

# cannes-ada

## Len Klady

Cannes is two weeks in the sun, movies, glamour, bombs (plastique), and a lot of money not changing hands. It's being pushed and cheated without finesse and it's an annual event for thousands of people. As well, some two dozen films compete in an international film festival and countless hundreds of movies hope to make sales to foreign countries for hefty monetary returns.

Cinema Canada, the organization representing the Canadian presence at the festival, was one of the biggest, most highly visible, well-run operations. The chemistry of the event worked better than ever for the CC group. There were the "pouchettes" filled with material on our product, the daily screenings at the Vox Cinema and the periodic parties. An incredible amount of work was put in by the Cinema Canada staff and they deserve the greatest kudos this year.

### The Marketplace

For the unfamiliar, the marketplace is where it happens at the festival. Some thirty films represented Canada in this area. The results on a dollars and cents (francs, lire, deutschmarks, et al) basis would indicate tremendous strides into the international markets. However, at this point, it's too soon to distinguish the talk from the commitments. A meeting with the agents for the Canadian films turned up the following facts and figures.

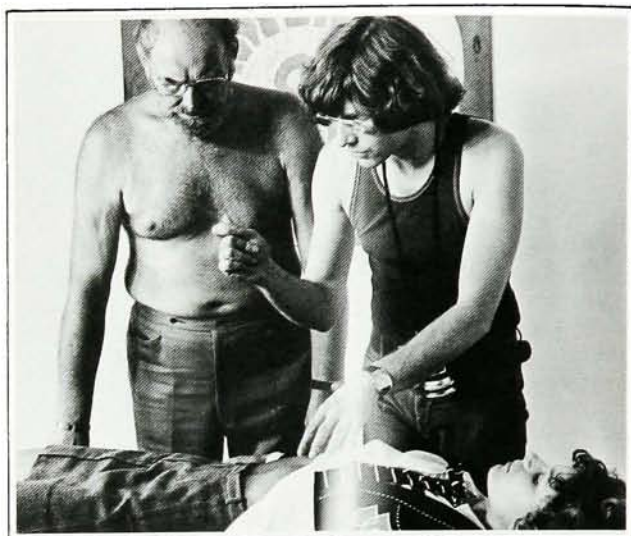
1) Anne Feinberg — representing **The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz**, **Black Christmas** and **Journey Into Fear**.

**Black Christmas** appears to get the nod for the Canadian sales champ award. The film appears to have been sold to 99% of the world markets. In the United States, it has been retitled **Silent Night**, **Evil Night** and will be released this summer by Warner Bros.

**Duddy Kravitz**, which has already played the majority of English-speaking markets, racked up sales to France, Denmark, Sweden and Italy. Ms. Feinberg credited the film's past box-office performance for the sales. These engagements helped establish the film as more than just an art house film.

Finally, **Journey Into Fear**, based on Eric Ambler's novel which had been previously filmed in 1942, the present film has been updated and involves intrigue and danger in Turkey centering on our hero's knowledge of oil and natural resources. Sam Waterston, Vincent Price, Shelley Winters and Donald Pleasence are among the top flight cast totally wasted in these foreign locales. Suspense, humor and plot play little part in this production. Sales only to the Far East and South and Latin America.

2) Cinépix — representing **Gina**, **The Parasite Murders**, **Pour le Meilleur et pour le Pire**, **La Pomme, la Queue et les Pepins**, and **Tout Feu, Tout Femme**.



*Fred Deoderlein, David Cronenberg, Kathy Graham*

Here, the best news was with **The Parasite Murders**, David Cronenberg's horror tale of creatures who invade the body and turn their victims into sexual zombies. This was one of the handful of fine horror films shown anywhere at the festival. The film gets full marks in all areas of its production. This can be attested to by the tremendous commercial and critical response the movie received. Sales and interest have come from Germany, Latin America, Belgium, Hong Kong, France, South America, Great Britain, the Far East, Spain and Portugal and no less than seven offers from the States. As well, six film festivals have already expressed interest in screening the film. Before a single play date, the production has not only brought back its cost but is making money! It is the fastest recouping movie in the history of Canadian cinema.

The remaining titles of the Cinépix line racked up only modest sales. The comedies sold in a couple of markets and both new films by Denys Arcand and Claude Jutra registered disappointing sales.

The Jutra film was a big disappointment. The story of the traumas of marriage is familiar and unexciting this time. However, Arcand's **Gina** was a powerful, complex study and has received many festival enquiries. The multi-levelled plot and its implications will be covered properly in an upcoming review. (See *Issue No. 19* as well.—Ed.)

Neither of the latter films secured a French sale. André Link of Cinépix attributed this to the relatively unsuccessful runs of recent Québec films in Paris. When a Québec film does badly in Paris it becomes difficult to sell other films to that market.

3) David Perlmutter — representing **Sunday in the Country**, **It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time**, **Sudden Fury** and **Monkeys in the Attic**.

Perlmutter first noted that the attitude toward our films has changed. It is no longer an embarrassment to represent a Canadian film and one is not required to apologize for them.

He had high hopes for even further gains in the future.

He was quite successful with two low-budget films: **Monkeys in the Attic** was sold to both France and Germany and **Sudden Fury** did an incredible amount of business internationally. **Sudden Fury** pits an innocent traveller against a maniacal man in the midst of his refusal to seek aid for his mortally injured wife. The pace is initially very slow and after some tedium the Southern Ontario milieu finally begins to work. The film continues to a chilling climax. Sales were credited to the Far East, Mid East, South America, South Africa, Germany, Austria and Great Britain — an incredible feat for a low-budget film which has resulted in Perlmutter's company, Quadrant Films, to recently develop a proposed two picture low-budget deal with the CFDC.

**Sunday in the Country**, which sold well last year, made a few more sales. Their newest film, **It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time**, is a comedy starring Anthony Newley. Although no classic, the film was as good and better than many American comedies at the festival. As a result, it was reported sold in most territories in the world.

4) National Film Board — with **Cold Journey** and **Why Rock the Boat?** was reported a dead loss and Martin Defalco's long-awaited **Cold Journey** was only credited with a French sale. **Cold Journey**, the story of an Indian boy alienated from both White and Red society, is a marvellous document. Carefully observed, well executed and intelligent — it is an important film but not really viable in a commercial sense.

**Action**, Robin Spry's documentary on the October Crisis, was not at Cannes. However, **Les Ordres** was in official competition and it managed sales in France, Portugal, Spain and Holland. In addition, many festivals have requested the film and the Festivals Office has reported that the two films will play as a double-bill in several places.

5) ACPAV — Association coopérative des productions audio-visuelles — is an independent co-operative of filmmakers based in Montréal.

For their representative, Cannes was primarily a learning experience, to explore alternative distribution methods for non-commercial films. They received nibbles and hope to secure sales later, but it was felt that they understood the international market better than Cannes was a marvellous opportunity to tell other Canadians about ACPAV.

6) **Les Vautours** — there seemed to be quite a mixup with this film, which represented Canada in the Directors' Fortnight. Their French agent had no press material and was really ill-prepared to sell this movie.

7) Les Films Mutuelle — representing **Les Aventures d'une Jeune Veuve**, **Alien Thunder** in French, **Child Under a Leaf** in French and **Les Ordres**.

The comedy **Les Aventures d'une Jeune Veuve** didn't make any sales. Pierre David of Mutuelle wasn't very surprised that this locally marketed film didn't have world appeal. His French-track versions of **Child Under a Leaf** and **Alien Thunder** both picked up French sales.

David is currently involved in a French-German-Italian-Canadian co-production called **Born For Hell**. Coproductions are high on David's priority list. Italians, he pointed out, were anxious to work in Canada and there was the possibility of three coproductions within the year.

The last film, **Les Ordres**, has sales or enquiries from Australia, Belgium, Denmark, France, the Far East, Britain, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Sweden, the Eastern Block and the United States. In addition, over two dozen requests have been made for film festival showings around the world.

8) Others.

**Me**, John Palmer's film, had many difficulties but nonetheless fully gave an insight into a Toronto sub-culture which was effective and devastating. Sales nibbles only.

**Pedestrians**, a short in competition, was plugged into the market and gained Australian, British and U.S. distribution. It should be understood that Cannes is not noted as a market for selling shorts, but the success with this one certainly opens the way for future world distribution of shorts.

## Les Ordres

For the first time ever, Canada won a major award in the feature film category. Michel Brault's story of five people who find themselves in jail without any rights during the October Crisis of 1970 won him the Best Director Award.

Of particular note is the international reaction to the film. It was really well received. Most countries related on a very personal level to the sudden loss of an individual's freedom. However, many questions were raised which have put an incredible new perspective on the film and on Canadians.

The biggest obstacle to overcome is the movie's unspectacular nature. There was no murder, violence, or rebellion. It just didn't happen that way. The real horror was not physically scaring. Some foreign critics went so far as to imply that there was no reason to complain. Because the jails were palaces ("You mean they give you soup?") and because it was actually possible to reach the Minister of Justice's office — they felt that Canada was Mecca. But what finally convinced them were two things: first, they learned that the film was shot in an actual jail. The jail had 50 cells and only two prisoners. People wondered what happened to crime in Canada? They couldn't comprehend the prisons allowing a slam against the police to be done under official supervision. All this amazement turned into incredulosity when it was revealed that the Canadian government (CFDC) had put up 50% of the film's budget.

Now, there are no easy answers to the foreign queries. Perhaps it's merely a fluke. Michel Brault's opinion is that the government did not understand the subtleties of the film but I'm not certain this is the answer either. Perhaps the real answer is somewhere in between. 1970 seems a long time ago to many of us. There is the physical distance of the event. Secondly, the film is structured to effect us on a subconscious level — yet another form of distancing. As a result, I find myself relating not to an historical event but to a very personal morality. An event occurred which placed innocent and guilty in prison to expedite justice. Canadians allowed themselves to believe that law and speed were synonymous and we were wrong.

## Epilogue

Cannes is perhaps the best opportunity to examine our industry, since all aspects of our industry receive attention. Some factions talk seriously about the commercial aspects and other factions are more interested in the artistic concepts and still others have different criteria of merit.

This year, it was English Canada which brought home the dollars and French Canada which swept up the majority of the accolades. On an artistic level, Québec cinema is recognized internationally for its vibrancy. There are films of significance that can be expected annually. There are names which have a reputation for creativity. But much of the feeling from Québec is that the boom is over. The potential filmmakers just aren't getting new opportunities and the old guard isn't performing at the box-offices.

In English Canada, the producer's sentiments appear to be that we're bringing money home from these "pot boilers" to make more movies. The sensibilities of men who make "schlock" may or may not be to balance their outlet with films of seemingly less commercial viability. If not, where will filmmakers who don't want to make thrillers get their opportunities? And as the flames roar in Cannes, you can see the birth of a new Canadian cinema. It appears to be a child with a tremendous potential, or was that another bomb? □



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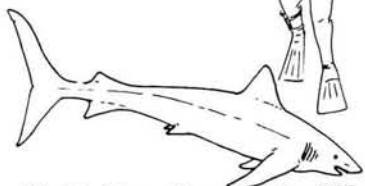
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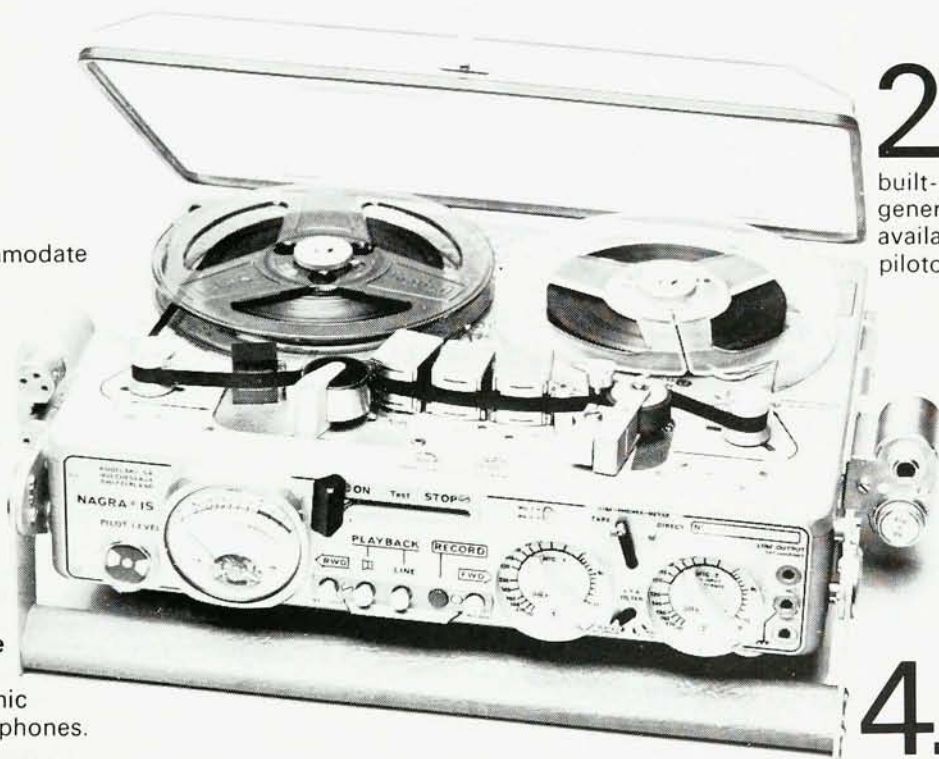
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