

Losique in firm control as Montreal fest combines beauty and glitz

By KEVIN TIERNEY

In this year's World Film Festival program, there is a section on page 6 called, "Grandeur and Servitude in the Organization of a Festival." The section begins with a question, "What is it, organizing a festival?" About half way down the page of answers to that question is the following statement: "It's having on your back people who, having never invented anything themselves, believe they can assume rights over everything you have created." It's signed Serge Losique and Daniele Cauchard.

Serge Losique is president and director-general of the Montreal World Film Festival and Daniele Cauchard is the vice-president and associate-director. While Cauchard is quiet and low-profile, Losique is very much in the limelight.

As a personality, Losique embodies the very essence of cinema: an art-industry, people like to call it, finding such an application wide enough to encompass that which is beautiful and that which is downright gaudy. By extension, these are also to be found in Losique's festival.

Losique has made his reputation in Montreal by attempting to find audiences for foreign films, forgotten classics and serious cinema in general. At the same time he is aware of where some of the bread and butter lies. When asked why American critic Rex Reed had been named to the jury, Los-

ique replied, "You and I might not like his taste, but his column is syndicated in over 100 American dailies and that's important." Unfortunately it isn't quite as easy to explain the presence of Gina Lollobrigida as jury president. Glamor? Perhaps, but of another era.

Losique's enigmatic nature causes many to question him and his amazing success. But answers prove elusive — they are more likely to be found in the festival than in the man.

Each year the sentinals of decency and good taste, the government and the press, the very people implicated in the opening statement, come to Montreal to bury Losique, not to praise him and each year they fail. This year's was the most popular festival ever, surpassing last year's record high attendance figure of 100,000 by 32,000. And in case anyone forgot to note the fact, Losique called a first-ever post-festival press conference to announce it.

This success was despite a relatively weak crop of features in the competition. "Yes, there is room for a world film festival in North America," said Gilles Jacob, head honcho of the Cannes festival, "but Mr. Losique will have difficulty finding 20 quality films for this year in Montreal." While Losique the art lover might have had trouble, Losique, the man with a nose turned to the industry, managed to do just fine.

So we had three American films represented: *Carbon*

Copy, an insulting bit of sick sitcom; *Butterfly*, a sort of *Lolita* goes west, designed to display the talents of one Pia Zadora, the wife of the film's extremely wealthy executive producer, and a man who sought to re-define the word chutzpah by not only making it clear that he was out to buy his wife a film career, but to buy the festival — jury, press and all — to boot; and *The Chosen*, the eventual winner of this year's Grand Prix des Ameriques, which even in light of the choices proved to be a most conservative winner.

From Germany, there was the impressive *Desperado City*, a first film by Vadim Glowna and one that came to Montreal via the Directors' Fortnight in Cannes where it had been voted best first film. *We Children From Bahnhof Zoo (Christiane F.)*, a gritty film that was preceded by commercial success stories and a sensational best-selling book, continued its successful track record here and ended up being named winner of the Air Canada Prize as the most popular film screened this year.

Three smaller films of quality were: *L'Année prochaine si tout va bien*, a first film by Jean-Loup Hupert, in the tradition of 'charming' French films; *Sally and Freedom*, directed by Gunnel Lindblom, the only film in the competition directed by a woman, (it ended up garnering the Best Actress prize for its leading lady, Ewa Froling); *Who's That*

Singin' Over There?, another first film by Slobodan Sijan, a young Yugoslavian (it took home the Special Jury Prize); *Chakra*, a fine Indian film was thought by many to be a strong contender until it was learned that it had already won a prize at the Locarno festival, thereby disqualifying it from consideration here.

Also of some note, but for all the wrong reasons, was *Kings and Desperate Men*, the only Canadian film in the competition. Directed and everything else'd by Montrealeur Alexis Kanner, it was a lesson right out of Wolfe's *You Can't Go Home Again*.

The Out of Competition section gave local audiences an opportunity to preview a few of the big successes from this year's Cannes festival, including Palme d'Or winner *Man of Iron*. The startling *Possession*, Lelouche's *Les uns et les autres*, *Francisca*, *Quartet*, *Blood Wedding* and Alain Tanner's beautiful *Light Years Away* all proved popular with audiences and critics alike. Canada had its strongest representation in the Cinema of Today and Tomorrow with *Imagine the Sound*, *Alligator Shoes*, *Black Mirror*, *After the Axe*, expat John Laing's *Beyond Reasonable Doubt*, Silvio Narizzano's *Choices*, *A Private World* and perennial entrant Harry Rasky with *Being Different*.

Unquestionably the most peculiar section of this year's festival was the Homages.

There was supposed to be one to Elia Kazan, but that lost whatever potential steam it might have had when Kazan's health prevented him from attending. Robert Wise did manage to make it, although from the almost embarrassingly small turnout at his press conference, it's hard to know just how many people cared. Another was for Pasolini, but all we saw was *Salò* or *The 120 Days of Sodom*, his last film and one that makes its point very early on and proceeds to literally and figuratively rub our noses in it for another 100 minutes.

As to why anyone would choose to pay homage to jury members Luis Berlanga and Gilles Carle, and then show only one of their films, *Patriotismo Nacional* and *Les Plouffe* respectively, is anyone's guess. The producer of *Les Plouffe*, Denis Heroux, was also paid homage, but for *Atlantic City*, a film that was ready for last year's Montreal festival but instead turned up at Venice where it won the Golden Bear. Meanwhile, Montreal audiences are still awaiting its commercial debut. As well, Heroux sits on the festival's Board of Directors. When it was announced that the International Press Prize for the Best Canadian Film Shown Out of Competition had been won by *Les Plouffe*, Gilles Carle commented, "This is embarrassing."

The most common complaint registered by the out-of-town press about this festival has always been its lack of stars, but this year, while they were busy making fun of La Gina, along came a couple of certifiables that even impressed the Toronto triumvirate of The Sun, The Star and the Globe and Mail: Sissy Spacek and Rainer Werner Fassbinder.

Spacek arrived with her husband-director Jack Fisk to promote her newest film, *Raggedy Man*. Had the film been entered in competition it would have been a serious contender. However, as Fisk pointed out, "Major studios aren't interested in entering their films in competition here or anywhere else because they feel they can only lose." Meanwhile, Spacek charmed everyone within a 200-foot radius with her Texas accent and squeaky-clean good looks.

But "The Moment" came with the arrival of Fassbinder. Although *Lili Marleen* had opened the festival, it was already playing commercially in Toronto. Fassbinder had been scheduled to attend from the beginning, but those who know him had not been overly optimistic about his materializing: "Who knows with a man like that," said *Lili Marleen* producer Luggi Waldleitner.

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