

# INTRODUCING...

## doubling their chances

*barry pearson and peter rowe*

What does a slight, dark-haired, mustached prairie boy have in common with a tall, fair-haired, clean shaven, city kid? Appearances aside, Barry Pearson and Peter Rowe make one fabulous filmmaking team.

This pair is involved in their third shared project, **Spirit of Adventure**, an historical, dramatic series which will be aired on CBC some time next year. If past success is any indication of the future, this new venture is promising. Two previous Pearson-Rowe collaborations — **Horse Latitudes** and **If Wishes were Horses** — collected five awards between them at the 1977 Yorkton International Film Festival.

**Spirit of Adventure** marks the first time the pair have formed an actual partnership. Rowe's production company, Rosebud Films Ltd., has drawn up an arrangement to work with Pearson. Both partners have assumed the roles of writer and producer, while Pearson is content to leave the directing aspect in Rowe's capable hands.

They first joined forces in 1975, when Pearson was a story editor at CBC and Rowe, an independent producer, approached the network with a script for **Horse Latitudes**. Barry was assigned to help him develop the story for television. "We really had fun working together," Pearson recalls, attributing their ability to work so well in tandem to similar "all around" backgrounds. Both have experience in acting, producing and writing for radio, television and film. Both have accumulated impressive Canadian film and television credits — a remarkable feat in this highly competitive (and until recently, stagnant) field.

Yet, their origins differ notably. Barry Pearson grew up in Nipawin, Saskatchewan. Lack of excitement in his prairie hometown directed him into poetry-writing, followed by attempts at short story composition. His early writing endeavors won him little recognition during high school. "The nearest town

was 100 miles away. Recognition didn't belong in the context of an isolated small town," he explains.

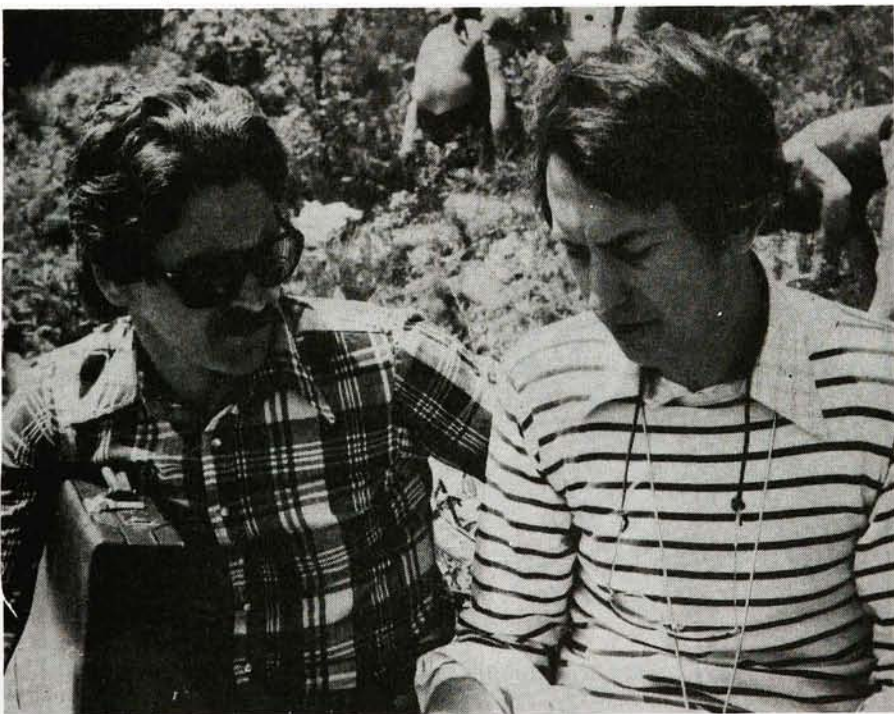
The tables turned when Pearson enrolled in the dramatic program at the University of Saskatchewan. In addition to the core curriculum of acting, he persuaded his professor to teach the mechanics of script writing and producing. Several of his plays were sold to CBK radio, Regina, and magazines were publishing his articles. Still, he remembers, "My income was nothing that I could support myself with."

When Toronto-born, Peter Rowe, enrolled at McMaster University in 1966 his interests were fluctuating between writing and philosophy. Together with John Hofsess and Ivan Reitman, he established the McMaster Film Board. Their specialty — underground movies

— would have pleased Andy Warhol, but they earned an X rating from the Toronto morality squad. Consequently, the university administration stilled his camera and Rowe left school to put his talents to active use.

Although the foundations were laid in university, it was not until Rowe and Pearson met up with their "great influences" that their careers began to flourish. In Rowe's case, it was an apprenticeship with Allan King; in Pearson's it was teaming up with contemporary, Les Rose, at The University of Saskatchewan.

Their friendship became a writing partnership. Rose, who has directed **Title Shot**, **Hog Wild**, and CBC's **For the Record**, claims, "Barry is really responsible for any success that I have had. He got me interested in reading instead of



It's a serious business. Here, Barry Pearson and Peter Rowe discuss **Spirit of Adventure** in a spirit of co-operation (photo: Jonathon Kay)



playing football all the time. He is one of the biggest influences in my life, not just professionally but personally too."

Pearson and Rose moved to Toronto where they briefly worked together in the drama department of CBC. However, opportunity didn't knock until they took a five page script outline to Ron Weyman, head of the network's film drama department at that time. Weyman was enthusiastic. The outline became a script for the Sunday at Nine series, **Rodeo Rider**. Close on the heels of **Rider** was McLeish's **Wild Horses**, another program for the same series, followed by the script for **Paperback Hero**, which Pearson credits with "lifting me out of the ranks of the invisible."

After a brief stint as a cameraman for the CBC, Peter Rowe caught the eye of Canadian filmmaker Allan King. "He showed me a film he had made, called **Buffalo Airport** and I hired him," King recalled. "Peter spent about two years working for me as assistant editor, director and cameraman. He is very bright, very talented. I always enjoyed working with him." King is thrilled with Rowe's success. "He knows the filmmaking business thoroughly. **Horse Latitudes** was a difficult piece to do but Peter did it brilliantly."

From there, Rowe left to make **Neon Palace**, a pre-American Graffiti resurrection of the 60s. The movie was critically acclaimed and Rowe won Best New Director at the 1970 Canadian Film Awards. However, the film's meagre grosses were not very encouraging. Rowe believes, "This freewheeling exercise would probably do very well if it was released today. It was quite avant-garde and the distributors didn't know what to do with it."

Unembittered by this experience, Rowe reemerged with **A Big Change From High School, Boy!** for OECA. Several CBC productions, including **Backlot Canadiana**, **Susan**, and **Haiti** earned him an American Film Festival award and the Columbus Film Festival Bronze Chris Award. His winning streak continued with **Horse Latitudes**, where he first worked with Barry Pearson.

Although **Paperback Hero** made Pearson a success within his own profession, he was discontent. "The fate of a writer is that you never have anything to

do with the rest of the production. I woke up one morning and decided I would change all that by becoming a producer." Capitalizing on his technical background from university, he co-produced **Crossbar** for the CBC and **Plague**, a low budget science fiction thriller.

In their **Spirit of Adventure** series, Barry Pearson and Peter Rowe are faithfully recreating little known events of Canadian history. Each episode is budgeted at \$100,000 and will feature a well known Canadian performer. (Céline Lomez is starring in the first, and Raymond Cloutier of **Riel** fame is in the second.) Two programs were slated for production last summer; another 12 episodes will be filmed intermittently over the next two years. Judging by CBC's hunger for quality Canadian entertainment, and the winning combination of Pearson and Rowe, this filmmaking duo seems likely to continue its successful partnership for quite some time.

Ellen Bott

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## ditching her toeshoes for stardom ann ditchburn

At twenty-nine, Ann Ditchburn is no stranger to the limelight. She has danced with the National Ballet of Canada for twelve years. She has choreographed ballets which are produced around the world to popular and critical acclaim. She has starred in a feature film. And when her professional accomplishments don't get her into the news, her outspoken comments, cool good looks and outrageous dress do.

Most recently she made headlines when she resigned from the National Ballet and publicly deplored the state of the Company. But she didn't resign because of problems with the ballet. Ann Ditchburn has given up her successful ballet career to become a film actress.

"I left the National Ballet because I want to pursue a film career. I will continue to freelance choreograph for awhile, but I feel like I can spend my time in better ways right now. I don't feel like my life is going anywhere fast enough, and I feel like something could be done about that.

"I've discovered incredible parallels between me as a choreographer and me

as an actress. My dancing and my choreography have always been emotionally motivated. In other words, acting-dancing is what I've done. Because of the way I choreograph, I found an immediate sort of home in acting.

"Film acting is about physicality. Physicality is very important because it's very important that the energy be there on the celluloid. And the energy has to be there within the performer. I have developed incredible respect for film actors... I love it!"

Ann has already starred in John Avildsen's **Slow Dancing in the Big City**, which played to small houses and less-than-rave reviews. It was a shock, her introduction to the film business and the film art -- being thrust into a starring role, and being forced to carry the film in Canada: quite different from the familiar security of the National Ballet which she had known for the previous ten years.

But the discipline of ballet has taught her respect for the actors' craft, a craft which she now is working hard to perfect.

"Because I've trained as a dancer for