



"The old tart has been spruced up again, once more resplendent in its late Victorian wedding-cake elegance. The most un-ladylike manifestations of the vulgarity of the past two weeks – regrettable, but oh so financially remunerative – have all but been effaced, and the Carlton Hotel is free once more to pursue its more refined, if equally meretricious, way of life. All of which is proof irrefutable that the 35th annual Cannes Film Festival is now a thing of the past.

"Perhaps it is the end of an era as well, for next year the old Festival Palace will lose its status of central show case to a mammoth new Festival Centre, which, almost completed, already is a blight on the *Vieux Port* of this beautiful city, its concrete-and-glass ugliness – yet one more monument to contemporary architecture's descent into utilitarian barbarism – desecrating the surrounding sea and mountain landscape.

"Will this affect the spirit, perhaps the very nature, of a Festival which continues to dominate the world scene, or will...? Time alone will tell, for the Cannes Film Festival has no equal in its ability to adapt, to turn everything to its own profit. If one thing is clear from this year's event, it is that, far from betraying any signs of fading away, the Festival is gearing itself for at least another thirty-five years of frenetic activity."

These words were penned over a month ago as an intro to his 1982 Festival report by the present dedicated scribe, who then had to quit, finally succumbing to the effects of flu and anti-biotics (as conscientiously reported, *bien sûr*, by Bruce Pittman and this mag's editors last issue). But why sacrifice such fervid stylistic stuff, since it still more or less applies, and especially since I have had to write and suffer through the creation of seventeen intros to seventeen reports for *Cinema Canada* and its predecessors these last seventeen years.

Fervid stuff indeed, and that seemed to be what was in store for us this year, because Cannes (the Festival) was sup-

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Carry on Cannes!

by Marc Gervais

posed to be in deep trouble. The obscenely high prices, the destructive competition from the American Film Market held in Los Angeles, the big controversy in France itself over the official French selections – on and on went the refrain about a possible demise.

And for a Canadian, well, nobody from Canada was going, right? L.A.'s where the action is.

The party's over, the reports are in, and, of course, the reality is something else. As a matter of fact, most folks consider 1982 a vintage Cannes year – ou presque. There were more journalists than ever, we are told (a mixed blessing, to be sure). And the crowds have not diminished. Moreover, the film market, far from succumbing to the L.A. challenge, had as many films on display as ever before (we are equally told). Finally, the quality of the films in the official selection was deemed by more than a few as among the best in years. – More about that later.

One can take all of this with a wee grain of salt, to be sure. Nonetheless, the Cannes Film Festival this past May was, over-all, a success. If less bloated, and therefore more comfortable, than it was a few years ago. Cannes '82 showed no signs of significant decline. Once again it served as a matchless microcosm of the larger film life spread around our global village.

The entire global village, that is, with the notable exception of Canada. As a matter of fact, one is tempted to ask if Canada really was at Cannes this May 1982. What kind of show did our film community put on, how does our coun-

try's production stack up against the rest, where does it seem headed, etc.?

To begin with the (very brief) good news: there was, of course, Jean-Pierre Lefebvre, a filmmaker who is invited to Cannes every two or three years, usually as part of the prestigious *Directors' Fortnight* (*La quinzaine des réalisateurs*). Lefebvre is a remarkable man, doggedly creating his own *cinéma artisanal* his own way, against every dictate of the present feature film system dominating Canada. He is too old still to be considered an *enfant terrible* (oui, Jean-Pierre, it happens to all of us!), but Lefebvre retains his peculiar mixture of hip sophistication and naiveté/passion, pouring himself into each of his movies, expressing the way he feels about life at whatever stage of his own personal evolution he may be experiencing. Undaunted, and against staggering odds, he goes on struggling for a truly national cinema in his own understanding of the term; and far from succumbing to discouragement or bitterness, he actually seems to be arriving at some kind of mature plateau, a new awareness of certain simple human values with serenity just a step away.

His feature *Les fleurs sauvages*, was well received, winning the international critics' FIPRESCI award. And so, by all indications, Lefebvre will labour on, working with tiny budgets, creating his own audience, with a cinema that is ever young, "difficult" in its refusal of easy commercial film language – and finding a positive response in many parts of the world.

Ted Baryluk's Grocery, a lovely and well appreciated study of Winnipeg ethnic life by John Paskievich and Mike Mierus, was part of the official selection

for short films; and naturally it furnished yet one more example of the National Film Board's high standards. Another aspect of Canada's developing film life was the indefatigable Serge Losique's presentation of a program of short films by students from his own Canadian Film Students Film Festival – surely a first for Cannes – within the context of the *Directors' Fortnight*.

And that was just about the extent of the Canadian story at Cannes this year, or at least its positive side. The other aspect, the Market Place, where some three or four hundred features are on display annually, and where Canada has expended so much effort these last years, was strictly no show. Four or five Canadian features, plus a few repeats from the past presented by their American distributors (and not as Canadian films, but American), plus a few promos and video cassettes – such was Cannes '82 as far as Canada was concerned.

This was probably the quietest, least visible Canadian presence I have encountered in all these blessed seventeen years at Cannes. Gone, of course, was the hoopla of a few years ago. Gone, too, were most of the occasions for Canadians and others to meet Canadian journalists were in evidence, and so were various federal and provincial agency reps; but where were the producers (a few), the actors, directors – the rest of the film community?

The saddest Canadian casualty in all of this was the drastically reduced *Cinema Canada* – not the magazine, but the Secretary of State's official Canadian office headed by Jean Lefebvre and Jacqueline Brodie.* For years the best organized and most popular of all national film offices in Cannes, *Cinema Canada* saw itself reduced from its suite of four or five rooms at the Carlton to one. Its only official activity, in addition to being of service to Canadian journalists, centered on the few films (mentioned above) representing Canada in

* Although Gervais refers throughout this article to the Film Festivals Bureau as "Cinema Canada", that name has officially been abolished. The activities of the Bureau at Cannes were designated as the "press and documentation branch of Film Canada." There is concern that the Bureau itself may soon be merged with the CFDC as a permanent part of Film Canada. Ed.

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any of the *official* selections or manifestations.

And so this year the nerve centre (one is tempted to say the heart) of the Canadian community was non-existent, and so much expertise, experience, and good will languished relatively unexploited in the radically reduced role that is now Cinema Canada's.

The *commercial* side of Canadian features was handled instead by the Canadian Film Development Corporation's CFDC Film Canada, which occupied a stand on the second floor of the Festival Palace - a sort of return to Canada's way of life some dozen years ago.

The result was typically Canadian (to put it charitably): two reduced areas, a divided presence, no centre. This becomes particularly bewildering when one compares the magnificent Australian presence, or the Scandinavian, or even the New Zealand, or...

Without returning to some of the hype aspects so criticized by (some) Canadian journalists in the past, surely the Canadian agencies need not go all the way in giving the impression that Canadian film is all but extinct? If it is worth going to Cannes at all, it is worth giving a positive and vital image of this country's feature filmmaking. Otherwise, our official presence at this, the world's most important film function, is self-defeating.

Behind the phenomenon, of course, loom certain realities. One centres on the role of the Festivals Bureau (Cinema Canada) and of the CFDC (Film Canada) - who or what is best for our image at the major film festivals?

The other, perhaps even more fundamental reality: the growing tie-in between Hollywood North (Canada) and Hollywood South (Los Angeles). This is the heart of the matter, the centre of controversy, the source of the present confusion, contention, elation, discouragement, what have you, depending on whom you talk to in this schizophrenic

state of affairs that is Canadian feature filmmaking.

If indeed American film distributors are to call the shots for Canadian features (and therefore control much of the film-making) then why bother with the other film markets around the world - and why Cannes? And what chance do Canadian independent distributors have when the game belongs to the Hollywood-and-its-Canadian-branch-plants mentality: how can Canadian independents buy "other" films if the U.S. is both our sole supplier and unique distributor?

I am caricaturing, over-simplifying, and exaggerating - to a certain extent. But many fear that certain very powerful sectors both at the policy-making and the production levels are hell-bent on total integration with U.S. film, without perhaps realizing the consequences of such a process.

Or, to repeat what has become a tragic cliché for those who believe that there should be an independent Canadian feature film production: a country that does not control its own distribution and exhibition cannot control its own filmmaking.

...

Comments such as the above can easily be distorted into some sort of self-serving, or silly nationalistic narrow-mindedness or excess, an excess which finds little reflection in world cinema - or at least so it would seem judging from Cannes '82.

For one thing, the filmmaker's nationality often in no way corresponds to the country he represents or in which he shoots his film. Here, for example, was Werner Herzog representing Germany with a film shot in Peru about one Brian Sweeney! The two *grand prix* winners, *Yol* and *Missing*, one directed by a Turk (Yilmaz Guney) for Switzerland and France, the other by a Greek living in France (Costa-Gavras) for the U.S., further

attest to this phenomenon. Poland's Jerzy Skolimovsky represented Britain with *Moonlighting* and Germany's Wim Wenders (*Hammett*) and Britain's Alan Parker (*Shoot the Moon*) were other foreigners flying the American flag.

At a deeper level, too, nationalism, or should one say ideology, found little exposure on Cannes' screens. Even "political" films such as *Yol* and *Missing* were more of an outcry against injustice and totalitarian regimes than special pleading for this or that political orientation; and the Taviani brothers, those convinced advocates for the Italian left, were far more interested in the *people* living through *The Night of San Lorenzo* than in any ideas advocating Marxism.

It was as if *all* ideologies, be they of the right or of the left, have been so discredited by their proponents in recent history that serious filmmakers simply can no longer find validity in commitment to any of them. Moreover, if a few major directors such as Godard and Antonioni seem to have given up on the human condition, it is within a political vacuum that they chase their own (ultimately) *personal* demons of alienation or whatever. Most of the films, on the contrary, are reaching out hopefully, positively, rejecting the madness of the arms race and the butchery of local wars, in favour of a simple way of life, an ability to live with oneself and with others. Very simple, basic stuff.

That, it would seem, was by far the most commonly shared message at Cannes this year in a Festival that by and large strayed very little from tried and true aesthetic paths. Even from names made glamorous or controversial in the recent or not so recent past (Antonioni, Anderson, Godard, Costa-Gavras, Scola, Herzog, the Taviani brothers, Skolimovsky), there were few radical departures, no exciting new developments, nothing that made this festival truly memorable. Rather, a series of quality movies con-

firming the trends of recent years, and witnessing to the fact that film techniques and technology are now pretty universally mastered, was unrolled on the screen of the Festival Palace. But dazzling, novel, poetic inspiration? Not this year.

A few comments, then - the fruit, naturally, of one's preferences, or special interests, or (above all) the limitations caused by having to choose from among four-hundred movies:

France, the host country, went for new faces this year, without much success - even though three old *nouvelle vague* names were available. Alone of the three Jean-Luc Godard was invited. Sad to say, his *Passion* merely confirmed that Godard is still trapped in a self-created impasse. Each film continues the perpetual unmasking of film art, the destruction of whatever it is he is creating on the screen. One is left with nothing - no spontaneity, wit, humour, humanity, not even his old but now discarded Maoist ranting. As the Godard film unrolls, it's a bit like watching a snake devouring its own tail - without the attendant horror. Boredom is all.

Of the other two *nouvelle vague* efforts that might have better served the Festival and its audiences, Eric Rohmer's *Le beau mariage* (I must admit after a Paris viewing) is very minor Rohmer indeed, too redolent of uninspired *déjà vu*. Chabrol's *Les fantômes du chapelier*, on the other hand, is marvelously crafted, a sort of inner Hitchcock without the tricks, and surely among Chabrol's finest efforts.

Italy, as usual, had too many films at Cannes. Ettore Scola's *The Night in Varennes* is self-indulgent pretentiousness, and offers further proof that the energetic Signor Scola is one of world Cinema's most over-rated directors. Much more interesting is the Michelangelo Antonioni case. Antonioni, one realizes with astonishment, will be



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seventy next September. Alas, his *Identification of a Woman* testifies to a drying up of inspiration. Gone is the strange, desolate poetry and the deep sense of mystery that made his difficult middle films so haunting. Still the supreme craftsman, still very much a contemporary voice – still relevant, in other words – Antonioni lacks the magical touch that brought life to even his most desperate elegies to alienated modern man.

The Taviani brothers, on the other hand, presented the best Italian film in Cannes this year, *The Night of San Lorenzo*, a strident, warm-hearted operatic tale that takes place near the end of World War II. There is nothing quite like a Taviani film; and the brothers, along with Ermanno Olmi, are probably the finest filmmakers at work in Italy today.

West Germany: Only a few weeks after the Festival's close, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, the most prolific, as well as probably the most erratic, brilliant, and alienated of Germany's new wave directors, died in rather tragic circumstances. But the German cinema goes on much in the image of Fassbinder's work; and three of its films in Cannes were of particular (and peculiar) interest.

Obviously the Germans are still grappling with their Nazi-shattered national psyche. Perhaps that is why old myths or desperation genres or crazy stories found such favour with their directors this year. Wagner's *Parsifal*, no less, filled the Palais screen for over four hours with Hans Jurgen Syberberg's mystical images. Werner Herzog went a step further in the bizarre and the operatic: his *Fitzcaraldo* tells the story of one man's obsessive determination to bring opera to the jungles of Peru, even if it means crossing a mountain with a ship – which is exactly what both the hero of the story, and Herzog himself, succeeded in doing while taking four years to complete his film. A self-portrait, if ever there was, of the weird and wonderful Mr. Herzog, *Fitzcaraldo* is enchanting with its glowing, haunting background of Peru's rivers and mountains and forests.

Finally, in another obsessional effort, this one for producer Francis Ford Coppola, Wim Wenders was able to complete *Hammett*, a film noir in colour, a strange interweaving of events in Dashiell Hammett's real life with his fantasy creations, replete with *Maltese Falcon* in-jokes and a profoundly self-conscious sense of social and philosophical malaise. (Whew.)

Eastern Europe: Unquestionably the most daring political film shown at Cannes, the Hungarian Makk's *Another Look*, was also one of the finest. The sensitive treatment of a love affair between two women serves as the pretext for a stinging condemnation of the Hungarian regime – but done with delicacy, nuance, understanding, and the aesthetic richness that characterizes so much of the Hungarian cinema. Another political parable, *Moonlighting*, by Poland's Jerzy Skolimovsky, and shot in England during Poland's recent agony, centres on those events through the improbable activities of "illegal" Polish carpenters in London. At once funny, tough, and tragic, *Moonlighting* signals a minor break-through by bringing a much-needed simplicity to Skolimovsky's work, complementing his habitual Kafkaesque humour, his sardonic sense of absurdity and despair.

Australia: The Australian story goes on, still serving as a marvelous model for what Canada could be. Mind you, the Australians can match Canadians any time when it comes to putting themselves down. Predictably, therefore, the advance reports from Aussie-land were anything but promising. After all, the recently implemented tax write-offs were too good to be true (150% over two years, plus profits up to one-half of the investment!), and everyone knows what happened to Canada and its write-off-created boom.

True, there was no Aussie film in the official selection – thanks to the Festival's time-honoured and shameless favouring of France (understandable), Italy (gross), the U.S., and, to a lesser extent, Britain. But the bad news ends there. The Aussies produced some 30 features last year, about 20 of which they brought to the Cannes Market. This did not include their most popular film, *The Man from Snowy River* – an epic created from Banjo Paterson's classic boy's poem (starring Jack Thompson and Kirk Douglas), which is breaking box office records Down Under – nor

imitations of what is worst in the American cinema, or embarrassing exploitation ventures.

Fortunately, since American distributors have decided that Aussie films can make money, many of these movies are finding, or will find, their way on to Canadian screens (which is good news for us, and good \$\$ for the Australians). But what an irony! Australia's Mike Harris, head of marketing for their films in North America, is looking for ways to unlock Canada from the U.S., so that he can deal directly with Canadian distributors, instead of through American! (Need we say more?).

The Nordic Countries: Finland, not enamoured of being included under the banner of "Scandinavia", prefers "Nordic" to cover itself and Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Iceland. The Nordics, then, try to work together... and together means about 20 million people in all. Dividing that figure into five independent countries points up how small each population – and home market – really is. And yet their governments insist on giving home feature film pro-

fact, though, is that few may find their way onto our screens, for the usual reasons. Unlike the Australians, the Nordics have a real language barrier; and, given the appalling North American cultural narrow-mindedness (reflected in the economics of distribution), the results are predictable. The Nordics, however, go on making good movies, culturally valid, interesting and entertaining. And they continue in their efforts to break through onto the international scene, to break through, that is, the strangle-hold of American-dominated world film distribution.

The U.S. of A.: There is little need here to discuss Costa-Gavras' zappy *Missing* (grand prix plus best actor for Jack Lemmon) and Alan Parker's excellent, but generally underrated, *Shoot the Moon*. The U.S. goes on supplying the world with a big share of its best films, and this year the pattern was no different. What was significant at Cannes '82, however, was the closing event. As previously indicated, there had been no extraordinary film in evidence this year, no event that generated real Festival excitement. Nothing of that sort, that is, except E.T. Shown out of competition on the last day, Steven Spielberg's delightful sci-fi fairy tale had everyone – including jaundiced critics – laughing and crying and cheering. Seemingly effortless, and witty, intelligent, ironic, with marvelous gadgets and effects, Spielberg's film is anchored solidly in hip youngster Middle-American suburbia, clichés and jargon included. And yet he succeeds in investing a very commercial movie with an in-felt sense of poetry, wonder, idealism, hope, profoundly rooted in the Judaeo-Christian ethic and mythology. A remarkable feat indeed – and go and see it again with your kids: the popular, mass-audience cinema at its best.



anything by its two top directors, Peter Weir and Bruce Beresford (his latest, *Puberty Blues*, is all but completed).

I was lucky enough to see eight of their Cannes offerings; and once again the sheer quality, craftsmanship, and intelligence are striking. No filmic masterpiece in the lot, to be sure; but quality, yes, and a sense of their own lives, their country, the human heart, "little things" like that. By now the world has cottoned on to Australian film, to Australia's own blend of excellence and fun.

Most of the films centre on contemporary issues – partially in response to Australian complaints that they were seeing too much "historical stuff". The one exception that I saw: *We of the Never Never*, a breath-takingly photographed story of the outback. Add to the honourable list *Winter of Our Dreams*, Gillian Armstrong's *Starstruck*, *Fighting Back*, *The Killing of Angel Street*, *Heat Wave*, *Monkey Grip*, *Squizzy Taylor*... the skills are manifest, the films reflect relevant contemporary situations, they are entertaining, they face up to where most people live... and most are not silly

duction a priority status, for cultural reasons. So the Nordics came to Cannes with no less than 30 features, six of which I saw in the Market.

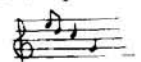
Ingmar Bergman is back in Sweden for keeps, just finishing his "last" movie (don't bet on "last"), the eagerly awaited *Fanny and Alexander*, "the most ambitious and expensive Scandinavian film ever." But there were some quite remarkable Swedish films on display nonetheless, including Vilgot Sjöman's *Am Blushing* and especially Hans Alfredson's *The Simple-Minded Murderer* – complete with Wagnerian angles and operatic (again!) outbursts. Finland's epic war (1939-44) film, *Sign of the Beast*, witnesses to that country's impressive ability, as does Vibeke Lokkeberg's *Betrayal* (also set just after the war) for the Norwegian film industry. The Danes, not to be outshone, presented Henning Carlsen's *Your Money or Your Life*, a fine contemporary study; and above all a remarkable, sensitive story of early teens in school, Nils Malmros' *The Tree of Knowledge*.

Six films seen, and all six of them excellent each its own way – the sad

So the Festival ended on a high, futuristic note, a fitting one, really, for an extraordinary yearly event that switches gears for next year's new locale. Switching gears for certain, as last decade's sci-fi is this year's and next's technology: new production and new exhibiting technology, erasing the distinction between "old" movies and "old" T.V. with the two-thousand line home screens ready to mesmerize us with their super video-cassettes, Pay T.V. – the works... Prodigious change is already upon us, the signs of which were in evidence all through Cannes.

Canada's next-to-no-show performance at this Festival may or may not have been of significance, but we are all part of what is going on, as a matter of fact we are seen as the world's leader in applied communications technology. Hardware, si! Software? Right now the Canadian fate is being decided, the potential is enormous, in either direction: our national production has a chance of blossoming as never before, or we can become a country with all the gadgets, all the windows, but with nothing to say about ourselves. And the world is watching us, trying to learn from our experience.

In that sense, at least, the Cannes Film Festival and similar events are major indicators. One hopes that next year...



... seems we've heard that song before, but perhaps never with such urgency.