Austin.

The Remaining Awards

The remaining awards for *Prelude to Axanar* did appear to come from legitimate film festivals, though The Zone, which gave *Prelude* six of its awards, now explicitly states fan films are no longer eligible, having created a separate festival for them.

Independent Star Trek Fan Film Awards

Six of *Prelude*’s awards — the largest single set of its honors — came from the one award event, the inaugural [Independent Star Trek Fan Film Awards](#), operated by the Treklanta convention, which honors Trek fan films. The following year, Peters sponsored the event, winning the naming rights for Axanar on each award plaque. 🗑️

Additional reporting by Jody Wheeler



COMMENTS

Discuss this article in [f](#)AxaMonitor's Facebook group.

Keywords

[Prelude to Axanar, fan films, film festivals, awards, fact check](#)

1) 2) 6)

[Alec Peters post on his personal Facebook page, 1/1/18.](#)

3)

[Email inquiry from AxaMonitor editor Carlos Pedraza to Axanar spokesman Mike Bawden, 1/3/18.](#)

4)

[Alec Peters' original post on his personal Facebook page, 1/1/18, before editing on 1/3/18.}}](#)

5)

[Alec Peters LinkedIn Profile, retrieved 1/24/18.](#)

7)

[Carlos Pedraza LinkedIn profile, retrieved 2/4/18.](#)

8) 9)

[Bears Fonte, "Film Festivals vs. Award Factories vs. Film Festivals That Give Out 10,000 Awards", Out in Austin festival website, 7/18/17.](#)

10)

[Jason Guerrasio, "An IW Investigation: The Dark Underbelly of the Film Festival Circuit, Part 1", 1/16/13, retrieved from archive.org 2/4/18.](#)

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[Henry Wong, "Scam Festivals: Signs of a Fake Film Festival", Inkspire website, 1/10/18.](#)

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