

The Canadian Film Awards on CTV

by Joan Irwin

I've never been to the annual Canadian Film Awards so I don't know whether it's an exciting event or not. It didn't make a very gripping hour of television when CTV telecast it this year for the first time, but maybe that's because it *was* the first TV outing and everyone was a little nervous and uncertain about it.

Uncertainty was apparent in the choice of host for the televised awards —Lorne Greene, for heaven's sake, doing his hand-on-the-heart "Ah, it's good to be home" number and inserting his pre-Ponderosa experiences as a Canadian performer into every conversation.

Some expatriates are more ex than others. Success in the great world makes them condescending and gives their narcissistic nostalgia a ring of heavy insincerity. Paul Anka dragged down the televised Juno Awards a couple of years ago, and Lorne Greene performed the same service for the Film Awards this year.

Surely the point of televising such awards presentations is to let the Canadian public meet some of the people who are making things happen in this country, to let us glimpse the performers and people behind the cameras when they're not playing their roles as actors, producers, etc.

The CTV telecast missed its opportunity to tantalize and capture the viewer in the opening minutes of the show.

Instead of panning the audience so we could catch the glitter, instead of zooming in on famous faces so we could anticipate coming encounters with celebrities, the CTV cameras gave us views of the backs of heads, the empty stage, and the Etrog itself.

We were well into the show before members of the judging panel were introduced from their seats, and we never did get much of a sense of the theatre itself and its glamorous audience.

A good many of those who appeared as presenters had to overcome by sheer force of personality the frequently dreadful material they had been given to read. Marilyn Lightstone and Jane Eastwood came across particularly well, while Al Waxman's easy-going ebullience provided welcome relief from the pomposities of the host.

The little history of Canadian movies was amusing but overlong, especially in view of the number of winners in important categories who had been shunted out of the show for lack of time.

A single hour probably isn't enough for such an event, especially if clips of winning performances and films are to be included as they clearly must. This year's TV debut of the film awards was competently produced, which is no small achievement when it's a live show. Everyone concerned has no doubt learned a great deal from this initial experience, so subsequent productions are bound to be tighter and better paced.

Beyond that, I hope they'll project a more compelling sense of occasion and a more dynamic pleasure in the glamor and suspense of a major event in the Canadian entertainment calendar.

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