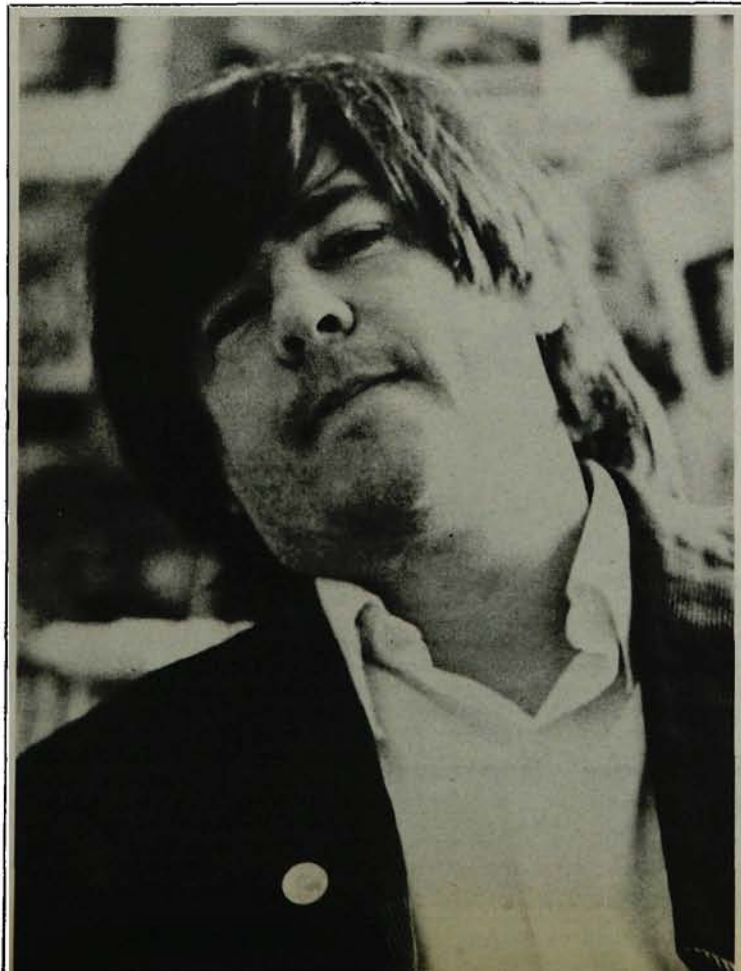


photos: Lois Siegel



The director's fear of the blank screen

by Michael Dorland

"On est toujours son seul et propre référent" - Forcier

André Forcier, 35 and a filmmaker, stared morosely at the bottle of Brador before him. That morning he'd woken up feeling down. Now the down sat perched upon his shoulder like a pet monkey, nibbling at his mind. Forcier would have liked to drink himself into the comfortable stupor where existential concerns no longer obtrude. Instead, he had to do an interview, yet another interview, and force himself to answer all those stupid questions, that cannot be answered, like "Why do you make films?" and "How do you situate yourself vis-à-vis Québécois filmmaking?"

"*Quel con!*"¹ Forcier muttered, including himself in the expletive as well as the interviewer who would assail him with impossible questions.

Journalists, a collection of *cons*: not only impertinent but ignorant to boot. One, on television, after a long exposé on laxatives, had called Forcier 'Mr. Fortier,' then had referred to Frank, one of the central characters in Forcier's fourth feature *Au clair de la lune*, as 'Franck.'

Another, in print this time, had gone on about Forcier's "instability" or some such off-the-rack psychoanalytic key as the explanation of Forcier and his films.

"How can you explain life?" Forcier wondered. "Short of being *con*, you don't sit down before a blank piece of paper or an empty screen and announce that you wish to demonstrate something. Me, I don't want to explain anything. It's all just bullshit."

Being proud, Forcier felt full of discrimination. Journalists were neither proud nor discriminating, so you could tell them anything. That was what made dealing with them such a mixture of pleasure and revulsion - pleasure at the enormity of one's lies, followed by revulsion before one's own *connerie*.

Forcier sipped his beer and rehearsed. "These days I'm studied in colleges. Marc-André Forcier, born in '47 of a policeman father and a mother who was an operator for Bell Telephone. It was a Saturday during a heat-wave. Baptised the next day at St-Edouard Church. At the age of one I fell in my walker down two flights of stairs. The next day I was taken to the doctor for an examination. They found nothing wrong apparently.

"It was just after the war. I have memories of myself at six months, at eight months, at a year-and-a-half. Nobody believes me. I can remember parades - in Montreal after the war there were a slew of marching bands. I remember the Queen's visit in 1952, on St-Denis Street. I remember... getting plastered in Plattsburgh. I was born *con*, I'll die *con*."

Forcier impatiently brushed the hair out of his eyes, and looked at the time.

"There's no interview here," he thought, "because the basis of it all is whimsy. Why does one make films? To be loved? Because we hate ourselves? All that is just stupidity. There is nothing fundamental in the development of a work of art. There is nothing that is being shown. All these pretensions at explanation are just things that are said afterwards."

Forcier stared out the window. What was he doing sitting by a window, with the sun streaming in? Forcier hated the light. He'd always preferred the gloom and the rain. When he was four, he'd lie to his mother just to be able to stay longer outside in the rain walking alone around the block, around and around. That was why he invented the character of Frank, an Albino, a person with a horror of light. Was that really why? Or was it because he'd liked what Cioran the philosopher had written about the fear of light in his *Précis de décomposition*? Forcier didn't know: he didn't know anything, didn't know why he was here, didn't know why he'd agreed to this interview.

"It's all whim. All that interests me, everything I live, are emotions. I wanted to start from scratch on a blank screen. Yeah, that's it: I tell myself I'm mentally ill. I'm not normal. I was six years old and they were telling me I wasn't normal. I'm sick. And I want to express myself. And I say there's nothing to say."

Obsessions. Forcier obsessively emptied his beer and obsessively ordered another and continued to remember.

"I was fascinated by the idea of someone allergic to the light. And I had another character who kept going through my mind - someone with arthritis, with fingers so swollen they could no longer fit into a bowling-ball. I wanted to do something in the tone of *commedia dell'arte*, a comical film where the situations would turn on emotions. I didn't want the characters to be cynical.

"I must have begun writing *Au clair de la lune* sometime in '77. I took my time with it. Subsequently, I attended an actors' workshop in Ottawa - there was Guy L'Écuyer and Michel Côté, then appearing in a play in Ottawa. With them it really exploded."

Forcier hesitated. The sun was gone; slowly the nightmare memories advanced upon him, and the sinking realization that he would have to talk about them during the interview. Later, Forcier forced his mind to stick to the chronology.

"*Au clair de la lune* is full of the generosity of its actors. It's an immense conspiracy of complicity. If I've worked largely with the same people, it's because I haven't made very many films. To work with someone like L'Écuyer is a privilege. He's an actor of extraordinary diversity: the owner of a bar-salon (*Bar Salon*), a homosexual chef (*L'eau chaude l'eau frette*), or a human billboard (*Au clair de la lune*). I steal his richness. I'm just a thief."

Forcier stared morosely at his beer, then he plunged into the memories of that terrible winter of '79-'80.

"It's awful to talk about the production of a film; it only makes the film that much more vulnerable. The shoot was a nightmare. It was 40 below zero, and we were cold. One after the other the principal players fell ill. There was no room in which to manoeuvre. We had to pay the technicians nonetheless; they were under contract. I work from a very tight script. I don't shoot like a master - I shoot in one shot. So even if one lead player was ill, I could shoot the other.

"As far as I knew, we had the money for principal photography and for post-production. With that money we shot the film, but there was nothing left for post-production. We had a little money left, \$2,000, but not enough to complete the film.

"The producers pretty rapidly came up with a financing solution, but then there was a lobby against us. There

were all kinds of rumors going around: that we were too young, and it was time we were taught a lesson. There were rumors that we'd run up debts, that it was a bad production, that we weren't serious people.

"*Bar Salon* was shot for \$58,000 - under budget; *Nightcap* - under budget, the only one of that NFB series; *L'eau chaude l'eau frette*, budgeted at \$373,000 came in at \$368,000 - under budget; *Le retour de l'immaculée Conception* and *Chroniques labradoriennes* I paid for out of my own pocket; *Au clair de la lune* - \$912,000: under budget.

"The wait lasted three years - three years during which it was impossible to do anything. I was able to assemble the film but it was unfinished - there were none of the special effects. In the meantime I got hired on as a director at the National Film Board. I'm very proud to be with the National Film Board of Canada - it's a haven of freedom.

"I've tried to forget all that; I've forgotten the time it took; I haven't counted the days. I suffered. *Au clair de la lune* is a film that I vomit forth. It was a nightmare.

"I didn't want to go back to it. I didn't want to know anything about that film. Bernard Lalonde, one of my producers, was tremendously supportive. When I did get back to it, I'd almost lost all contact with the film. I saw it as a challenge: after all that had happened, was it still possible to have fun with this film? It still seemed to contain emotions, ideas that were worth putting across, there was still something to be done with that film. I decided to orient it in the direction of its emotions. I decided to fuck the chronology. I took the idea of the voice-over from another film I'll never shoot. I drew on elements from that film to tell the story of this one. *Au clair de la lune* is completely different

from the film I wanted to make.

"I wanted to make a film that escaped time. I didn't want to situate the film in 'Quebecitude' or Canadianity - it was as if I'd intuited the worst blows. I wanted the film not to be framed by reality. I wanted the costumes to be beyond time, beyond fashion. And Montreal not to be that of '69 any more than that of '80. I wanted the film outside of time - to protect it from something I feared, as though I was expecting a catastrophe.

"So I wanted a film shot entirely in artificial decors, in which each natural element of the décor would be transformed into artifice: that's why I used colored lighting, that's why the fake snowstorm, that's why the roman candles in the wheel-rims, that's why the aurora borealis. But these aren't 'effects', they're integral."

Forcier laughed bitterly. "So we played the lighting card, and we played the color card, we played all the cards. Out of whimsy. It's all vanity. Why make films? For nothing. I don't know why I make films.

"Yes, I know. I learned to make films at school. I was good at it. At the Longueuil classical college, there was an experimental course on filmmaking. Me, I was always last in my class in method and I wasn't intelligent enough to learn Greek. Just as stupid as always. They stuck me in a plastic arts and cinema major, and I showed talent at it; I learned how to make a script really tight; I caught on right away; I picked up the language of film like that. And as I was learning that, I started to write about films since they made me write film reviews. So I learned to write. And I was very good in French and film. You make films because you were good at it in school. It's stupid, but that's how it is.

"So I've made this film, and I'm certain that it works, that it'll touch people. But

what kind of bargaining power does that give me? You English say, 'You're only as good as your last film.' This morning I don't want to continue.

"I didn't want any of this. I wanted the film to come out in a small theatre; they said it could take a large theatre. They put me before a *fait accompli*. So now I give interviews, I go on TV.

"As for where it leaves me, it leaves me in the middle-income bracket of Film Board directors, earning just under \$36,000 a year. Roughly what a first-class police officer gets after four years. But that's important. Before, I didn't have credit cards. Now I've got a whole handful and Mastercard has called wanting to boost my credit limit."

Forcier ordered another beer, slyly pleased with himself.

"There is in *Au clair de la lune* a certain lightness of tone that is taken for the film's thesis when it isn't. There is the tone of the film and there is its content; and the tone irritates because it is contradictory to the content. It's a light film; you laugh a lot. The laughter is light, or rather it lightens, but is not itself light. It's a hypocritical film because the tone does not fit with the content. It's a snide film; but then being is snide.

"There is cynicism in the special effects; that I admit. I don't know if you'd call it a wink, I hope so. But I think the courage of the characters surpasses all that. To me it's a film about courageous people. I like the courage of Bert's comeback; I like the courage of Léopoldine Dieumegarde who is a veritable little Mother Courage. I like Frank's cowardliness - it takes guts to live like a coward in a welfare society. I think they're all courageous.

"But then I'm always the first spectator of my films. How can one be in the heads of others? One is always alone and one's own reference point. The Other is an imaginary referent. The fact of being one and of not being born two is the fact of solitude. It's the fact of *Au clair de la lune*, which is the symbiosis of solitude, the osmosis of solitude. And the cynicism of the film is the hallucination brought about by hope - that provokes the image of the difference of the Other. *Au clair de la lune* is about two separate beings: an intellectual (Frank) and a *naïf* (Bert). I am the Albino. I would rather have been Bert. I would have liked to be able to believe.

"I would have rather not been an artist, I would have rather lacked in nothing. I would like to fade out when I come home in the evening and not drag my job around in my head 24 hours a day. I would have liked to have a stamp collection and been happy collecting stamps. I would have liked to be a bee-keeper, a prime-minister, an aviator, a waiter in a tavern with lots of tips. I would have liked to admire... Instead I'm a sick individual who makes films just to get it on with women. There's only Bergman who doesn't make films to get it on with women. He's a sincere human being. *Quel con!*"

Forcier looked up from his reverie to see the interviewer heading towards him, tape-recorder slung over his shoulder, eyes shifting with treachery.

Oh merde, Forcier thought, now it would begin...

"Are you André Fortier, the filmmaker?"

● "It was 40 below, and we were cold; *Au clair de la lune* is a film I vomit forth."



1/ The word "con" literally signifies the visible portion of the female sex organs. However, to the Cartesian mind, its meaning extends to encompass a general condemnation of the fleshly. To be "con", finally, is to be human. Thus the wide usage of the word as a universal expression of contempt.

André Forcier's

Au Clair de la lune

"Mon pays ce n'est pas un pays c'est l'hiver," sings Gilles Vigneault in a famous song. Since Voltaire's curt dismissal of Canada as some arpent of snow, winter has been this country's curse just as it has been its fate. Not surprisingly it is a Québécois, André Forcier, who has made the definitive film about our country, winter.

In *Bar Salon* (1975), Forcier's second feature film, winter was in appropriately desolate shades of grey and dirty white, the mud-caked desperation of filthy Februaries, bleak and relentless, an infinity of grey tomorrows in which twice-marginalized human beings (marginalized first by nature then by the economy) still managed to sparkle in the incandescence of their futility.

Au clair de la lune returns to winter but now, in 35mm colour, it is winter as magic, as a carnival of swirling cotton puffs, the candy-cotton stuff of dreams in the silences of eternity. This is winter as a sacred space, a mantle for the creation of life-myths in technicolor.

Here in the quiet of the snow-bound back alleys of Montreal, *Au clair de la lune* tells the story of the friendship of two men who live inside the frozen hulk of a green 1971 Chev in a parking lot behind the Moonshine Bowling alley.

François "Frank" (Michel Côté) is an Albino from the mythic land of Albinie. Albert "Bert" Bolduc (Guy L'Écuyer) is a former bowling champion, reduced by arthritis to a human billboard for the Moonshine. Chased through the alleys by the Dragons, the local authority figures who drive their souped-up cars on tireless rims as sparks stream forth like roman candles, Bert finds Frank seemingly frozen to death and brings him back to life.

"Au clair de la lune" is also a French children's song, the second and third lines of which go: "Prêtes-moi ta plume pour écrire un mot, ma chandelle est morte, je n'ai plus de feu" (Lend me your pen so that I can write, my candle has died and I'm out of fire). The film *Au clair de la lune*, then, would seem to be about the role of art in the service of the Resurrection.

In this space between life and death, Forcier deploys the characters that inhabit his obsessions. Under the winking lights of the nighttime neons of the urban *néant*, the shuffling shadows of the lumpen proletariat dissolve to take on human form: Ti-Kid Radio (Gaston Lepage) in his fringed leather jacket delivering smoked-meat sandwiches on his bike for the Rainbow Sweets restaurant, riding on tireless rims and talking only in English CB dialect as he dreams of becoming a Dragon; Léopoldine Dieumegarde (Lucie Miville), another of Forcier's precocious girl-women, as The Maniac who goes around puncturing car tires in a desperate, loving bid to save her father's recycled-tire business from bankruptcy; or Alfred, custodian of the Moonshine, who shares his Valium with Ti-Beu, his dog and companion in senility.

It is a world seen through the frozen bottom of an empty bottle of Benlylin cough syrup, the local champagne. If it is a world where all that glitters is not gold, at least the pile of quarters that Franks earns running a tire-protection

racket do gleam, as do the characters' eyes when they light up with manic inspiration.

Here - even here - hope springs eternal and fantasies have their own necessity as that cynical myth-maker Frank knows as he schemes to cure Bert's arthritis and so allow him to make a comeback at the Moonshine tournament.

Au clair de la lune is an ascension - from the lower depths to those peaks of experience from where, in the words of Frank's wonderfully cynical voice-over, "at last you can savor the miracle of life" and recall "the follies of our winters." Frank 'cures' Bert's arthritis and Bert makes a comeback beyond his wildest dreams. But, as Frank narrates, "the last folly is always the one you must expiate."

After the initial violence of the shock of mortality, the fall back into the depths is as gentle as the flutter of the surrounding snow. All of a sudden Bert's hair is as white as Frank's who had upon this day promised to take Bert to Albinie.

Huddled in their car as the great cold sets in, at last out of fire except for one final bottle of tournament champagne, the two friends, now purified as Albert and François, prepare to discover that Albinie is Death. As the Moonshine parking lot echoes with their hilarity at the thought they will be "congealed like Walt Disney", the snow falls softly covering the roof of the green Chev. *Hiberna vincit omnia*.

To die congealed is to die in a state of suspended animation. This posits resurrection - but only as in the case of Disney, whose body was cryonized, as a technological intervention. When Frank says, "At least the worms won't eat us until summer," this denotes the residue of a belief in resurrection as myth ("summer") and as a process of natural teleology (worms) that is at the same time implicitly denied by the locus of death (inside a car, moveable technology). For without resurrection, life is simply a story of progressive putrefaction.

Already under the weight of winter, life is stunted, frozen and immobilized; and life myths are not certainties, merely delusions. Against winter's frozen eter-

nity, life becomes a corruption. Behind the magical illusions of *Au clair de la lune* a soundless scream points to the horrors of impossible existence.

In Forcier's horror-filled vision these diminished human beings shit and piss, bleed and pustulate. They are not the living dead but, worse, the rotting living, tumbling towards a meaningless death buoyed upon the froth of their illusions. Forcier (who always slips himself into his films as either retarded, mute or an idiot), because he cannot bear to articulate the truth, contents himself with dumb-struck descriptions of the opium of the people that are the people themselves.

Yet in the face of the anti-humanism of winter, Forcier, much like the society of the inhabitants, can only reach for another anti-humanism, that of technology. Perhaps in (literally) animating the depths of the delusions of his characters, it was his way of drawing attention to them. Instead, the animation technology only produces their gross manipulation. In this sense, *Au clair de la lune* is Forcier's most cynical film: for nothing, not even art, can save these wretched creatures. And the price we pay for winter (for living in the techno-state) is an eternal condemnation to colorful futility.

While *Au clair de la lune* is manifestly Forcier's vision, many people helped realize it. Voltaire, of course, and E.M. Cioran, the Roumanian Nietzsche, get screen credits for providing philosophical inspiration. The screenplay is shared between producers Louis Laverdière and Bernard Lalonde, L'Écuyer, Forcier, Côté, long-time collaborator Jacques Marcotte and Forcier's neighbor, filmmaker Michel Pratt. Other veterans of the Forcier *équipe* include regular DOP François Gill who is also the editor of the film. *Au clair de la lune* was co-produced with the National Film Board who lent the unmistakable signature of Sidney Goldsmith for the special animation effects and made it possible for *Au clair* to be properly completed. In Bert, Guy L'Écuyer has delivered a diamond-hard performance of brilliant bathos and Michel Côté's Frank has all the sorrow of stardust. Joël

Bienvenue's mocking musical score adds just the right touch of persiflage. *Au clair de la lune* is a film of immense sadness. For in the absence of the Resurrection is the Life: *this* life, such as it is.

Appropriately then, *Au clair de la lune* was plagued with completion problems, yet another example of the kinds of crucifixions that chronically keep Canadian art from Canadians. Along the lines of the same principle, it is equally unlikely that *Au clair de la lune* will receive the wide distribution it deserves outside Quebec. In Quebec, however, thanks to the heroic efforts of the independent distributor Cinéma Libre, of which Forcier is one of the co-founders, the film will get what he calls a "normal" distribution.

In a sense the timing is perfect. In *Au clair de la lune*, this *Wunderkind* of Quebec cinema (who began making films at 19) has effected a fascinating synthesis of his two earlier features, *Bar Salon* and *L'eau chaude l'eau frette* (1976). If the former film was bleak to the point of despair (though balanced against the hard pretension of its realism) the latter was too much of a sitcom, sacrificing its cutting edge for the respite of a mid-summer's eve. Not for nothing was *L'eau chaude* acclaimed in Italy where its spirit was recognized as Mediterranean. But this says more about the climactic schizophrenia of Canada where summer is the illusion and winter the reality.

Au clair de la lune confirms Forcier - now 35 - in his true stature as the bard of these winters of our discontent. Yet though rooted in this quintessentially Canadian context, *Au clair de la lune* also transcends it to achieve a superior universality through its concentration on what Hannah Arendt, in a comment on Chaplin, called "the entrancing charm of the little people."

Forcier, as reclusive as Howard Hughes, had skipped town for the press screening of the film over which he has labored since 1979. He left in his wake one sentence, like the tail of a comet: "I sought in the time of a life a sort of space that would contain the smallness of the century." He did not need to add that that space could only be a coffin; appropriately a North American car.

Michael Dorland ●

AU CLAIR DE LA LUNE d. André Forcier
 exec. p. Bernard Lalonde, Louis Laverdière p. dir.
 Laverdière, Marthe Pelletier p. co-ord. Edouard
 Davidovici p. asst. René Deniger, Roland Carrier,
 Jean-Paul Lebourhys, Michel Toutan, Fabrice Gabi-
 land loc. man. Suzanne Girard, Michel Siry sc.
 Forcier, Jacques Marcotte, Michel Pratt, Guy L'Écuyer,
 Michel Côté, Bernard Lalonde asst. sc. Michele
 Leduc, Marthe Pelletier a.d. Pierre Gendron, Marie-
 André Brouillard art d. Gilles Aird tech. dir. Forcier,
 François Gill d.o.p. François Gill, André Gagnon
 asst. cam. Michel Caron, Daniel Vincelette key
 grip Marc de Ernsted grip Jean-Maurice de Ernsted
 gaffer Richer Francoeur, head: Jean Courteau,
 Denis Menard, Jacques Girard sd. ed. Mathieu
 Decary sd. asst. Alain Corneau, Marcel Fraser
 props Patrice Bingle, Louis Craig sp. efx. Louis
 Laverdière, Sidney Goldsmith cost. des. François
 Laplante ward. Diane Paquet make-up Mickie
 Hamilton set des. Gilles Aird neg. cut. Dagmar
 Gueissaz stunt dir. Marcel Fournier sd. efx. Ken
 Page opt. efx. sup. Louis Laverdière opt. efx.
 prep. Walter Howard, Susan Gourley mixer Jean-
 Pierre Joutel, Adrian Groll music comp. Joël Bien-
 venue mus. sup. Catherine Gadouas mus. rec.
 Louis Hone, Joël Bienvenue lab. Bellevue-Pathé,
 NFB color comp. Gundrun Kanz, André Gagnon
 cast. cons. Lise Abastados unit pub. Marie Decary
 dist. (word-wide) Cinéma Libre, 35mm color,
 running time: 90 min. p.c. Les Productions Albinie
 lp. Guy L'Écuyer, Michel Côté, Lucie Miville, Robert
 Gravel, Michel Gagnon, Gaston Lepage, J.-Leo
 Gagnon, Ti-beu, Elise Varo, Louise Gagnon, Pierre
 Girard, Marcel Fournier, Gilles Lafleur, Yvon Le-
 compte, Charlie Beauchamp, Stéphane L'Écuyer,
 Dino des Laurentides, Gros-Louis.



The 1983 Genies : Looking back upon tomorrow

by Connie Tadros

The 1983 Genie awards were the industry's swan song for the film boom that was. The five films in nomination for Best Picture had all been made in 1981, the last year for films pieced together with private investments. Several of them — *The Grey Fox*, *Quest for Fire* and *Une journée en taxi* — had production stories more dramatic than anything that got on the screen. These were the films that almost didn't get made, caught as they were in an industry fast coming apart as investors scrambled off the ship. But if these films mark the end of Canada's tax-shelter production boom, they also point to the future and the divergent paths Canadian production will take.

The critics were unanimous in stating that this year's nominees were the best ever presented by the Academy to its members. In fact, it's more like a draw. In 1982, the Genies offered us The Year of the Director in which Ralph Thomas, Don Shebib, Gilles Carle, Eric Till and Allan King were responsible for the films which were honored. It seemed that the boom was finally throwing up the directors everyone felt could give Canada a distinctive film vision. Certainly *Ticket to Heaven*, *Heartaches* and *Les Plouffe* still look very good.

This year, the best films were of two sorts. With *The Grey Fox* and *Une journée en taxi*, Phil Borsos and Robert Menard proved that young directors with first feature films could get support to make the best of films. With *Threshold*, *Quest for Fire* and *Harry Tracy*, the producers showed that proven international directors, surrounded by Canadian talent, can bring home respectable films tailored for the world market.

In both years, the films were fine indeed, though this year surely Jean-Pierre Lefebvre's delicate *Les fleurs sauvages* should have replaced the lightweight *Harry Tracy* in the Best Motion Picture category.

The awards

It was reassuring to see most of the awards go to the right people: there is always a latent fear that the Academy voting system, asking the industry to vote for its own, will turn up bizarre, inappropriate choices.¹

Most gratifying of all was to see Peter O'Brian and Phil Borsos honored for *The Grey Fox*. Borsos, in graciously thanking the Canada Council for its support through years of making shorts and documentaries, underlined once again the exceptional help the Council does give young filmmakers: help, incidental-

ly, that is virtually unparalleled in most other countries.

O'Brian reflected the satisfaction of seeing a creative producer steal the thunder from those tax-shelter producers who have regrouped in the ACMPC² and have made so much noise in recent years. O'Brian, and many of his CAMPP colleagues, have been around longer than the Drabinskys, Cooper-Cohens, and Slans of this world. And though the latter have made their own important contributions to Canadian film, their association has sufficiently bad-mouthed other producers until it seemed that the O'Brians might not make it in the current climate. For those who remember titles like *Me* and *Love at First Sight*, the satisfaction was palpable.

There does seem to be in the Academy, a certain perversity about rejecting the opinions of others concerning our films. Did *Quest for Fire*, which beat out every other French film this year to win the

César for Best Film in France really not measure up to *The Grey Fox*? And did *Les fleurs sauvages*, which won the FIPRESCI award at Cannes, not even deserve to get in the running? As in 1981, when *Les bons débarras* won over *Atlantic City* for best picture, is there a hidden agenda on which it is written that the indigenous under-dog gets the benefit of the doubt when the votes are cast?

There were a few anomalies. Both Jackie Burroughs and R.H. Thomson seemed uncomfortable with their awards for Best Supporting Actress and Actor, as well they should have been. She was in the wrong category, obviously having held the lead role next to Farnsworth in *Grey Fox*. As for Thomson, his was a career award, honoring his considerable work in interesting films like *Tyler*, *Surfacing* and *Ticket to Heaven*. Like Kate Lynch before him, who won for her role in *Meatballs*, he

must have felt pleased with the recognition but sorry that it had come for an unsubstantial film like *If You Could See What I Hear*. The Best Supporting awards would have been just as appropriate for Clare Coulter for her uncanny portrayal of a social worker in *By Design* and for Wayne Robson in *The Grey Fox*.

Of the Best Original Song, let it suffice to say that if votes had been cast the evening of the Genies, when everyone had had a chance to hear Raoul Duguay sing "Le quêteux d'amour" from *Les fleurs sauvages*, Burton Cummings would have gone home empty-handed.

The question of Quebec

Which does indirectly bring up the question of Quebec. And among the Québécois, there is real and reasonable doubt as to whether their films are seen and understood by the members of the Academy.

While the Academy boasts 600 paying



• A winning combination: David Brady, Richard Farnsworth, Jackie Burroughs, Peter O'Brian...



• ...and Philip Borsos, all of *The Grey Fox*

Photos: Brian Anderson

AWARDS

members, with about 160 from Quebec, a head-count in that province shows francophones and anglophones about evenly split, and the two solitudes are every bit as estranged there as elsewhere. Gaffes over the years – like confusing Micheline Lanctôt and Julie Vincent in *Silent Scream* in 1981, and omitting *Les fleurs sauvages* this year – have led to paranoia. With seven nominations for *Une journée en taxi*, Robert Ménard is clearly heard as he wonders what happened on the way to the Genies.

To some extent, the Québécois are singularly off-handed in the way they approach these awards. Every year, they send French prints to Academy screenings without sub-titles; the National Film Board did so with *Mourir à tue-tête* (*Silent Scream*) and Ménard did it with *Taxi*. A film like *The Great Chess Movie*, which got rave reviews at the Toronto festival and might well have walked off with the prize this year in the documentary category, was entered by the NFB under its French title, *Jouer sa vie*. How many Academy members knew it was the same film?

The Academy has a board of directors of 21 people. Of that number, only one – Louise Carré – is a francophone, and she is an "honorary member." The rest seem absolutely insensitive to the need to respond to the French. Dave Thomas' joke about being unilingual – and the very fact that the host could not speak French – is one measure of the distance the Academy must still travel. Paul Hofert's effort to compensate, though brave, was so stressful for him that at the end of a long paragraph in French, he welcomed us all to the Junos instead of the Genies!

There was singular irony, lost on the Toronto crowd, in giving the only Quebec award to *Elvis Gratton*, a short about the bastardization of Quebec society. Although Julien Poulin's acceptance speech was funny for about three seconds and then swiftly deteriorated into an exercise in bad taste, a point was made. There is a political element to the goings-on at the Genies. The Academy can surely understand that the entire Genie exercise is not just a gathering of the clan to share in-jokes and old stories. It is the industry's once-a-year chance to do something about the consciousness of the people who watch the show at home, the people who are being offered a chance to see a Canadian film.

And how about the public?

To suggest that there was a real problem of "tone" this year would be to put things mildly, and the CBC must largely be held to account for this.

The evening before the ceremony, *The Journal* promoted a special in-depth look at the Genies. Earlier on *The National*, clips repeatedly urged us to stay-tuned-to-*The Journal*-and-see-why-winning-a-Genie-doesn't-amount-to-a-hill-of-beans. When *The Journal* report was aired, it was deplorable. The Genies were used to make a point about the distribution of features in Canada. It was one of the worst examples of manipulative journalism I've seen in a while, and industry people who participated felt sorely used. Marcia Couëlle, for instance, was interviewed on film for 45 minutes; she is an ardent supporter of the Genies ever since *Les bons débarras* won two years ago. The clip mentioned only that the film had not yet made its money back. Peter O'Brian and Jay Scott were also appalled by the editing done



● In the limelight: Charlene Woodard (*Hard Feelings*) and Best Actress Rae Dawn Chong (*Quest for Fire*)



● The CFDC's André Lamy gets in the mood with Denise Mulvey—celebrating his new wealth?



● Elvis Gratton himself—Julien Poulin by day—with Cinema Canada's Del Mehes

1983 PRIX GENIE AWARDS

Congratulations — Félicitations!

The following is a complete list of the
1983 Genie Award winners in all categories:

Voici la liste des lauréats
dans chacune des catégories:

Best Motion Picture

Meilleur film

THE GREY FOX — Peter O'Brian

Best Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role

Meilleure interprétation masculine dans un rôle principal

Donald Sutherland — THRESHOLD

Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role

Meilleure interprétation féminine dans un rôle principal

Rae Dawn Chong — QUEST FOR FIRE

Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role

Meilleure interprétation masculine dans un rôle secondaire

R.H. Thomson — IF YOU COULD SEE WHAT I HEAR

Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Role

Meilleure interprétation féminine dans un rôle secondaire

Jackie Burroughs — THE GREY FOX

Best Performance by a Foreign Actor

Meilleur acteur étranger

Richard Farnsworth — THE GREY FOX

Best Performance by a Foreign Actress

Meilleure actrice étrangère

Glynnis O'Connor — MELANIE

Best Achievement in Art Direction

Meilleur directeur artistique

THE GREY FOX — Bill Brodie

Best Achievement in Costume Design

Meilleurs costumes

QUEST FOR FIRE — John Hay

Best Achievement in Cinematography

Meilleur directeur de la photographie

THRESHOLD — Michel Brault

Best Achievement in Direction

Meilleur réalisateur

THE GREY FOX — Phillip Borsos

Best Achievement in Film Editing

Meilleur monteur

QUEST FOR FIRE — Yves Langlois

Best Achievement in Sound Editing

Meilleur monteur — son

QUEST FOR FIRE — Ken Heeley-Ray, Martin Ashbee,
David Evans, Kevin Ward

Best Music Score

Meilleure musique

THE GREY FOX — Michael Conway Baker

Best Original Song

Meilleure chanson originale

MELANIE "Save My Soul" — Burton Cummings

Best Original Screenplay

Meilleur scénario original

THE GREY FOX — John Hunter

Best Screenplay Adapted from Another Medium

Meilleur scénario — adaptation d'un autre médium

MELANIE — Richard Paluck

Best Achievement in Overall Sound

Meilleur son d'ensemble

QUEST FOR FIRE — Ken Heeley-Ray, Joe Grimaldi, Austin Grimaldi,
Claude Hazanavicius, Don White

Best Theatrical Short

Meilleur court métrage

ELVIS GRATTON — Pierre Falardeau, Julien Poulin

Best Theatrical Documentary

Meilleur documentaire

THE DEVIL AT YOUR HEELS — Bill Brind, Robert Fortier,
Adam Symansky

The Academy's special annual award, the **Air Canada Award**, was presented to Fin Quinn for outstanding contributions to the business of filmmaking in Canada by Michel Fournier, Vice President, Public Affairs, Air Canada.

L'Académie du cinéma Canadien a également remis le Prix de l'industrie cinématographique canadienne d'Air Canada à Fin Quinn en reconnaissance de sa longue carrière au service des aspects techniques du septième art au Canada; le Prix d'Air Canada a été présenté à Fin Quinn par M. Michel Fournier, vice-président aux affaires publiques d'Air Canada.



Academy of Canadian Cinema/Académie du cinéma canadien
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AIR CANADA ✪

AWARDS

to their comments. As for Academy head Andra Sheffer, she didn't even make it into the piece. Certainly, after listening to *The Journal* and hearing all the bad news about the Genies and the industry, the public would hardly feel tempted to stay tuned the following evening.³

As for the actual Genie show, produced by the CBC, its budget was showing. Suffering cut-backs, the presentation was drab in comparison to the previous year's stylish production, and technical problems involving the synchronization of the clips and the sound persisted.

Bruce Malloch called the evening a "recession Genie," and it was. The house was not sold out, and fewer people were dressed to the hilt. Thomas got laughs from the audience by underlining the industry's fragility and dependence on the Americans. "I haven't seen this many people from the industry together since the morning flight from Los Angeles." The put-down jokes got laughs from the audience, but I doubt whether the public tuning in had any idea why that was supposed to be funny. Thomas was a good, comic host except for the fact that the situation in the industry is not really very funny at all.

What he and his humor did serve to point up was that the entire affair is predicated on the American experience. His jokes - "Don't worry; this won't be seen in L.A. and no reputations will be ruined" - make no sense unless this assumption of a carbon-copy industry is accepted, and Canadians' set role as MacKenzie-type bumpkins corresponds to the industry's image of itself. No wonder there seems to be a problem in reaching the Canadian public.

Denis Héroux couldn't resist comparing his evening at the Genies to the reception he got at the Césars with *Quest for Fire*. "The English-Canadian public is simply disconnected to what is going on here," he commented, seeing no crowds of curious people standing by the doors of the theatre. Indeed.

The Genies are a once-a-year chance for the Canadian film community to touch the Canadian public. The staffers at the Academy are doing their best. The numbers of nominees they were able to drum out this year was impressive, and the organization can hardly be faulted. But it's up to the film community itself to shake its depression - and a very real ambivalence about its own work.

During the film boom, the only model was the American theatrical feature, and too many tried to make copies, only to find they didn't - and couldn't - best the original. The ambivalence felt by the filmmaker centered on whether this model was the right one or whether he should refuse the model and look inward for inspiration. This is the same dilemma which presents itself to the Genie ceremony. With the end of the tax shelter production comes, coincidentally, the end of the theatrical feature and the rise of the "program production industry" with its bewildering mix of series, mini-series, TV movies and theatrical spin-offs. Certainly the Academy will soon be confronted with the need to adapt its own structures to these changes and, with that chance, another one to carve out a more appropriate and meaningful ceremony. The context must cease to present Canadian filmmakers as the dim reflection of their American counterparts.

Donald Sutherland, for one, understood the implications of the current situation. In his acceptance speech, and in his gracious presence at the press



● Fin Quinn was awarded the Air Canada prize for his outstanding contribution to the industry

lunch, he knew that a point had to be made: that a Genie award was an occasion for gratitude, and that only when the players take the awards seriously will the public also come to do so. He did more in three minutes to communicate a sense of pride and excitement in the idea of winning a Canadian award than did Dave Thomas in an entire evening of hosting.

So the real question is how does one organize a Genie ceremony that reaches out to the public and creates excitement?

For those who thought the films were the best ever this year, just wait. English production next year should include *The Terry Fox Story*, *Videodrome* and *The Wars*, not to mention the lower-budgeted *The Deserters* and *That's My Baby*. From Quebec will come *Maria Chapdelaine*, *The Tin Flute* (inexcusably retitled *For the Rest of Our Lives*), *Au clair de la lune*, *Rien qu'un jeu* (which is on its way to the Directors Fortnight), *Sonatine* and *Lucien Brouillard*.

If the Academy and its members are truly ready to risk getting an appreciative public, then the show should be moved to Montreal next year. The crowds would be in the streets, and the local media coverage would be dazzling. Even the international press which the Academy might wish to fly in would be bowled-over by the enthusiasm of the province for its filmmakers and stars.

Such a decision, however, just might have to be made in spite of the Québécois... and that's the problem.

Going to Toronto and picking up an award is a bit like going to New York or Chicago. Having the party come home and being seen picking up a prize for the Best Canadian Motion Picture would

require a maturity which the Québécois film community may not yet have.

In 1973, the Canadian Film Awards were scheduled in Montreal. CBC/Radio-Canada were ready to do the first-ever bilingual show with Lise Payette (now a former minister from the Levesque government) as hostess. But Quebec filmmakers got cold feet and decided to boycott the affair, bringing the whole event down like a house of cards. Today, according to staffers at the Academy, the situation is similar. The Québécois want the event to stay in Toronto; they need the media exposure in English Canada, they say; it would be better for the Academy, and so on.

That's all very well, but the Academy needs Quebec more. It needs to catch that enthusiasm which only the Québécois public can generate, and it needs, for once, to put on a genuinely bilingual show, out of respect for and in fairness to francophone filmmakers. Moreover, it needs to articulate the kind of fundamental respect which the Québécois have for the making of films: the ingrained, culturally biased, gut reaction to film as a way of communicating to the public, and not - as Garth Drabinsky once said - to film "as an asset which generates receivables."

The 1983 Genies bid farewell to the tax shelter dealers. The coast is now clear for new and different efforts. If the Borsos and Menards are to continue, then the much-awaited federal film policy must make allowance for film directors, ready to try their hand at a first feature; for starting out is always tough. In that context, an evening at the Genies should go a long way to allow those filmmakers to enter the mainstream.

As for the others, the Héroux and Cohens, their equations now include the promise of television and the guarantees of pre-sales. In theory, this should give us more popular and substantial films than those of the past. Certainly, experience will play its part in creating quality. As for the Genies and the Academy, the task falls to it to help make that connection between the filmmakers and their public. It's a risky and difficult time, but in this often colorless country of compromise, the risk should be taken.

Notes:

(1) Voting for the Genies awarded to feature films is limited to the active members of the Academy of Canadian Cinema. Candidates for membership have to have a credit on a feature film to be eligible; this results in eliminating, for instance, all the documentary filmmakers, most of the young makers of short films, the past director of the Canadian Film Awards and all of Canada's film critics and commentators.

Although all active members can nominate in the Best Motion Picture category, only craft members can nominate in the various crafts: composers nominate best song, actors nominate actors, editors nominate editors, etc. In some crafts, like composers, the numbers of people are small, and the numbers who actually get to the screenings are even smaller. There is always the danger, therefore, that the final nomination or vote will go by default to a well-known name and may not necessarily reflect the quality of the particular work. For example, two years ago, when Julie Vincent went unmentioned for her lead role in *Mourir à tue-tête*, Micheline Lanctôt received a nomination for best leading actress in the same film, though her speaking role lasted less than five minutes.

(2) The idea of creating the Academy of Canadian Cinema originated among the producers of the Canadian Association of Motion Picture Producers (CAMPP) in 1979, when, spear-headed by Bill Marshall, producers threatened to boycott the Canadian Film Awards (CFA) unless they were given a bigger say in the proceedings. (The CFA had been run by a committee made up of representatives of all the various associations and guilds.) The new ACC, on a \$50,000 grant from the CFDC, replaced the CFA.

CAMPP itself was a splinter group of feature filmmakers which broke from the Canadian Film and Television Association. Several members of Quebec's Association des producteurs de films (APFQ) joined CAMPP though retaining membership in the APFQ as well. While the CFTA and the APFQ had proper organizations, with permanent staff, offices, well-defined membership criteria, and the like, CAMPP seemed more fluid, accepting producers, line-producers, production managers, etc. as full members, and running affairs out of the offices of the president. CAMPP membership swelled to over 50.

By 1981, the nine producers of feature films who had been most active during the boom period were being out-voted by the others in CAMPP, and decided to split once again, creating the Association of Canadian Movie Production Companies (ACMPC), and leaving the "line-producers" at CAMPP to fend for themselves. The former group was soon referred to as the "gang of nine"; its Quebec members also severed their relations with the APFQ.

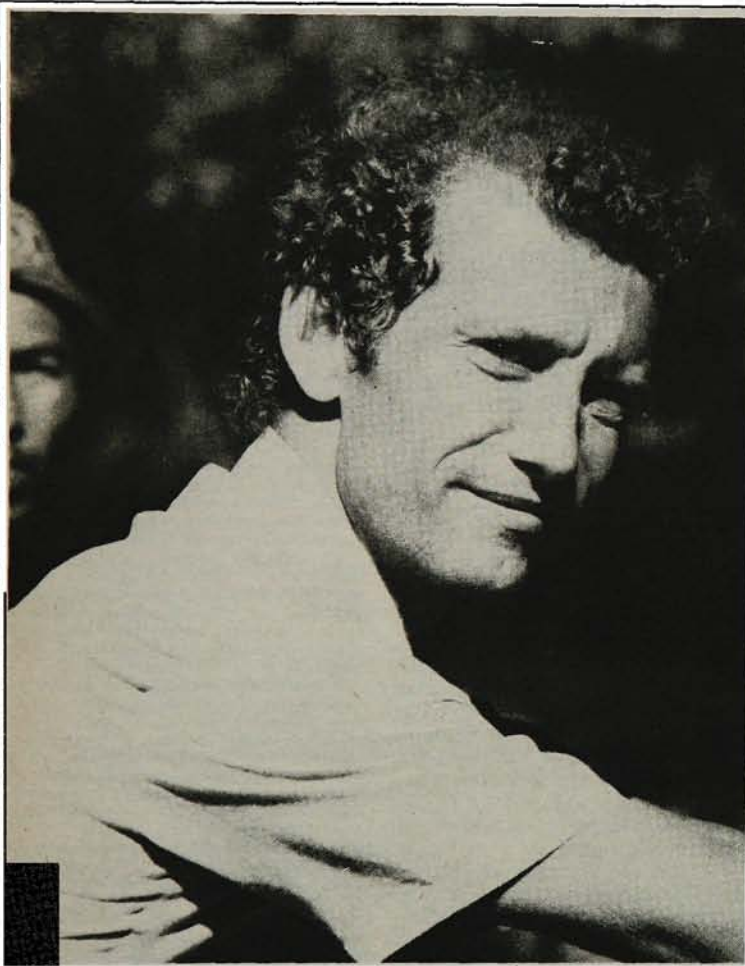
In 1981-1982, the ACMPC and executive director Martin Bockner became one of the most effective lobbies in Ottawa, joining the CFTA and the APFQ in the Producers Council of Canada, a paper organization which has never had any actual, structural existence. The by-product of this lobbying activity was a conscious attempt to eliminate CAMPP as a viable voice in the political process. Today, CAMPP is seriously debilitated.

In 1983, the ranks of the ACMPC are reduced, the executive director and the office are gone. Several of the original members have not been active for several years, others are producing in the U.S., and still others have grown disinterested. Rumor has it that the remaining members are negotiating re-integration with the CFTA.

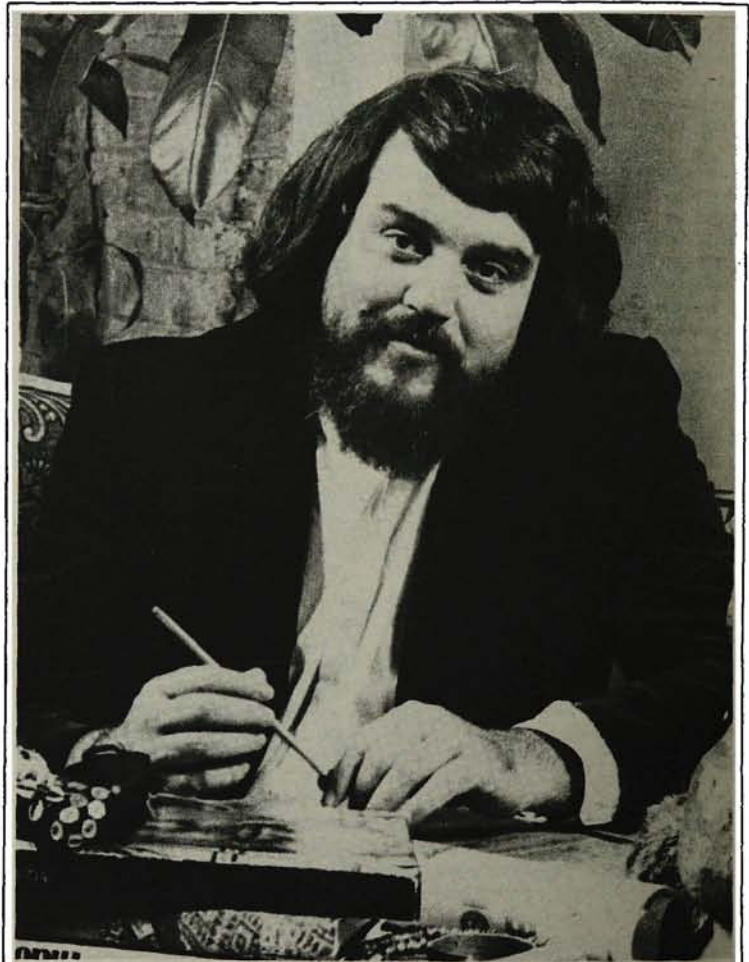
(3) Next year, the CBC could do another piece about the "insignificant" win of *The Grey Fox* and its subsequent distribution. In fact, United Artists Classics, an American company which has held distribution rights on the film for many months, and which had been forewarned that in all probability the film would win strongly, had only one print of the film in Canada in the week following the Genies. Despite efforts on the part of all the Canadians involved to make hay with the Genie publicity, and the willingness of the exhibitor to free up screens, it will take the New York-based distributor another two weeks before 19 prints - and appropriate publicity-support material - are made available across Canada. Compare this to Astral's approach to *Maria Chapdelaine* which will open in April with 30 prints in Quebec alone.

Documentary's dynamic duo

by Alan Herscovici



● François Floquet



● Daniel Bertolino

Daniel Bertolino, and François Floquet, thrive on doing the impossible. Via Le Monde Inc., which the dynamic duo began in 1967, has produced films about some of the most isolated and little-known peoples of the globe – an astounding output of more than 140 documentaries, most of them shot in extremely difficult conditions. But one could say that their most remarkable achievement has been Via Le Monde itself: the survival and growth of an independent Canadian company making films almost

exclusively for television.

The key to their success – apart from the apparently boundless energy of the 40-year-old Bertolino and 43-year-old Floquet – has been a well-orchestrated programme of co-productions, and aggressive exploitation of the European market. Most recently, Bertolino's *Indian Legends of Canada*, (a series of 14 half-hour episodes co-produced by Via Le Monde, with Radio-Canada, CBC, The Department of Indian Affairs, and the Quebec Film Institute), was followed by some 12 million viewers on France's Antenne 2, and the series has been purchased by networks from Sweden to Algeria and the Ivory Coast. One of the legends won the UNESCO International

Youth film prize in June 1982, and an LP recording based on the series was awarded the European Audio-Visual Grand Prize by l'Académie des disques français, in November.

"We understood quickly that if you try to depend only on Canadian money, you're dead!" says Bertolino. "That meant looking for subjects that could interest an international audience – not just staring into your own navel like so many Canadians were doing. My own travels had made me very sensitive to the international dimension."

While still in his early 'twenties, Bertolino set off to tour the world with a camera and \$100 in his pocket, and in two years filmed 26 half-hour episodes

for his series *Camera-Stop!*, before settling down in Montreal.

"From the beginning, CTV and Radio-Canada were ready to work with us because we had experience making films in remote parts of the world... and we had the advantage of being multi-disciplinary; we could research and write our own projects – we weren't dependent on what a producer said we could or couldn't do. Our goal was always to work towards autonomy, not dependence," Bertolino says.

But the secret to their survival was a talent for luring the industry giants into joint-ventures:

"Radio-Canada might not have enough money for a new series, but what they

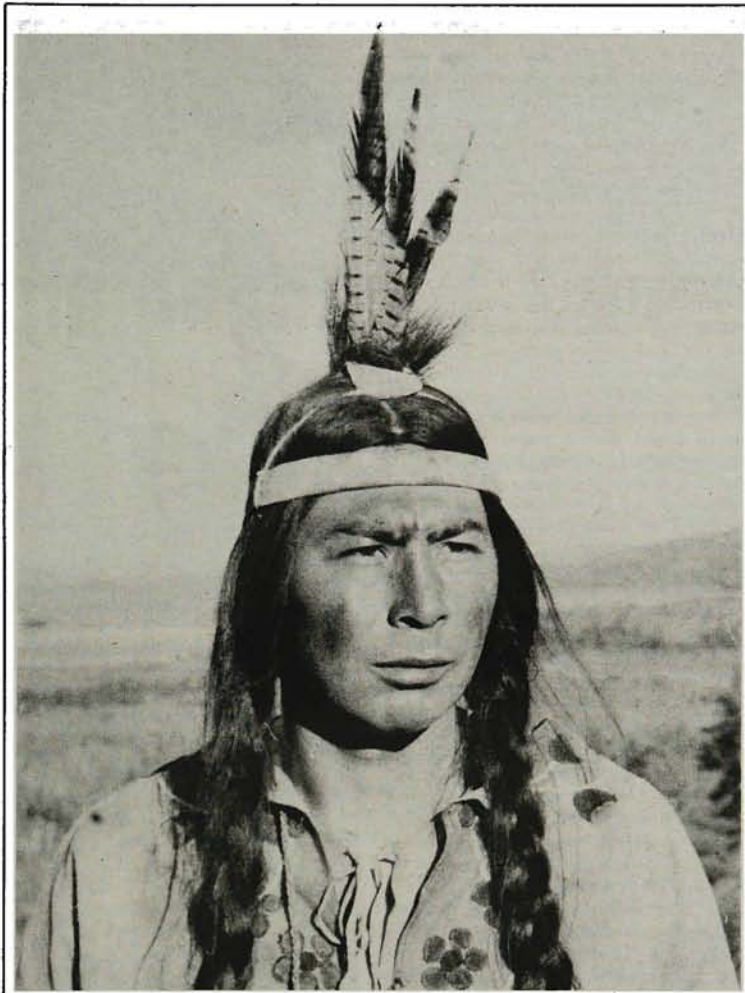
DOCUMENTARIES

did have to spend was for us an effective 'déclencheur', a catalyst," says Bertolino. "And of course, cooperation with Radio-Canada assured us distribution - it guaranteed that our work would be seen. Sometimes we could bring unlikely partners together; in 1972 we brought CTV and Radio-Canada together for a project - that was something. And we were the first to bring Radio-Québec and Radio-Canada together!"

Other government agencies, like the Canadian University Students Overseas (CUSO) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), were co-opted whenever possible, as for the 1976-77 series, *Challenge*, about Canadians working in difficult conditions in remote parts of the world. More often than not when Via Le Monde went on location abroad, it was to film two or three projects at once, to keep down expenses. Ironically, now that the company is relatively established in the industry, the problem of balancing the ledger seems harder than ever.

"Costs are up terribly, but the networks don't have much to spend," says associate producer Carle Delarochette-Vernet, who's been with the company since 1969. "We compensate by trying to do much more preparatory work here in Montreal than we used to. It's absolutely essential now that we find partners who can cover most of our expenses 'in kind'. If we're shooting a legend in Portugal, for instance, we'll try to work out a deal with the tourist bureau there. They might be able to arrange plane tickets and accommodation for our crew, in exchange for which we give them a print of the film that they can use to promote tourism. Our goal, ideally, is to have no expenses at all to pay once we leave Montreal to start shooting. It's the only way you can survive today."

The same labour-intensive/low-invest-



● A warrior's quest for his wife takes him to the frontier between life and death

ment formula characterizes the aggressive marketing tactics Via Le Monde employs to crack competitive overseas markets. For the launching of *Indian Legends of Canada*, Bertolino brought to Paris four of the Indians who played in the series, in full regalia (one of the men was dressed as a cornucopia), to meet the press. For a week-long children's festival, native carvers produced a totem-pole, on the spot, and donated it to the city, and Canadian embassy officials, even minister of Communications Francis Fox, were recruited for the gala celebrations.

"You must remember that this was literally the first time a Canadian series was aired on prime-time European television, so the Canadian government was very cooperative," says Bertolino.

Cooperative indeed. Under the skillful coordination of Bertolino, a carefully organized media-buzz was unleashed: Air Canada provided 11 tickets to fly French media editors to visit Indian communities in Canada, to see the realities of Indian life in the twentieth century, so they could write about the TV series in the proper perspective - and avoid the charge that Bertolino had exploited the image of the Indians.

"We didn't want to be accused of mystifying the situation of the Indians; on the contrary, our goal was to break through the stereotypes and give people a glimpse at the real Indian culture, which has a great deal to teach us."

French youngsters have been invited to write in their own stories and legends, and this summer four of them will be flown (again courtesy of Air Canada) to visit one of the villages where the series was filmed. A satellite hook-up will allow children in France to ask questions while the four lucky winners squat contentedly beside the Indian chief.

● The Yana or chief of the Yendi tribe, his warriors, and François Floquet (behind camera) during the filming of an episode of *Lost Kingdoms*



DOCUMENTARIES

Another tie-in with the broadcast of the series has been the publication by Flammarion of a book, and the release of two LP recordings which have 20 pages of text and photos from the TV episodes.

"All 15,000 copies of the book sold out in Paris in three months, and Flammarion will be printing a second edition," says Bertolino. "Flammarion has full responsibility for the book and we just collect royalties, but of course our contract with them included assurances that the series would be televised. Radio-Canada and CBC, for their part, have their logo shown all over the world where the book is sold."

The success of the series has permitted Bertolino to begin filming a new project, *Tales and Legends of the World*, which will be filmed in 13 different countries, and, in the U.S., PBS is interested in screening the *Indian Legends of Canada*.

"They want us to produce another 13 episodes of legends of American Indians. They've been unable to develop a good working relationship with Indians in the United States, perhaps because of their violent history, and they want to use our experience to break the ice," says Bertolino.

This opening into the US is a very important step, especially since that vast market is generally closed to outside producers.

"In our 17 years, I think we've managed to sell the U. S. about four times," says François Floquet. "The American attitude is that they don't buy - they sell. If by chance they like your product, they'll say they need a big American star to do the narration, so they'll pay you, say, \$400,000 for your series and then charge you back \$100,000 to re-do the narration. More likely than that, though, they just steal your idea. 'Where did you say that Chief lived?' they'll ask, and then send out their own crew. Unfortunately, the Americans still think that they're the only who can do good work. That's the attitude that we have to work to change, but it's a long slow process."

As animated and jovial as is Daniel Bertolino, François Floquet, who has a doctorate in Geography and was President of the Quebec Association of Film Producers (APFQ) in 1979, strikes one as introspective and philosophical. He sees the irony that after 17 years as one of Canada's more active filmmakers, he finds himself in the position of packing his films into a suitcase and setting off to the U.S. to sell his wares.

"You have to sell, and you have to open new markets. I've armed myself with video-cassettes of my series, *Lost Kingdoms*, and an open ticket to California - I won't come back until I've found a buyer, it's as simple as that. You can't stay there in Montreal and expect to survive. PBS is interested in *Lost Kingdoms* [a series about traditional chiefs in different countries] but they say we must find the sponsor! I have an agency in N.Y. looking after that now. They gave me an itinerary of the 17 major film companies in California, and I'll see them all. Ideally we can work out some kind of co-production arrangement, that's the only way to break into the American market. So I'll load my suitcase with films and off the go."

On the go is certainly the hallmark of Via Le Monde. The outsider, stepping into their third-floor offices in old Montreal, is struck with the impression of having stumbled into the center for some kind of international conspiracy. Large aluminum cans of film stand in stacks in the middle of the room, labeled

with exotic place-names from Asia and Africa; across one full wall is a floor-to-ceiling map of the world, riddled with coloured pins that mark locations where Via Le Monde has filmed. Carle Delaroché-Vernet comes in from the bank with his pockets full of escudos; he's off to Portugal tomorrow to begin filming an episode for the *Legends of the World*. Gilles Parent comes in to discuss the progress of a new series he's preparing about the Hubbards, a husband-wife explorer team who were the first non-Indians to penetrate the interior of Labrador. Parent, himself an avid mountain-climber, has made seven trips into Labrador, on foot and by canoe, retracing the voyages of the Hubbards.

"It's very exciting," says Parent, "I've found some of the exact spots they photographed in the interior. They were an amazing couple... and she was probably one of the first woman explorers in the world, you know."

Like the Indian legends, the Hubbard story will be a dramatic re-construction. "The networks aren't that interested in straight documentary style anymore," says Floquet. "Everybody wants the sagas, the long stories..."

"Via Le Monde was always interested in dramatic representation," says Bertolino. "Even when we were doing the documentaries in remote areas, there was a great deal of experience directing people who weren't professional actors. That experience was very useful when it came to shooting the *Indian Legends of Canada*. None of the people who played in the legends was a trained actor, but they were marvellous. They had no fear of the camera whatsoever, and they are very proud of their culture and their traditions. As much as possible, we tried to find people to fit the parts - for example, in *The return of the Child*, the man who plays the chief really is the chief of that village, so he didn't find it a hard role to play. If we were filming a story about a woman who's heart-broken about losing the man she loved, we tried to find the woman in that village who really was in love... and her lover too. The deep human element really came through, and that's why people everywhere, from Sweden to the Ivory Coast, responded to it - the human experience is international."

Bertolino will be tackling the international question on a far larger scale in his next project - a \$2-million film version of Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber's *World Challenge*, scheduled for broadcast in 1984.

"Radio-Canada and Antenne 2 are already committed, and we're negotiating with CBC," says Bertolino. "It's a sweeping study of world history - how we've come to the present impasse and where we're headed for the rest of the century. Servan-Schreiber's book sold three million copies in 17 languages. We'll be trying to show the world impact that events have today. For example, in tracing the oil crisis, we'll recall the Suez confrontation by splitting the screen in four to show how hour-by-hour events in the Middle East were related to what was happening in London and Washington and so on... We're preparing six hours of film that will be aired every night for a week, and on the Saturday night we'll have a panel of world-known intellectuals discussing the consequences. This is really a natural focus for us, because all our work has aimed at showing the international dimension of our world - that's why we call ourselves Via Le Monde."



• The sudden death of a beloved spouse begins the quest for the meaning of life



• Jibwes becomes a moose-man when he loses touch with his tribe in this Abenaki legend



• Mandamin, the "marvelous seed," incarnates the secret of maize in this resurrection myth



Blood, horror and boobs

by Michael Douglas

On television in Los Angeles that second week of March you could watch the neighborhood houses flying down the street. Downtown, a tornado nearly went unnoticed among the widespread damages from the wildest winter storms in 20 years.

Landslides closed the highway, hundreds of families up and down the California coast were left homeless as torrential rains swept over the sandbars and washed beach-front into the Pacific.

The rain pounded on the windshield of my rented Chev as it surged through a great pond that spread across the busy highway. On the car radio, a news flash blended with the commercials—a young policeman had shot and killed a five-year-old boy presuming he was armed, and the Queen had moved her tour north to Reagan's ranch.

Turning off the Hollywood freeway onto Vine Street, I aimed for the searchlights over the Hollywood Palace. Though the legendary theatre has become a fashion-plate disco for disinterested teenagers, tonight for a few hours it would host the opening party for the third annual American Film Market.

After drinks and hors d'oeuvres, the buses appeared at nine to take the buyers back to the hotel. Big day tomorrow.

The foreign buyers had arrived to purchase the rights to distribute hundreds of English-language movies in theatres, on television or through home video, in any one of the 60 countries they represented.

Here is one slightly adulterated sales story:

After working for years distributing films for a Hollywood major, "Max" was on the MIFED to Cannes road when he met a writer-director with a script. It was a variant on the wolf-man story in an isolated fishing village. Max put up \$45,000 as his half of the production and they shot it in English on a Greek island in 35 mm. The various distributors would provide subtitles. The film presented lots of blood and guts. It didn't have

Michael Douglas is an Edmonton filmmaker.

sufficient quality to play theatrically in North America, perhaps some drive-ins, but it sold as high action in other markets.

For the video rights in England, \$30,000. Video and theatrical in France, \$24,000. U.S. and Canada television, \$140,000 minimum guarantee plus 25% on the overage.

Philippines, \$15,000. Singapore-Malaysia, \$6,000. India, \$12,000. Iceland, \$2,000. Belgium-Luxemburg, \$1,500. Holland, \$2,000. Spain, \$22,000. Ecuador-Columbia, \$2,500.

Produced in 1980, the picture is still selling. Max retired for a year on the singles-bar circuit and then returned to the distribution game he originally enjoyed. Production had too many hassles, he said.

The American Film Market is a must. Launching the sales pattern there will get the production off to an equal or better start with the rest of the new year's output and set up sales activity for MIFED and Cannes. The AFM provides a very business-like environment. Six floors of hotel suites are turned into office reception areas with adjoining screening/deals room. The suites are generally lined with a variety of colorful posters for pictures the agent represents. One agent might represent one movie or five or 200.

Admittance to these floors is tightly restricted. Only buyers and invited guests are permitted. Sales agents screen trailers, excerpts and completed films on 3/4" cassettes. The screenings are complemented by information sheets with 8-1/2 x 11 inch color posters with cast, crew and synopsis on the reverse side.

For ten days the buyers and sellers take a bus for half a mile to the sprawling Beverley Centre to the 14-screen Cineplex. Every two hours from 9 to 5, screenings begin on all fourteen screens, over 300 films for sale. The screenings prompt hope and despair.

The veteran distributor stands by the door to the empty theatre with his promotional material. No one enters. The buyers, chattering in their varied languages, pass by and enter the next group of screening rooms. The distributor shakes his head. His movie begins, "They can just smell it—a good film or a dog," he says to no one in particular. The hall is empty again.

After the screenings, the hotel elevators, hallways, bars and rooms buzz with business. What would the minimum guarantee be? Would the first payment be the only payment? Could the buyer do as well in all media as claimed? What would the currency be worth in six months or two years? What other films were they bidding on? What would the majors have as competition?

The AFM is primarily for the little guys, the independents. There are some exceptions: Orion, Embassy, PSO, Jensen-Farley, Cannon...

You never know what kind of ancillaries your movie might open up for you. Arista was at the market, promoting their new video games, based on the popular movies *Halloween* and *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. In the former, the baby-sitter must keep the madman from killing the babies and in 'T.C.M.' you battle to keep your family from being cut in half, complete with electronic blood. From 9 a.m. till 5:30 every day, two young idiots sit and demonstrate these games. The titles available can be depressing; 'Blood-Sucking Freaks', 'Blood Tide', 'Funeral Home', 'Mausoleum', 'Screwballs' and 'Joystick'. These titles represent three of the more popular elements available—blood, horror and boobs or the mix.

There are also big classy movies promoted here, like *The Far Pavilions* and *Gorky Park*. But what seems most striking is the passion for gore; as when one buyer turns to another and says "great shot" after a flying finger hits the floor in a trailer.

One of the most original trailers or promotional films came from Rob Reiner, pictured busily editing his new rock 'n roll movie *Spinal Tap*. The film isn't ready. So his 'promo' incredibly takes us to Denmark for a 10-minute documentary on making cheese.

There are dozens of Canadian movies available here. One of the busiest and perhaps best distributors handling Canadian pictures is Manson International who are representing *Spring Fever*, *Utilities*, *The Funny Farm*, *Siege* and Garth Drabinsky's new American film *Losing It*. (Paul Donovan's *Siege*, a taut thriller set in Halifax during a police strike did well at Manila and would do well here.) *The Columbia Connection*, a Canadian film produced on

the west coast, would do well for its gutsy director-producer Len Kowalewich. At AFM, Sandy Howard, an experienced producer, had been impressed by the look of the film related to its budget and wanted to get into a deal with Len for a new movie.

At the north end of the sixth-floor hallway, a proud cardboard Mountie stands guard at the doorway to the CFDC suite. Inside, Anne Brown, Karen Lawrence and Lorraine B. Good acted as liaison people, screening films without sales agents to prospective buyers and helping to connect them with the Canadian producers. Jack Darcus of Vancouver came with his film *Deserters*, fresh from a deal with First Choice. He was looking forward to initiating foreign sales. One of the most quixotic figures was Montreal director Rafal Zielinsky. He pleasantly hustled his proposed TV series while chatting up the two films he directed, *Babe* and *Screwballs*.

One of the most gung-ho buyers to exit the CFDC suite was Bob Curtis of AIP Video. He had purchased *Scoring*, *Slipstream* and *This Time Forever*, *Coming Out Alive* from the CBC. It would do well for them on American cable, he smiled. (The star of *Coming Out Alive* was Helen Shaver, co-star of Ron Cohen's *Harry Tracy*).

At the Cat and Fiddle Pub on Laurel Canyon Boulevard, Helen Shaver sat in the chair vacated moments before by Beverly D'Angelo, and ordered a beer for her handsome friend and waited, as performers must do so much of their lives. Earlier that day, the waiting and working had paid off for another Canadian actress living in L.A. Lisa Langlois had shot her first scene as the female lead in a Paramount comedy entitled *Under Pressure*.

Outside the pub, a Marilyn Munroe look-alike steps out of her car and pulls her tee-shirt down. It reads Hollywood Reporter. A young man follows her down the hill as Neil Diamond drives by in his Rolls, singing to himself.

Later that night, on a shuttlebus chugging up a Hollywood hill, the bus comes to a stop and a red-headed woman with turquoise eyes steps on board and a man follows, probably a nice guy but he's hard to remember. The woman is actress Tanya Roberts (*Beastmaster* and "Charlie's Angels"). The man, her hus-

band, is a writer. The blond, playboy leader of our mini-bus tour to the hillside party is a hustling producer with a script he wants Tanya to read. "She is worth a million now", her husband smiles. "Ah, a husband-manager, I've dealt with you before." The young producer turns to Tanya. "Have you read the script? I know you just got it yesterday." Tanya: "No, not yet, I have a couple of other projects I have to read first." The producer: "Well, there's not a whole lot of money, as you know, but this is a movie for you; it's got definite Academy Award potential." Tanya: "Well, I will read it."

On the hillside in the roomy, pink villa, everyone chats to each other for 15 or 20 seconds. In the wet and crowded kitchen, a creative director (script reader) asks the young guy opposite to guess how old she is. He smiles, he can't guess. "80", she laughs out loud. He shrugs, "Well I'd still take a run at you." She smirks back, "That's the point, isn't it?" Their 20 seconds are up. As Robert Culp dashes through for a glass of wine, he appears larger than on screen, but no less intense.

After the party breaks up, an odd group of new friends appear to pour down the hillside to Sunset Boulevard. They have a chance to read their invitations. A producer has met an actress at the market and 48 hours later, they are engaged and he is passing out printed invitations at the party to departing guests. Apparently his engagement will commemorate both this odd couple and the date on which the first film produced in Hollywood was begun.

The five friends reach Sunset Blvd. and load into my car. Our guide would be Jonathan Barnett, a freelance writer. Sitting in the front seat is Stefan, the Swedish video-buyer who offers me \$10,000 for video in Sweden of anything I produce based on the way I drive. In the back seat with Jonathan is Linda, a writer from New York and Allen, a suave movie-buyer from Florida. Fortunately they have decided to sober up the driver and find something to eat at the only all-night deli in Hollywood. On the way, Allen muses over his recent deal to buy *Superman III* for \$35 million from the Salkinds. He and his consortium would sell the rights to a major distributor and go into profit at the \$79 million dollar mark. Later in the week he would buy three more movies. Right now he couldn't understand how four men had ended up with one woman after a Hollywood party. Linda smiled politely. She knew why. She just wished he'd stop talking about it.

Daytime. Many of the buyers were gone. In the bar a few deals and a lot of bullshitting about the business was in progress.

Two new buddies around the piano had discovered their exhausting common knowledge of movie trivia.

"Who were all the Tarzans?"

They both know and rhyme them off.

"Who were the Magnificent Seven?"

"If I tell you, Brad Dexter, will you give me the rest?"

"Oh, yeah, sure. I got a great Brad Dexter story for you...", Steve Sloane continues. Steve distributes karate films. He owned a couple of boxers for a while but you can't talk to them so he's looking for an off-Broadway play to produce. "Just ego", he shrugs.

"Are you going to the party?" the other trivia expert asks.

Patrick White acts and recently directed *Slapstick*, the latest Jerry Lewis picture (there's a rumour that Lewis' heart



attack occurred during a screening. Patrick would wait to see how *Slapstick* went and do some days as the gardener on *Dynasty*.

Later that night in Culver City, just down the road from MGM, Bruce Laird Studios hosted the AFM's windup party. Visitors enter through a 747 mockup past the celebrity look-a-like into the two giant sound stages made over into international restaurant areas; at the far end a huge dance floor and orchestra.

These were once the Selznick Studios, and this was the home of Scarlett O'Hara. Those magnificent sunsets over Tara were shot from the roof with fences mounted to mask the offending skyline in the days before smog drained the colour out. Since *Gone With the Wind*, the dreams have changed.

Over 2,000 guests mill about the restaurants and bars, many in tuxedos. There are not ten black people in sight.

When this fact is mentioned, an L.A. producer laughs and resumes his half-hearted interest in the ass-kissers that flank him.

"Can I get you some more dessert?", one asks, concerned.

Suddenly, I was tired of all the people who looked you in the eye and lied to you; these comfortable people who don't give a shit.

Steve Sloane grabs my arm and takes me for a walk.

"Listen, preacher," he starts, "don't



worry about the sharks. Sharks have to eat. They're hungry. You show them how they can eat and they can be your sharks."

Next day the veteran gypsies in the show-bizz caravan rolled up their advertising and moved on. They'd renew acquaintances in Italy or France later

this spring at or Cannes or MIFED. After screening so many films, meeting lots of people, the good ones shine through clearly, and so do the scripts. Me, I'd return to a desk in Edmonton to work on a script I hoped would back-bone a film to be sold, yeah, at the next market.