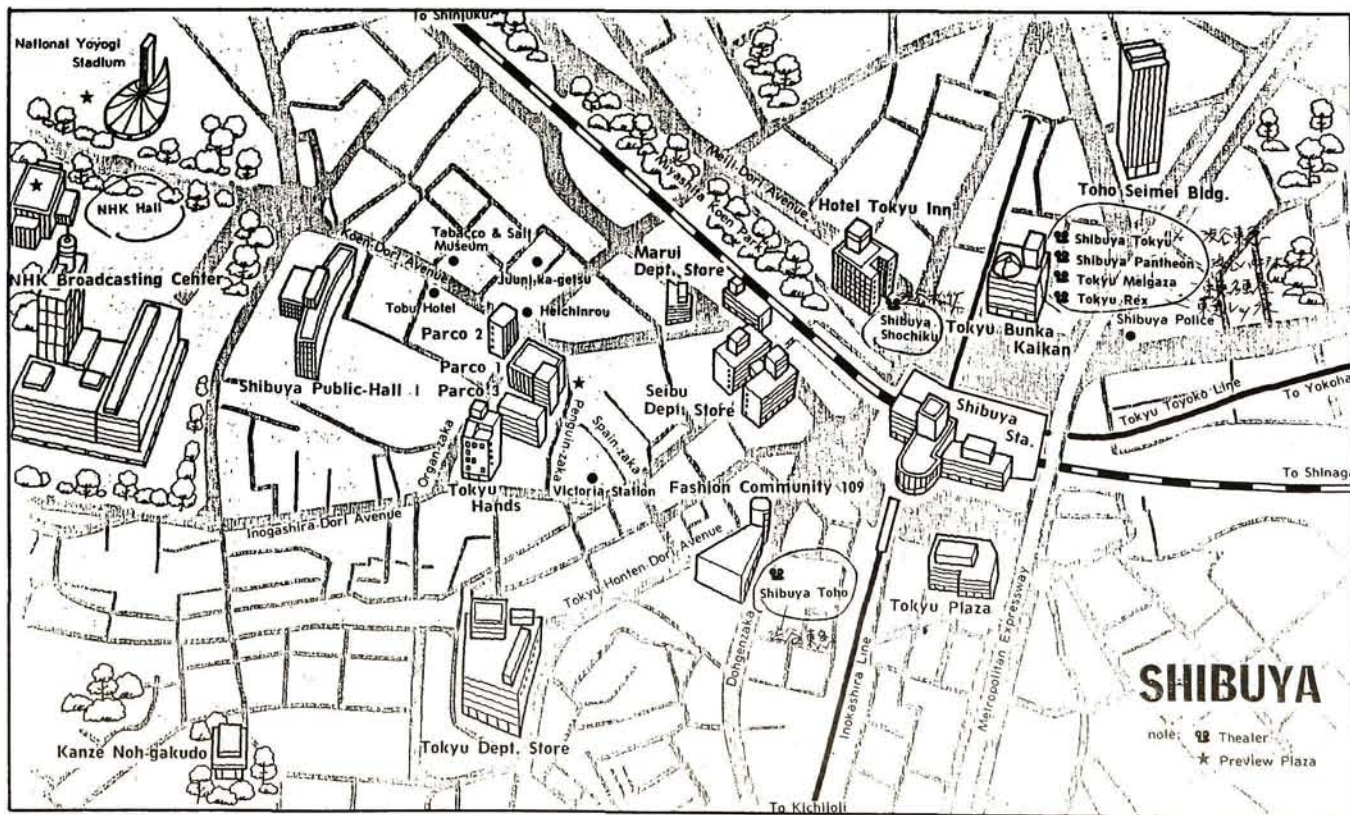


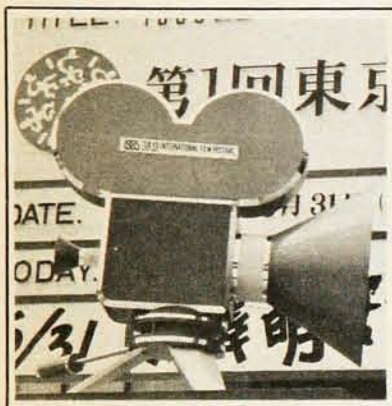
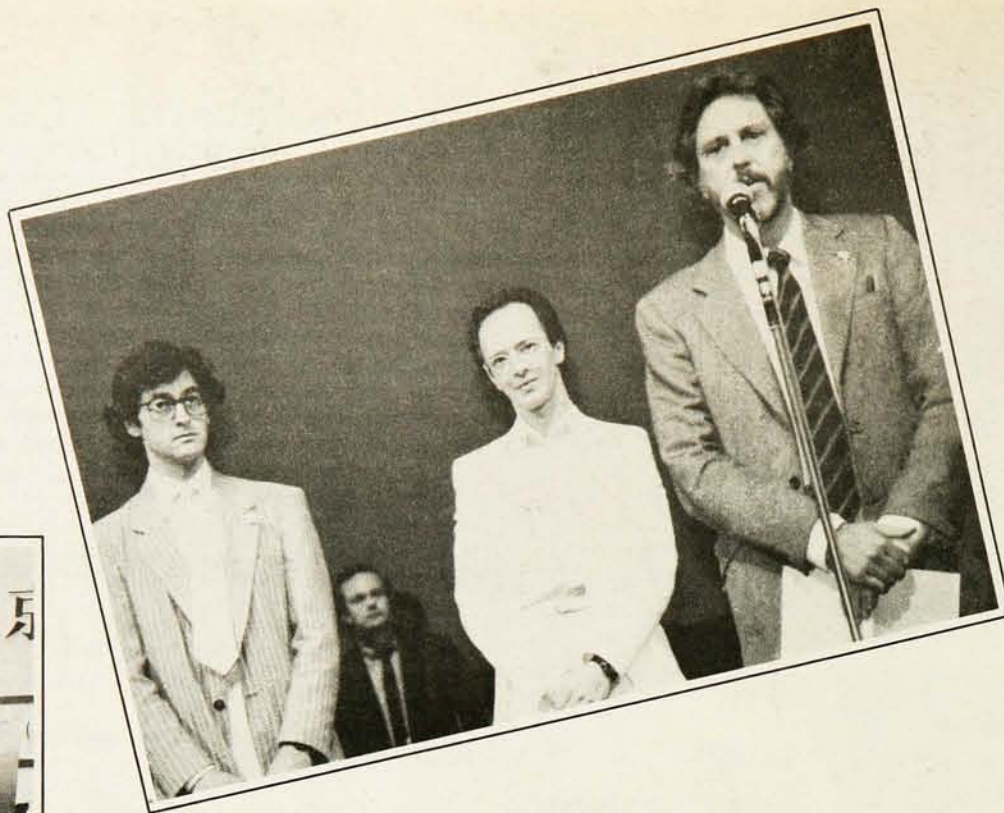


photos: Camille Gueymard

# The first Tokyo International Film Festival Canadian cinema's rising sun

by Camille Gueymard





From May 31 to June 9, Tokyo hosted its first international film festival.

For the occasion, Shibuya, the animated Tokyo neighbourhood where the event took place, adopted a festive air — its streets were decorated with banners, posters and television sets displaying trailers of the films. Videotext terminals could be found at major intersections and provided moviegoers with programme and schedule information on the eight movie halls, each within walking distance of the others, where the different sections of the festival were screened. As the 30th Asia-Pacific Film Festival and the 8th Pia Film Festival were also held concurrently, several department stores also joined in, presenting film-related events ranging from a Universal Studios festival to an Akira Kurosawa exhibition.

Organized around seven groupings of films, of which Young Cinema '85 was the only competitive section, the First Tokyo International Film Festival (TIFF) concluded with a flourish for Canada. Jean Beaudry and François Bouvier, whose film *Jacques et Novembre* was screened in the Young Cinema '85 section (and is now on to the Mannheim fest), were honoured with a special jury award. Presenting this award, British film producer David Puttnam, on behalf of the jury, saluted "two filmmakers whose brilliant movie helps span the bridge that exists between television and film." Puttnam expressed his hopes for the next film by the Québécois co-directors Beaudry and Bouvier, in a speech full of emotion, felt that the Young Cinema '85 section had not really been competition but rather a place where friendship and respect among filmmakers strongly developed.

Eight of 16 entries were in final competition for \$1.5 million (U.S.) in production financing towards a new project. The jury was composed of Raymond Chow, Istvan Szabo, Bernardo Bertolucci, Sonia Braga,



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• Quebec filmmakers Jean Beaudry and François Bouvier (*Jacques et Novembre*) get a special jury award from jury chairman, Britain's David Puttnam (top); Japanese cinema giant Akira Kurosawa signs an autograph for a fan (center); Quebec filmmaker Lea Pool (*La Femme de l'hôtel*) at the Akasaka Tokyo hotel

Adrienne Mancía, Shohei Imamura, and headed by Puttnam.

During the festival two films became ineligible: Nanni Moretti's *Bianca* from Italy (the print had no English subtitles) and Neil Jordan's *Company of Wolves* from Ireland (for winning an award at another festival and therefore no longer meeting the rules of TIFF). The films screened represented a wide range of production budgets and genres, from science-fiction to social dramas and comedies. The jury unanimously agreed on two special jury awards (one to *Jacques et Novembre*) and the \$1.5 million prize was divided among three participants.

In a moment of genuine internationalism, David Puttnam spoke of young cinema as essential to world film-culture. He underlined the unique nature of the Tokyo fest's Young Cinema competition since it will allow the recipients of the \$1.5 million prize to produce their next film without "interference" from investors or other authorities. Speaking for the jury, Puttnam felt Young Cinema '85 was "encouraging for the future of cinema around the world," and expressed his gratitude to Shiro Sasaki, director of the competition, who had travelled around the world to select the films, adding that it was Sasaki's love of cinema which really marked the "mood" of the competition.

The second special jury award was presented to Hector Babenco from Brazil (whose previous film *Pixote* distinguished itself the world over), for his extraordinary achievement on *The Kiss of the Spider Woman*. The director's attempt to remove all barriers, be they sexual or political, was particularly praised by the jury. Babenco in turn thanked the Japanese audience for their fantastic reception of a film that "literally comes from the other side of the world."

Needless to say, the suspense built up as the awarding of the money prizes approached. Addressing the audience, Bernardo Bertolucci spoke of his reservations at creating yet another jury award. However, he said that, after six hours of deliberation by the jury and after he personally had gone to Kamakura to visit the grave of one of Japan's most representative film directors, he felt there was no doubt there should be an Ozu Memorial award.

On behalf of the jury, Shohei Imamura presented the Ozu bronze statue to Ali Özgentürk from Turkey for his film *At* (English title: *The Horse*). Özgentürk, in his acceptance speech, said that the Festival had given him an incredible sense of film's power to present other countries' cultural ways. He added that before receiving the Ozu award he was still a "young" cinema director but now felt he had become an "old" director.

The two major festival prizes went to Hungary and Japan. *Time Stands Still* director Péter Gothár received \$500,000 for the financing of his next project. Gothár expressed his gratitude to the hospitality of the Tokyoites and Young Cinema '85 staff. Shinji Somai, director of *Typhoon Club*, was simply overwhelmed when he heard that he was the recipient of the \$750,000 prize and the Governor of Tokyo award (in the form of the statue of a *kirin*, a mythical animal.) During the Festival, he confessed he had spent most of his time sleeping in his hotel room, unable to afford to to out. This recognition and encouragement, Somai added, would allow him to work again, to live again. "I feel out of this world!"

*Typhoon Club*, although it may seem disconcerting at first, becomes captivating as the film's narrative structure reveals itself. Typhoons are common in Japan and they bring with them death and chaos.

Here, the passage of a typhoon metaphorically echoes the emotional changes undergone by a group of school kids entering adolescence. At the climax of the storm, when the youth find themselves in the eye of the typhoon — where it suddenly becomes still and quiet — they perform a dance which seems to remove them from social and sexual pressure. With the experience of chaos, of an "interior typhoon," the children are finally able to come at peace with themselves and give meaning to their lives.

The films screened in the Young Cinema '85 competition were selected from 500 entries from over 40 countries. Award-winners were in competition against such films as Michael Radford's *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* (U.K.); Joel Coen's *Blood Simple* (U.S.A.); Yim Ho's *Homecoming* (Hong Kong); Marisa Silver's *Old Enough* (U.S.A.); Victor Prohorov's *Seraphim Polubes and Other Inhabitants of Earth* (U.S.S.R.); Doris Dorric's *Straight Through The Heart* (West Germany); Uri Barbash's *Beyond The Walls* (Israel); Jean-Pierre Limosin's *Faux-Fuyants* (France); and Michael Hoffman's *Restless Natives* (U.K.).

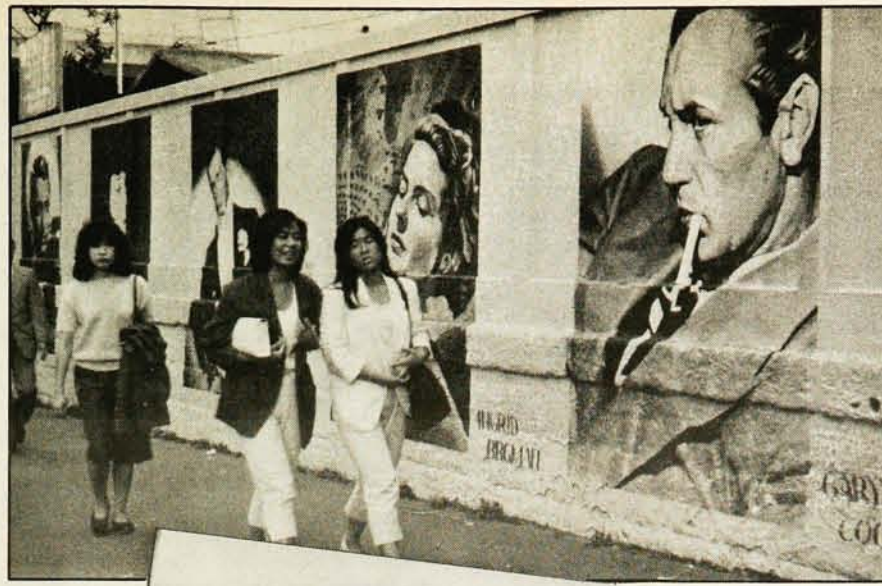
Of the 136 films screened, the "known" co-existed with the "unknown." The main section was the Festival of Festivals which presented award-winning films out of competition, *Atlantic City* and *Diary for My Children* among others. This category also comprised films that recently attracted a lot of critical attention such as *Paris, Texas* and *Witness*. Kurosawa's latest film, *Ran*, opened the festival while *The Burmese Harp* by director Ichikawa concluded the event. The majority of films shown within the Festival of Festivals were introduced by the director or a major actor with the help of Japanese interpreters. The films were all in their original version with Japanese subtitles with the exception of *Ran* and *The Burmese Harp* which had English subtitles to the general satisfaction of the foreign press. (The Fripesci jury chose *Ran* as the winner of its prize at the Tokyo Festival.)

The TIFF not only opened a window upon numerous national cinemas but also reflected Japan's own film history. The Japanese Films of Yesterday and Today section grouped films according to various themes such as "Faces of Japanese Families," "Kings of Comedy" and "Women in Trouble." This last section was certainly a treat for the fans of Japanese cinema. All films were in their original versions with English subtitles, as the audience was consistently composed of approximately 10% non-Japanese.

Among the film events running parallel to the festival, Saturdays and Sundays drew the highest attendance for the Animation Film Festival where 17 out of the 22 films shown were Japanese productions.

The Fantastic Film Festival sponsored by Takara Shuzo Co. Ltd., featured 23 films that ranged from science-fiction to horror and supernatural. A special all-night screening of *Creepshow*, *Le dernier combat*, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* and *The Dead Zone* was presented to a full house of fans. The Fantastic Festival counted among its invitees Christopher Lee, Dario Argento (director of *Phenomena*) and Canada's David Cronenberg (*Dead Zone*).

Nippon Telegraph and Telephone sponsored 30 Selected Films Around the World. This section was meant to promote better understanding as well as cultural exchanges through film screenings with countries whose productions rarely get shown in Japan. Canada was represented by *The Grey Fox*, Chris Owen's *Tukana* (Papua, New Guinea), Souleymane Cisse's *The Wind* (Mali), and Jamjan Buntar's *The*



• Scenes from the first Tokyo International Film Festival, held in Shibuya, Tokyo

*Great Eagle* (Mongolia) were probably among the most "exotic" films here.

The International Women's Film Week, sponsored by Kanebo Cosmetics Ltd., comprised eight films among which Jeanne Moreau's *L'adolescente*, Helma Sanders-Brahms' *The Future of Emily*, Sumiko Haneda's *Akiko* and *Gaijin* by Brazilian director Chizuka Yamazaki.

Quebec director Léa Pool, who had left her new film *Anne Trister* on the editing table in Montreal, also attended the Festival. Pool's *La Femme de l'hôtel* was screened as part of the Young Filmmakers section of the 8th Pia Film Festival (which formerly acted as the film festival of Tokyo) Ms. Hibino, Pia Festival director, selected films which tended to explore the formal possibilities of narrative language. This "parallel" festival was very much centered around the *auteurs*, and Pool seemed delighted with the follow-up the films received after the screenings. Lectures, interviews and press showings were organized in order to maximize the exposure of both the films and the filmmakers. When I met Pool in the coffee shop of the Akasaka Tokyo hotel, she mentioned that she was "flattered and proud" of the reception her film had received. "Besides the obvious cultural references," she said, "the universal element of the film was able to move Japanese audiences and that is very flattering."

For Pool as for Beaudry and Bouvier, the TIFF was a first and warm encounter with Tokyo and the Japanese film audience. This fall will probably see their films back on the Japanese screens as a *Semaine de cinéma québécois* is currently being organized by the Société Générale du Cinéma. Telefilm Canada, Québec producer Yuri Yoshimura-Gagnon and the Québec delegation in Tokyo. The programme would tentatively include *Sonatine*, *Le jour S*, *Les Années de rêve*, *La femme de l'hôtel*, *Au Clair de la lune*, *La Guerre des tuques* and *Jacques et Novembre*. Denise Robert, who represented the Société Générale du Cinéma at the Tokyo Festival, mentioned that Pool and another filmmaker would accompany the films to Japan in the fall.

Francine Allaire and Jacques Blain of Telefilm Canada seemed satisfied with the contacts established during their stay in Tokyo. Although the Festival had no "official market," the Telefilm Canada team had a routine of several appointments a day. Their task, explained Allaire, was to present the Canadian situation to Japanese circles, particularly the notion of a public sector (which is nonexistent in Japan) and the role of Telefilm Canada. Co-production talks were held with various members of the Japanese industry. But, as Jacques Blain remarked, "The real talks with the Japanese will start once we have concrete projects to propose." He also added that a "common problem" (the strong presence of U.S. films on movie screens) "might bring our two countries closer in an effort to develop our national productions."

In short, the First Tokyo International Film Festival was a treat for Tokyo moviegoers since it brought films of a multitude of genres from over 30 countries to the screens of Shibuya. But even more, one could sense that the Festival was a frank attempt to promote cinema as a form of cultural exchange. In that sense, the opening ceremony speech by Emperor Hirohito augured positively for the future: "Image as message can play a cross-cultural function... Let's hope the young filmmakers will continue in the spirit of world community."