

# Two or Three Things We Know About the Canadian Film Audience ...

by A. Ibrányi-Kiss

During the "Naked Came the Maple Leaf" festival of Canadian films at the Poor Alex, a questionnaire was handed out to the audience for several weeks. Designed by Sandra Gathercole, who is in charge of publicity for the theatre, its aim was to find out a bit more about who goes to see Canadian films, and why. The following lists the tentative results with some conclusions, and comments from the audience.

## 1. DID YOU ENJOY THE CANADIAN FILM YOU HAVE JUST SEEN?

	Per Cent
Yes	92
No	1
Neutral	7

## 2. HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THIS FILM?

	Per Cent
Newspaper ads	33
Listings or brochures	17
Radio	3
Magazine or news article	8
Friends	34
Unspecified	5

## 3. ALL ELSE BEING EQUAL, ARE YOU MORE INTERESTED OR LESS INTERESTED IN SEEING A FILM WHICH IS IDENTIFIED AS CANADIAN?

	Per Cent
More	75
Less	4
Neutral	21

## 4. WOULD YOU GO TO MORE CANADIAN FILMS IF THEY WERE SHOWN?

	Per Cent
Yes	89
No	—
Neutral	11

## 5. DO YOU ATTEND FILMS FREQUENTLY?

	Per Cent
Yes	53
No	37
Neutral	10

## 6. HAVE YOU SEEN ANY OTHER CANADIAN FEATURE FILM?

	Per Cent
Yes	80
No	16
Neutral	4

## 7. WHAT IS YOUR AGE BRACKET?

	Per Cent
Under 20	3
20-30	73
30-40	13
Over 40	7
Unspecified	4

Question No. 1. The audience was generally very favorable to the films. The neutral element explained that, "I don't know if 'enjoy' is the right word! Very provoking, probing, etc." One person wrote, "I really don't know. I'm not sure if I could ever feel anything again." Both of these answers came after viewing Michael Snow's *La Région Centrale*. It is quite fair to assume that many of the people who saw either that film, or any of the other films that do not readily fit into the category of entertaining movies, wound up with a neutral response to that question.

Question No. 2. The recommendations of friends still account for slightly more than a third of those attending. However, another one-third mentioned newspaper ads and many people wrote that they had heard about the series from several different sources. There was only one viewer who came because of the sign on the telephone pole! Other reasons for coming were, "I knew the artist" and "Because it is in French". In all fairness to both the films and the viewers, the next questionnaire ought to be in both French and English. Nonetheless, publicity still seems to be a problem. It is either not reaching enough people, or reaching only those who had already decided to come after hearing about the series from friends.

Question No. 3. When asked about being more or less interested in seeing a Canadian film, all else being equal; one person wrote only that it was a 'loaded' question. Of the 25 per cent who answered either 'no' or were 'neutral', all mentioned that the origin of a film is not the major reason for them to see it; and that they are far more interested in the content and quality of a film than in whether it is Canadian or not. However, three out of four people answered an overwhelming 'yes' and most mentioned that they were interested in all Canadian culture and Canadian life in general. Films are definitely being touched by the new wave of nationalism.

Question No. 4. The 11 per cent neutral response to this question was again due to the same reason as in the previous question. Again, people gener-

ally wrote that they would see any film that is good, regardless of origin. However, fully 89 per cent answered that after seeing the film in question, they would definitely see more Canadian films. One person commented, "Why not? I've nothing against Canadian filmmakers!"

Question No. 5. It is very interesting to note that almost half of the people who came to the Poor Alex are not frequent filmgoers. This is very important since it shows that Canadian films are drawing viewers who otherwise wouldn't go to the movies. This definitely ties in with the new interest in the Canadian arts, and with the growing pride of Canadians in themselves.

Question No. 6. Although 80 per cent of the audience had seen other Canadian features, one must note that quite a few wrote, "Yes, most of the ones in your series." Thus, before the festival, many had not seen any Canadian films. The other films seen were mainly *Mon Oncle Antoine*, *Goin' Down The Road*, and *The Rowdyman*. One viewer commented with, "Yes, only *Goin' Down The Road* which I enjoyed on television. I'll admit that I was leery of spending money on it, yet ironically, I let my wife talk me into seeing *Love Story* in which I was led down the road." Only one person answered that question with, "Yes, all of them." (WOW!!!)

Question No. 7. Predictably, 77 per cent of the audience were under the age of 30. What is encouraging, though, is that 20 per cent of the theatre-goers were over 30, which is a higher figure than for commercial theatres. Again, it seems that Canadian films are tapping a more 'mature' audience and one which ordinarily does not see films. (Money-men take note!)

One interesting comment in answer to whether one goes to movies frequently was, "I used to, but due to babysitting problems, don't now." Day-care in theatres, anyone? Another person decided to comment on the introduction to the questionnaire, which stated 'we would like to know more about you' with, "Flattered, but I must confess I blush easily and have been known to break out in hives when questioned about my relationship with my mother." (Questionnaire designers — beware!) One important request was that more be published about the films before they are shown so that "... one has some background before coming or deciding whether to come or not."

If you would like to add your comments to these, all you have to do is go to the Poor Alex and see a Canadian film. 100 per cent of the responders to the questionnaire did. ●