



the 1972 Cannes film festival

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Marc Gervais, internationally respected critic, and professor of film at Loyola College, was at Cannes this year. Here is his view on the state of world cinema. Issuing statements about the present state of world cinema may well prove an overweeningly ambitious, pretentious, and (ultimately) futile enterprise. And yet... from observation of what has been projected on Canadian screens this last year or so, and on European screens, and with the focussing of it all through that gigantic and most sought-after film experience known as the Cannes Film Festival, and through the subsequent exchanges of ideas and information with film directors and critics from all over the world, there may be some vitality to the attempt.

As of today, then, what are the discernible trends, the fashions, the hopes for the future, the disappointments, in world cinema? The answer (in a word): with striking and appalling unanimity, the knowledgeable film people share a feeling of disappointment and disenchantment over the lack of anything new or truly exciting.

Some particular (symptomatic) areas:

France. The schizophrenic film country par excellence. Right now on Paris screens the latest Godard, *Tout Va Bien*,
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is arousing interest and debate. "A momentous moment (as they say) heralding Jean-Luc Godard's return to the more traditional film making that was interrupted by his Maoist anti-cinema cinema period and his near fatal car accident". *Tout Va Bien* is a minor, but interesting, self-critiquing political tract "starring" two other publicly committed film people of the Left, Yves Montand and Jane Fonda. It is indeed a film of serious political intent, and far better, for example, than anything French shown "officially" at Cannes recently.

So Godard is back. And while Resnais and Agnes Varda are maybe difficult times, still, two other veteran "nouvelle vague" directors, François Truffaut and Claude Chabrol, go on turning out stylish, insightful, beautifully etched works. And France still has two of its senior artists, towering figures belonging to no school or fashion or age, and among the purest of film makers today, Robert Bresson and Jacques Tati.

So for one aspect of French film making. But that is not the direction of French film making today, not the big, official French cinema representing France at its own famed Festival, or pushed onto the big international market. For that, one must turn to things like *L'Aventure c'est*

l'Aventure, a slick, at times funny, at times intelligent, but always self-indulgent concoction by Claude Lelouche — which, incidentally, opened the Cannes proceedings. And then three sentimental, heart-tugging romances, two of them built around those fortyish sacred cows of French cinema and theatre, Jeanne Moreau (*Chère Louise*) and Annie Girardot (*Les Feux de la Chandeleur*), the other featuring the adorable younger, newer rage, Marlène Jobert. (To be fair about it, her vehicle, Maurice Pialat's *Nous Ne vieillirons Pas Ensemble*, isn't nearly that bad, it has a certain toughness and integrity about it. This kind of thing used to be called "bourgeois drama", and later on, in the women's magazines and radio etc soap operas it became the pabulum that was supposed to nourish your typical sophisticated and *désabusé*: the sad moments of rueful rapture, the oh-so-sad wisdom, and finally the sad courage of our lead heroines is played out in today's fashion: soft focus, lovely on-location shooting, misty colours, the soaring background music of Michel Legrand or Georges Delerue. What has happened to the prestige French cinema? Or is it rather all part of something much vaster, a reflection of the mood one feels everywhere in France these days... a country rapidly becoming super-organized by the techno-

crats, its national purpose and energies deliberately channelled into the pursuit of soft consumer society as the be all and the end all?

Sweden There was almost no Swedish presence at Cannes this year. This is exceptional, and perhaps it is indicative of the rather bad situation at the moment in Sweden, whose film life is at the crisis point because of ideological divisions from within the film community, and above all because of the steady encroachment of television. A few bright spots, though. Ingmar Bergman's latest film, **Whisperings and Cries**, a colour period piece, is all but completed — blessedly sans Elliot Gould. Now with his own production company, Bergman is embarking on a new project: a series of at least six television films. And the Swedes are extremely enthusiastic about what may be their most successful film ever, Jan Tröell's two-part saga, **The Emigrants** (Part 1) and **Unto A Good Land** (Part 2), now playing before record crowds in Sweden. Toëll has just about clinched the number 2 spot in Swedish film making, but (predictably and inexplicably) the Cannes authorities found his film too long for the Festival!

Film making around the world exists at various stages of development, varying with different countries. Countries like Iran, for example, can surprise the complacent western observer with the artistic excellence and technical control of films such as Darriouche Merjoui's two first features, **The Cow** and **The Postman**. European countries, as might be expected, tend to be more advanced. **Belgium** and **Holland**, for example, are steadily gaining in total artistic film creativity. **West Germany**, however, is the interesting country emerging right now. The German cinema, so mighty in the twenties and early thirties, and so impoverished ever since, may be on the verge of a real (if slow) renaissance. The West Germans, though by no means as yet a major factor in world cinema, are soaring beyond their unspeakable commercial rubbish and their annoyingly esoteric political tracts. An example: the recently released **Trotta**, by Johannes Schaaf.

Meanwhile, two giants of the past are stirring. **Russia**, that enormous heavy-weight film machine, prone to huge spectacles and stodgy dogmatic dramas, may be loosening up a whit. Andrei Tarkovsky's **Solaris**, with its mystical cosmic stirrings, could be a prelude to exciting developments. **Japan**, too, may be

returning to a position of eminence. This year's spread of Japanese films at Cannes* was the best seen in a long time, though the level is still well below that of the Japanese fifties and early sixties.

The recent worsened state of the **Eastern European** cinema perdures. The various national cinemas of these countries have already shown in the past how marvelously rich they can be, and there are still some isolated outstanding achievements, such as Miklos Jancso's mesmerizing **Red Psalm** (for some reason, the Hungarian Jancso, surely one of the world's greatest film artists, continues to remain virtually unknown in North America) and Andrej Wajda's **Birch Trees**. But the Eastern European films reflect the diminished film life of their countries. Western film making may be tyrannized by the irrationalities imposed by the narrow, often cretinous commercial way of life that runs our cinema; but the Eastern European countries face something worse: the stifling party-line dogmatism of the ruling Communist Party cliques 1972-style.

Great Britain, of course, has long been noted for its impeccable film craftsmanship, its superb acting — and its stultifying reliance on traditional forms and obvious "quality" effects. The British do have their own form of movie madness, to be sure. One must marvel at the technical wizardry of a country capable of spawning the fetid decadence of a Ken Russell, or the brilliant nihilism of Kubrick 71-72. Decadence, or, rather, lack of commitment to any kind of vision or belief, seems to be the keynote, in shrill medics such as **The Ruling Class**; the superficial, sumptuous historical trifles such as **Mary, Queen of Scots**; or in a directionless **Macbeth**, brewed by three with-it modern-day conjurers (Roman Polanski, Kenneth Tynan, and Hugh Heffner).

The other rich and decadent film country, **Italy**, may well be returning to standards worthy of the creative genius of so many of its film directors. The return to form of De Sica, Visconti, and Fellini is stunning. Pasolini, Olmi, and Bertolucci are working, at times brilliantly. And of course there are the usual reworkings of the same basic scenario of the last years: leftist political critiques of the ruling neo-capitalist structures. As a matter of fact, two such films — fairly good ones (which will eventually find

* especially Teshigara's **Summer Soldier**, Shinoda's **Silence**, and Matsumoto's **Shura**.

their way to Canada) — Francisco Rosi's **The Mattei Affair**, and Elio Petri's ambivalent **The Working Classes Go To Paradise** split the Cannes *grand prix* . . . an indication, perhaps, of the low quality of the films in competition this year, and of the political commitment of many of its jury members (Chairman Joseph Losey, Mark Donskoi, Milos Forman, etc., etc.).

Passing comments, but enough to suggest what Cannes 1972 confirmed: there are some valid things going on, but by and large the world cinema right now is at a low ebb. What used to happen regularly in the (say) decade-and-a-half between 1953 and 1968 — i.e., the discovery of a new master (e.g., Ingmar Bergman) or of a new school (e.g., la nouvelle vague), or even a "new" country (e.g., Japan, Czechoslovakia) — that made of that period a Golden Age of World Cinema simply has not been happening these last years. To reiterate an earlier comment: nothing really new or worth eliciting a lasting enthusiasm.

* * *

But film life in many ways has never been more vigorous nor more honored. For one thing, the cinema now reveres its own history; and now, old is beautiful. Therefore, Cannes, having last year fêted a venerable Charlie Chaplin, this year turned to the last remaining Marx brother, Groucho, a spritely but slightly doddering 82; and the showing of **A Night at the Opera** blazoned out for a delighted audience the immense superiority of American film comedy of days gone by (Peter Bogdanovitch et al. notwithstanding). Groucho himself, by the way, still game, still wicked, is now slightly pathetic. One has seen it all just too often. The leering routines appear tired, even labored.

Not, however, for men somewhat younger than Groucho, but well-trying veterans in their own right. The last time or two, I believe, will stand out in film history as a time of unexpected regeneration, the return to greatness of numerous well-established names. We've already seen Losey's masterpiece, **The Go Between**, and Visconti's **A Death in Venice**. But then, neither Losey nor Visconti were ever that far away. Vittorio De Sica's **The Garden of the Finzi-Contini's**, however, marked the re-emergence of a master long considered past his prime, not to say artistically dead.

Well, the trend goes on. Federico Fellini is only in his fifties; and it may be absurd

(as it may be with Losey and Visconti) to speak of a "come back" in his case. Yet his *Fellini Roma*, now playing in his native Rome, is surely his finest film in a decade (since *8½*). A baroque documentary on the Rome of Fellini's imagination, with no plot and no central figures (except maybe Fellini Himself), it is by no means his greatest achievement ever. But *Fellini Roma* has enough of the wit, humour, perceptiveness, and sheer genius and vitality to make it dwarf anything, for example, shown in completion at Cannes.

So for Fellini. Most film people, I suspect, had long given up on an older, perhaps less overtly talented film artist, John Huston, a man once capable of creating such screen gems as *The Maltese Falcon*, and *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, but now become, (or so it seemed) a refined *poseur* intent on cresting his own image as an elitist, swashbuckling Irish land owner sought after by the nobility—cum—jet set. *Fat City* should rout us detractors. For here is a lean, austere, beautifully perceptive and warm

film on human beings who have lost the meaning of it all. Huston is definitely more at home with the broken down prize fighters of *Fat City* than with the biblical epics, medieval romances, or Tennessee Williamshish explorations of decadence that have occupied his film making time for years.

And the Legendary Alfred Hitchcock. returned to England after so many years in Hollywood, Hitch has directed a film that is a smash hit in London as of now. *Frenzy* had its world premiere at Cannes, as part of a special tribute to its creator. Well, Hitchcock just about stole everything in sight. Everywhere he went, there were standing ovations, genuine outbursts of admiration and affection. *The event* of this festival, Hitchcock totally dominated Cannes, the public, the critics, playing his mischievous entertainer's role graciously and to the hilt. *Frenzy* has proven immensely popular. For many, it means a return to eminence of Hitchcock the master. And I am certain it will be his most financially successful film in over ten years.

The film deserves lingering on, even in this kind of shot gun article. The old Hitchcock tricks are in dazzling evidence. And because they are so brilliant, they have that fresh and mesmerizing quality. Chills and thrills and laughs and horror And for those (among whom the present writer) who see in Hitchcock a "profound" film artist with one of the toughest, widest-ranging, and most intensely communicated visions of man

(*"l'univers hitchcockien"*), *Frenzy* is a gold mine. It's all there — shared guilt, the dialectic between life/death, love/alienation, the dark forces lurking within human nature, always ready to erupt, etc., etc..

(In spite of my enthusiastic comments, I suppose I should add that *Frenzy* falls short of the finest Hitchcock. A certain obviousness, verging on coarseness, seems to be warping the texture of his films, or rather marring their former diamond-like, hot/cold, "clean" quality. Hitchcock is perilously close to following today's fashion; there's a whiff of something akin to sadism or pornography. Where before these things were only suggested (and therefore made far more disturbing), and where Hitchcock opposed them with the presence of delightful human beings (Cary Grant, of course, and Grace Kelly, and Jimmy Stewart, and Michael Redgrave, and so many others), giving his films their precarious charm, and a believableness, a feeling of dancing on the abyss, now he shows less interest in the total view, concentrating more exclusively on pathology and aberration.)

Any one of these three veteran director films (*Fellini Roma*, *Fat City*, *Frenzy*) could easily have one the best film award in a Festival that is acknowledged to attract the world's finest films. None was in official competition. But one thing for sure. Right now, the best films being made are by men in their fifties, or sixties, or seventies! Which may not be



Ring action during John Houston's *Fat City*.



The owner of the matrimonial agency (Barbara Leigh-Hunt) is the victim of the Necktie Murderer.

such bad news for some of us.

* * *

Canada. Many Canadian readers and listeners know by now that the Canadian presence in Cannes was even more spectacular than last year's. For one thing, the Canadian group, so say the Festival authorities, was, next to the French, the largest: 250. A very exotic group, to be sure, made up of CFDC, NFB, producers, distributors, directors, actors, critics, and so on. And the mammoth Canadian gala reception, complete with the specially-flown-in-for-the-occasion Québécois Charlebois and Canadian salmon, was by far the most splendid (along, *bien entendu*, with the French). There were also the score of Canadian films being shown "on the market", with the information stands, a rented theatre, and so on. All of this has a far ranging meaning: a testimonial, of sorts, to Canada's concerted effort to become a world figure in cinema.

Yes, there are major efforts being expended to promote Canadian films internationally; and special Canadian events, film weeks, etc., are cropping up all over the world, from New York to Amsterdam to Ouaga-Dougou. More germane to the peculiar interests of this article, however: the impact on other countries of Canadian films, and how others see our artistic development. What about, for example, the four films, two in the official competitive festival, two others in the two prestige art festivals, in

Cannes this year?

After being in attendance at the Cannes festival these last half-dozen years, one has to admit that there has been an amazing evolution, from nothing, really (always limiting our concern here to feature films), to today's situation of real promise, and even of respect for recent achievement.

Foreign critics, and distributors, are genuinely interested in what is going on in Canadian feature film making. Opinions on the Canadian films are widely divergent, as may well be expected; but never have I seen Canadian films taken so seriously. A healthy minority of critics, for example, felt that Gilles Carle's *La Vraie Nature de Bernadette* should win an award of some kind. The (London) *Observer* was even touting it for best picture. And I noticed that a number of non-Canadian critics were impressed by Denys Arcand's *Une Maudite Galette*. In *this* festival, it is safe to say, the Québécois films scored much higher than the English-Canadian. The whole Québec film scene is witnessing a growth in control and maturity, a shedding of some of the cultural hang-ups. But Québec films have a way to go, they still tend to be variations of the same basic script, the same posture. And simplicity tends to be a value that is unrecognized. Gilles Carle, for example, keeps on insisting that he wants every level, every point of view, *everything* to be in his films simultaneously. Shades of an early Godardian mystique? And Québécois films go on flogging the same

old dead horses, and preaching overtly what is already perlocutely obvious throughout their films: that they are for the "revolution", *i.e.*, the changing of structures and attitudes and mores. But at their best, as in Carle's latest film, there is a freshness, a humour, a free-wheeling love of the land, a celebration that offset what have become Québec clichés.

On the English-Canadian side, Eric Till's *A Fan's Notes* had its admirers, more of them "over there" than back home. But the film, I feel, is disappointing. What is particularly annoying is that the basic technical *sine-qua-non*'s, things such as the shooting, the colour processing, the sound recording, etc., are below standard. At its worst, a talky television treatment, without Till's brilliant inventiveness; but at its best, a rather novel approach, fitfully effective.

So the word for Canadian film, at least as seen through foreign eyes: very promising, Canadians are still on the verge.... All in all, the experiment seems to be working.

* * *

The second spring of directors with long and distinguished careers behind them may not be a highly significant development in world cinema. But another development is. Political involvement is now a way of life for a vast segment of international film making. And political involvement, it must be added, in a revolutionary sense.

It is no longer a question of isolated areas, even though the political cinema as such is still not big at the box office. One knows, for example, that the *cinéma québécois*, in its own way, shares in this revolutionary aesthetic. The same can be said of many Latin American countries, with Brazil still in the lead. Italy, West Germany, Sweden, Denmark, France, and perhaps most of all, The United States – the list can be extended impressively. Jean-Luc Godard, to put it mildly, no longer is a solitary pioneer.

Our western countries, by and large, may be run by middle-of-the-road governments that in no way can be typed as radical. Moreover, the over all social pattern flows along much in the same mold. And yet, judging from a mammoth film gathering such as that at Cannes, today's cinema is already at grips with what must be called radically new world socio-economic structures. For it, world structures as we experience them are already dead; it is not even matter for debate.

Film after film, for example, seems to take for granted the hopeless corruption of neo-capitalist values. Such, then, the two Italian prize winners, but even a British film such as *The Ruling Class* – a point of view, it may be added, that is shared by a huge number of film directors and critics.

The wide-spread revolt takes on many forms and colors, in a variety of guises. It may be anarchistic (the cynical *Marjoe* – USA), or it may be more classically Marxist (*Red Psalm* – Hungary). Many of the films have a highly moralistic tone, much like the edifying hagiography of the past. Typically, a Marxist hero's life (complete with appropriate lessons) is recounted, showing the evolution (or lack of same) of a man into political, social, "historical" awareness (e.g., *Reed* – Mexico; and *Sao Bernardo* – Brazil). Or the attempt may be more "Godardian", or more along the social-realism lines presently being pursued by much of the young Swedish cinema. Various political/social structures are analyzed along Marxist insights, the films remaining "open", inviting the viewer to complete the analysis, to judge for himself. All very idealistic, to be sure, but leading ironically to some sort of impasse. For these films, of very limited appeal because of their forsaking of the more pleasing "aesthetic" pole in favor of a heavy and often boring didacticism, are seen by very few, i.e., a chapel made up of the initiated, and hence have very little effica-

city among the very ones they are supposed to convert.

Cannes, then, was a very show case for revolutionary films. And particularly for films attacking militarism and the barbarisms that the military mentality calmly accepts as the inevitable (and tolerable) facts of life. The French – and this is a redical departure for the politically heavily censored French cinema – offered a study of military behaviour in the Algerian war, *Avoir Vingt Ans dans les Aurès*. Perhaps the French have decided it is now safe to discuss Algeria so many years after the fact. But the anti-militaristic lessons and sympathies of the film are clear.

As might be expected, however, the Americans are the ones really to explore this phenomenon, and to scream out in dismay and anger. *Winter Soldier*, an "anonymous team" documentary taken from the testimony of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, recounting the unspeakable and wide-spread atrocities, overwhelms the viewers with the evidence of depravity and the dehumanization of values. Another (and very good) film, *Parades*, attacks the very processes of indoctrination as practised by the U.S. Marines on their own recruits. Always the same cry: "How can we have reached this degree of insanity, where have our values gone sour, and why do we put up with it?"

The indictment against everything that has gone wrong with the U.S.A. (and by extension with most of the rich countries) reaches its most sublime expression in Daniel Berrigan's *The Trial of the Cantonville Nine*, which proved to be the most powerful, electrifying event of the Cannes Festival. The charismatic Jesuit priest, fresh out of jail, was in attendance at Cannes; and so were the young director of the film (and of the earlier theatre version), Gordon Davidson, and Gregory Peck, who financed the venture as part of a personal gesture. Their presence somehow dwarfed everything else, in terms of human dignity; and one could feel the total impact of the event on the crowds at the various showings, press conferences, etc.. A movie? Rather, a moving, dramatic/poetic presentation of free choice, a call to the human spirit, an appeal to human conscience. This film is remarkable and against the contemporary fashion in its unabashedly positive stance, an uncompromising spirit of love. Men and women suffering the indignity of prison for their convictions, but out of love: no hate, no strident



Zikkaron, directed by Laurent Coderre was the only Canadian film to win an award at Carnes this year. The NFB film won the International Union of Technical Cinematograph Associations' award for technical achievement, originality and creativeness.



George Mische (Richard Jordan) one of the co-defendants explains himself to the defense attorney (David Spielberg) during the trial of the Catonsville Nine.

posturing, no revulsion, no ego trip. **The Trial of the Cantonsville Nine**, I feel, will stand as one of the most dramatic religious witnessings (or, if you prefer, witnessings to human conscience) ever seen on film. And this whether or not one agrees with its political options.

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There is one final (and perhaps surprising) observation worth making. The American films just mentioned are merely part of a remarkably wide-spread and widely acknowledged phenomenon: the clear superiority of the Americans in world cinema 1972. The Americans, first of all, are by far the most exciting creators not only in the area of the political cinema, but in other areas not generally considered as part of the big commercial film trade. For example, a devastating, wicked little animation feature called **Fritz the Cat**, definitely *not* out of Disneyland; an incredibly cynical "documentary", **Marjoe**, about a lying revivalist preacher now "converted" – and still lying and exploiting *us*; Paul Morrissey's **Heat**, a mad, over-long film, yet so perceptive of the pathos within even the most freakish of human behaviour.

And as for that big commercial American cinema, well, we've all known for years what is wrong there: the slavish courting of the latest fad (at the moment, violence), the addiction to formula entertainments, the lack of depth and sincerity, the *now* in self-indulgent pessimism that sells so nicely, the inability to follow mature vision all the way artisti-

cally (at least in comparison to what was achieved by post-War Europeans and by certain great Americans of the distant and not-distant past).

All this may still be true of most of the "big" American films today. Yet what country can match such films as **McCabe and Mrs. Miller**, **Klute**, **The French Connection**, **Play It Again, Sam** (to name this last year's finest – even though some of these may have been missed by some of the critics)? And, of course, the phenomenal **The Godfather**. At Cannes, it was the same story: no country – not even Italy – could equal the American entries: John Huston's **Fat City**, Sydney Pollack's **Jeremiah Johnson**, and George Roy Hill's **Slaughterhouse-Five**.

A conclusion? Not really. It may be that the American cinema is set for a sparkling re-birth of quality. Or it may simply be that the U.S. has been less victimized by the general let-down all over the world. Is it that film artists have been unable to catch up with the changed production conditions, the new sophisticated machinery, the powerful pressures from industry or government, the continued intrusion of television? Whatever the answer, one thing for sure: these are not good days, the world over, in terms of heightened cinematic art. But it is the Americans who seem best able to cope with the new conditions, new film forms, and (new) contemporary themes.

t h e e n d

OFFICERS ELECTED BY S.F.M.

At the recent Annual General Meeting of the Society of Film Makers, held in Montreal, the following officers were elected:

President – Peter Adamakos, Montreal;
 1st Vice P. – Raoul Fox, Montreal;
 2nd Vice P. – Peter Jones, Vancouver;
 2nd Vice P. – Stanley Fox, Toronto;
 Sec Treas. – David Green, Montreal;
 Ass. Sec Treas. – Peter Benison, Montreal;
 Directors –
 Wally Gentleman, Montreal;
 Grant Maclean, Toronto;
 Tom Shandel, Vancouver;
 Past Pres. Ex-officio – Donald Brittain, Montreal.

FILM CANADIANA

Film Canadiana, the quarterly film magazine, which documents about three hundred films per issue needs information! In order to place more stress on Canadian content, information is needed from Canadian producers and directors about their productions as Film Canadiana is attempting to be as accurate and complete as possible. The magazine is also interested in documenting amateur and student efforts as well as professional work. Producers and directors interested in submitting information for publication should contact:

Louise Chenier, Editor
 Canadian Film Institute,
 1762 Carling Avenue,
 Ottawa 13, Ontario
 1-613-729-6193

Data sheets will be supplied upon request.

TSB GETS GRANT

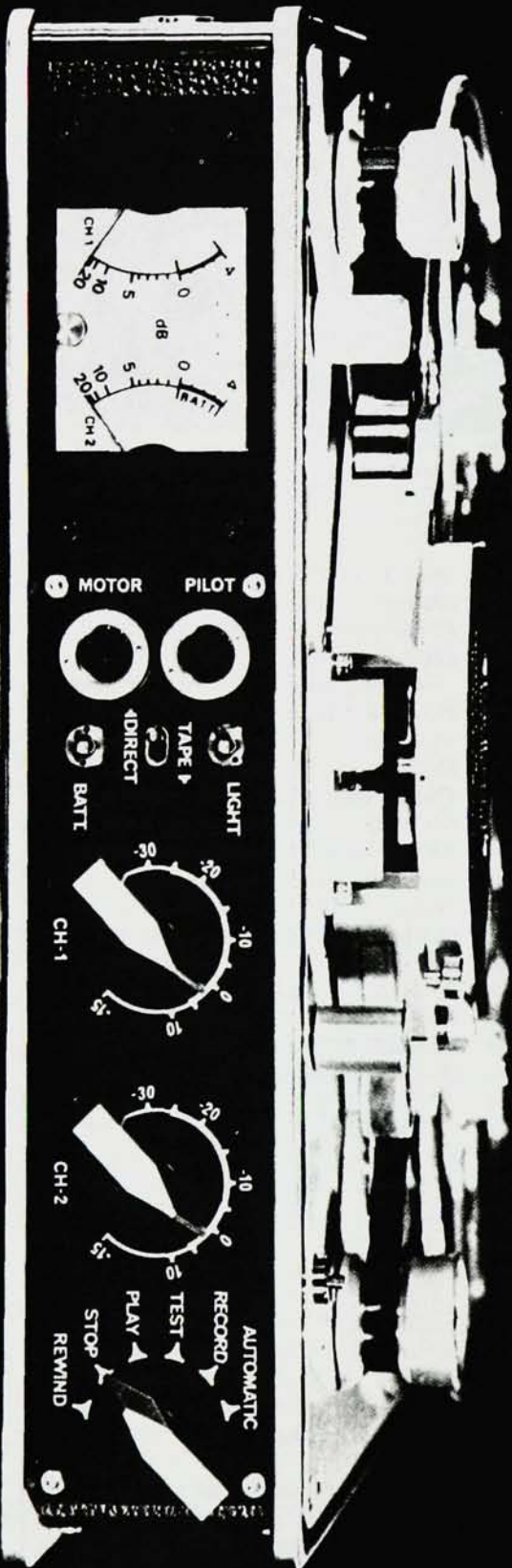
THAT'S SHOW BUSINESS, a Canadian entertainment newspaper, has received a Canada Council grant to promote the publication. The staff of the paper, under editor Bette Laderoute, is taking a one issue break to move into new offices and do some re-organizing, and then will get on with the business of publishing a new improved paper. Next big issue comes out August 4.

RESEARCH PAPER COMPLETED

Cinema Canada would like to congratulate Mr. William Nassau on completion of his research report at Waterloo Lutheran University concerning the first public showing of motion pictures projected on a screen in front of a paying audience occurred fifty years before Edison and the Lumiere Brothers. We would also like to thank Mr. Nassau for the aid he gave the editors in the distribution of the magazine throughout Canada's universities and colleges.

Sp 7 =

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$\Delta \nu = 0.1$ %	u = $\int_{0.1}^{1.5}$ mV
f = 12,800 C/s	$\Delta f = 1 \cdot 10^{-3}$
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