

# Notes From Cannes/73

by Kirwan Cox

The Cannes film festival is the most important marketplace in the world as everyone knows. It is also two weeks of boredom, excess, and film feast that can perhaps best be understood by statistics.

This year there were over 400 films screened including 22 in official competition; 8 in the critic's week; 43 in the director's fortnight; and the rest in the "market" which means anyplace the distributor can find a projector. There were 1500 journalists, untold thousands of buyers and sellers from around the world, and a few locals watching and drinking and watching and sunning and watching.

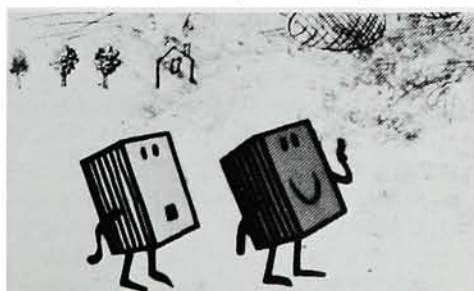
Seven short films were in competition and the grand prize was won by the National Film Board's "Balablok". This is a 7½ minute cartoon about prejudice and the human conflict that results. It was made by the Czech animator Bretislav Pojar, whom I believe has returned to Czechoslovakia.

The rest of Canada's entries did not fare as well. Gilles Carle's *La Mort d'un Bûcheron* was panned by the critics and received without enthusiasm by the audience. It is interesting that the film has been playing to capacity audiences in Montreal.

Claude Jutra's *Kamouraska* was given a special critic's invitation to the festival, and was screened out of competition. The reaction was generally ho-hum. Well-acted and well photographed, but otherwise too this or too that—seemed to be the critical consensus. Once again the reaction in Cannes was at odds with the box office in Québec.

In contrast, Denys Arcand's *Rejeanne Padovani* was an unqualified hit with the critics. This film looks at the corruption that goes into the building of an expressway in Québec (or anywhere else). Arcand was soon in constant demand for interviews. A political filmmaker had been discovered in Québec (and even the national film board had banned his work).

I was mystified by the reaction to Bill Fruet's *Wedding in White*, because



*Balablok*, winner of the Grand Prix for shorts.

there didn't seem to be any reaction. This film represented Canada at the Directors Fortnight, along with *Padovani*. Producer John Vidette said that this non-reaction indicated that English-Canadian films should perhaps not be at Cannes. He was not sure the festival was worthwhile for his film.

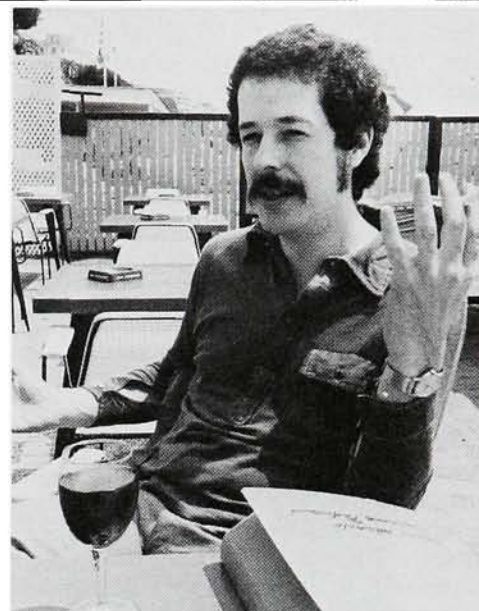
Don Shebib's *Get Back* was shown at the VOX- and producer Chalmers Adams felt Cannes was definitely worthwhile for his film. He also said the Vox was the most important service the government offered Canadian producers.

23 Canadian films were screened at the Vox, twice during the festival. It then turned into a commercial theatre showing *Last Tango in Paris* at night. This was the major marketplace for Canadian films and the big hit was Denis Héroux's *Quand c'est parti, c'est parti*. The Héroux film is despised by Québec critics. It is a comedy about a family driving to Vancouver without knowing English. Other interesting films shown at the Vox were David Acomba's *Slipstream*, about the music business and a freak disc jockey, and *O.K. Laliberté*, by Marcel Carrière. This last film is difficult to describe except that the hero has a ball point pen collection which he can't pawn. Harvey Hart's *The Pyx* was disappointing despite the strong production and some excellent scenes that seemed lost in the end.

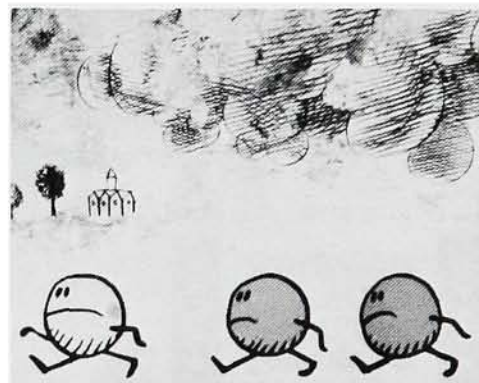
Canadian films are slowly building a solid reputation among knowledgeable film people, but only Carle's *La Vraie Nature de Bernadette* has been widely seen by the European public. One continuing problem at Cannes seems to be the fact that Canada has not yet produced an undeniable masterpiece to build around.

There were some masterpieces at the festival, and no two people will agree on which they were. After some reflection on the forty-odd films that I saw at Cannes, the following stand out: James Guercio's *Electra Glide in Blue* (U.S.); Claude Goretta's *L'invitation* (Switzerland); James B. Harris' *Some Call It Loving* (U.S.); Jean Eustache's *La Maman et la Putain*; Wolper's *Visions of Eight* (the Olympic film with eight directors); and Marco Ferreri's *La Grande Bouffe*.

I think the American films are undeniably strong in what they have always had going for them—great production values lotsa action, and strong narrative style. The really great experiments—like Jean Eustache's film—



Denys Arcand in Cannes



happening elsewhere.

Getting back to numbers, there were over 120 Canadians at Cannes in various guises. It seemed like half this number could be found any night in a small bar called the "Petit Carlton". Imagine the Bistro in Montreal on a hot night full of people from Ottawa. The official Canadian effort was very efficient and well organized, under Jean Lefebvre and Robert Desjardins from the Secretary of State's office.

I think the final comment on Canadian participation at Cannes came from a South African buyer who was surprised to find out that Canadian feature films existed. He explained that the reason for his surprise was the fact he had recently visited Hamilton, Ontario to see a friend—a doctor. He asked his friend if there were any Canadian movies and was simply told no—none. Do we now have to bring that doctor to Cannes, or bring Cannes to Canada?

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Marc Gervais, Barbara Martineau and A. Ibrányi-Kiss will report in depth on Cannes/73 in the next issue of *Cinema Canada*.

photo: Henri Bresso

## Visual Arts and Film Organizations Receive \$201,330 in Canada Council Grants

Ottawa — Canada Council grants totalling \$201,330 to 15 visual arts and film organizations were made public here recently. Other grants will be announced later in the year.

For their 1973-74 activities the Confederation Art Gallery and Museum, Charlottetown, receives \$24,000, the Burnaby Art Gallery, Burnaby, B.C., \$13,000, and the Owens Art Gallery, Sackville, N.B., \$10,600. Grants of \$12,000 each are made to the Art Gallery of Windsor and the Saskatoon Gallery and Conservatory for their activities in 1973. Council grants to art galleries are largely made in support of activities which bring the work of living artists before the public.

Grants of \$18,000 each go to A Space, Toronto, and Vehicule Art, Montreal, both visual arts exhibition and experimentation centres, for their 1973-74 activities, and Plug-In, an art information/communication centre in Winnipeg, receives \$11,000 for its

activities in 1973. Open Studio, a Toronto print workshop, is awarded \$16,000 for its 1973-74 activities and Grand Western Canadian Screen Shop, which provides silk-screen printing facilities for Winnipeg artists, receives a grant of \$6,000.

A \$25,000 grant is made to Women and Film, Toronto, for film rental and publicity costs for a 10-day Toronto program of Canadian and international films, followed by 2 or 3 day screenings and seminars to be presented in 18 cities across Canada. The Independent Filmmakers Cooperative, Montreal, receives \$9,950 for its 1973-74 activities in the promotion and distribution of Canadian films.

Graff, centre de conception graphique, Montreal, receives \$12,000 for its 1973 activities and the Atelier de gravure de Québec, Quebec city, \$8,780 for its activities in 1972-73. Both workshops provide basic equipment for the use of graphic artists. A grant of \$5,000 is awarded to Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, for a community artist-in-residence.



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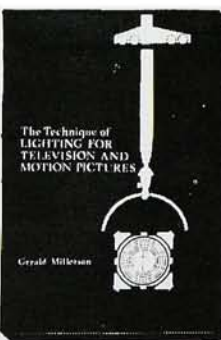
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## Canada: Five Portraits aired by CTV

by Marie Dawson

That proud flush of nationalism invigorating Canada has inspired a whole flurry of plays and films. Now CTV has come up with a series of specials—**Canada: Five Portraits**. The network has obviously got the right idea believing that uniquely exciting and contemporary documentaries will inevitably contribute to Canadian understanding.

Called simply **The Mountains**, the first episode was aired recently. Written by George Ryga and produced by Jerry Lawton it evokes the awesome beauty of mountains and the sensitive character of the people they dominate. Besides their spectacular panorama — lashing north to south through Western Canada — the mountains are the source of rivers, they provide irrigation and hydro, generate a rain forests that have made B.C. one of the world's major suppliers of lumber and pulp, and expose ore bodies for exploitation.

Written by Don Cameron and produced by Ron Kelly, **The Atlantic** discusses the influence of this vast rugged coast. Here there is a fierce loyalty to the land because the land is civilized and good to live on. There is the stubborn strength of character of those who turn to the sea for livelihood; there is comradeship; a more proper awareness of being in contact with the human conditions; and a spirited contentment.

Writer Barry Callaghan and producer Don Owen worked together on **The St. Lawrence**, not the biggest river in North America but physically probably the most important. The film follows the course of the river and its effect on those who live on its banks.

Then there is **The Prairies**, written and produced by Jon Boynton. From the very beginning their character has been a lonely one with modest farm houses squatting dejectedly in flat landscape. Ironically this has produced the prairie "soul" that gem of hospitality born from an appreciation of the qualities and company of others. And the people reared in isolation are strong and individualistic.

Finally comes **The Shield**, a fitting prologue, written by James McLean and produced by Ron Kelly. In one sense the presence of this great dominating surge of land which eclipses more than half of Canada, is invisible. Unlike a mountain range or a central river most people are ignorant about its source or finish. But it is still there...dominating.

**Canada: Five Portraits** is a production of CTV News. Executive Producer was Jerry Lawton.



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