

# People



PHOTO: GEOFF ROGERS

## Lasn and Schmalz: coming on like gangbusters

VANCOUVER - Kalle Lasn and Bill Schmalz, two Vancouver filmmakers, have jumped headfirst into the magazine business with the premiere issue of *Adbusters*, a quarterly that aims to change the way consumers think about corporate advertising.

Earlier this year, both filmmakers attempted to counter a 30-second television advertisement for B. C. forest industries - *Forests Forever* - with an alternative 30-second spot on CBC-TV. The CBC rejected the spot that pointed out the gap between logged and properly forested land as "too controversial." Public outcry forced the CBC to discontinue *Forests Forever*.

Four more scripts were included in the first issue of the magazine and have already been deemed too controversial by the CBC. However, both filmmakers hope to rally funds through the non-profit Media Foundation and produce these spots for CTV. Also featured in the premiere issue are feature articles on media strategies, environmental issues and ethics.

"The first issue cost \$20,000 but we've already raised \$10,000 for the second issue through subscriptions and donations which makes us feel like we are on to something," says Lasn, a documentary filmmaker for the last 20 years.

"We're going ahead as if this thing will fly."

*Adbusters* has an initial distribution of 7,000 aimed at concerned individuals, environmental groups, educators and advertising agencies across North America.

One 15-second spot that Lasn would like to see broadcast across the country shows a person wearing a television head and struggling to take it off. Failing this, the television head flicks off the off/on switch. A voiceover asks: Can you switch off?

## Brakhage: building a nest in Toronto

TORONTO - Stan Brakhage, the recipient of the 1989 Edward MacDowell Medal, for his lifelong commitment to producing inventive films that go beyond conventional

devices of plot and character, is seeking landed immigrant status and a teaching position in Toronto.

"When immigration asked me why I want to live here I offered to write them a book," says Brakhage. "I told them that we want to raise our child in Canada."

Brakhage and Marilyn Jull of Victoria B. C. are expecting their first child in September. They have a residential address in Toronto and Brakhage is currently teaching at the University of Colorado.

A world traveler who is known as one of the most



influential filmmakers of the American avant-garde cinema, Brakhage says that Toronto is "at this moment, the most vibrant and interesting centre for independent film in the entire world."

"All across Canada there are people who are making films much like we would expect a painter to make a painting, a composer; music or a poet; poems. This is what independent filmmaking is all about."

"This wouldn't be happening if there was not a culture and people who have risen to represent that culture."

Brakhage is well known in the United States for his ardent enthusiasm for the work of *The Group of Seven* and his efforts over the last 25 years to raise the profile of these Canadian painters in the United States. He is also outspoken, south of the border, in support of Canadian experimental filmmakers.

Canadian filmmakers must not imitate the "mad commercialism" that has infected filmmaking in the U. S., warns Brakhage, who will be presented the Edward MacDowell Medal by Martin Scorsese.

Other Edward MacDowell Medal winners over the past 30 years are John Updike, Thornton Wilder, Eudora Welty, Lillian Hellman, William Styron, Leonard Bernstein, Aaron Copland, William Schuman, Walter Piston, Elliot Carter, Georgia O'Keeffe, William de Kooning, Lee Friedlander, Robert Motherwell.

## Lafond: "Streets and labs"

MONTREAL - André Lafond, Montreal's film commissioner since the beginning of August, says it's equally important to



"feed" the labs and service industries with work as it is to bring foreign productions to the streets of Montreal.

"Streets and labs," says Lafond, "in Montreal there is a willingness to work hard and create a dynamic film and television industry but we have to be aggressive to get that work."

Lafond, age 45, is the former contract manager for Rock Demer's Productions la Fete and the former head of Cinenov in charge of the 1987 Cannes Film Festival launching of *Un Zoo La Nuit*. He worked for 15 years at the NFB where he was the assistant director of distribution.

"My mandate is to push hard at development and promotion and to coordinate all of the services in the city," says Lafond, whose office with two full-time staff is part of the Commission d'initiative et de développement culturel (CIDEC) of the City of Montreal.

Although the number of film permits (to use public

services) is slightly down in 1989, with 171 permits after six months compared to 396 permits in 1988, Lafond says Los Angeles is also experiencing a downturn in production.

"This is not a Montreal problem exclusively," says Lafond.

He says there are encouraging signs that the city administration is renewing its support of the film commissioner's mandate with a recent promotional trip to Los Angeles by Mayor Jean Doré and a special two for one invitation to visit the Cité Ciné exhibition on Aug. 28.

Lafond replaces Guy Trinque who resigned in June after five years to work in the private sector.

## Alexandra Raffé produces *White Room*

TORONTO - Alexandra Raffé had just quit her job after 10 years with Xerox when she took in a roommate to offset the salary loss. Her timing proved to be fortuitous. Her roommate turned out to be none other than Patricia Rozema. "At the time Patricia was working at *The Journal*, which I thought was incredible, exotic and very flaky," Raffé told *Cinema Canada*. "She happened to get a grant to make her first film and I asked if I could help. She said yes you can, come into the office and answer tele-phones." This was January of 1985.

Raffé had no previous experience in filmmaking but got promoted on the spot. "We had no money to edit it (a 28-minute short called *Passion*), so I learnt to sync rushes. Then we did a few music videos and some short films. After that I was working as a part-time administrator at LIFT (Liaison of Independent

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and

- Garth Drabinsky's Cineplex empire: A case study

Filmmakers of Toronto) and Patricia was writing the script for *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing*. So we tried to figure out how to get it made."

Born in Singapore, Raffé describes herself as a "boarding school brat" whose family moved around a lot, arriving in Canada in 1978. Her business experience with Xerox proved useful in putting together the deal for *Mermaids*. "I think, in some ways, our very ignorance was helpful.

We went into *Mermaids* very confident. We treated it like a much bigger arts council type of project with no expectation of any huge complexities. We said this is a lot bigger so will have to work a lot harder. We did eight months of prep, 18 hours a day. Had we known how difficult it was going to be we would never have tried. However, we had every possible piece of luck you could imagine. It was the most wonderful first feature film we

could have possibly made in our lives."

Now Rozema and Raffé (co-owners of the Toronto-based VOS Productions) are working on their second feature. "Patricia started working on the script for *White Room* when she was editing *Mermaids*. The script we are shooting bears no resemblance to what she was writing then but the genesis was there. It's quite different from *Mermaids*. We didn't get any money for

development, instead we put back what money we got from *Mermaids*. We took it as far as we could on our own, which gave us that much more creative control from everybody and everything. We knew exactly what we wanted to keep and what we wanted to do. Then after getting the distribution deal from Alliance, we went into Telefilm and OFDC. We also got a presale from Channel 4 in Britain. There was a big

difference in attitude this time, but *Mermaids* could only open the door for us. It's quite scary going out with a new script. It shows genuine growth and maturity on Patricia's part."

*White Room* stars Kate Nelligan, Margot Kidder and Sheila McCarthy, with Maurice Godin. Shooting wrapped the 24th of August and Raffé is hopeful of a Cannes 1990 release. They then plan on hitting the festival circuit, with a commercial release in

the fall. "It's going incredibly well," she said. "The shoot is on time and on budget and the crew is marvelous. We're having the time of our lives." Raffé, however, does acknowledge that there is a lot of pressure on them to come up with a good film. With the outstanding success of *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing*, these two former roommates have come to symbolize a hope of a brighter future for Canadian cinema.

## Appointments

### SPICER CALLED TO HEAD CRTC

OTTAWA - Keith Spicer, former official languages commissioner (1970-1977), has been appointed chairman of the Canadian Radiotelevision and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), effective Sept. 1. He leaves his job as editor/columnist of the *Ottawa Citizen* to replace André Bureau who resigned in March after five years. Among the higher-profile items on the CRTC agenda is a study of the revised Broadcasting Act shelved prior to the last election after its first reading in the House. Spicer has refused to be interviewed by the press until he is instated in his new job.

### ARMSTRONG MOVES FROM CRTC TO TELEFILM

MONTREAL - Robert Armstrong is the new associate director, planning and policies, at Telefilm Canada. Armstrong joins Telefilm after holding various positions at the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission since 1983. Prior to that, he worked as an executive producer with Cinefort Inc. The appointment is effective as of Aug. 29.

### COLUMNIST JOINS CBC ALL-NEWS SERVICE BOARD

MONTREAL - Jean-Paul Desbiens, educator and journalist, has been appointed to the board of management of CBC *Newsworld* and the proposed French-language all-news service. A weekly columnist for *La Presse*, Desbiens has held a number of teaching and administrative positions in Quebec. In 1960 he published *Les Insolences du frere Untel* (The Impertinences of Brother Anonymous), a book that had an impact on some of the orientations in the field of education during the Quiet Revolution in Quebec. The appointment is for a three-year term.

### McDONALD: V.P., TELEVISION CAB

OTTAWA - Elizabeth McDonald is the senior vice-president, television, of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters. McDonald joined CAB in August 1988 as director of policy and planning. From 1984 to 1988 she was a strategic planning consultant with the CBC. The announcement was made by Michael McCabe, president of CAB.

### COHEN JOINS LAW FIRM

MONTREAL - Ronald I. Cohen, entertainment lawyer, former chairman of the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television and former film producer (*Running, Middle Age Crazy, Ticket to Heaven, Draw!* and *Rare for the Bomb*) has joined the Montreal-based law firm of Gascon, Gibson, Pierre J. Lachance has also joined the firm with Cohen.

### CBC NAMES NEW LONDON AND PARIS DIRECTORS

OTTAWA - Jack Craine and Antonin Boisvert have been appointed to head the London and Paris offices, respectively, it was announced by CBC Executive Vice-President William Armstrong. The London office oversees all the CBC's English-language activities in Europe. The Paris office does the same for Radio-Canada. Craine is presently the program director of the CBC's Northstar Network, a proposed Canadian program service for distribution on U.S. cable. He joined Northstar after a decade as director of programming for CBC's English Network. He oversaw the move of *The National* to prime time and the creation of *The Journal*. Boisvert has been vice-president of communications at the CBC since 1987. He joined the head office in Ottawa in 1983 as director of general supply.

### TELEFILM CREATES NEW PARIS JOB

TORONTO - Bill Niven, currently the Manager for Project Development at the Toronto office of Telefilm Canada, has been named planning consultant in the Paris office of Telefilm Canada. This is a newly created position. Paris Office Director Roland Ladouceur is returning to head office in Montreal and will be replaced in Paris by Pierre Lampron.

Ian Birnie, formerly Special Projects and Production Officer at the Ontario Film Development Corporation, will take over from Niven at Telefilm in Toronto. Birnie has been at the OFDC since 1986. Prior to that Director of Distribution for Janus Films in New York.

### ARBOUR ELECTED

MONTREAL - Madeleine Arbour has been elected president of the Conseil des Arts de la Communauté Urbaine de Montréal and has replaced Jean-Pierre Goyer. Head of her own interior design company for the past 25 years, Arbour is also a writer and animator of many Radio-Canada-produced

programs, including *La boîte à surprises*, a children's program which originated in 1951 and writer of a film entitled *Riopelle au présent*. For 25 years she had a spot on a daily news magazine show called *Femme d'aujourd'hui*. In 1987 she received the Order of Canada.

### MARTIN: TVONTARIO

TORONTO - Mary Martin has been appointed director of community development and liaison at TVOntario, effective Aug. 1. Martin comes to TVOntario from the public relations department at the University of Toronto. She will be responsible for public financing and the activities of the consultation committee. The announcement was made by Bill Roberts, director of public relations.

### RACICOT HEADS CBC IN OTTAWA

OTTAWA - Pierre Racicot has been appointed director of the National Capital Region for CBC responsible for overall operations of English and French radio and television services in Ottawa. Racicot was appointed assistant vice-president, Human Resources in August 1986 and vice-president in June 1987. The appointment, announced by Bill White, vice-president of Regional Broadcasting Operation, is effective Aug. 15.

### COPEMAN TO CO-ORDINATE SFDP

REGINA - Don Copeman is the project co-ordinator of the Saskatchewan Film Development Project. He has worked in the local film industry as producer, director, editor, post-production supervisor. Copeman will be responsible for administration, communications, professional development and ongoing job placement. The SFDP is a two-year-old cooperative venture between Saskatchewan Parks, Recreation and Culture and the National Film Board.

### SAMUELS JOINS ATLANTIS IN AUSTRALIA

TORONTO - Richard Samuels, formerly of Granada Television International in London, has joined Atlantis Releasing as senior sales executive in Sydney, Australia. Samuels joined the company effective July 15 when the new Australian office opened. The announcement was made by Ted Riley, president of Atlantis Releasing.