

OPINIONS

Canadian Film-Flam Awards

by John Hofsess

An aesthetic appreciation of food and wines is not one of the more prevalent sophistications among Canadians, but when at the 1975 Canadian Film Awards "gala dinner" (\$15 per person) guests were offered a choice of vodka, gin, cheap whiskey or rum to wash down their beef currie and rice, I wondered if we will ever overcome our bumpkinness in matters of culture and sensuality.

Who needs "Hollywood's Canada" to depict us as rustic nincompoops when we so often play the role in real life? Serving a dress-up meal with hard liquor may seem like a small gaffe in the pantheon of human error, but it proved a depressingly appropriate and revealing detail of the Film Awards generally. That is scarcely surprising. Taste is indivisible. It's highly unlikely for someone to have good taste and a lively sense of style in one area of life and bad taste and absolutely no style in everything else. So, as went dinner, so went the Awards.

Most of the top Award winners (Michel Brault, best director, Stuart Gillard, best actor, Margot Kidder, best actress, Henry Beckman, best supporting actor, Lila Kedrova, best supporting actress, among others) didn't show up, and quite a few of those present envied the

winner's absence more than their Etrogs. There should be no slighting of the prodigious amount of work which Sandra Gathercole and others did in reviving the Awards, but unfortunately, the final result looked as if other people had been undoing her stitches as fast as she knitted them together. Everytime she did something to make the Awards stimulating and lively, someone else seemed to have checkmated her moves by making things stuffy and dull. The jury gave every "major" film entered one or more prizes so that no producer or distributor would go home feeling bad, and in a spirit of largess, or critical gutlessness gave the impression that three films were being honoured as "best picture" - **Eliza's Horoscope** (for dint of effort), **Les Ordres** (for a political morality) and **The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz** (for its immense popularity). A something-for-everyone Awards debases any possible meaning or reputation that the Etrogs might develop with the public. In the end the night resembled one of those self-congratulatory, amateur nights one used to know in high school, where nobody told the truth about anybody's lack of talent or dismal future and everyone went home with their illusions intact.

To be charitable, one could say, well, what's Thanksgiving without a turkey! But the truth is, time is running out on this Canadian film charade. Without an infusion of sophistication, some show-biz pizzazz and/or standards of excellence, Canada's film industry is just persisting in the foredoomed attempt to make dullness profitable.

A Parasite-free Ottawa?

by John J. Wolotko

On Tuesday, Feb. 25, 1975, the Ottawa run of the motion picture **Ilsa, She Wolf of the SS** was interrupted after the manager of the theatre showing the film received an ultimatum the night before from officers of the Ottawa morality squad.

The officers informed the manager that if the picture was presented the following day the film would be seized and the theatre charged with the exhibition of an obscene film. The decision not to show the film was made by the manager's superiors at Famous Players Head Office in Toronto.

The implications of this decision and its possible consequences greatly disturbs me both as a film patron and critic for a number of reasons.

To start with, every film shown in an Ontario theatre bears the stamp of approval of the Ontario Board of Censors. Not only was **Ilsa** classified "restricted" but it also bore warnings in its ads cautioning patrons of its content.

The Board of Censors, a provincial body, has deemed that the film in question is suitable to be shown on any screen in Ontario. By what right does the Ottawa Morality Squad challenge such a provincial authority?

Granted, the Morality Squad officers were most likely acting upon complaints received from patrons who have seen the film. But what about the hundreds of others who have also seen the picture and emerged virtually unscathed? Why should the complaints of a minority prevent others from exercising their right to see the film?

It would be interesting to know what qualifications the officers have who, acting upon the complaints and after viewing the film, reached a judgement that categorized **Ilsa** as obscene. In order to avoid charges being laid, the exhibition company showing the film decided to withdraw it from the theatre.

Since that time no other similarly violent films such as **The Texas Chainsaw Massacre** have reached Ottawa screens. After the Ottawa incident, **Ilsa, She Wolf of the SS** played in nearby Hull with no furor being raised.

It seems that the actions of the Ottawa Morality Squad have set a dangerous precedent in that city.

And who knows, the people of Ottawa may find themselves being protected from an infection of David Cronenberg's **Parasites** without even knowing it.