

SHOOT ALBERTA

by Linda Kupecek

Members of the Alberta motion picture industry congregated at the Four Seasons Hotel in Calgary March 5 for the 1983 AMPIA Awards. The tone of the affair was contralto rather than coloratura, an echo of the quiet year experienced by most Alberta filmmakers. (For list of awards, see following page.)

Traditionally, the AMPIA Awards alternate between Edmonton and Calgary. Every year, half the Alberta industry pile their finery, tuxes, tails and velvet into cars or onto the Pacific Western Airbus and migrate to the host city. This year, a poor turnout was anticipated due to economic woes and the resulting slow-down in sponsored film. But an energetic blitz by an awards committee headed by Nancy Peterson and Myrle Christensen, donations by a number of corporate sponsors, and a stylish poster by artist Grant Leier generated interest and support. Surprisingly, there were over 75 entries, and more than 250 people attended the event. In addition, Mayor Ralph Klein declared the week before the Awards, Salute to the Alberta Motion Picture Industry Week.

The 1983 Jury were: David Scorgie, Alberta Culture (Chairman); Marie Hoy, distributor, Cori and Orient; Richard Nielsen, producer, Primedia Ltd.; Iolande Rossignol, producer, director, writer and critic.

Although there were grumbles that the affair lacked excitement (no cartwheels, brawls, punch-ups, or ecstasies of hysterical thanks), others were grateful that the awards presentation (energetically hosted by Fred Keating) were mercifully brief. "Let's face it. We know these aren't exactly the Academy Awards," commented one participant philosophically. "This is the Alberta commu-

nity honoring its achievements."

The most dramatic moment came, not at the Awards, but at the Judges' Brunch the following day, when producer-director John Juliani announced he would return the Best Entertainment Feature Award presented to *Latitude 55*. His *Latitude 55* was the only entry in its category, making the award, in his opinion, inappropriate, and, also, that the jury excluded *Latitude 55* from competition in the craft categories.

Jury chairman David Scorgie commented, in hindsight, "We might have foreseen that it might have been better to have given a special jury award to the film instead," adding that the jury had sincere admiration for the film and wanted to recognize its worth.

Syd Sniderman, Canadian sales manager of Roke Distributors (based in Calgary) reports that the company has expanded since its origins as a small regional distributor.

"I used to buy rights for only western Canada, and the producers would make their own deal in eastern Canada," says Sniderman. "But with the advent of more products for distribution, we started to take on all Canadian rights. We had to make a decision to expand to the east, which meant either opening offices in eastern Canada, or making a distribution arrangement with an existing distributor in eastern Canada."

Roke teamed with Citadel Films in 1981. And, since then, a deal which enables the two companies to share offices across the country has proven

beneficial. Citadel distributes Roke product in eastern Canada, eliminating the need for expensive duplication of branches.

"Together, Roke and Citadel are the only Canadian distributors who are represented in every film exchange centre in Canada," says Sniderman. "In combination, we are the largest independent Canadian distributor."

Roke (senior partners are Hector Ross and Frank Kettner) deals with independents, not majors, and "commercially acceptable" exploitation films, not art films or foreign films.

"We go after the product that in most cases is not handled by the majors, and we try to make a buck out of it," says Sniderman. His pet peeve is "the number of Canadians who think that, as a Canadian film distributor, we don't want to handle Canadian product." Not so, he says... but the bottom line is commercial viability. And salesmanship helps, too. "It hurts so much when a producer or company doesn't back up a picture with the appropriate advertising tools."

Meanwhile, Roke released

28 titles in 1982 (a giant step from its humble beginnings of 4-5 a year) and anticipates releasing 25-30 a year in '83 and '84. Sniderman watches the results of his films' openings avidly. A typical recent weekend had *Spring Fever* opening in Calgary and Edmonton, *One Dark Night* in multi-theatres in Ontario and *They Call Me Bruce* in Winnipeg. Titles can range from *Caligula* to *The Last Unicorn* (a Lord Grade production).

"Every time I release a new title, it's a totally new experience," says Sniderman.

TORONTO - VTR Productions Ltd. of Toronto has announced that as of Feb. 25, 1983, the company will no longer be transferring video tape to film. VTR general sales manager Bill Burak said the company decided to drop the service because the demand was too small. The company referred its clients to the video department of the National Film Board of Canada's Montreal office, whose labs still transfer tape to film.

Jewison and Columbia

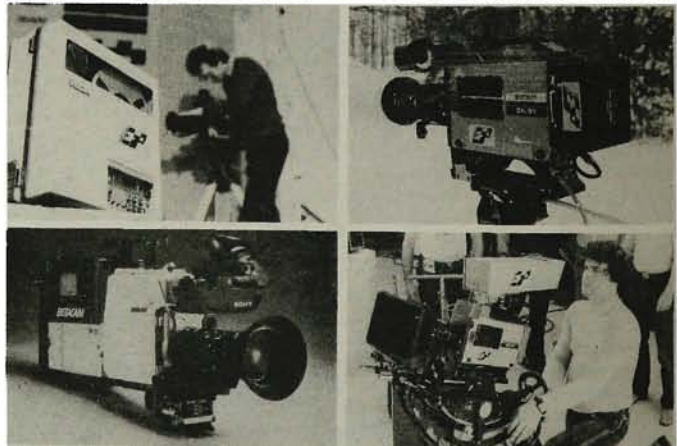
TORONTO - Columbia Pictures has signed a seven-picture deal with Canadian producer-director Norman Jewison.

Columbia president Guy McElwaine announced the deal Mar. 8 in Toronto.

Three of the seven films will be shot in Canada and the three projects are expected to have a combined budget of \$30 million. Jewison will direct one of the three Canadian films and two of the four American projects. He is currently producing *The Iceman* with Patrick Palmer in Vancouver for Universal.

The deal is the second signed by Columbia with a Canadian producer-director in the last nine months. Last August, the studio signed Ivan Reitman to develop and produce a number of projects in Canada. Columbia has a negative pick-up deal on the 3-D adventure film *The Space Hunter* produced by Reitman last fall in British Columbia and Utah.

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