Dubbing itself “the Pulitzer of television” and brandishing a healthy handful of rave reviews, the Banff Television Festival has come a long way since its early days at the Banff Centre. Now holding court in the medieval splendor of the Banff Springs Hotel, supported by backers like Global Television, Nabisco Brands, and increased loot from lottery funds, praised by international critics, the Festival is finally in the world arena of competition for excellence in television programming. Well done and brave!

Then, why, instead of “the healthiest young浏览者 on the block” described in the press releases, does the Festival seem more like an aging debutante, still clinging to coy ways instead of welcoming the maturity of success?

There is much that is admirable in the Banff Festival: impressive guests and speakers in a spectacular setting, excellent programming from around the world... and an expressed concern for integrity in programming. But, seeing such great potential, one wants to whisper a few words of advice into this beauty’s ear. (Or, even better, send over a crackerjack public relations person with a snappy wit and an iron hand.)

The litany of “we are-so-poor-and-suffering” worked (barely) the first few years. But, the fifth time around, intoned with a snappy wit and an iron hand. But, seeing such great potential, one wants to whisper a few words of advice into this beauty’s ear. (Or, even better, send over a crackerjack public relations person with a snappy wit and an iron hand.)

The exchange of views between countries and producers was invigorating and promising. At one of the star-studded Trans-Atlantic Transplants, American panelists urged Canadians to pursue more co-productions.

However, Charles Larsen, of Almi Television Productions, recounted how that negotiating the sale of SCTV to the U.S., the Canadian producers were initially reluctant to include the McKenzie Brothers because of the “sudden siblings were just Canadian content...” “But they’re funny,” insisted a bewildered Larsen. Moral of the story, according to Larsen, is “Don’t misjudge what the American audience will accept.” Cloaked in humility, and fusing with inedibility, Canadians are perceived as “decent but dull” international image.

And, unhappily, the day devoted to Canadian topics only confirmed that. One group of panelists must have fled, mumbled and muddled behind their microphones interminably, finally prompting one producer to explode with rage like a mini-volcano. When she marched to the front of the room to shake her fist at the panel and tell them off for their negative droning, most of the room was silently cheering her on. (“I thought she was going to pull them,” crowed one delighted delegate.)

Perhaps this illustrated two possible interpretations of the dynamism of moulder/smoulder. The Americans and British seem to enjoy what they do. They get excited. They argue. They know their business and they love their business. But the gentle Canadians? Are we really like that dreary panel? Do we just wonder and wander and whim and wimp?

Maybe not. The most vibrant moments came from three western producers... Wendy Wacko, Elvira Lount and Eda Lishman. Wacko not only sold Challen- ge: the Canadian Rockies (for Turner Broadcasting while in Banff, but also proposed an alternative film finance plan, which at least an attempt to churn out something constructive. Lount, disgruntled with financing problems, charted the course of her Broad- cast letter, and in an outrageous gesture, offered to sell it to the highest bidder. Lishman berated one panel on behalf of independent producers. “Why are we here? We haven’t heard one positive thing from anyone on this panel!”

Robert Fredericks, producer of The Beachcombers in Vancouver, earned a round of applause when he spoke elo- quently of the needs of independents in the west. “If we really want Canadian content, we must use western creativity, but these Canadian quotes were dropped in the bucket of information available at Banff. The Festival offers a wealth of knowledge and expertise as close as the person at your elbow at the buffet. Seminars, addresses, press conferences, screenings, receptions, informal socializing, wild whoop-de-dooing, and general playtime in the Rockies offer a wide range of opportunities to wheel-and-deal, associate and negotiate.

Now if only the Festival could patch up its little problems: incredible disorganization in some areas (okay, many of the staff are volunteers, so one has to make allowances); faux pas after faux pas (Example: The opening night premiere of Draw. Apparently, delegates had taken courtesy buses up the moun- tain to the theatre, only to discover they had to fork over a dollar in order to get back down the mountain at the end of the evening. “I can’t believe it. That’s so tacky!” groaned one bemused delegate: a lot of indiscriminate hugging and kissing and musing over people when a simple handshake would do (I’m not against affection, just phoniness); a tendency to hokey and cute (I was told that the Banff Follies, a sort of amateur night caused a major exodus to the bar); and other such shenanigans that try the patience. Also, although the prow of this wobbly ship is unfallingly afloat, the crew tend to throw their manners overboard in the desperation of the week. It’s funny that Andrea Sheffer and her gang at the Trade Forum don’t have this problem. But, then, Sheffer, in addition to her impressive track record, has the p.r. skills of Maria Topolovich on hand.

So, the Banff Television Festival is terrific. “The best television festival in the world but no-one knows about it”, laments Hunter. Personally, I think that’s because there’s still too much mush and mumble in the mountains. The Banff Fest is come of age. It can toss the kissy-buggy, fuss and buss, and it doesn’t say “little” me jazz into the closet... and simply be what it really is — a world-class festival.

**Quotable Quotes**

Robert Wussler of Turner Broadcasting on co-productions: “Bring us our status... either tax shelter dollars or a unique creative character or a way to spend a lot less money.”

Les Brown of Channels Magazine on the population of Canada vs. the U.S.: “Birds in the US come in flocks but in Canada and every single person watched it, it would fail.”

John Kennedy, CBC Television Drama: “I would like to nominate Stan Thomas and CKND for sainthood for their courage in taking the bull by the horns, and undertaking something as potentially dangerous, but also potentially rewarding, as television drama.”

Manitoba filmmaker Allan Kroeker: “Anything that’s good in film is reg- ional.”

And the winners are...

**Banff Festival Festival ’84**

**Fush and mumble in the mountains**

by Linda Kupecek

**Award Category** | **Program Title** | **Production Company**
---|---|---
Best Comedy | *Kick Up The Eighties* | CBC Scotland
| *Romeo & Juliette On Ice* | Indian Road Prods. Inc. (Toronto)
| *The Seven Deadly Sins* | Hungarian Television MTV
| *Big Bird in China* | The Children’s Television Workshop (New York)
| Fine Arts | *Gurkhals of Nepal* | Australian Broadcasting Corp., Sepia Films (Toronto)
| *Never Stay In One Place* | Thames Television Ltd. (London)
| Social & Political | *Rumpole and the Old Boy Next Door* | CKNY/TV (Winnipeg) | CanWest Broadcasting
| *The Best of the Festival* | Central Prods., in association with Vana Landsberg Prods. (U.S.)
| *The Ghost Writer (from the American Playhouse)* | WNET 13 in association with Showtime Entertainment
| Special jury awards | *Past For Tiger* | Westdeutscher Rundfunk, RTL, Eire
| *Caught In A Free State* | Alan Landsberg Prods. (U.S.)
| *Adam* | WNET 13 - Showtime Entertainment

**Top Award Winner**

**Outstanding Festival**

**Gordon Martin**