

CALVIN WHARTON & MARK O'NEILL

This month's column is being written about 35,000 feet above Saskatchewan en route back to Vancouver after several days in Montreal putting together this special B. C. issue of *Cinema Canada*. It's the morning after the night of *Un Zoo la nuit*; 13 Genie awards! I can't help but ponder what B. C. needs to do in order to, one day, produce a film that can knock everyone else off the stage.

In its way British Columbia is as much of a distinct society as Quebec. Nearly half of the city of Vancouver now uses English as its second language. The mountains isolate us as effectively from the rest of the country as French does *La Belle Province*. We participate in the Confederation but with an inner conviction that, somehow, we are being left out and taken advantage of by federal decision-making.

The people you'll meet on the pages of profiles elsewhere in this issue pursue a variety of film professions. They share a commitment to quality production and to living on the West Coast. Collectively they have the ability to make an *Un Zoo la nuit*. No, more than that. They could, given the resources and support, produce a string of films that would tell the stories of B. C. and stand for themselves at the box office.

This issue is dedicated to them and to the many others who are not profiled but are equally deserving of recognition. Perhaps it's the altitude but I'm optimistic that the next year will mark a surge forward of indigenous production.

● TV Ontario chairman Bernard Ostry spoke in Vancouver on St. Patrick's Day, the third anniversary of the Shamrock Summit. He addressed his speech to the Canadian Club to "the need for bold national commitments to cultural development and to regional programs" in light of the globalization of trade and economic activity. I quote from his printed text:

"We need to approach cultural development in an active spirit; not to sit on our hands and whine about the tide of foreign production that washes over us, to make other countries worry about the volume of our productions invading their space. Few countries possess such a reservoir of talent and skill as ours, or such potential for attracting gifted immigrants.

"We are today at a watershed in our historical evolution when decisions have to be taken... If the Prime Minister of Canada determines that every step necessary to reduce the anxieties and alienation arising out of the early effects of globalization and to maximize the opportunities presented by the current potential of our economic and cultural base should be taken and he takes them, eventually he will be supported by a majority of Canadians and sustained by history."

● I met with the new NDP critic for culture and communications while in Ottawa on a break from *Cinema Canada* production. Ian Waddell is something of a neophyte in such matters. However the MP for Vancouver-Kingsway is no stranger to the process of decoding complex issues into coherent policy; students of recent Canadian history will remember his impressive contribution to the Berger inquiry into the MacKenzie Valley gas pipeline. He's planning a smaller scale excursion into the world of culture. Don't worry about an expensive tour of hearings and briefs; he's planning to read the volumes of government reports already available on the issues and follow them up with one-on-one meetings with cultural leaders.

Pundits feel Waddell's appointment to this shadow portfolio is not exactly a promotion. If he gives it the same attention he's given other matters, they may be proven wrong. If nothing else, his parliamentary skills should give Flora MacDonald a run for her money in Question Period.

● Vancouver International Film Festival Director Hannah Fisher is hard at work strengthening the Pacific Rim elements of this year's program. She's presently on a screening tour of China and Hong Kong.

While she's away the newly formed programming department is also scouting out films:

PoChu AuYeung, a film graduate from Loyola College in Montreal, is program co-ordinator. Alan Franey, owner of the Vancouver East Cinema, returns to the festival as a programmer. Other members of the group include Martin Delisle (director of exhibitions, Canadian Film Institute, Ottawa), Jacqueline Brodie (Maxipromo, Montreal) and Sandy Gow who will be looking after the crucial matter of shipping and receiving films.

Fisher has also hired a new business manager. She's Sheila Beveridge, formerly of Citycore and Creative House.

● Expect a public issue of shares by Summit Entertainment/Odyssey Pictures. The company is hoping to assemble a sizeable chunk of capital in order to acquire a wide variety of properties. Cal Shumiatcher says the problem faced by most regional production companies is that they rely on too few projects; when one fails then trouble looms. Summit/Odyssey principals are two filmmakers, Shumiatcher and Robert Boyd of Toronto, working with Vancouver businessmen Aaron Lubell and Nathan Neumer.

● Videomaker Lauren Olson is back from Japan where she discovered a sizeable appetite for Canadian product. She's so enthusiastic she has set up a Vancouver office to facilitate contact between our filmmakers and Japanese buyers. Contact her through the BCMFA or at (604) 988-9629.

The Beacon Group of Companies staged a novel event at the end of February; an investors screening of Atlantis Films feature *Cowboys Don't Cry*.

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Industry in radio-drama spotlight

TORONTO - Canada's film industry is the subject of a CBC Radio Drama to be broadcast on April 24.

Marshmallow by Cordelia Strube is the second in a new series of radio plays called "Canadian Free Theatre".

Strube, who is an actress as well as a writer, says her play is a metaphorical look at Free Trade. It follows the production of a 'Canadian' film almost entirely staffed by imported talent. The producers are Eastern European, the cameraman is Australian and the two leading actors are, no surprise, from the United States. The writer and director are Canadian but the play should leave the listener wondering whether they are in it for the art or for the money.

The film being made is a "football-horror" flick. The director wants it to become a new *Citizen Kane* but receives little support for his ambition. The leading lady is an aging ingenue with a drinking problem and a son ill with AIDS.

Strube has done some film work herself. She says a lot of the specific incidents in *Marshmallow* are real although the characters are, of course, totally fictional.

"There's one scene where a young actress rubs onions in her eyes in order to cry," she told *Cinema Canada*, "I've seen that happen."

"A lot of people have asked me if I was aware

I was jeopardizing my career in film," says Strube, who sounds unconcerned given that this is her fourth production for the national radio network.

Marshmallow will be broadcast on CBC Radio Sunday April 24. (4:05p.m. Eastern, 5:05 Atlantic and Mountain, 3:05 Central & 1:05 Pacific.)

Art fest awards

MONTREAL - Martin Duckworth has won the Prize for Best Director at 6th International Festival of Films on Art (March 8-13) in Montreal.

Nos derniers jours... à Moscou was the film by Duckworth to which the international jury awarded the prize. Twenty-six films and seven videos were entered in competition.

Other prizes include the Pratt and Whitney Grand Prize to *The Nights Belong to the Novelist* (Australia) by Christina Wilcox; Special Jury Prize to *Le Procédé Fresson* (France) by Jean Réal; Prize for Best Film for Television to *Jacob Epstein: Rebel Angel* (Great Britain) by Catherine Collis; Special Prize, Film Portrait to *The Third Dimension* (West Germany) by Heinz Peter Schwerfel; Prize for the Best Biography of an Artist: Documentary Category to *Mémoire: Un film avec Oskar Kokoschka* (Austria) by Albert Quendler; Prize for the Best Biography of an Artist: Dramatic Category to *Caspar David Friedrich: Borders of Time* (West Germany) by Peter Schamoni.

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The \$2.9 million feature is a father-son story set in Alberta. Our invitation was contingent on not reviewing the film but we will say that it's an interesting counterpoint to director Anne Wheeler's previous feature *Loyalties*. It's also fair to report there were more than a few tears in the eyes of the assembled investors and their guests.

The film will be screened on CBC-TV later this year.

- There are apparently up to 20,000 British Columbians who work from time to time as film extras. According to the people behind the new Canadian Screen Extras Guild, 500 of them have signed up in favour of certification. The model is the U.S. Screen Extras Guild. ACTRA, which has jurisdiction over the first 25 extras used on any union film project, has no objection to the competition but wonders how producers will react to yet another union operating on the set.

- Delete The Knowledge Network and the B. C. Open Learning Institute from your address book. As of April 1 they've merged into the Open Learning Agency. Part of the mandate of the new agency is to improve general interest and children's programming on the provincially owned TV system.

- Marv Newland's International Rocketship is coordinating the production of an animated feature called *Toons x 9*. Nine different animation directors from around the world will each contribute a 10-minute segment of the film. Each segment will deal with some aspect of the Faust legend.

Animators from Canada, the U.S., Britain and Europe will do the animation, which will then be sent to Vancouver for final production.

This project is an elaborate version of *Anajam*, a short film (also organized by Newland) in which 22 animators each worked on 15 seconds of film centred around a specific character. Instead of a character, *Toons x 9* presents a theme which the contributors can interpret in their own whacked-out way, according to Rocketship's Mike van den Bos.

Telefilm helped with development, but it's uncertain at this point if they will be involved in production. The feature is intended for theatrical release and distribution will likely be handled by Thomas Howe Associates in Vancouver.

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