

The fame game

It takes more than talent to be a star.
Without the right image, the expert sales pitch
and solid industry support, even the best are by-passed.

by Krystyna Hunt

What makes a star a star? Good looks? Dynamic presence? Super-human persona? Bankability? If the star is the most attractive, most humanizing aspect of a film, the medium through which the message of the producer, director, writer, and crew is conveyed; if a star reflects the qualities we most want to see in ourselves and have others see in us, then why, in the Canadian film industry, are there no Canadian stars?

This is one of the fundamental questions being asked in the industry today. It has divided the business element from the creative, with both groups hurling accusations at the other.

Talent agents blame actors for being badly prepared, producers for lacking interest, and the media for not actively seeking out Canadian stars. Actors blame agents, producers and the media for the same reasons. Producers blame lack of bankable star material, economics, Hollywood, and agents who don't build stars for them to buy.

Publicist Glenda Roy finds the main difference between Canadian actors and American actors to be naïveté. "I can't say how many times I've tried to publicize a local actor, then asked him for his publicity material - and gotten a résumé. You can't tell anything about a person from a résumé that an editor or a talk show producer wants to hear. Americans have it all ready from the time they decide to become actors - bios, pics, interview material, anything that shows an interesting personality. To be quite honest, I don't think that a lot of agents here are any more aware of the necessity of these things than are the actors."

Canadian agents, to many people in the industry, have not established a reputation for aggressive, decisive or imaginative action. Many actors believe that agents want them to do all the work, and will not go out of their way to discover an unknown. Stratford actor Jack Wetherall played opposite Maggie Smith in *As You Like It* four years ago, to rave reviews in Canada, England and the U.S. His performance made him a teenage heart-throb; fan clubs were formed for him in Michigan and Ohio. British and American agents offered to represent him, but in the two seasons that he played the role, of Orlando not a single Canadian agent showed any interest. "I would like to have been represented by a Canadian," says Wetherall, "but with five offers from some

Krystyna Hunt is a film/theatre critic and free-lance writer in Toronto. She has worked as an actress, designer and production co-ordinator for films and television.



"Promoting yourself is as necessary a skill as acting. You have to answer the question - why would anyone turn the TV on or go to a movie to see me when they have a hundred other things they could be doing?" Al Waxman

of the best agents in the business, I felt I should not have had to be the one to make the first move." He chose an American agent, went to New York, and six months later replaced Philip Anglim as the lead in *The Elephant Man* on Broadway.

Publicity itself is a strange new tool born of the film boom. Like fire to the caveman, people here are both in awe and fear of it. In most cases it comes as a second thought. Actors think that agents and producers should be responsible for it, agents think that their job is to suggest a client and negotiate a salary and that actors should hire their own publicists. Producers are too busy trying to sell a film to publicize a local actor.

Everyone accuses the press of drooling over American talent and ignoring good

local people. "Nonsense!" says Anne Moon, entertainment editor of the *Toronto Star*. "Reporting on Canadian talent is our mandate. We were the first to write about R. H. Thomson, Lenore Zann and Lally Cadeau. The trouble is Canadians don't act like stars. They are too self-effacing, too self-conscious. When they start acting like stars, they'll get treated like stars."

Michael Oscars, talent agent with G.K.O. agency, has been working hard to develop stars for years. Among his clients are Chris Makepeace, Kate Lynch and Lally Cadeau. Helen Shaver was also his discovery and client. He courted publicity for her, promoted, nurtured, encouraged her, took her to Cannes and lost her to Hollywood and the William Morris Agency, because the professional credi-

bility he had established for her had outgrown her opportunities in Canada.

Oscars is quick to emphasize that, "Canadian producers just don't fight for Canadians. We have potential stars here but they must be cultivated. That takes time and that takes responsibility, neither of which the producers are willing to risk. The best roles, the ones that are most designed to appeal to the public, are non-existent for Canadians."

Producer Stan Colbert (who had 25 years of experience in the States before he came to Canada), believes that many producers - those who had little or no film association before the CCA-inspired boom - cannot fight for Canadians because their lack of experience makes financing and distribution their major preoccupation. Colbert has produced CBC dramas like *Riel*, and has done his best to expose the largest number of Canadians possible "... in order to show the people here what a wealth of talent their country has. The trouble is, Canadians eat their young. I have had to push, fight, and argue for Canadian talent and it hasn't been easy." It was at Colbert's insistence that Sara Botsford was cast opposite Richard Chamberlain in *Bells* despite initial objections from others on the production. "Even an accomplished actor with proven credits is made to read again for the same kind of part. It's as if it doesn't occur to anyone that they've proven themselves. It's insulting to the actors, and it's insulting that the actors put up with it."

Chapelle Jaffe is one of those actresses with proven credits. She won an Etrog for Best Actress in *One Night Stand*, co-produced by Stan Colbert. "They'll ask me what I've done and I'll say, I've won an Etrog (re-named a 'Genie') for Best Actress, and they'll say, oh that's nice - just another credit on my résumé beside the last CBC job. The highest award in Canada means nothing. It has never gotten me another job. I don't know what I have to do to get respect - I don't know how to build a career in this country."

Kate Lynch won the Genie for Best Actress two years ago. She's done no film work since. A few days after the Genie Awards a group of film people were talking about the acceptance speech made by "that girl who won the Genie" - they did not even remember her name.

Jonathan Welsh played a lead in the CBC series *Sidestreet*, and still gets dozens of fan letters from across the country. Still, that wasn't enough for producer Harold Greenberg to allow Welsh to publicize *City on Fire* even though he was the only actor among a list of glittering "names" to get good reviews, and the only one willing to publicize the film. Welsh promoted it

out of his own pocket, and even had to pay to fly to Montreal for the premiere.

"Canadians will never have the kind of credibility Americans have in this country - ever! - because Canadian businessmen and audiences just aren't interested," says Stuart Aikins, whose company, Canadian Casting Associates, has profited from finding many major American stars for Canadian producers.

"It is harder for me to get publicity for a Canadian than the commission I get for it is worth. My advice to Canadian actors is, fight like a dog, push your publicity, get your experience here, then go somewhere else to have it recognized. Making films is a business, so forget about truth, forget about integrity, forget about honour - that's just good business."

"Good business" vs. good sense

"Good business" is the mantra producers, investors, bankers, and distributors repeat constantly to justify the American look of a film, packaged - so they believe - to sound commercial specifications.

But in those eager efforts to carbon copy Hollywood and impress the world that we think like Americans, Canadian businessmen are repeating the patterns that have always kept the Canadian economy behind that of the United States. Business and creativity are being separated, and that is very bad business indeed. Americans have always known the value of creative skills and, consequently, they know how to commercialize art: Canadian business education emphasizes commercializing commerce.

Americans did not become great by selling 'international' products. They became great by 'selling America' first. They made people identify with the American dream, and thus established a perpetual motion machine fueled by those creative dreammakers - tin pan alley, Broadway musicals, movies - making what they produced that much easier to sell over and over again.

Norman Jewison understood the need for a strong creative base when he insisted on casting Alan Arkin, then an unknown, to play the lead in his first feature film, *The Russians are Coming*. "It takes a lot of confidence to present an unknown, a lot of positive thinking; but it can be done, if you understand the nature of your project and the value of the creative talent that is necessary to put it together, and how the two will work. Canadians in the last few years thought it was very easy; all you had to do was put together a couple of stars and you could make a successful film. But a film is successful because the creative piece is so talented that everyone will respond to it, and it has nothing to do with Canadians or Italians or Americans - it's a bona fide piece of art, and it doesn't matter who is in it. If you have a big star and the part isn't right, it's going to be a disaster. You would be better off having an unknown. The genius of Hollywood is that they are so totally motivated by profit that they will accept talented people from anywhere and they don't care about nationality at all."

This would indicate that Americans will not cringe at seeing good, talented Canadians headlining Canadian movies. They might even welcome them as grist for their mills. "My God, when the Australian film *My Brilliant Career* came out," continues Jewison, "everyone in Hollywood was on the phone to anyone who had anything to do with the

His name is Thomas Peacocke, Best Actor, 1980. Despite this achievement he finds himself

Lost in Stardom

At 11pm on March 12, 1981, Thomas Peacocke became a star. Accepting his Genie award for best performance by an actor, he made a sad and prophetic statement: "What is the point of becoming a film star, if no one sees your films?"

There were many on that gala night who thought Peacocke was biting the hand that honoured him. One Toronto producer remarked, "He's an actor, for god's sake, and he's from Edmonton... what does he know?"

Like many other actors, Peacocke knows a lot.

At 48, Peacocke is in his prime, a tough, avuncular little man, as gregarious as a family of seals. He is a professor of drama at the University of Alberta, in Edmonton, where he has taught for the past twenty years. His academic career is well punctuated with numerous stage roles and bit parts in sponsored films.

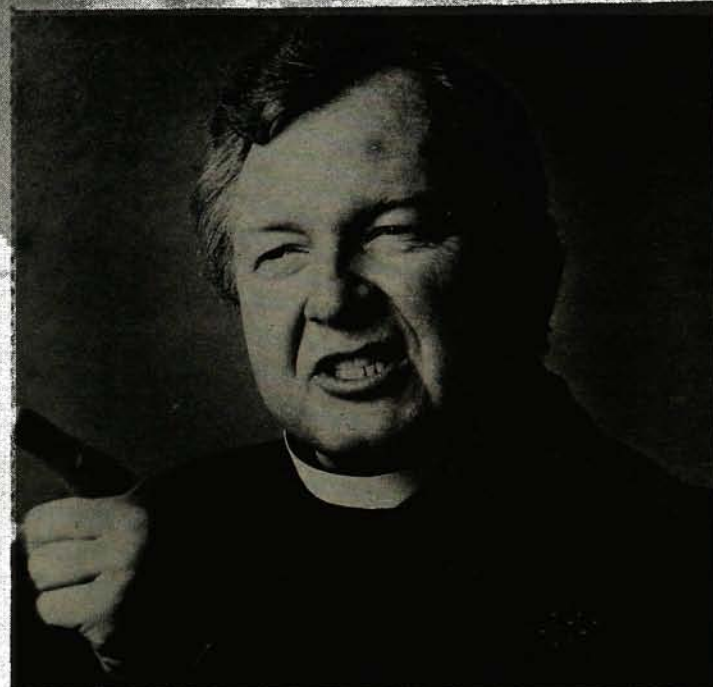
The idea of being a star hasn't really hit home. "I don't believe we have a star system in Canadian film... I suppose you could call Donald Sutherland a star, but who made him one?"

Peacocke was introduced to Canada in his role as Father Atholl Murray, the feisty founder of Notre Dame College in Wilcox, Saskatchewan. The film that gave Peacocke his first and, to date, only principal role in a feature, was Fil Fraser's production *The Hounds of Notre Dame*. He landed the part with typical lack of drama: Fil Fraser phoned him. Peacocke laughs when he recalls the incident. "I think it was between me and Ed Asner... I suppose I was cheaper."

The very thought that Edward Asner, albeit a gifted actor, could be cast as Father Murray is as chilling as the winters in Wilcox. Unfortunately this type of casting is often par for the course in Canadian features. Producer Fraser must be admired for his integrity in casting Peacocke. It was a bold gamble which paid off at the Genie awards, but unfortunately, not at the box office.

The Hounds of Notre Dame has achieved abysmal distribution, a fact that incenses Peacocke. "It's not only our film... look at the other films at the awards... they haven't been seen either. We have to put more emphasis on marketing and distribution; otherwise, what's the point?" Peacocke would like to see as such money spent on promotion as on production. This position may at first seem to be slightly overstated until one stops to realize that many American features have promotion budgets which are many times the negative cost of production.

Since winning his Genie, Peacocke's film career hasn't exactly



rocketed. It would seem that the kudos on that special night was no more than the tip of an ice cube. "I've received stage offers from all over the country and a lot of television parts, but nothing as big or as good as *Hounds*."

Peacocke is basically a stage actor who has proven, with his mercurial performance in *Hounds*, that he is admirably suited to the screen. He is a thespian in a world of interim financing. Both worlds met, with pitiful irony, when, after receiving the Canadian film industry's premier award to an actor, Peacocke was graciously invited by Stafford to audition!

Being a Canadian film star is a bit like being an American hockey player - no one really takes you too seriously. Peacocke is aware of this and acts accordingly. He doesn't have an agent, but rather relies on the phone ringing to bring him work. His success in *Hounds* has prompted him to consider the more logical alternative. "I'm seriously thinking about an agent. To begin with, I hate negotiating. I find it distasteful. And besides, I don't know what I'm worth."

If an agent is the answer to continued stardom, then the answer lies in Toronto. It's a simple fact that there are no agents west of that city, so Peacocke's film career has an added problem of geographical proportions. Like birds of paradise and other exotic creatures, film stars do not live in Edmonton. The president of the Alberta Motion Picture Industries Association, Arvi Liimatainen, believes Peacocke to be one of the province's greatest assets and would hate to lose him. "I've used Tom a lot on my films and I've always been

impressed with his professionalism. He loves the camera and I think it's mutual."

As the incumbent "Best Actor in Canada", Peacocke is refreshingly unaffected. He admires skill more than reputation. "When they were filming *Desperado* here (in Alberta), Jim Defelice (Edmonton writer/actor) had a scene with a dog. The dog wasn't on set when he was rehearsing, so Bruce Dern got down on the ground and played the dog for him. Now, to me, that's what being a star is all about."

Whether Peacocke is a star or not is irrelevant. He is an intelligent actor with a definite future in features - if there is any future in Canadian features. He would love to continue as a principal performer, but this is something which will be decided in Toronto's trendy restaurants by producers who will consider him with the same enthusiasm that they apply to their selection of appetizers.

Peacocke's position is not unique - in fact, it is symptomatic of most Canadian film workers. Here, there are no popular magazines fanfaring the exploits, or alleged exploits, of our beloved stars. There is no studio system which hinges upon the continued overexposure of underdeveloped talent. Nor is there a history of excellence in feature film production. What we do have is a collection of crafts-people in search of a direction.

In a small room in Edmonton, Professor Peacocke interviews prospective drama students, potential film stars. To them, he is a passport to "the business." To others, he is the star of a film no one has seen.

Tom Crighton ●

Tom Crighton is an Edmonton writer, film critic and broadcaster.

film creatively, trying to get them to do their next picture. Nobody cared that they were Australians - they are just 'talent'."

Consciously or unconsciously Hollywood developed its star system and its pool of creative talent first; then, when that became strong enough, a system was built to package it. Canadians, thinking that business always comes first,

the second group judged his talent because someone in Hollywood had liked it.

When Canadians use American stars they feed the American perpetual motion machine and, ultimately, sell the American instead of the Canadian film industry. Consequently, the world does not look to Canada for more films - a response that could generate further

interest in Canadian product, and thus increase a producer's power. It keeps on buying American. In the end Canada remains enslaved, instead of becoming the master of its own house.

It is that age-old lure of Hollywood that continues to make Canadian filmmakers feel like poor relations. Alas, many Toronto filmmakers - newly sprouted during the film boom - have

been caught in the illusion of Hollywood's greener pastures of glamour and prestige. They want the stardust, starlets, parties and pizzazz... forgetting that Hollywood moguls invented the magic as a gimmick for getting people hooked on films. Canadian actors, it seems, will never look glamorous until they have passed through the Hollywood veil.



● Director Norman Jewison.

copied the external shell of the package system, then tried to ram the creativity in to fit. Whereas Hollywood tries hard to be conscious of audience communication, audience is the last consideration in Canada. The script and talent are taken apart to fit the illusions of investors and the insecurities of distributors. What's left is patched up for the audience.

But if the audience doesn't buy the patch-up, everyone down the line loses. Actors, writers, directors have very little power in the Canadian film industry; and the business people have too much, creating an unhealthy imbalance. A producer in total control of a project, concerned only with selling the picture for the highest possible profit, can easily substitute one actor for another if it makes a better deal. But a director with clout would fight for an actor - knowing full well why one actor is better for a role than another - regardless of "name", and in that way perhaps make a better picture.

"You've got hard-edged businessmen in Hollywood too," adds Jewison, "but they understand what making films is all about. They are people who know and love films. Here, investors, stockbrokers and bankers make creative decisions for directors, and they may not have seen a movie in years."

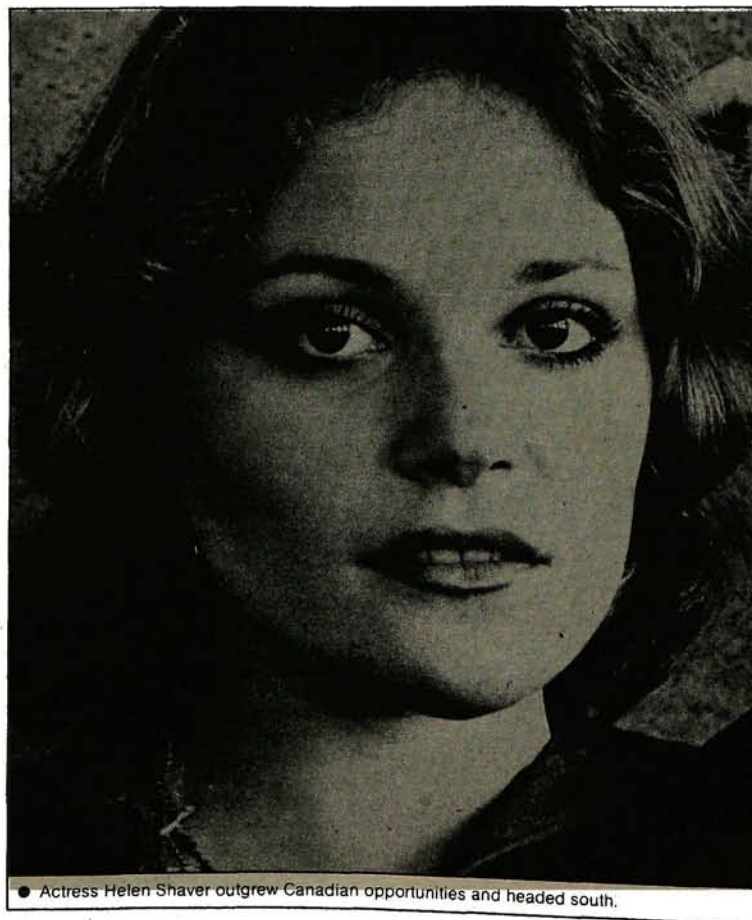
"I don't know why anyone would want to make films for the money. Most films don't make money. What you do is find the best talent in your own country, who aren't in it for the money. Go out of the country if you can't find them, allow them to give you the best they've got, exploit that, and then you will be in the best position to make money. That's how Hollywood works."

Password "Hollywood"

Canadian screenwriter Jim Henshaw, who could not sell a script in Canada to save his soul three years ago, came to the attention of a group in Hollywood who saw his film, *A Sweeter Song*. They liked it and invited him to Hollywood to write a film for them. Henshaw stayed there six weeks and wrote a script for a film that subsequently was never made; but upon his return to Toronto he was asked to write three scripts. The first group judged his talent by his work,



● A kiss for victory in *Meatballs*: Kate Lynch and Bill Murray.



● Actress Helen Shaver outgrew Canadian opportunities and headed south.

Hailing the hero-as-victim

When Canadian filmmakers say, "There is nothing interesting in Canada to represent," they are inadvertently commenting upon themselves; for they have come from the same uninteresting soil, breathed the same uninteresting air, and absorbed the same uninteresting influences. It is heartbreaking to consider that so many people regard themselves as victims, ever conscious of "others" making all the rules.

In his book, *Deference to Authority, The Case of Canada*, Prof. Edgar Z. Friedenberg of Dalhousie University says the main principles of Canadianism are "Peace, order, and good government." This principle is maintained by the government to cultivate docility and a sense of powerlessness. It gives the impression that Canadians are well taken care of, without having to know how - just like children. Friedenberg also claims that Canadians have achieved such world renown in classical ballet because it is the art that provides "the least opportunity for spontaneity and improvisation." In other words, we play it safe.

Actors want a star "system" to process them, producers want Hollywood to give them the okay, agents wait to see what happens in both arenas before they move, and the press wants the public to tell it what it wants to read, instead of telling the public what it should know. Everyone listens to the Americans because they think they really "know" - and they do, insofar as they themselves are concerned. This helps to

explain why it is not only functionally difficult to become a star in Canada, but psychologically difficult as well. Stars, by definition, project an image of authority, of not being afraid to stand up and be counted. This may not be so in their private lives, but the fantasies they project are so strong, so full of life, that on screen they take on super-human qualities.

"The perfect Canadian star is a victim," says director John Trent. "Look at how Canadians lionized Terry Fox. Running on one leg and riddled with cancer. They have won some of the most spectacular military victories in history and look at the one they remember and talk about and know about most - Dieppe, where they got slaughtered. Give them a winner and they can't relate."

Self-apology, self-effacement, and wanting daddy to prop you up does not make for stardom - from star-to-be to star-maker to star-consumer. Recognizing star material, investing in it and developing it, takes absolute faith in your own judgement and the ability to differentiate between the fantasy of glamour, and the reality of it as simply a tool.

Knock, knock - nobody home

The need to create Canadian stars is basically a cultural one. Culture is the means by which a country reflects itself, to itself and to others. Its theatre demonstrates the changes and vibrations of everyday life, its music establishes the rhythms, its art reflects the concerns of its people. Via culture, people who listen, watch and perform, respond to and support each other because a common bond has been established. It becomes the emotional language of strangers who live in the same land.

In Canada, 74% of the television programming, 72% of the books, 84% of the recorded music, and 93% of the box-office take is American*. The little Canadian culture that filters through is almost regarded as the foreign culture, considering the degree to which we identify vicariously with the Americans. We are comfortable with trumbleweeds we've never seen, lust after California beach bunnies, and think of Florida as our spiritual home. Perhaps that is why we are such excellent documentary filmmakers - we've become good at observing without being involved.

"Ourselves" as a vital concept doesn't exist. That is why those film people forgot Kate Lynch's name, why actors must continue auditioning past the point of proven ability, and why producers lunge so desperately for the crown of acceptance from Hollywood.

Alas, no matter how much we are told that movies are a product, like automobile parts, the fact is that a movie is a form of communication and therefore culture. It is an aspect of culture even in the form of *Prom Night*, and it says something about each person who contributed to it. *Tribute* is the ultimate example of The Successful Canadian Movie. It tells the world who we think we are. It is about an American press agent; it has American stars and American settings. Although the supporting cast is Canadian, and it was made by the Canadian film industry, it was entered in the Berlin Film Festival as the official

American entry. It is a film that quite simply says we have no sense of 'self' - something we've been telling each other for years; now we're shouting it out to the world.

Which brings us to the next stumbling block in the development of Canadian stars: internationalism. Implications are that if we make anything obviously Canadian it will not be 'international.'

ing dominant, as we have not. It absorbs foreign cultures and makes them American - a simple case of wanting the exploitable best.

A good example is that of Canadian actor Saul Rubinek, who recently finished shooting *Soup for One*, a Warner Bros. Production in New York. After the director saw a reel of Rubinek's Canadian work - mostly CBC dramas, and clips

actors must learn to respect certain business factors. It's not enough to be talented and to wait to be discovered. "My advice to Canadian actors," says Michael Oscars, "is to be prepared to do it all by yourself. Don't expect anyone to meet you half way. Don't expect a helping hand. When you have the confidence to know you can do it all by yourself, you'll have a chance." Actors must find out who they are, what they can do, where they fit into the marketplace, and how to sell themselves. Only then will they understand the businessman's priorities and be able to speak a common language.

Al Waxman has projected his *King of Kensington* into a starring vehicle for himself with a simple down-to-earth philosophy: "Promoting yourself is as necessary a skill as acting. You have to answer the question - why would anyone turn the TV on or go to a movie to see me when they have a hundred other things they could be doing?" Discover the blocks in the financial structure and learn to surmount them. Be prepared to engage in all kinds of arguments that have little to do with how good you are - just how that 'good' is marketable.

Instead of talking about becoming a star, it is important to start being a star.

As a writer, I have been exposed to numerous press conferences and press releases where an agent or publicist presents some hopeful as the next star-to-be. At the press conference the hopeful smiles, grins, nods, maybe says a few words, and then is quickly forgotten. Why? Because it is not enough to be *told* that someone is a star. The star quality must be evident. It would be far more useful if the agent or publicist staged the hopeful in such a way that the magic spoke for itself - so that writers could walk in and say "Hey who's that?" The image is what the public wants, and if writers believe the image they will sell it to the public.

Just look at Howie Mandel. He does not tell people he is funny, or that he is a comedian or a star. He simply *acts* out his image - hanging from trees, making faces, being loony in interview after interview, photo after photo. Instantly you know where he's at and what he's got to offer. It's that excellent promotion campaign and the magic of make-believe that show business is all about. Bonne chance. ●



● Saul Rubinek in *Ticket to Heaven*.

Perhaps it's this lack of a sense of 'self' that causes us to believe that the world is made up of everybody *but* us; that our only hope for acceptance is to appear American. We forget that Italian films are *Italian*, German films are *German*, and American films are *American* - all identifiably so - and that what makes them 'international' is not the identity, or non-identity, of their locale and performers, but their ability to reach the hearts of most human beings to depict the conflicts and aspirations common to mankind. To be human is to be international. But it is each country's unique expression of its humanity that makes for good films - films that spark the imagination.

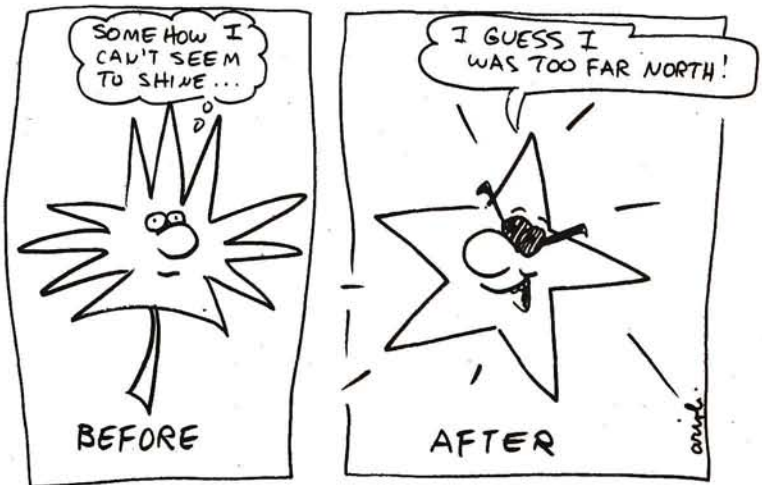
Canada's desperate attempts to white-wash its products with American paint does not make it international. It makes it a colourless entity in the world mosaic. Besides, with the 85% average foreign cultural product available in Canada, surely we must be the most internationally generous of all nations: we can afford to cut back a little to make room for our own, without being accused of being self-absorbed xenophobic chauvinists.

Ironically, those filmmakers who insist on internationalism as their excuse for excluding things Canadian are the most nationally conscious of all. For they presume that American lifestyles are more desirable to world viewers than Canadian. Americans themselves, as Norman Jewison pointed out, do not distinguish between nationalities as long as they can be useful. Still, Hollywood prevents foreign cultures from becoming

from *Ticket to Heaven* and *By Design* - he rejected a list of possible 'name' actors to play the lead, and chose Rubinek as the best actor available, the "most suitable for the part." Proving that 'best' is the most international quality of all.

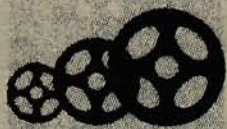
Tricks of the trade

Just as businessmen must come to respect the creative contribution more,



THE MAKING OF A STAR!

* Statistics from the Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, the Canadian Booksellers Association, the Ministry of Culture for Ontario, and the CBC.



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Taking the bait

Despite the growth of the feature industry here, Tinsel Town still lures many talented Canadians south.

by Robert E. Miller

"American 167 'Heavy' descend to 3000 feet. Cleared for landing two niner left." You break through a shroud of hazel smog and there it is: the city of angels. L.A. actually enjoys quite a stunning geography, bordered on each side by mountains and hemmed in at either end by vast expanses of desert and ocean. As the sun sets behind L.A.X. you catch a slight hint of why they call it the "Golden West."

First stop? Hollywood and Vine in search of tinsel town. Result: hassled by a bag lady and hustled by several "professionals" of undetermined gender. The atmosphere is much closer to Dr. Caligari than Busby Berkeley. Sure, the studios dust off their glitter façade once each year around Academy Award time, but if it's stargazing you're interested in, then try the sophisticated boutiques of Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills. Downtown L.A. struggles with urban decay while the magnificent gothic theatres lining Hollywood Boulevard attract a clientele that would do justice to a Fellini casting call. Even *Grauman's Chinese* has undergone a metamorphosis, emerging as - *Great Caesar's Ghost!* - a multiple! Alas, our cherished image of Hollywood in the thirties has become sadly tarnished over time.

Yet, there is still an undeniable vibrancy bubbling just beneath the surface. And, for a filmmaker, the energy positively crackles over you skin like Saint Elmo's fire. People are hustling. There is always a deal in the works, a script under option or a package about to receive financing. Even the names approach mythological dimensions; Universal, Paramount, 20th Century-Fox, Warner Brothers, MGM and the list goes on. It is, after all, the industry.

This is the dream, or perhaps illusion, that has drawn talented Canadians to Southern California for over 60 years. And, indeed, they have been welcomed with open arms. Hollywood has traditionally operated under the simple premise that "What's yours is mine and what's mine is mine." In the most pragmatic manner imaginable, major studios have used the lure of money, prestige and power to steal away master filmmakers from around the world. Hitchcock, Clair, Renoir, Lubitsch, Von Sternberg, Wilder - you'll have to complete the pantheon yourself. There is no fear of cultural dilution here, just a passion to learn from and exploit the talents of the best.

Hollywood's fascination has been

Robert E. Miller is an active filmmaker who teaches film at Concordia University in Montreal.



● Arthur Hiller consults with Kate Jackson during a rehearsal for *Making Love*.

particularly strong for Canadians. Geographical proximity, cultural compatibility and, until recently, the lack of a viable indigenous feature film production industry have funnelled Canadians south of the border. Our greatest export commodity is not film but talent. Yet for each young artist who seeks his fortune in L.A. (or London or Paris for that matter) our industry loses a drop of its precious life blood. Why does the exodus to balmy Southern California continue unabated? What is it that Canadians are seeking in Los Angeles and what - if anything - would draw them back to their homeland?

To address these questions, it seemed only logical to poll the primary sources directly. So we interviewed six Canadians currently plying their craft in Hollywood. Some names will be familiar to you, others will be new. However, the stories are all representative of a common experience.

ARTHUR HILLER

Producer/director. Hiller began his career with CBC radio and television in Toronto. He moved to Hollywood in 1955 and established an excellent reputation directing dramas for shows such as *Matinée Theater*, *Climax*, and *Playhouse 90*. He subsequently moved into the field of feature films directing and/or producing numerous major motion pictures including *The Man in the Glass Booth*, *The Americanization of Emily*, *Man of La Mancha* and the highly successful *Love Story*. Hiller's latest, and as yet unreleased, feature is called *Making Love*.

Cinema Canada: You have been in Hollywood for 26 years now, but were you involved with film or television while in Canada?

Arthur Hiller: Initially I was involved in public affairs programming with CBC radio. Then, because of my particular interest in theatre and drama, I started to do social documentaries. Later I also became involved with musical variety and moved into television where I concentrated on drama. The move to the United States came after I met Albert McCleery who was starting a new program called *Matinée Theater*. He said he wanted to see a kinescope of the closest thing I had to *Cameo Theater*.

I didn't dare admit to not being familiar with *Cameo Theater* so I decided to just send my best show, a T.V. version of Charles Israel's *The Mark* which was later done as a feature film with Rod Steiger.

Then I decided that was too intelligent for America T.V. so, instead, I decided to send a half-hour drama called *The Swamp*. When I went to get the kinescope I discovered Bill Shatner - who acted in it - already had it under his arm and was also trying to sell himself in New York. Finally, I sent the next best thing - a kind of Mickey Spillane detective story - which proved to be exactly the sort of thing they were looking for.

When the job offer came through, it took about three weeks of sleepless nights deciding whether or not to go. All we knew about Hollywood was what you read in magazines and my wife and I both wondered if it was possible to lead a normal life there. As I was flying in I would have gladly turned the plane

around if it were possible. But when I landed it was a glorious day of blue skies and 82 degrees and all the anxieties seemed to just melt away.

Cinema Canada: Was the working environment you found in Hollywood more stimulating than the one you left in Toronto?

Arthur Hiller: No. Remember, Canada was the first to do ninety-minute dramas on television, so there was a tremendous sense of excitement. But Hollywood became more stimulating as time went on. I enjoyed the pressure of *Matinée Theater* because we were doing a show every day, so there were seven or eight directors working simultaneously. Also, there was a wonderful feeling of camaraderie that I really enjoyed. From there I went on to *Climax* and *Playhouse 90* which was the best television drama of that period.

Cinema Canada: What is your impression of the Canadian film industry viewed from the perspective of Hollywood?

Arthur Hiller: I've been up several times for festivals over the past 10 years and I could see there was an interest growing and the works were getting better. I saw films by Don Shebib, Claude Jutra and others and it was clear they could direct. Technically things were developing nicely so I thought there would be a strong feature film industry in about 10 years. This feeling was reinforced when the government decided to step in, because you do need help to get started. Things turned out a bit differently in that it became a highly commercialized venture. My own feeling is that the Canadian film industry has been hurt by the packagers and financiers who really didn't care much about making movies but would have been just as happy selling shows. By the same token, pictures are being made and everybody is learning, learning, learning! My own feeling is that Canada is now in a position to do major motion pictures of greater value than the films of the past.

Cinema Canada: What elements do you look for when evaluating the potential of a screenplay?

Arthur Hiller: It's hard to explain. Certainly your instincts have to be closely in tune with what the audience will accept. I go by an internal feeling that says, "This is something I would be interested in doing." Unfortunately you can't computerize what the audience is going to like. For instance, I felt *Man of La Mancha* was the epitome of my work until it came out and the critics and audience let me know the picture wasn't that acceptable to them.

Cinema Canada: Have you had occasion to work in Canada since you left?

Arthur Hiller: I did *Silver Streak* in Canada thanks to C.P.R. Everything to do with trains was shot either in Alberta or Toronto. It was fun because I still think of Canada as my home. I'm still a citizen and even our children - who were born in the U.S. - carry dual citizenship and feel Canadian.

I also get lots of scripts from Canadian producers, hopefully because they admire my work but also because I would fit nicely into a Canadian package. In a sense, they would be getting an "American" director who qualified as Canadian. There are a lot of Canadian scripts floating around down here. I remember having dinner one night with Ted Kotcheff and Dan Petrie and laughing because we were all, unknowingly, talking about the same film. Finally, we agreed to turn down the corner of page thirty-one whenever we got a Canadian script. Then, if we ever came across a screenplay with page thirty-one turned down we could call each other up and find out what the story was about.

As it happens, none of these projects ever materialized. I was interested in *Improper Channels* which I thought could be very amusing assuming some revisions were made in the screenplay. I spoke with the producer and indicated I was willing to work on the film. But the producer, for financing reasons, had to start shooting right away and wasn't interested in making any improvements. Still, I would really like to make a film in Canada. ○

AUBREY SOLOMON

Writer/producer. Solomon graduated from the University of Southern California's Division of Cinema with an M.A. in film history/criticism/aesthetics. He produced a full-length feature in Montreal and subsequently moved to L.A. in 1976. Since then, he has been a story editor on the Quincy series and has authored numerous dramatic scripts for television with his partner, Steve Greenberg. Presently he is the supervising producer for That's Hollywood, a syndicated program, backed by 20th Century-Fox.

Cinema Canada: What were some of the reasons that prompted your decision to leave Canada?

Aubrey Solomon: Well there was a very simple reason. There wasn't really enough work in Canada, at the time, that I could get actively involved in. The other reason was that Jack Haley Jr. called from L.A. and said, "I've got a job for you, why don't you come out here?" So we packed up and moved. It was as simple as that.

Cinema Canada: Did you manage to do any film work at all while you were in Canada?

Aubrey Solomon: Yes, after I got out of USC's film school in 1973, I went back to Montreal and put together a deal to make a French low-budget comedy. At that time, comedies were doing quite well at the box-office in the regional market. We got our investors, made the picture in the fall of '73 and released it in the fall of '74. It did moderately well initially and then dropped off like a shot within two weeks. So, our prospects for making any more pictures were washed out. The truth is that between the time we made the picture and released it the market had collapsed for local comedies

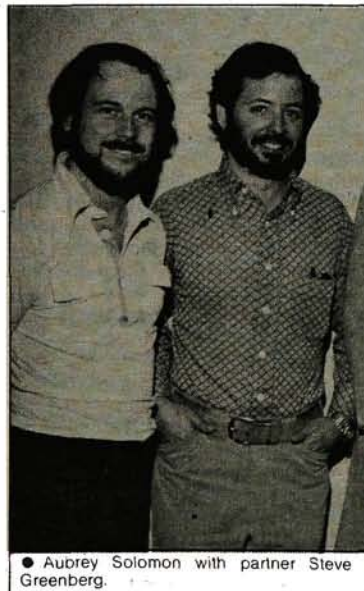
and we weren't the only picture to get burned.

The film was called *Les deux pieds dans la même bottine*. Pierre David was directly involved and had high hopes for it. He put together a distribution deal, got some money from Famous Players and was involved in the casting. We were planning to build from this film and expand into English pictures throughout Canada. Now this was a time when the tax situation was still in question. Nobody knew what kind of write-off they were going to get so it was a lot harder to attract investors than it is now. As a combination of the difficulty of raising money and the minimal release of our picture it was very hard to continue in Canada.

Montreal, at that time, was a closed market. You could go to Pierre David or George Destounis - who was really in Toronto - or perhaps to Gilles Carle. As a matter of fact, after the French picture I went into distribution and bought the rights to *Hester Street* and distributed it throughout Canada. As *Hester Street* was winding down in early 1976, Jack Haley Jr. phoned and offered me the job in L.A.

Cinema Canada: Would you consider returning to Canada to work?

Aubrey Solomon: Initially I had gone back to Montreal because I felt there was a potential for making pictures. As it turned out, the potential dried up very quickly and it wasn't until a few years later that Pierre David became more heavily involved in production. If I had stayed I might have



● Aubrey Solomon with partner Steve Greenberg.

been part of that, I don't know.

But in California, you're talking about an industry that's been in business for over 60 years and needs people in all areas. Television especially is like a bottomless pit. You have to keep on feeding it by bringing in a constant flow of new people. To answer your question though, I wouldn't consider returning to work in Canada. I've had offers to do scripts and generally, when I learn the producer is Canadian, I just tune it out. My experiences with Canadian producers have been all bad. The people I have dealt with - and perhaps it's because they were lower-echelon producers - have a very limited approach to picture making.

Cinema Canada: What are you presently involved with?

Aubrey Solomon: Right now I'm supervising producer on *That's Hollywood*. It's like a pet project for me since I am also a film historian and my particular studio - 20th Century-Fox - is funding the show. This is where I started as a researcher and now I'm supervising producer. I'm also completing a number of scripts and am involved in several development deals for television. All things considered, I'm really quite contented with my situation here in Hollywood. ○

GORDON FARR

Writer/producer/director. Farr came to Hollywood from Toronto in 1967. He wrote the Hollywood Palace for one and a half years as well as numerous variety specials - Tom Jones, Petula Clark, Glen Campbell, Tony Orlando - and situation comedies - Maude, The Jeffersons, The Dick Van Dyck Show and The Bob Newhart Show for years and then subsequently ABC's Loveboat for 3 years.

Cinema Canada: Drifting back 14 years, can you still remember the events which led to your decision to leave Canada and try your luck in Hollywood?

Gordon Farr: Well, I was writing some material for *Spring Thaw* (which was a big event in those days) with Barry Gordon - a friend I had gone to Ryerson with. We got 75 cents per blackout per performance and \$1.25 per sketch. It kept us in cigarettes and we got free tickets. So we would go to two or three performances a week and when our stuff would come on we would stand up and yell "Author! Author!" Somebody from CFTO saw some material we had written for *Spring Thaw* and hired us to write monologues for Rick Campbell who was doing a late night talk show... except that he had no sense of humor. It paid \$75 a week but we decided the show was no good so we would create our own program.

Barry and I phoned Spence Caldwell, who had just formed the CTV Network, and went in and pitched the show like crazy to a board room full of people. And they loved it. The show was called *Funny Business* and was a cinema vérité behind-the-scenes look at comedians. The show never got off the ground but I ended up as an assistant to Michael Hindsmith who was then head of programming for CTV. So I worked out of CFTO for four or five years and ended up producing and directing programs. Then someone decided to start a Directors Guild so I signed the petition like everybody else. John Basset, I understand, wasn't happy about it and summarily had the last two or three names on the list fired, so I found myself out of a job.

I was married, had no money and there weren't a lot of alternatives. The CBC wasn't hiring anybody at that time, especially if you were coming from CTV. There wasn't much of a future for me in Canada because the boundaries of what you could do were so narrow. What were you going to do if you wrote a film? There was no financing. There were no situation comedies on television - besides, who was going to let you produce? You had some guy sitting in an ivory tower on Jarvis Street who was going to do it because he was Mr. Showbusiness. We weren't bitter, but aware of the limitations.

Anyways, I said "The hell with it!" and came down to L.A. to look around.

Within a few days I had an agent, because Canadians were in vogue and were easy to sell in the variety area. I ended up writing a game show and earning \$250 a week which was considerably more than I was getting in Canada. From that came the *Hollywood Palace* which I wrote for a year and a half and then a lot of variety specials like Tom Jones, Petula Clark, Glen Campbell, Tony Orlando... I can't remember them all there were so many. A lot of it was through the "Canadian mafia" because



every variety show had Canadians on staff.

But variety was becoming a dinosaur so I started writing half-hours beginning with *Maude*, *The Jeffersons*, *The Dick Van Dyck Show* and *Bob Newhart*. I ended up producing Newhart for two years and wrote 15 episodes. When I left Newhart, *Loveboat* came along which I produced for three years.

I find people in the business here are open. They listen to you and are interested in what you have to say. In Canada, they're more interested in who your parents are or where you went to school - this was in 1967. In L.A. you can get a half-hour of anybody's time and pitch your idea no matter how dreadful it is. They understand that the next time the idea might be brilliant; next time you might have *All in the Family* or *Rocky*. Everyone is genuinely interested and that's why it's nice for creative people.

Cinema Canada: Does the talent exist in Canada to support a strong television and film industry?

Gordon Farr: Yes, there is a strong talent pool in Canada but not in the numbers that exist in the United States. Each year there is an influx of new talent on the writer, producer, and story editor level, not to mention actors. You take a show like *Laverne and Shirley* and there are eight or ten writers involved on various levels working under the producer and Gary Marshall. They're all learning and moving up. But there isn't that depth in Canada. Certainly the talent exists but they need the supervision of someone who has done it for a number of years. *The King of Kensington* is a terrific idea but it could never have gotten on the air down here. The actors were good but the writing was weak. Anybody can have an idea for a good story or joke but there is a whole lot of care and craftsmanship that goes into the script.

I'm still a Canadian citizen, but to go back - forget the weather which is a killer - is impossible. I make more in a week than I could make in a year up there. But I don't think a day goes by when something exciting doesn't happen in L.A. My God, I just sent a screenplay to my agent who told me Paul Newman passed on the script but someone else is interested. We're doing a three-hour picture for network television - that's exciting! There is always something happening and you don't have that feeling in Canada; it's not an exciting business. It's just a job, while people wait to get out because they know they're not going to get rich. If you go to somebody in the CBC or CTV and ask, "Is this it? Is this what you wanted to do when you grew up?" I don't think a lot of people would say yes. Still, I would love to make a feature film in Canada, and I have a number of screenplays - one of which is specifically designed for Canada - which are moving on. Who knows? O

KERRY FELTHAM

Producer/director. Feltham has written, produced and/or directed over 30 network television films in Canada, England, Germany and the U.S.A. In addition he has directed a prize-winning feature film and written half a dozen screenplays. Most recently he was associate producer on the television mini-series Shogun.

Cinema Canada: *What were you involved with in terms of production when you were in Canada?*

Kerry Feltham: I had a production company in Toronto for about 10 years, although I am a Vancouver boy, and we did a lot of commercials, industrials, documentaries and various things for CTV. We limped along and basically just survived. I spent two years of my life trying to get units sold in features that were very practical and probably would have made money. My blood is over Bay Street but they wouldn't go for it. I was perfectly happy to stay in Canada and make pictures but the answer was always "No!" My idea was to make films for about \$500,000 which could have a negative pick-up from a major distributor and probably have done alright, but nobody wanted to hear about it. Then, one winter, my daughter fell on a patch of ice and broke her tooth. I said, "This is it!" and four weeks later we were on a plane for California.

Cinema Canada: *Do writers and producers in L.A. have a different attitude or approach to the business as opposed to their counterparts in Canada?*

Kerry Feltham: Sure. I'm just an ordinary working fellow but there is nobody here in Hollywood, right up to studio heads, who wouldn't listen to an idea and say "I like it" or "I don't like it." Everybody's open to you and so many things are happening that there is a real sense of momentum.

There is a tendency to think about the market first: what people want to see. And then, having established what the audience wants, the goal is to do the very best job you can. It isn't the Sistine Chapel but people do a good craftsman-like job and they don't look down on what they are doing.

I don't feel my work reflects any particularly Canadian perspective. I'm working on a television movie now, for example, which is about the escape of Jews from Denmark during the Second

World War. It's a story of great heroism and suffering. In fact, my years in L.A. have helped me shed some tendencies I developed in Canada which would have been a drawback to writing a good script. Now I approach a script much more analytically: as entertainment first. You have to catch people's interest. Equally fundamental, you must be rational in that you have to take the premise and develop a story which flows and has plot and drive. That does not prevent you from having wonderful characters doing wonderful things.

Many Canadian films seem weak structurally. They start as good ideas but run out of steam after the first 30 pages of a 100-page script. This is a typical result of not having analyzed the structure of the story beforehand. That aspect of craftsmanship tends to be ignored in Canada. I remember a lot of stories in Canada which were full of internal angst and were about how I crossed the street. Nothing happened in these stories. There was a tremendous



● Kerry Feltham at Paramount.

amount of inner agony but no plot. They just weren't interesting.

Yet there are good Canadian stories available. I optioned one of Hugh McClelland's books which was set in the Maritimes but nobody in Canada was interested. Hugh Garner is one of the few Canadian authors whose stories are really strong... not literary or self-conscious. I also paid money to option one of his books but was unsuccessful getting it produced.

Cinema Canada: *Is it worthwhile, then, for Canada to flirt with the possibility of maintaining a film industry of any significance.*

Kerry Feltham: Maybe it's an artificially induced situation. Fundamentally I agree with Gerald Pratley who wants to see films reflect the Canadian character without saying Canada with a capitol C. Regional pictures if you want. *The Rowdyman* was a wonderful Maritime picture. Nobody outside of Canada ever wanted to see it but it's an excellent film and, if it takes subsidies, then perhaps that is the civilized thing to do. Still you compare *The Rowdyman* with an American regional film like *Breaking Away* and you discover *Breaking Away* is based on a much stronger story using characters that can be identified with much more easily. Peter Carter is a fine director and I cherish *The Rowdyman* but I wouldn't touch the film if I were a distributor because not enough people

would go to see it.

Cinema Canada: *What would lure you back to Canada?*

Kerry Feltham: A good project for sure. But I love California. This is where I was meant to be. I feel alive and real. One of the great things about being here is that if a deal doesn't work out this week there are eight others on the fire and one will come through next week. After the associate producer's assignment on *Shogun*, I did a pilot for television called *Chicago Story* and right now my agent is negotiating a deal with MTM to direct a segment of *Hill Street Blues*. Something is always happening. In Canada I only felt half alive. O

RENÉ BALGER

Writer/director. Balger graduated from Concordia University's department of Communication Studies in 1977. Subsequently he edited several Canadian documentaries, and directed a short film - A Twist of Fate - for Phantoscope Productions in Montreal. He came to Los Angeles in 1980 and has since been involved in three feature film projects.

Cinema Canada: *Were you actively involved with film while you were living in Montreal?*

René Balger: I was doing some production work while writing for *Cinema Canada* and also working for the Directors Guild. I still have a script under option to Stuart Harding at Cinépix but it doesn't seem to be going anywhere. Then I had the opportunity to work with a director - Monte Hellman - so I came to L.A., but I'm keeping all my options open. I'll go wherever there's work. But it seems that most Canadian producers come to L.A. looking for talent since this is where the agencies and the distributors are. I think it's a bit ridiculous to view the Canadian and American film industries as separate entities without any exchange between the two. In North America the marketplace is in Los Angeles. Anyways, it's been a good experience for me so far. I was hired to write a script for Mike Gruskoff (who produced *Young Frankenstein*, *Nosferatu* and *Quest for Fire*), and have also been commissioned by Martin Poll and Mike Wise for a feature film script.

Basically though, the approach to filmmaking in Montreal was very similar to what I found in Hollywood. The major difference is that there is an onslaught of projects here. You get calls every few days whereas, in Montreal, a new project might come up once a month. The pace is much slower because there's less money and opportunity. But, it still comes down to luck. There is talent and hard work, but you also have to have luck.

The most glaring weakness in the Canadian industry would have to be scripts and a lot of the responsibility has to lie with the producers. I would think 75 percent of Canadian producers have absolutely no experience in film. Many are former lawyers and accountants who make films only because they are able to put deals together.

My goal is to eventually establish myself to the point that I don't have to live either in Los Angeles or Montreal to get work. I would have no qualms about going back to Montreal if the project was worthwhile and the money adequate. In the end, it boils down to the fact that L.A. is the place to get work. The attitude towards Canadians working in

Hollywood - and you see this in *Cinema Canada* quite often - is very antagonistic. "Why did you turn your back on Canada?" I find this attitude unrealistic and it issues forth from a feeling of inferiority; perhaps even envy.

People come down here because this is a much bigger marketplace. They aren't running away from anything. This is where Francis Mankiewicz came to sell *Les bons débarras* and this is where they will sell *Les Plouffe*. They might sell it to Uruguay at the Montreal International Film Festival, but to make a profit they are going to have to sell the film to an American distributor. If everyone ends up in L.A. eventually, then why not be down here to begin with?

Cinema Canada: *Is there adequate material and talent in Canada to support a feature film industry?*

René Balger: There is a lot of good material and talent in Canada but the main problem is one of orientation. Should the industry model itself after the American fashion or perhaps the Australian or even the European approach? They're still searching for the answer.

What the Australians have been able to do is admirable in that they have distilled drama out of authentically Australian subjects. Perhaps it is due to some kind of psychological block, but Canadians seem to constantly undercut the dramatic elements in their stories. I'm thinking here of *Two Solitudes*, which I worked on and which was an absolute horror. We can't seem to take ourselves seriously because we're insecure. A little bank robbery in Toronto isn't exciting, but it's great in New York.

The Europeans, on the other hand, have had the courage to regulate distribution and return money from the box-office to the industry. In Canada we have never been willing to do this. A big help would be to place people in key positions who really understand film on a practical and aesthetic level. Right now the Secretary of State's office and the CFDC are filled with incompetents who don't have the background to make key decisions regarding financing or about how distribution should be regulated.

I also feel the tax shelter should be eliminated because then there will be a tremendous attrition of accountants and fly-by-nights. You need a sound financial base and all these wheeler-dealers have done their best to destroy that base. We really have to clean house because the industry can't continue to alienate financial institutions such as the Bank of Canada and the like by sticking them with \$50 million worth of unreleasable films.

Cinema Canada: *So, where does one begin?*

René Balger: The place to start, though, is with the screenplay. No one in Canada knows what a good script is. They don't know how to read them or write them. As Gore Vidal said, "In the beginning was the word." If you're going to initiate some kind of training program, the place to begin is with writing. Not just for writers but for producers so they will know what a good screenplay is supposed to look like. Studios like Paramount still have elaborate training schools for producers. Since we don't have large studios to bankroll such a program, I think it is the duty of government to step in. That is, if they are serious about finally developing an industry that is viable. ●

A history of great ideas and lost opportunities

After 46 years of struggling to fulfill its mandate, the Canadian Film Institute is on its last legs.

by Penelope Hynam

On January 13, 1981 a small article appeared in the *Globe and Mail* with the headline "Film Institute May Die From Lack of Funds." It went on: "*The Canadian Film Institute is facing a drastic cutback of services and possible extinction unless it can persuade the government sources that provide approximately half of its budget to release an emergency expropriation of \$106,000.*" The executive director Frederik Manter was quoted as saying about the 46-year-old organization that "to avoid termination we will have to cut back on our publications and our National Film Theatre. To do that would mean that we are no longer an institute."

This little article is significant for more than one reason, the main one being that it is the first piece about the Institute to appear in the media in recent memory. The CFI has managed to maintain such a low profile in the past 20 years – in a period when every other cultural organization has been dissected, praised, blamed, and in the spotlight over various issues – that the film student who recently said to me blankly, "the Canadian Film What?" can hardly be blamed for his ignorance. The article is also significant in that with very little fanfare, kudos or regrets it could be signalling the end of an era.

What is this organization that seems to be "facing extinction" before it has even reached a respectable middle age? In the seemingly endless parade of film and cultural initials in Canada – the CBC, CFDC, NFB, CCA, CCFM, CRTC and on and on – the CFI has been comparatively ignored and neglected, for reasons not entirely of its own making. How many of us know that it is the second oldest film institute in the world? How many even care? What is a "film institute" anyway?

In 1935 a group of alert Canadians established the National Film Society as an independent, non-profit, federally chartered organization whose main purpose was "*The encouragement and promotion of the study, appreciation, and use of motion and sound pictures and television as educational factors in the Dominion of Canada and elsewhere.*"¹ Although not explicitly stated, its main concern was the increasing domination of Canada's film market by American commercial and educational product. The Society wanted to counteract the lack of opportunity for Canadians to see films from foreign coun-

Penelope Hynam has been working in television and film for 13 years, mainly as a producer/researcher on documentaries, and as a script supervisor on over 16 Canadian feature films.

tries, particularly Britain, in our American-owned theatre chains (yes, Virginia, they owned them then too). Based in Ottawa with branches in the provinces, the Society would make available to Canadians films that would otherwise never be seen on our screens. It would also make people aware of the problems and choices in the educational film markets in Canada. Its formation coincided, not incidentally, with a low point in Canadian film production and an increase in Hollywood's world-wide takeover of film markets.

The stated aim of the Society was wisely comprehensive and general. Its impetus was the same as that behind the formation of every national film institute. Just two years earlier, the British Film Institute (BFI) was founded on much the same principles, although it is interesting to note that from the beginning the British were not afraid to make their mandate more clearly nationalistic: "to promote the various uses of the film as a contribution to national well-being."² In the following decades



In its first five years the Society did a remarkable job, given the size and complexity of the country, in creating a network of film societies and 16mm screenings for fascinated audiences from coast to coast.

the American and Swedish Film Institutes, among others, would be established. During these years the basic and necessary functions of any film institute were clearly laid out:

- an archival program to collect, preserve and document films and film-related material, both from the indigenous country and from around the world;
- a publication program producing books, catalogues, research papers, etc. on or about film, filmmakers and television, mainly but not exclusively from the institute's own country;
- an exhibitions program connected to

a National Film Theatre or theatres across the country, which would program a wide variety of films for the public screenings;

- and a distribution library of educational, artistic or historic films for rental or loan to individuals, schools, groups and universities, etc.

From the very beginning money to finance the activities of the National Film Society was, if not a problem, at least an uncertainty. Ironically, given the main reasons behind its formation, the Society was supported in its first years partly by grants from the American Rockefeller and Carnegie Foundations. Grant money also came from the British Imperial Trust, an arm of the British government. In its first five years the Society did a remarkable job, given the size and complexity of the country, in creating a network of film societies and 16mm screenings for fascinated audiences from coast to coast.

World War II provoked the formation of the National Film Board in 1939, and an unprecedented increase in Canadian film production and distribution stimulated by the war effort. After the war, the National Film Society stepped into the void created when the NFB ceased its travelling exhibition circuit. The distribution film library was greatly expanded, and according to its own pamphlet published about 1947, the Society was moving ahead in all the "traditional" institute fields: a library, research, catalogues, rental services, film society branches and an information service. All that remained to be done was to change the name officially to the Canadian Film Institute, which came in 1950. The organization maintained its independent, "voluntary," non-governmental status which initially gave it a great deal of freedom, and later was to play a role in its financial and credibility problems.

An archival department was started in the early 1960s under executive director Roy Little who, with Peter Morris, had produced a document entitled "A National Film Archives for Canada." Despite initial government enthusiasm for the plan and verbal promises of support, it took some time before Morris officially became curator of the Canadian Film Archives in 1964. But even then financial support was not forthcoming and the Institute maintained the Archives out of its own operating budget for the first few years. Despite the less than ideal conditions Morris persevered and began the work of building up what was eventually to become a valuable collection of films and documents.

At that time the Canadian Film Archive holdings were stored in a large warehouse in Beaconsfield, Quebec, and because of the lack of funds the

nitrate film was not properly stored nor air-conditioned. The CFI had urgently applied for a grant from the government for \$65,000 to transfer much of the footage to safety film – a request that months later had not even been acknowledged much less granted. And in 1967 the predictable happened. One hot day the volatile nitrate stock self-ignited, and the ensuing fire destroyed many of the valuable films. It was a bitter blow to the Institute and its curator, and angry statements were made to the press blaming the government for its lack of support. Then Secretary of State Judy LaMarsh retaliated with a strongly worded letter to the president of the Institute taking exception to its statements. It was probably the most daring line that the Institute had ever taken publicly, and this chastisement from the highest government source seems to have permanently intimidated the board of directors. (At least it has never again publicly taken as strong a line on any issue.)

The Archives did survive that blow, and by 1973 the collection had again been built up to an outstanding level, including 5,000 films conserved, 140,000 films indexed, 150,000 stills collected, and an extensive library of important film books and periodicals (some now rare) in place.

But an even bigger blow was looming, unbeknownst to many at the Institute. Under the executive directorship of Gordon Noble the CFI suffered its most serious financial crisis to date, just as its archival collection was becoming more and more valuable. Because a small and undistinguished collection already existed in the Public Archives in Ottawa, the government was very interested in improving it by acquiring the superior CFI collection. So in 1974 the board of directors and Noble arranged to avert the financial crisis by "donating" the Canadian Film Archives to the Public Archives in exchange for the support of some \$50,000 a year in various areas of Institute activity. The entire collection was squirreled away into the vaults of the Public Archives, over the objections of many, including Institute curator Morris. He was vociferously opposed to the takeover "*because the Archives is a place where things get buried and that's not to my mind what an Archives ought to be... an Archives ought to be like the National Gallery. Of course it's a place that conserves and collects but if it doesn't do a cultural role as well, if it doesn't show things, if it doesn't publish books and have lectures and discussions, and generally get involved in arguments about whatever the artistic issues of the day are, if it doesn't do those things then it's just a dead agency,*"