

some opening remarks

Impressions of the Montreal and Toronto festivals follow, in articles written by Ron Blumer and George Csaba Koller. But first, Connie Tadros tries to create a context for those impressions. How were they alike? How were they different? And what does it all mean for the future?

by Connie Tadros

As far as Montreal and Toronto are concerned, the competition is over. Montreal's World Film Festival and Toronto's Festival of Festivals were so different this year that it is now a question of choosing between two different festival formulas or deciding that Canada needs both. They were competitive with each other on only slight grounds: the selection of a few films. On the other major points – the kind of film selected, the sort of guests invited, the handling of the press and the press conferences, the appeal to the public and the handling of the screenings, the market and its potential – the festivals were as different as night and day.

It is tempting to push the analysis further and to suggest that the differences between the Montreal and Toronto festivals reflect the differences between French and English Canada. Certainly, the Montreal festival could not happen in Toronto, and the Toronto festival would not succeed in Montreal. So, in festivals, like in so much else, Canada has two valid options, two different approaches to a same problem: how to throw a film festival of international stature in Canada.

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The Toronto festival was aimed at the Toronto public. When its organizer Bill Marshall commented, as was reported

in the press, that he hoped it would become a tourist attraction like the zoo, he expressed things well. If the Festival of Festivals can draw the public like flies, as it did this year, create local publicity like we have seldom seen, and present movies which please, the accomplishment is already enormous.

One result is that such a festival can become self-supporting. Another is that an important number of people will be exposed to films which they would not see otherwise. Never mind that some of the films may have been available through film societies or in specialized houses, the Festival drew the public. And the films were seen.

The Festival of Festivals knew how to sell its product. And the Ontario Censor Board gave it just the send-off every festival organizer dreams of by cutting the first film. The overflow audience for **In Praise of Older Women**, and the news which resulted from the near-riot scene, made participating in the festival a social must for many.

The films themselves were selected as the 'best' from other festivals, hence the name Festival of Festivals. Few risks were taken in the programming; the films had already had public exposure, and the organizers knew that they would go over well. There was no doubt about the public reaction to films like **Midnight Express** or **Girlfriends**. Their reputation preceded them.

In Montreal, the thrust of the festival was quite different. Director Serge Losique aimed big: the international film community. This meant moving directors, producers, stars and buyers across the Atlantic. He paid little attention to the local populace.

The ways to get people to move are several. Cannes does it by presenting films which have not been seen outside of the country in which they were produced. Losique adopted the formula.

Inviting some thirty films to compete for prizes, none of which had been exposed to international audiences, is a gamble. Nothing insures that the Montreal public will appreciate the latest production of Italian television, or a recent film from Argentina. But buyers — and the international film press — welcome seeing 'new product.'

One can also get people to move by simply inviting them: offering to pick up part of the tab. Milan (MIFED) had functioned for over fifteen years, and no one came. The time came to close down the film market or to make it work, and the Italians gambled on inviting everyone and paying for everything. Predictably, 'everybody' came. Three years later, when MIFED was established and the buyers and sellers could not do without it, MIFED cut down on its financial largesse and the market continued to thrive.

A market can only work if buyers and sellers come. Although this year Montreal enticed the sellers who, in turn, brought their films, the buyers were in shorter supply; but more on this later.

So, on the one hand, Toronto addressed itself to the public with many sure-fire films and impressive local press coverage, while Montreal catered to hundreds of foreigners — merchants, stars and directors, and the foreign press.

The local coverage in Montreal was good, and the existence of a 16 page, daily paper enhanced the festival. But it was curious to hear the anchor lady of a local program ask, during the final days of the festival, "Can the public go?" To her, the festival meant having Alain Delon talk to Dino Risi while stars from Spain, Germany, France and Italy stood by.

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Socially, the festivals reflected their chosen styles.

In Toronto, the discothèque at the Plaza II, and the hospitality suite for those in the know, were home base. The reception given, for instance, by John Turner's C.F.I. Investments was minimal, and the shin-dig for opening night at the city hall (where one waited for 30 minutes to buy a ticket and another 30 minutes to receive the beer the ticket bought) was, in the words of one Ottawa civil servant, "tacky."

In Montreal, the receptions were sumptuous. Iran, which didn't have a film in the festival, but which had many domestic problems, threw a feast at its Expo pavillion, and the French out-did themselves at a sit-down lunch high in the Chateau Champlain. In context, the Italians, whose reception would rate high above CFI Investments cocktail in absolute terms, didn't come off so well in Montreal.

The standards were different.

The press, who personally had many complaints at both festivals, were better served in Montreal. Press conferences — two, three and four per day — were held, sometimes in front of television cameras and always with proper microphones.

Journalists met the directors, stars and producers after press screenings, and a steady flow of information other than gossip was generated. It had to be so because the foreign press was invited, and there were many in Montreal who filed stories abroad. In Montreal, it was easy to operate in many languages, and the Europeans appreciated it. For the World Film Festival, one article in the Paris *Figaro* was worth two in the *Toronto Star*.

Neither festival has given a detailed accounting of the success of the film markets, but a first distinction is evident. Toronto's physical surroundings were unacceptable, and few foreign merchants could have been expected to do business there.

In Montreal, the physical set-up was fine, as was the administration. What was missing were the American buyers. People had come from most of the European countries to sell to the Americans. For them, Montreal represents a French speaking back door, open to the States. They don't understand that it can be as hard for Canadians to move Americans north as it is for Europeans to move them east.

The Americans who did come to Montreal, came to promote their films, not sell them: just as the Americans who came to Toronto came to promote their films. Steve McQueen's **Enemy of the People** and Ted Kotcheff's **Great Chefs** were not being presented in Montreal and Toronto respectively to sell them; they were being shown so that the Canadian audiences would consequently go to see them.

If Canada's festivals are to be used by Americans to promote their own films rather than to buy new product, then the chances are that Toronto will fare better. It got the people to the theatres.

If, on the other hand, a festival is going to serve as a market place to sell Canadian films and to offer others the chance to buy and sell, then Montreal probably has the upper hand.

At the end, money makes the difference. Establishing an international film market is an enormous bluff for the first few years, and someone has to spend an enormous amount of money inviting guests to make it work. An atmosphere has to be created. Whether the public goes to a market is neither here nor there. MIFED refuses to allow the press in, let alone the public. And business in Cannes is not conducted around the official competition or even in the public places. Private discussions, receptions, and 'who you know' predominate.

So the principal questions are not the ones which are asked in the press as to whether Marshall or Losique is the villain of the festival drama Canadians play out in late summer.

The question is whether Canada can support two very different kinds of festivals — one aimed at the local population, the other at the international community — or not. If not, can either festival incorporate the virtues of the other? And, if not which will the governmental money-men back?

For the answer, same time, same station, next year... □

P.S. In all honesty, it must be said that the festivals share two more characteristics. Neither can manage to throw a decent opening night ceremony. And neither, at this writing, have settled all their debts.

festivals (2)

footsteps in the city

What is it like to get swallowed up by a city? To attend ten days of film festival and to feel you still have found no focus? Ron Blumer tells it like it was, for him.

by Ron Blumer



The heart of the Complex Desjardins where music helped to draw attention to the festival

How does one assess the success of something as vast as a ten day film festival. Were the films good? Did the buyers buy and the distributors sell? Did Dino Risi meet Brian De Palma over a drink at the Meridien and conclude a multi-million lira deal? Did Sergei Bondarchuk get his wife a new pair of nylon stockings?

Talking to the red-eyed festival groupies at week's end and comparing notes, one feels like a fisherman; the best ones inevitably got away. And the festival as a whole was like the crowd scene of a low budget movie, a bit short of extras. At \$5.00 for the evening shows with no discounts, the price per film was inaccessibly high for the masses and the festival certainly was not a sellout.

The dearth of people was somewhat exaggerated by a lack of focus in the physical organization of the festival. The films were shown at a large impersonal multiscreen cinema, and the events and headquarters were two blocks down the street in a hotel and huge shopping complex. In a sense, the festival was swallowed up by the city and one got the impression that there was no one place, no bar or restaurant one could go to, and be sure of seeing festival participants. One's life that week was an endless scurrying up and down St. Catherine Street bumping, as it were, into strangers in the night.

The World Film Festival of Montreal is a wonderful thing and long may it live, but if it is to stay healthy, its organizers at the Conservatoire d'Art Cinématographique had better wake up to a few hard cold facts. One of the first things that leaps to mind is the fact that Montreal is not Cannes. This would be belabouring the obvious if the entire super structure of the festival were not so painfully apeing every last detail of that great mother earth festival of the Riviera. We start with the very poster which seems an almost exact copy of the kitschy, plastic Botticelli school of art favored by the Cannesians. Also the way in which the films are presented is a steal: the "Compétition officielle," and the special sections "Hors-concours," on the one hand, various national cinemas and for those films that don't fit anywhere else, the homages, and the Marché on the other.

The film market which is like ten film festivals in itself.

The Marché is a presentation by the producers themselves, hermetically sealed from the rarefied structure of the rest of the official festival with no place in the glossy brochures, often little publicity for the films, little forewarning of what is coming up, and last, but not least, no audiences for the excellent films presented. The idea, and the reality at Cannes, is that the festival provides screening opportunities for producers to present their films to the assembled multitude of critics, distributors and buyers. In this way, they gain publicity and sales. At Cannes, this critical mass is present and the Marché screening rooms are sometimes jammed. At Montreal, the few buyers and critics present were just too bleary eyed to attend the films presented in this catch-all category. The general paying public were excluded from these morning and afternoon screenings and the huge theatres at Cinéma Le Parisien were frequently completely empty.

Montreal is in an excellent position to mount a successful festival. Because of the language, it is an ideal halfway house for European producers to meet American distributors and

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Jurors Carole Laure and Alain Délon are joined by Robert Stack and wife as a satisfied Régine takes it all in at her disco

visa-versa. But it must be recognized that we do not and cannot have the tradition and general impact that Cannes has. With this in mind, the proliferation of categories without audiences seems a silly affectation. Even the competitive stance of the festival seems a little strained. Does anyone, after all, really care who has won the Montreal World Film Festival? For critics, distributors and the public alike, a festival is simply a place to see films, old films, new films and those precious films from all those countries that do not generally have access to the American market.

Carping aside, the essence of a film festival is, of course, the film, and for the critics who could keep their eyes open, there were films by the carload. At any one time from nine in the morning to eleven at night there were up to five movies showing simultaneously. Simply in terms of the mountains of 35mm film cans sitting in the lobby of the theatre waiting for shipment, the festival was an impressive spectacle.

Given the quantity of films, the tendency was to do a lot of film shopping, popping in and out from theatre to theatre, in mortal fear than one might be missing something better. These are hardly ideal viewing conditions for the savouring of some of the slower films that drone out of the near and far east. The pressure, however, is there, and one just cannot afford to miss films that are very unlikely to ever grace Canadian screens again.

What follows is a very iconoclastic selection of seven of my favorite films out of the large number so sampled. Canada, particularly in the guise of CBC drama put on an impressive showing. Acting and technical standards were so high that one is led to believe that we have acquired a feature film industry through the back door of television. **Tyler** by Ralph Thomas won the award as best Canadian film out of competition, and it was characterized not only by strong acting and a convincing plot, but was also blessed with a story which had some fiber to it. You had the impression that you were watching a film which was about something real in both human and social terms. **Drying Up the Streets** by Robin Spry, was also made for the CBC and was equally impressive in terms of story and acting. The film follows a reformed drug addict searching for his 18 year old daughter on Toronto's Yonge Street sin strip. In terms of Spry's own political evolution, the film is not without its ironic overtones. In the late sixties, Spry was making films about the then fashionable drug consumers in films like **Prologue** and **Flowers on a One Way Street**. The hippies have grown up and are now the bad guys corrupting today's youth into drugs and prostitution. Surprisingly, the for-



A jovial German press conference for *Flammende Herzen* (actors Peter Kern and Barbara Valentin, directors/producers Walter Bockmayer and Rolf Buhmann)



A modest Serge Losique accepts gifts and praise from the president of the block committee Harold Greenberg

merly wicked police have now been romanticized into the good guys whose only aim in life is to protect our children. Either Robin Spry is showing us his true conservative colors or more likely, he picks his film subjects according to which way the wind is blowing.

Some of the films which I found particularly interesting came from small countries whose product is rarely seen in Canada. A film called *Insiang* was a first feature from the Philippines and had a freshness and directness of appeal missing from what we mistakenly think of as more sophisticated films. *Insiang* is the name of a young girl living in the congested urban slums with her corrupt mother and trying to maintain a bit of human dignity. The characters seem so real as to have been wrenched off the streets and the settings and situations give us a rare view of the way in which much of the world actually lives.

Chuquiago is a film which was shot in secret in Bolivia to be distributed God knows where. It is a minor masterpiece consisting of four vignettes of people from various classes in society showing how they deal with the political realities of Bolivia today. The film was unusual; it provided no easy leftist or rightist answers to the question of how politics affects people. We see, for example, a party member drunkenly lord-ing his petty power over his associates in a tavern. There is a portrait of a rich upper class girl torn between her family and her revolutionary boyfriend. Through the device of the four films, so quick to sacrifice depth for strident message.

Meanwhile back in shallow old Europe there were two films which were enjoyable and immensely popular with the festival audiences. The two were the black comedy *La belle emmerdeuse* from France and the blacker comedy *Un Borghese Piccolo Piccolo* from Italy. The first film (interesting in that it was written and directed by its stars Elizabeth Huppert and Roger Coggio), tells the story of a beautiful young woman peacefully engaged in the business of trying to slit her wrist. Pauline has everything in life, a good job, lots of lovers, a promising future, but she has just turned thirty and has decided that life is boringly not worth it. She sets about, elegantly staging her own death. (What *do* you wear to your own funeral, my dear?) The comedy comes from the fact that everything goes wrong from the plumbing in the fatal bathtub, to a chubby ball of Italian uselessness, Roger Coggio, who has latched onto her and is determined to woo her with his wonderful spaghetti. The climax of the film has everything in the plot crashing together in a scene worthy of the Marx Brothers.

The Italian petty petty bourgeois film is funny in a much subtler way. It tells the touching story of a government functionary grooming his slob of a son for a ministerial sinecure. The film takes a surprise plot turn in the middle and our quiet chuckling during the low key first half of the film turns to quiet groaning in the bloody and macabre second half. It is not a perfect film, but it is one which puts the audience through changes and certainly ensnares us in its emotional nets.

The final film which managed to make some impression on my festively bloodshot brain was again a Canadian film, *Blood and Guts*. As its title suggests, the film is about wrestling, and it is a formula which works. The director, Paul Lynch, was a bit like a magician who has shown us how he has hidden the rabbit in the hat and yet still wows us when he does the tricks. The convention in wrestling is to have a good guy and a bad guy in the ring. The bad guy accompanied by the boos of the crowd always wins the first part of the fight whereupon the battered hero rises phoenix-like from the mat to pummel the villain into the ground. This, it transpires, is exactly the plot of the movie, with the final victory taking place in the wrestling ring. What may have been a corny film, however, is saved by the realism of the settings and the realism of the situations in which the seedy company of wrestlers went their way through rural Ontario in their struggle to survive.

No review of the World Film Festival of Montreal would be complete without a description of the main social event of the week, if not the social event of the year. I am referring, of course, to the Fellini like gathering assembled by Harold Greenberg and company on the set of *City on Fire*, a film being shot in the East end of Montreal. The invitations to press and dignitaries called it a "block party" — rather amusingly since the block in question was a replica of the main street of a small mid-western town, built specially for the film. The store fronts and mailboxes and telephone poles were all destined to be burned to a crisp later in the month by the Wenger family, a special effects team from Los Angeles.

Gorging themselves on the hors-d'oeuvres and hot dogs were the stars of this "blockbuster," Shelly Winters, Barry Newman and Susan Clark. The most delightful moment came when everyone was hushed to silence and Greenberg announced that it was his son's twenty-first birthday. After the cast of thousands reluctantly sang Happy Birthday, the Wengers blew up a couple of cars to the cheers of the assembled multitude. Top that Régine. □

everybody came

Big and brash and slightly out of control. That was the Toronto festival this year, awash in its huge popular success. George Csaba Koller gives us a glimpse of his diary as he 'did' the festival.

by George Csaba Koller



Robert Morley thinks the proof is in the pudding. Jacqueline Bisset and George Segal wait to see in *The Great Chefs*

On the afternoon of Opening Night, I enter the press room at the Plaza II. David Novek, with telephone welded to his ear, greets me warmly. He is repping *In Praise of Older Women*, having left his National Film Board publicity job some time back. Paul Almond comes in with his newly tanned, California wife and Marc Gervais, who seems to vaguely remember me from Cinema Canada's formative years. It takes a while to get my pass, since I'm not on the official list, but the phone

call from Cinema Canada does the trick. Then George Kaczender makes a brief appearance and I ask him in Hungarian for a pass to Opening Night for a young lady I have in mind, but he looks puzzled, throws up his hands, and says that they are way oversold.

Get a lift in a yellow Ford truck to Yonge and Queen and high tail it to the theatre where a huge crowd is gathered on the sidewalk. They hold me up at the door along with the

rest of the crowd. Even my press pass cannot get me through. George Anthony of the *Toronto Sun* sails through with a whole entourage while I wait around (but then the *Sun* is the official festival paper, an indication of Bill Marshall's shrewdness in reaching the masses). Assertion does the trick. After a long fruitless search, I find a seat way up in the balcony, cordoned off for the privileged gold passes and the press. Scores of people are left holding tickets with no seats. Some do not hesitate to express their anger. Wayne Clarkson, this year's festival director, appears to assure everyone without seats that the film will be re-screened at the Festival Cinema later in the evening. Then Secretary of State John Roberts is introduced to win the hearts and minds of this gala audience.

Roberts gets a cool reception (largely on account of anti-government sentiment, but perhaps because of his dilly dallying on the film policy) but makes a very strong statement against censorship, endearing him to all, judging from the applause. And finally the lights are dimmed, and through the magic of celluloid and big bucks, we are propelled back in time to Budapest, Hungary perspiring profusely under the burden of Papa Stalin in the fifties (and what's this?) "elderly" ladies initiating a young boy into sweet n' sweaty sex? Leave it to us Magyars to put the paprika back into puberty, but with finesse, noblesse oblige.

Actually, it is to the credit of director Kaczender, producer Robert Lantos, and director of photography Miklos Lente, that they managed in **In Praise of Older Women** to recreate the atmosphere of Budapest in the fifties without ever leaving Montreal. Down to the last minute detail, such as the ashtrays in the dance hall, the flashing neon signs, pictures of the political leaders on the wall, and the lead character young Andras humming the popular tunes of the day, as well as the impressionistic portrayal of the 1956 revolution, the spirit of our homeland is there. The explicit treatment of heterosexual encounters might raise a few eyebrows, but is healthy and refreshing in this age of sexual ambivalence. The audience for the most part disliked the film, even though it has a strong Canadian element, being that young Andras winds up escaping to this country after the abortive revolt, to continue his sexual conquests unabated. A male fantasy to be sure, but what red blooded man would turn down invitations from Karen Black, Marilyn Lightstone, Helen Shaver, Alexandra Stewart, and Susan Strasberg?

Over to City Hall in the rain where I find long line-ups for drinks and blaring disco music, wide plastic streamers, and huge balloons. The whole affair is a bit chintzy, despite the assembled notables. Karen Black makes an entrance with hubby Kit Carson. Donald Pilon and Chuck Shamata exchange macho acting talk. Don Owen is complaining about almost being kept out of the opening. Kaczender makes a brief appearance, but one has the impression that the real party is elsewhere.

Wake up Friday at noon and catch Murray Markowitz on a Hamilton talk show rapping about **Hugs and Kisses**. He says that Demeter was done in by jealous people who envied his success and great wealth, and the Hungarian connection

George Csaba Koller, former editor/publisher of Cinema Canada, is presently at work on a research project on Canadian experimental films. He hopes to write a book on the subject next year.

is there again. The whole town is buzzing with film talk and film people. Over to Canadian Film Institute luncheon at Plaza II, meet Frederik Manter in the lobby, an old friend from the days when he used to be Cinema Canada's advertising manager. Kelly O'Brien and others are there, and the circle is complete, because Wayne Clarkson hails from the CFI as well. They hand out press kits, including new books on Don Shebib and Richard Leiterman, put out by Piers Handling and the publications section. John Foster of *Movie Works* rushes about with a huge cross around his neck, having taken on the task of publishing a daily paper for the duration of the festival.

Head down to the Marketplace, a collection of commercial booths featuring product from various publications and film companies. Back to the lobby to sit awhile and chat with Dennis Zahoruk of **Brethren** fame about his new script **Evil Eye**, based on an outline by Peter Bryant.

Nelson Smith C.A. appears and invites us up for a drink at the hospitality lounge on the fifth floor, which turns out to be *the* place to hang out and pick up gossip and be attuned to the festival's central nervous system.

In the following week, this very comfortable hotel suite is to be deluged with stars and sparkling, beautiful people, all eager to be close to the hub of this fast revolving wheel of fortune set in motion by Bill Marshall and company.

Go to see **Marie-Anne**, a film from Alberta with a feminine point of view, starring Andrée Pelletier as a beautiful, strong willed woman who turns out to be the first white lady west of Saskatchewan among the fur traders and Indians. She has a quasi-mystical confrontation with a fierce Indian woman, her husband's ex-lover, and ends up saving the day by an act of courage. It's a bit square what with its CBC like dramatics, nevertheless producer Fil Fraser did a fine job. There is a need for honest films about Canadian history, if our identity is to survive alongside the American, Australian, German and Italian bits of consciousness exhibited at festivals like this and in marketplaces throughout the world.

Back to the hospitality suite, where Helen Shaver comes in with a white poodle in a white outfit and she asks me for a light. She seems happy, high and not so holy, not knowing that next week she'll win the Etrog as Canada's best actress for her role in **Older Women**. Graham Coughtry is there and gives me an icy look, maybe because I don't have time to talk to him. Have to rush off to see a film. Sydney Newman makes one of his frequent appearances, and we both have club sandwiches (paid by us) along with drinks (courtesy of the Festival). The celebrities sink into their comfortable sofas and arm chairs, preparing to watch the Ali/Spinks fight on the large color TV. I rush off to see another film with an actress named Sandy.

Bloodbrothers turns out to be a nitty-gritty, working class drama about machoness in Italian American hardhats, but it does have its softer moments. The technical quality is excellent and the acting is quite natural, but this kind of film gets on my nerves after a while. In addition to the, by now arbitrary, tits 'n ass scenes and locker room language, bloody fights between men, wife beating, and sweaty camaraderie, one of the brothers has a sensitive side. He wants to quit construction and become a schoolteacher.

The next morning I make it to Yonge and Bloor in time to catch a bit of **Don's Party**, an Aussie film again about macho men who indulge in such sports as grabbing a well-

endowed lady, undressing and throwing her into the pool. Then they all undress and jump in after her and everyone runs around naked for the next half hour, with the more squeamish women offering the towels. Oh yes, there is a labor party election in there somewhere, but not in the sequence I saw, although they did have heavy handed discussions about socialism. Nice technical quality and some good acting.

After a quick trip to the hospitality suite, I run across the street to see **Violette Nozière**, Claude Chabrol's Canada/France co-production, which is a beautifully photographed (Jean Rabier) and costumed period piece (thirties) about this sexy young girl who has problems at home and decides to murder her parents in order to solve them. Her father could or could not have been having intercourse with her since she was 13 and her mother is a neurotically hysteric lady. Violette finds out that she has syphilis which can be hereditary, so she decides to blame it on her family. The film is a long and monotonous series of vignettes illuminating the internal world of this young lady. Cockeyed editing makes the plot hard to follow, but David Novek confirmed that 17 minutes were cut. But the film has an added impact, when it is revealed that Violette was a real life murderess saved from the guillotine by Marshall Petain, and then pardoned by Charles de Gaulle. "We do have some curious people in Paris," commented cinematographer Marc Champion after the screening.

Next is the world première of Ted Kotcheff's **Who is Killing the Great Chefs of Europe?** Kotcheff and Micheline Lanctôt get seats in the last row of the balcony and I find myself sitting next to Oscar winner Beverly Shaffer. **Chefs** is a very well made film, Kotcheff knows his craft, but it is about over abundance and high cuisine, which at a time of economic crunch is perhaps a sardonic comment on western appetites and could be considered in bad taste. The film concerns Robert Morley as the epitomic epicure who runs a gastronomic magazine and knows all the great chefs of Europe personally. Anyway, the great chefs get knocked off one by one in the manner of their specialty: baked in an oven, boiled alive as a lobster, mashed as a rabbit, whatever. Jacqueline Bisset and George Segal play a likable couple who have divorced but get back together as the film progresses. She is one of the great chefs and he is a high rolling businessman specializing in fast foods. Well photographed, well acted and humorously scripted, it is not a screamer throughout, but one scene where Segal walks into a subdued vegetarian restaurant and loudly and graphically describes how he's going to open up a place next door where he'll butcher the steer right at your table sending the gentle patrons scurrying for the door, is hilarious. If you are scrimping on your weekly food budget, go see **Great Chefs**. Maybe you'll get vicarious heartburn.

Saturday go to see **Girl Friends**, director Claudia Weill's 16mm feature blown up to 35mm. Off beat beginning about two girl friends, one blonde and WASP, the other curly black haired and Jewish, the real heroine of the film. Blonde gets married and Susan Weinblatt, played by Melanie Mayron, is left alone to cope with the problems of getting started as a photographer. She has a touching love thing going with a middle-aged rabbi (Eli Wallach) and he at one point kisses her passionately on the lips. Later, she picks up a young hitchhiking lady who helps Susan come out of her shell. Not unlike the proverbial butterfly from the cocoon, the awkward, sometimes snotty Jewish kid with glasses is transformed by the

end of the film into a desirable woman. She goes back to see the blonde periodically, and her girl friend's relationship with husband and baby provides good male/female contrast in this liberated age. Well acted, shot and scripted, this film received a standing ovation when it was shown at Cannes. The reception at Toronto's Towne Cinema is more subdued.

There is not enough space to continue in this detailed fashion. I just wanted to give an idea of what it was like covering this major event. The facts have been recorded elsewhere. Total attendance at the festival topped 75,000, making it one of the biggest film festivals in the world. The organizers kept assuring everyone that they did not sell more passes than seats but the contrary was obvious. For this reason, they extended the festival, repeating some of the major attractions for those who could not get in the first time. Cinema Canada asked for interviews with both Bill Marshall and Wayne Clarkson but the request was denied by the press room.



Brad Davis takes a rest as the real Billy Hayes looks on during the shoot of **Midnight Express** in Malta

The festival had too many films for any one journalist to attend, so I decided early on to be very selective. Of the new Australian cinema series, **The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith** was the most outstanding. Directed by Fred Schepisi, this film is gripping in its subject matter and exhibits a very high standard of technical excellence. About a young aborigine, who is sometimes mistreated but more or less accepted by the white settlers down under, **Jimmy Blacksmith** nevertheless explodes with gruesomely explicit racial violence. The film has imperfections, but it keeps the viewer on the edge of his seat throughout its 122 minutes.

The most cathartic moment at the Festival occurred after the screening of **Midnight Express** when Billy Hayes made



The coup d'état explodes into action as the military storms the airport in *Power Play*

an appearance. The film we saw depicted his somewhat dramatized, but mostly true story of going through hell for five years in a Turkish prison. Having been picked up at Istanbul airport with a large quantity of hashish taped to his body, Billy Hayes was caught up in the nightmare world of the Turkish system of "justice," which decided to use him as an example to other young westerners who might entertain similar get rich quick ideas. Sentenced to three years, Billy is told on the day of his release that another twenty years has been imposed on him. Brad Davis, as Hayes, goes understandably berserk at this point. One of the most powerful scenes in any movie of recent memory takes place when his girl friend finally saves up enough money to visit Billy after four years. By this time he is almost a zombie. As soon as they are left alone in the visiting room, with a glass partition dividing them, he's overtaken by her low-cut blouse and asks to see her breasts. Taken out of context this sounds crass, but it is one of the most touching love scenes ever filmed. He finally kills the head prison guard and makes a dramatic escape. It is not surprising that audiences everywhere have been giving Billy Hayes standing ovations after the film. Toronto was no exception. A further note on the power of cinema in general: 47 days after the film was shown in Washington D.C., the U.S. government signed an extradition treaty with Turkey for the exchange of such prisoners.

And finally, an equally gripping movie, this one a Canadian/Anglo co-production, directed by Martyn Burke, produced by Chris Dalton, and starring Peter O'Toole, David Hemmings, Donald Pleasence, and Barry Morse. *Power Play* takes place in a mythical European country, but just as *State of Siege*, it could happen anywhere. When terrorism causes brutal government repression, or vice versa, a number of high echelon military leaders, instigated by a well meaning cabinet minister, decide to stage a coup. Hemmings plays the noble

Colonel, a family man, about to retire but moved by his conscience to act. O'Toole plays a flamboyant tank commander, who is slow to convince but does join the coup, for entirely different reasons. Morse plays the cabinet minister and Pleasence is superbly evil as the symbol of the repressive government. Chuck Shamata makes a brilliant entrance as the coup's security chief, in a scene that will probably go down in Canadian movie history. As the plotters sit around a conference table discussing the tactics of the coup, Shamata puts a bit of terror in their hearts as he replays, on a hidden tape recorder, everything they've just said and jumps in front of them with a submachine gun placing them under mock arrest. "Gentlemen, you should be more careful next time," he says conchantly. "This could have been the real thing." And so could the rest of the movie, which has a very twisted, if not totally unexpected, ending. The pace is brisk, the acting is of an evenly high quality with O'Toole's brilliance shining through and the rest of the production values do just credit to the highly talented, largely Canadian production team responsible for *Power Play*.

Epilogue: the sidewalk outside 21 McGill Street, an exclusive Toronto's women's club, looked just like a scene from *Power Play*. At least a dozen heavy looking dudes with walkie talkies who claimed to be "parking attendants for the limousines," were looking out for the security of the notables assembled inside. The downstairs gymnasium featured the music and the dancing, while the upstairs reception room had a cocktail party atmosphere. Both were packed tightly with celebrities, and the champagne flowed freely. Earlier in the evening, the Canadian Film Awards ceremonies took place at the Ryerson theatre, of which a CBC television special was taped by Bill Marshall and his team. "Stars galore," is how one participant described the largest bash ever thrown by the film industry in Toronto, and probably in Canada. □

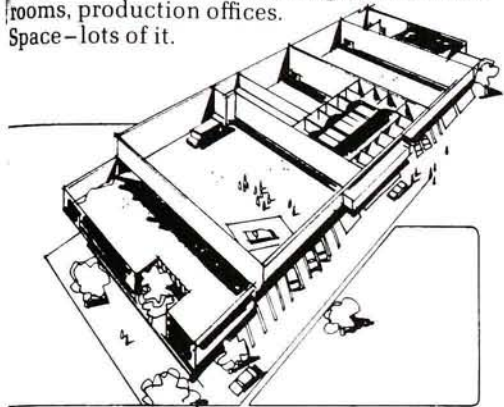
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