

REVERB

Agreeing to Disagree

I feel I must respond to Andrew Dowler's article on the Toronto Super 8 Festival (August 1979, Number 57). His description of the Funnel Experimental Film Theatre as the "loyal opposition" to the Festival is a distortion. Our intention, as a co-operative group comprised mainly of experimental filmmakers, is to show and make experimental films — a serious artistic endeavour. Our members work in Super 8 and 16mm film as well as in media other than film. If we have an interest in Super 8, it is as a means of democratizing a medium and making it more accessible to the artist. This was what I had envisioned as one of the founders of the Festival in 1976. I was naturally chagrined when, after its initial successful year as a project of the Ontario College of Art, it was legally incorporated without my knowledge. (I had never intended to let the Festival "die" as the article implies, and I have no recollection of "walking away in a fit of temper" as your writer suggests.)

Some time later I began the Funnel and now our group is actively involved in doing what I had hoped to do with the Festival — promoting the use of film as a medium for serious artistic investigation. Now entering its second year as an incorporated organization, the Funnel has operated until now solely on the volunteer labour of its dedicated members. None of them are interested, nor have time for, anything so trivial as being a thorn in the side of the organizers of the Super 8 Festival. One of our members, Patrick Jenkins, won a prize of \$500 at the Festival for his experimental film *Fluster*. We were all very pleased for him. Those members who submitted films and those who did not, made their own decisions regarding the matter. There was never any thought of a boycott, since there never seemed to be any reason for one.

I am sure that the organizers of the Festival are doing an admirable job of running the Festival according to their vision. That it is not my personal view is of no consequence to me. I feel that it is far better to agree to disagree than to engage in "backstabbing" as I have been accused of doing. Canadian culture can only benefit from a greater diversity of views. It is the

suggestion that we should all agree which is harmful.

Ross McLaren
President

Back to the Rank and File

In response to Gerald Pratley's comments on my article *Canada's Theatrical Wars*, I'm very happy Gerald has taken the time to add his viewpoint and information to the public record. I hope others with knowledge or experience of the period will follow suit.

Naturally, anything I have written about the history of the Canadian film industry comes from research into written sources such as correspondence or the trade press. These sources only tell part of the story which must also include memory and experience of the participants.

As for the specific points Gerald raised, in some cases I'm not sure whether he or I am right. In other cases it is a matter of opinion, or my writing was unclear. Whether footnoted or not, every statement of fact in the article has a source — usually the *Canadian Film Weekly*, *Canadian Moving Picture Digest*, or the Censor Board's files and Premier Frost's correspondence in the Ontario Archives.

Articles in the trade press, though often inaccurate, did report that Rank suspended his feature film plans in Canada because the Ad Valorem tax would be applied to these films. Similarly, they contained reference to Rank Studios in South Africa and Australia. How many people know Rank had a studio in Toronto?

Of course, Rank continued to make films after this period, but in the late forties it looked like he might actually challenge Hollywood's supremacy to become a full-fledged "major" in both quantity and quality of production. This effort collapsed for a number of reasons including a push from Hollywood (which signed his biggest stars and organized pickets at U.S. theatres showing Rank films among other things).

I believe Rank's retrenchment in England combined with Lawson's death and the spectre of television ended Odeon's expansion in Canada. While Odeon was a rival of Famous in many aspects of its

business, I pointed out in this article that Famous and Odeon formed a booking pool to eliminate some of the more deleterious aspects of serious competition. From discussions with participants, I believe this pool continued to operate into the fifties and sixties.

My observation that Brockington did not have Lawson's energy was not intended as a personal criticism since I describe Brockington as "eminent." I was wrong to imply a comparison of personal energy. I should have said Brockington didn't appear to apply his energy to Odeon's expansion as forcefully as Lawson did since Lawson's correspondence with Premier Frost indicates a more aggressive approach to Odeon's future than Brockington's letters.

A quota would not have destroyed Odeon, of course, but I know Chris Salmon was unhappy at being "pressured" into the voluntary quota agreement which was evident from Odeon's failure to meet the "voluntary quota." From press reports at the time, I certainly got the impression that one of the reasons Rank sold Odeon was the more difficult regulatory climate that the "voluntary quota" seemed to foreshadow. Odeon's P.R. man, Charles Mason, did nothing to dispel this impression at public meetings I attended.

One final piece of historical information that I discovered while poring over the documentation from this period: one of the very few people to speak out forcefully at this time in favour of an indigenous Canadian production industry and against a branch-plant industry was Gerald Pratley.

Kirwan Cox

Erratum

Apologies to writer, Andrew Dowler — and our readers — for our error in issue No. 58. In *The Brood*, p. 33, col. 3, line 4, "dying" should have read "denying," as follows:

"Her comments — that she *never could* find out why Nola kept waking up cut and bruised — show that twenty years later, she's still denying." Ed.