

Television awards to Academy if ACC and ACTRA able to resolve differences

TORONTO - The Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA) released the list of nominees for the 14th - and possibly last - annual Nellie awards, as the Academy of Canadian Cinema has announced plans to mount its own television awards ceremony starting in 1986.

Andra Sheffer, executive director of the Academy, told Cinema Canada that the Academy is in the process of broadening its membership base to include television. "It is a recognition of the fact that the industry is changing so much. The theatrical industry is slowing down. It would be foolish to ignore major productions going on out there," said Sheffer. She added that in its first two years of operation (the Academy was founded six years ago) the Academy had presented television awards. "We are returning to the mandate we took on in the beginning."

The Academy is negotiating with ACTRA about taking over the awards ceremony. ACTRA is holding back on two issues. The Academy wants non-Canadian performers to be eligible for awards. This is totally unacceptable to ACTRA.

A lesser issue is the future of the radio awards. The Academy would like ACTRA to continue the radio awards but on radio with highlights presented on TV for the television awards ceremony.

Alex Barris, ACTRA vice-president and chairman of the national awards committee, told Cinema Canada that ACTRA is in principle in favour of industry-wide awards. "We have indicated our willingness to take part," he said. "There are several stumbling blocks. Arthur Weinthal at CTV is not interested at all in radio awards. We are not prepared to dump radio to please CTV." Barris said ACTRA also doesn't totally "want to lose our identity. The Nellie should be retained."

The most contentious issue relates to eligibility of foreign actors. Barris said that "the Academy, more specifically CTV, wants foreign actors to be eligible. The ACTRA awards were established to celebrate Canadian talent. We do not want to lose that principle."

He pointed out that the Academy has itself been inconsistent on this with its Genie awards. "Over the last years they've gone back and forth

over that issue." Barris is not certain they've gone back and certain how the issue can be resolved. "We are by no means ready to abdicate until we know what we are abdicating for," he said. Barris thinks that the ACTRA awards will continue in 1986. He noted that Texaco Canada, who are sponsoring the 1985 show, have agreed to extend their sponsorship to 1986.

Meanwhile, the Academy is still working out the details of their expansion. Among other things it is considering amalgamating the television awards with the Genies.

Leading the Nellie nominees is CBC's ratings runaway *Chautauqua Girl* with three nominations: for best television program; best writer (Jeannine Locke, also the producer); and best actress (Janet Laine Green). Competing for best television program is *Balconville*, David Fennario's stageplay about working-class Montreal and *Tighten The Traces*, a portrayal of a cerebral palsy victim.

Hosting this year's ceremony are Joyce Davidson and Roger Abbott. Davidson recently hosted her own series, *Parenting*, on CBC-TV. Abbot is one of the founders of the Royal Canadian Air Farce. The ceremony, to be broadcast live on April 3 from the Congress Centre in Ottawa, is produced by CBC-TV Variety.

Vancouver filmmakers make first feature

TORONTO - Two young Vancouver filmmakers, Charles Wilkinson and Cal Shumiatcher, have taken a typically Canadian path to making *My Kind of Town*, their first feature film. Asked by the NFB Pacific region to produce a documentary on Chemainus, a town struggling to survive on Vancouver Island, they realized that the budget NFB allowed them had plenty of slack - enough to make a feature.

"We had a 15:1 ratio," revealed Wilkinson in an interview, "and we had the confidence about our documentary skills to know we didn't need that much. We decided to use the excess to make a drama." One of the things that made it feasible was that all the film was processed in Montreal. "By the time the rushes came in we had gone too far. John Taylor (NFB exec. producer) hopped on a seaplane to see us. He had mixed feelings. He was thrilled to see the dramatic footage but he was also concerned we honour our commitment to finish the documentary within the budget."

CFTA explores export initiative

TORONTO - Sam Jephcott, executive director of the Canadian Film and Television Association, has told Cinema Canada that the CFTA is co-ordinating a new export initiative.

In discussions with External Affairs and the department of Communications, the CFTA is trying to establish a market solely for Canadian product. Under the CFTA scheme, selected buyers will be flown in all-expenses-paid to view Canadian product. Jephcott noted that for such a scheme to work, all sectors of the production and distribution industry had to work together. Isme Bennie, CFTA vice-president in charge of distribution, told Cinema Canada that "we would have to

make sure the timing is right. And we have to make sure we have the product. We have to have enough for next year and the year after. The key will be sustaining the product and there will have to be a tremendous effort to make buyers feel welcome."

One sticking point in the plan may be the opposition of Montreal and Toronto film festival directors Serge Losique and Wayne Clarkson. Losique in particular feels that such an initiative will reduce the importance of the market at the Montreal International Film Festival. He has been urging CFTA officials to locate the initiative in Montreal concurrent with the World Film Festival. The CFTA is resisting the suggestion.

Vancouver (cont)

The documentary, *The Little Town That Did*, had been sponsored by Chemainus luminary Karl Schutz who mortgaged his house to put up \$60,000 for the film when the provincial government was slow in funding. Subsequently, he recouped his money when a delighted provincial government granted \$50,000 for the film. The remaining \$10,000 came from a CBC license fee.

The documentary and much of *My Kind of Town's* dramatic footage was shot in July, 1983.

It was a year, however, before Wilkinson and Shumiatcher could return to complete shooting on the feature. A polished script had to be developed and money found.

Initially, Telefilm rejected the project but when the filmmakers came up with letters of support from CBC regional, City-TV and the support of veteran editor Frank Irvine and cinematographer David Geddes as well as a recoupment position for Telefilm that assured them in the worst scenario a return of half their investment, Telefilm threw in \$80,000.

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