



Denys Arcand directing "Rejeanne Padovani"



Michael Parks, Don Shebib and Bonnie Bedelia



Bill Reid, director of NFB documentary feature "Coming Home"

death of the film awards

A. Ibrányi-Kiss

CANADIAN FILM AWARDS 1973: PARTICIPATION GREATER THAN EVER

The 1973 CANADIAN FILM AWARDS... is welcoming participation by Canadian filmmakers which far surpasses that of any past year. In 1972 the CFA, which was held in Toronto, received 144 entries. With the move to Montreal in 1973 entries have climbed to 212. Noteworthy increases in 12 of the 13 categories /animation being the exception... ed./ point out the growing importance of this annual event.

THE AIMS OF THE CANADIAN FILM AWARDS

... the principal aims and objectives of the CFA are to stimulate creativity and quality in Canadian film production and to promote widespread interest and distribution for Canadian films. . .

PROMOTE! PUBLICIZE! AN ALL-OUT FIRST FOR THE CANADIAN FILM AWARDS

Besides being the 25th anniversary, 1973 is a year of many 'firsts' for the CFA. For the first time, the Secretary of State Department made a substantial grant to the organization and thus, for the first time, the Awards Committee was able to engage a full-time, professional Director. They chose Marcia Couëlle. . . Her experience in the private sector . . . has convinced her that this industry can grow only with promotion and publicity, and the 1973 Canadian Film Awards will clearly reflect her beliefs. Where will the Film Awards be held? In a very commercial

St. Denis theatre complex . . . When? . . . right in the middle of the Canadian film premiere season. . . With the move to Montreal, will this year's Film Awards be a Québécois event? More so than ever but by no means exclusively! Marcia Couëlle talks of national television coverage, of reporters from across Canada, of film critics from other countries.

In 1973, more than ever, the Canadian Film Awards is affirming its position vis-a-vis the Canadian film industry. Its aim is to project this industry's total image to the public. . . In previous years, all films, from features to travelogues, have been seen by the international jury. In 1973, the international jury will judge only those films which tend to cross Canada's borders and which constitute the more commercial aspect of Canadian film production.

Excerpts from official press releases of the Canadian Film Awards prepared by Robert Paradis & Associates.

Meanwhile, the Toronto office was equally busy organizing "A Day in Montreal" — which included 112 seats on a charter plane, luncheons, cocktails, presentations, Windsor Hotel rooms (where the International Jurors were staying) and a scenic bus tour. PLUS tickets to the gala evening to be televised by network CBC, and the note — No charge for overweight on return flight caused by Etrogs.

The official tone of the Canadian Film Awards changed drastically from this glossy hype by the time Friday, October 12th arrived. This was the last official statement made:

STATEMENT BY THE ADMINISTRATORS OF THE CFA

The aims and objectives of the Directors of the 1973 Canadian Film Awards were to efficiently promote the work of Canadian filmmakers. This same type of promotional effort is made each year in Cannes, Berlin and anywhere else that can lead to wide-spread diffusion of Canadian films, both on the cultural and commercial levels.

It is obvious that the Canadian Film

Awards festival week was organized in Montreal this year with the full support of the Canadian film industry. It is also obvious that the structure and workings of the Canadian Film Awards have been public knowledge for the past 25 years.

In 1972, a meeting was called by the Quebec Producers Association. This meeting was attended by many Québécois directors who manifested their full support of this bi-cultural event which is the Canadian Film Awards. It was with this in mind that the Directors of the Film Awards decided to hold the festival week in Montreal in 1973.

We acknowledge that the structure of any festival may be contested, however we feel that the Association des Réalistes de Film du Québec chose a particularly unfortunate moment to lodge their protest, the opening day of this festival week. By their action, they have deprived all of the other members of the Canadian film industry of a valuable promotion designed to stimulate public interest in Canadian films.

Nonetheless, we decided to carry out the festival week as originally intended. We thank all the members of the media who have come from across Canada and from other countries to attend the 25th Annual Canadian Film Awards. . .

* * *

It is precisely that last statement — where the blame for the loss of this 'valuable promotion' is placed on the Quebec directors — that makes this communique misleading. There were far too many other factors involved than the directors' boycott.

To backtrack: there have been numerous recurring complaints about the way the CFA operates. True, its structure has been public knowledge for 25 years; but that structure has also been impervious to criticism. For example, last year the Experimental Film Category was dropped from the festival. Strong protests were lodged at the time by many concerned journalists and filmmakers. However, this year that category was again missing. Last year's pro-



Jacques Godin, star of "O.K. Laliberté"



Luce Guilbeault in "O.K. Laliberté"



Denys Arcand with Roger Lebel and Luce Guilbeault

tests were ignored.

One of the major complaints this year was that the 15-member pre-selection committee included only 2 active filmmakers. This in itself is absurd; but far more serious was the consequence that many important, if not outstanding, films were excluded from competition and therefore not shown. Most of the selected films were not only commercially-oriented (and these films will be seen anyway) but as a result, not representative of our industry as a whole.

Some of the features excluded in pre-selection were *Tendresse Ordinaire* by Jacques Leduc, *Montreal Main* by Frank Vitale, *Tu Brûles . . . Tu Brûles* by Jean-Guy Noël, *Peep* by Jack Cunningham, *Bar Salon* by André Forcier and *The Visitor* by John H. Wright. However, films like *August and July* and *J'ai Mon Voyage* were retained. *Richesse des Autres* and *Isis au 8* were both deleted from the non-fiction feature category and *Rocco Brothers* as well as *I Seem to be a Verb* were also left out from the theatrical short category. Many other films of equal importance should have been shown since they represent a major part of our film industry and film culture. These are also the films which have less of a chance of playing local neighborhood theatres — shouldn't the Canadian Film Awards be the place to show such films?

Another problem: entry fees for films were raised to \$50 for a short and \$100 for a feature. Although refunds were given to films which were rejected, the raise in fees was strongly discriminatory towards independent filmmakers. In addition, many independents have been seriously suggesting placing the National Film Board in a separate category, since not many filmmakers have the means to compete with the Board's equipment and resources.

To top off this list is a personal complaint: at the same time that the CFA received \$40,000 from the Secretary of State and hired a professional promotion agency to lodge a major advertising program, magazines such as *Cinéma Québec* and *Cinema Canada* were re-

quested to donate free ad space although they had actively promoted and supported the industry all year and were far more needy of ad money. So it goes . . . There were problems.

Meanwhile, the Film Awards were roaring ahead oblivious to the unease the huge campaign was causing. The last few weeks before the festival saw numerous ads on television, radio and the papers in Montreal hyping the coming week as a great bilingual, bicultural, glossy, slick and glamorous event. Dust your rhinestones! Send the tux to the cleaners! This is going to be our own Oscars! Think gala!

That did it. The Québec Film Directors' Association held an emergency meeting and issued the following statement on Monday, October 8th:

The Canadian Film Awards is an industry event whose basic structure is directly plagiarized from the United States' Academy Awards.

Furthermore, it is attempting to blend two separate and autonomous cultural entities.

The rejection of certain films, based on Awards "reasoning" presents a false impression of our productivity. We find it ridiculous, in 1973, to collaborate with an Awards presentation whose bi-cultural organization would imply homogeneity in Canadian cinema.

Just as it is no longer possible to unite CBC and Radio-Canada, or the English and French production units of the NFB, so is it unthinkable that the Awards successfully group together two such complex and diverse realities as the cinemas of Québec and of English Canada.

Consequently, the undersigned directors have decided to abstain from participating in the Awards presentation, and refuse, in advance, any prize which may be awarded them.

Gilles Carle, Denys Arcand, Claude Jutra, André Melançon, Jacques Gagné, Denis Héroux, Marcel Carrière, Gilles Thérien, René Avon, Clément Perron, André Belanger, Jean Saulnier, Roger Frappier, Aimée Danis.

Amazingly, it was this delicately-worded and understated communique which sparked off a series of unbelievable over-reactions! The most serious of these was the CBC's refusal to broadcast the awards, supposedly out of fear that political activities may take place. (If that is not censorship, we have to rewrite our dictionaries.) Toronto called emergency meetings to discuss the possibility of moving the Awards "back home", and an enormous amount of insurance was placed on the theatre in Montreal. Many English directors were legitimately upset over losing the free publicity and potential box-office that the prime-time telecast would have meant. But who called off the telecast? Even the boycotting directors were amazed at the reactions. Consider what happened:

The screenings continued and the week developed into one of the most boring and hohum events ever. At least, in Montreal. The only well-attended showings were for films playing in downtown theatres. (Obviously it's nicer to pay \$1 than \$3 to see the same films . . .) The free screenings in the adjoining theatre were virtually ignored. Most people failed to show up either because they'd thought the week had been called off, or because they couldn't care less.

A lovely series of vignettes took place on Thursday night when CBC-radio sent an interviewer and a soundman on Nagra to find out what theatre-goers thought about the boycott. Most people questioned didn't even know there was one! As to why they came — because it cost only \$1 . . .

Not even the Québec critics' statement caused too much excitement, although it was far more outspoken in its criticism and approached a paranoia equal to that of English-Canada. Whereas the English segment of the CFA felt it had been stabbed in the back by the French, the critics saw this same group as deliberately seducing both the public and the film community into accepting its commerciality while discriminating against authentic Québec cinema.

Finally, the end of the week ap-

proached. An announcement was made that a press conference (read: low-key) will take place on Friday evening with the results of the competition. Things started getting glamorous. Toronto showed up. Surprisingly, key actresses showed up – Geneviève Bujold, Micheline Lanctôt and Luce Guilbeault – all three starring in films whose directors were boycotting. However, very few English Canadians seemed to decipher that, contrary to popular paranoia, Québec was not in complete assent. Nevertheless, everyone settled in, and the ‘conference’ was underway. Marcia Couëlle, showing amazing grace and nerves-of-steel, calmly read the CFA directors’ statement on behalf of herself, Ralph Umbarger, Vi Crone, and Claude Godbout. Then, the international jury read its statement. (Roch Carrier, Québec novelist; Roger Corman, American Grade-B genre director; Alain Jessua, director from France; Ivan Passer, Czechoslovakian filmmaker; and Les Wedman, Vancouver film critic were the jurors. Marc Gervais was the non-voting chairman.) They suggested follow-up discussions to take place after the Awards and that, “. . . all those who like films have the right to discuss our choices”. Everything seemed to be drawing to a thoughtful and somewhat sad end. We all sat back in our seats prepared to hear that the awards were split between Rejeanne Padovani and Between Friends with Kamouraska getting everything else. But lo and behold – the jurors went mad! With over-reaction? Overcompensation? Paranoia? Who can tell?

- Rejeanne Padovani was given only one Etrog for best screenplay,
- Between Friends the film which should have won best direction and best film (according to both Québécois and English-Canadian filmpeople) – was completely ignored. Did the jury even see it?
- Kamouraska received a Special Jury Prize for all-round excellence – which somehow managed to exclude best film, best direction, and best cinematography,
- Gilles Carle received the Wendy Michener award for, among other things, “his contribution to this year’s awards”. Was this black humor since he was boycotting?
- and Best Direction and Best Film were given to David Acoma for Slipstream!

Hisses from the audience . . . Shock . . . Tears of disbelief . . . WAS THIS FOR REAL? Nothing against Slipstream – David Acoma should have gotten, and probably deserved, an award for best first feature or most promising newcomer. But best film? Best direction? Apologies should go to Denys Arcand and Don Shebib . . .

Alright. I was there. I had seen all the films at least twice. Perhaps, in my over-zealous devotion to Canadian films I’ve gone over the edge and have no critical sense left . . . It can happen. But then how to explain the following: after being assured by both Cinéma Québec and yours truly that his name won’t be used, one of the jury members confided – no, he did not think Slipstream was the best film. But yes, it was a unanimous decision.

It was on this surreal, slightly funereal tone amidst cheap red wine and slightly inebriated filmfolk that the 25th Annual Canadian Film Awards ended.

How and why did all this happen? Most rational of all were the Québec directors. First of all, Québec was facing a crucial election with the Parti Québécois challenging Bourassa’s legions to become the official opposition party. Obviously, some form of strong support for the separatist position had to be forthcoming from Québec’s politically conscious artists. The Film Awards provided a marvelous means for that since

the media was very attentive. As far as the other criticisms stated in the communique – the only reason English-Canadian directors did not boycott for those same reasons is because they’re politically disorganized and individualistically competitive.

There is no question that the CFA’s entire approach was commercial and that it attempted to portray our cinema as being federalist and fun. However Canada is not bicultural, bilingual or commercially very successful – and neither is its cinema.

In closing, I have only the following questions:

- Would we invite Harold Robbins to decide which Canadian novel should get the Governor General’s award?
- Are we incapable of judging our own work?
- Do we walk through art museums giving statuettes for the Best Painting? Best Sculpture? Most Beautiful Frame?

Most of us no longer insist that the world is flat, maybe we should stop insisting that this is *one* country.

Feature Films

Sound Recording	.....	Jean Rival – L’Infonie Inachevée
Sound Editing	.....	Alan Lloyd – Slipstream
Sound Re-recording	.....	Joe Grimaldi – Paperback Hero
Editing	.....	Kirk Jones – Paperback Hero
Art Direction	.....	Françoise Barbeau – Kamouraska
Original Music Score	.....	Willie Lamôthe, Tristan Hansinger, Chick Peabody, Peter Van Ginkel – La Mort d’un Bûcheron
Cinematography	.....	Don Wilder CSC – Paperback Hero
Screenplay	.....	Jacques Benoit, Denys Arcand – Rejeanne Padovani
Supporting Actor	.....	Willie Lamôthe – La Mort d’Un Bûcheron
Supporting Actress	.....	Camille Bernard – Kamouraska
Actor	.....	Jacques Godin – O.K.Laliberté
Actress	.....	Geneviève Bujold – Kamouraska
Direction	.....	David Acoma – Slipstream
Non-Fiction Feature	.....	Coming Home – Bill Reid
Fiction Feature	.....	Slipstream – David Acoma

Wendy Michener Award – For his outstanding contribution to this year’s Canadian Film Awards and to the Canadian Film Industry – Gilles Carle

Special Jury Prize – For its all-round excellence – Kamouraska, Claude Jutra

Grierson Award – to a person whose work carries forward the Grierson tradition – Robert Forget, Director of Vidéographe.

Non-Feature Films

Sound Recording	.....	Richard Besse, Jacques Chevigny – Station 10 (NFB)
Sound Editing	.....	Arla Saare – The Shield (CTV)
Sound Re-recording	.....	Michel Descombes – Le Vent (NFB)
Editing	.....	Claude Lavoie – Faire Hurler les Murs (OFQ)
Art Direction	.....	Denis Boucher – The Sloane Affair (NFB)
Music	.....	Les “Stein” – Faire Hurler les Murs (OFQ)
Cinematography	.....	Paul Vezina, Paul Maltais – Faire Hurler les Murs (OFQ)
Non-Dramatic Script	.....	André Melançon – Des Armes et les Hommes (NFB)
Screenplay	.....	Alvin Goldman, Doug Jackson – The Sloane Affair (NFB)
Actor	.....	Marcel Sabourin – Des Armes et les Hommes (NFB)
Actress	.....	Jackie Burroughs – Vicky (CBC)
Direction	.....	Doug Jackson – Sloane Affair (NFB)
TV Drama	.....	Sloane Affair (NFB) – Doug Jackson
Animated Film	.....	The Family That Dwelt Apart (NFB) – Yvon Mallette
Theatrical Short	.....	Goodbye Sousa (NFB) – Tony Ianzelo
Documentary	.....	Grierson, Faire Hurler les Murs Roger Blais (NFB) Jean Saulnier (OFQ)

NFB – National Film Board

CBC – Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

OFQ – Office du Film du Québec
CTV – Canadian Television

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