

Broadcast fund fuels production boom

MONTREAL – Boom may be too strong a word yet, but technicians in Montreal, producers in Toronto and industry equipment suppliers in both cities all agree the film and television production industry is humming like it hasn't in years, and could well keep up the pace at least until Christmas.

A steep increase in the number of features being shot in Montreal has raised film production figures to heights not seen since the tax-shelter years of 1978-79. Although no total production figures have yet been compiled, several indicators suggest that 1984 will easily be the most important production year in half-a-decade.

The Quebec technicians union, the Syndicat des techniciennes et techniciens du cinéma du Québec (STCQ), reports 21 feature shoots up to mid-October, a 50 percent increase over the same period of 1983. Several film production companies report, moreover, that they are encountering some difficulties in procuring equipment and in engaging crews. In particular, the categories of gaffers, grips and set decorators are reported to be very tight, with demand largely exceeding supply.

The reason for the surge in demand for crews is the sharp increase in the number of feature film productions in Montreal this fall, as well as a general increase in the number of commercial shoots.

Among the major film shoots are: Cinévidéo's \$2.6 million-dollar production of Yves Beauchemin's *Le Matou* employing 125 (full- and part-time) technicians shooting 'til January; RSL's \$8 million *Joshua Then and Now* (60 full-time technicians, wrapping in November); the HBO TV series *The Hitchhiker* (50-60 technicians, wrapping Nov. 11); and Quebec and Canadian features like *Visage Pâle* (20), RSL's *Night Magic* (30), and ICC's *The Boy in Blue* (wrapped Oct. 14).

manager at Panavision Canada, a major film-industry equipment supplier, reports that there is "no panic" even though the demand for equipment is running very high this fall. "We're swamped, but we always manage to keep up with the demand," says Belaieff. "But we have facilities in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, so we are able to constantly shift equipment back and forth – in this case from Toronto to Montreal."

Some film production houses, however, report that the tight available supply of film crews and equipment is causing scheduling problems. Pieter Kroonenburg of Filmline Productions expects that producing the \$2-million *Man Across the Street* will "certainly cause some problems."

"We will almost certainly be importing people from Toronto," reports Kroonenburg, who adds, "We would like to schedule productions in other seasons," rather than the high-demand fall season, but "financial arrangements make it impossible to organize many shoots earlier in the year."

While feature film productions have generally been able to procure the equipment and technicians needed for work in Montreal, some production houses report that other film and television work, such as commercials, is posing more problems.

"There is an unbelievable shortage of skilled people and equipment in Montreal right now," reports André Viau, director of commercial productions at SDA Productions. "And when things are booming in the film industry, it makes

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Trade Forum mixes opinions, coproductions

TORONTO – Producing Partners was the theme of the 1984 Festival of Festival's Trade Forum. The subtitle could have been "How I Learned to Love Television and Stop Worrying About the Theatrical Film." Over three days delegates were presented with "the compleat how-to-do-it for TV" kit in three different versions – Canadian, American and European. Out of eight panels, five were devoted to television; a sixth dealt with the producers' point of view; a seventh discussed the video ancillary market; and the eight theatrical distribution.

The mood of the Forum was one of earnest expectancy as close to 600 delegates (up from 400 the previous year) gathered to initiate courtships, revive dormant connections, or, if really lucky, consummate a relationship. Like overanxious adolescents at a sex education class they waited for the real lowdown from the experienced panellists – how do we do it? wise Bernard Weitzman, president of Lorimar Television Acquisitions, who cautioned his country cousins – the Canadian producers – about the Hollywood rapists. "Come to

Lorimar first," he said. "To be raped," added a wag in the audience.

Andra Sheffer, executive director of the Academy of Canadian Cinema and producer of Trade Forum '84, attributed the large crowd to the topic, co-producing, which was "dead-on." She also felt that the Canadian retrospective attracted a lot of the people to the festival who then decided to attend the Forum as well. Perhaps more than anything, the large attendance was an indication of how successful Telefilm had been in reinvigorating the Canadian production industry but as a television-driven business with the emphasis on the word business.

Peter Pearson, program director of Telefilm, stated unequivocally that "the Broadcast Fund is the TV business." Arthur Weinthal, CTV vice-president, referred to the "business-minded, success-oriented" Fund and warned the audience that the "TV business and the movie business are not the same." The sentiment was echoed by most of the other speakers. David Mintz, Global president, called

for "business-like productions" David Meister, senior vice-president, HBO, put it bluntly. "We're up here as businessmen and if it doesn't work as business, forget it."

In response to a plaintive plea from the floor – "what does Telefilm have to say to the motion-picture maker?" – Pearson, in the words of Peter Simpson, Forum moderator, had "nothing to say" In fact, what Pearson said was that it was difficult to bring filmmakers and broadcasters together and that there would have to be adjustments on both sides.

He decried an attitude that proclaimed "cinema, *c'est la noblesse*; television, *c'est le peuple*. That elitist attitude has made it very hard for broadcasters to work with filmmakers. It is very hard to do business with nobility visiting the plebians."

The real struggle between the forces of television and film unfolded in the producers' panel on the afternoon of the first day. René Malo fired the first broadside as he declared that Telefilm "is not a way of creating either an industry, nor

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Culture talks in Quebec on Cité and 2nd net as ministers meet

MONTREAL – In the glow of the post-electoral honey moon, Quebec and federal ministers of communications and cultural affairs have agreed to re-open several 'dossiers' in the areas of film and TV production, which had been points of contention under the Liberals. In particular, the new federal minister of Communications, Marcel Masse, has indicated his willingness to include Quebec government participation in the proposed \$36-million Cité du Cinema production centre on the Montreal waterfront. As well, a committee of federal and provincial deputy ministers has been up to study the technical and financial impact of an eventual second French-language private TV network.

The Sept. 25 meeting between Marcel Masse and his Quebec counterparts, Communications minister Jean-Jacques Bertrand and Cultural Affairs minister Clement Richard, was marked, in the absence of traditional federal/provincial antagonisms, by a business-like approach to TV and film production issues. The Quebec government, said Bertrand, was particularly pleased that there will be "further study" before any action is taken to build a film and TV production centre on the Montreal waterfront. The Quebec government, according to Richard, had been excluded from an agreement between then-Communications minister Francis Fox and a consortium of investors led by Montreal producer Denis Héroux which was signed Aug. 20.

The proposed agreement called for the federal government to contribute \$22-million out a total of \$36-million cost for the production facility. The rest of the costs – \$14 million – would be assumed by a private-sector consortium, La Société de gestion de la cité internationale du cinéma et de l'audiovisuel de Montreal inc., headed by Héroux.

The memorandum of understanding between Fox and the Héroux consortium called for the group to submit a detailed financing plan for the waterfront project before the end of 1984. This may all change now, given the federal government's new commitment to "cooperative federalism," and extensive consultation with the provinces.

"The Cité du Cinema issue will now be completely reviewed," Quebec ministry of Cultural Affairs spokesman André Steenhaut told Cinema Canada. "There must be a greater amount of room for

Quebec cinema in this project and, if this is the case, Quebec is willing to contribute to the project's cost." Reactions from the Héroux consortium will be forthcoming in a public statement, but was still being elaborated at press time.

The second issue on which the Quebec government had felt a lack of consultation from the federal government was the proposed second French-language private TV network. Following the Masse-Bertrand-Richard meeting, a committee of deputy ministers from both federal and provincial communications departments was set up to re-examine the effects a second French network might have on existing French-language television outlets: TVA, Radio-Canada, and Radio-Québec. Details of the committee's mandate were unavailable at press time.

However, the Quebec government's concern on the issue was expressed by Communications minister Jean-Jacques Bertrand, who underlined, "We want to make sure that the technical means are available (to support a second French network), and that public monies are being coordinated in a way which ensure the quality of services."

Ontario gets involved

TORONTO – Ontario Minister of Industry and Trade, Frank Miller, hinted at increased support for the film and video industry in a speech to Trade Forum '84 delegates.

Referring to the as-yet unreleased report by Toronto communications consultant Paul Audley, commissioned by the Ministry, on the film and video industry in the province, Miller said, "the report reinforces the notion that the film and video industry is a highly wage- and labour intensive industrial activity, offering substantial returns. Fortunately, others are beginning to see that potential, and we sense a growing mood of optimism within and towards the industry. If that upsurge can be reinforced then Ontario's film and video industry will find itself playing an increasingly important role in satisfying market demand. That, of course, will lead to increases in employment, salaries and wages, and corporate and government revenue."

The report is presently with the minister. The minister's office expects a formal announcement by the end of November.

"Fashioning the product" focus of Forum panels on film and TV

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a culture." He attacked a policy that concentrated exclusively on television. "A film for television goes to television," he declared. "A film produced for theatrical distribution will go to theatre, home video, pay-TV and television. Instead of one market it will go to four markets." There was also a matter of content. "Television production," said Malo, "is censored production. Subjects are limited, have to see things in a certain way, can't say certain words, have to shoot in a certain way. This does not let a lot of space for imagination. I don't know a lot of television directors known for contribution to culture, but I know a lot of film directors."

Fellow Quebecer Denis Héroux countered that the Broadcast Fund was only "one tool, one element of film policy" and that it was giving results. Pearson agreed that Telefilm was only "a small piece of the puzzle." He suggested that evolving technology would shortcircuit the whole debate. "We may find," he argued, "with a direct broadcast signal satellite due next spring and medium or low-powered high definition television signals with 35mm quality available to every home in the near future that the most bizarre paradox of all is about to happen. If you want first rate television you will go to the theatre to see the opening of the Metropolitan Opera or the visit of the Pope and you would stay at home to see Denis' (Héroux) movies."

Distributor Martin Bockner could not accept the new technological vision. "I am con-

cerned," he said from the floor, "about the smokescreen about new technology relative to the importance of feature films. We may have 100 channels or 1000. We will still have a lot of buildings with large screens. We will still have people going out. The feature film is the most important marketplace in this country - \$350 million at this point in time. There is a need for the Broadcast Fund to concentrate far more on the making of feature films and stop with smokescreens that everything is for television."

For most Forum delegates complaints about Telefilm in its first year of operation related to the application of its mandate rather than the content. In particular there were cries that Telefilm had acted unfairly or in an inconsistent manner in its interpretation of Canadian content requirements. Stephen Roth, chairman of RSL, generally applauded the film policy and Telefilm's implementation of it. However, he felt that there was "still paranoia with respect to our neighbour to the south. It is much easier to get a co-venture with a non-American entity than with an American." For Roth Americans are the ideal partners because of their lack of "cultural chauvinism."

A related failing in Roth's view was Telefilm's arbitrariness in Canadian content rulings. He said that despite the role of Telefilm in funding *Joshua*, Telefilm "caused us a great deal of anguish, a great deal of time and money spent on putting together a package. There was a tremendous

amount of frustration in finding out rules... for the first time in the middle of the thing which we had no conceivable way of perceiving because they were contradictory to the norms of the industry." By the shouts of approval from the audience it was obviously a widely-shared frustration.

Pearson responded by saying that he could easily have sold out the fund by running it as a branch plant. The Americans, he said, "would gladly cough up \$10 million for *Dallas* and adhere to the rules and regulations set out for Canadian content." The Fund had a responsibility to go beyond the letter of the law to enrich the cultural, economic, and social fibre of the nation. Contrary to what many observers were saying, the Fund was not necessarily part of an industrial strategy. "The Fund," declared Pearson, "is not simply to stimulate employment or provide work for the laboratories. It is the bedrock of a history that goes back 50 years with the creation of CBC and public involvement in communications."

For all of Pearson's commitment to a cultural/national definition of the Fund and for all the grumblings about the restrictiveness of Canadian content regulation, there was, ironically, particularly given the massive Canadian retrospective, no sense of a distinctive Canadian cinema being fashioned. Co-production meant anonymous production. The television people, the product takers, wanted "audience-producing event entertainment at the lowest possible price." Steve Walsh of Goldcrest warned Canadians of taking too national an approach. The most telling comment came from British panelist Colin Leventhal, head of Program Acquisition for Channel Four in the U.K. "I am struck by the absence of discussion of content. I have no sense of what cultural content you want in co-productions."

In the end what seemed to matter most was the financing package. As Malo put it "the way Telefilm is structured is to put financing together, not to make money and not to produce excellence." The route to that financing lay through a broadcaster's letter of intent. What projects were likely to receive the broadcaster's imprimatur? The answers were variations on the common theme of ratings. As Pearson noted, "ratings are on everyone's mind."

CBC, said Roman Melnyk, network program director for CBC English Television, was looking for independent Canadian productions which would elicit the same kind of response as the American pro-

gramming it was destined to replace.

For Weinthal and Weitzman the name of the game was series. "We need," said Weinthal, "to work with seasoned professional producers who understand that its going to play at 9 at night." Mintz was looking for "audience-producing, business-like productions." Jay Switzer at CITY-TV needed "entertaining, ratings-generating film."

The Americans, whether it was the pay-TV people or intermediaries like Mark Damon of PSO, were concerned about creative as well as financing involvement. Damon pointed to PSO's partnership with RSL on *Heavenly Bodies* as a case in point. "We took it over and fashioned the product to make it most appetizing for the buying public." The result was a phenomenal success with pre-release sales in "every country of the world."

The story from the Europeans was much the same. Goldcrest was "looking for co-productions which will leave us with a commercially viable product to sell... We should have creative input... What we put into script, casting is dictated by commercial reasons."

There were exceptions. Leventhal's network had a mandate to cater to non-commercial tastes and to experiment with programming. Next February he plans to screen a short season of French-Canadian films.

experimented with low-budget quality drama projects which have proved tremendously successful. Their first film, *The Catch*, created a "big buzz at Cannes" in 1982 and won several awards. They followed with *Reunion* and *Hunting Season* (both shot in video) and *In the Fall*, their first film production. The very morning that Stan Thomas, CKND program director, was recounting his experiences, filming was commencing on *The Tramp in the Door*. In the meanwhile CBC purchased three of the dramas and packaged them as *West Winds* to be telecast next February. But CKND operates on a small scale with production controlled by the station. For the independents the major route to the Broadcast Fund is through CBC or CTV. And that was a concern.

CBC (French and English) accounted for 71.4% of the Broadcast Fund in "Year One"; CTV's share was 15.6%. By comparison Global took 2.6%. No wonder that Malo was afraid "that all directors and producers will become employees of CBC and Telefilm."

Roy Krost of Krost Productions worried about the elimination of competition. If the networks rejected a project a producer's chances of acces-

sing the Fund were almost nil. In other words, a subtle form of censorship was being enforced where projects had to conform to the dictates of one of two large organizations. Beyond that, a letter of intent took a project out of the competitive marketplace. "You can't," complained Krost, "bid product after development." Simpson replied, "Every refuge has its price."

Another major concern that emerged from the Forum - one that Simpson in particular insisted on - was the lack of development money. Melnyk said that development "was very much on our minds at CBC." But it's "the hardest money to find. It is high-risk money." He felt proud of CBC's record the network having set aside \$300,000 for development. Simpson counterattacked that the Corporation, with a \$900 million budget which spent only \$300,000 on development, was "shameful." This brought furious applause from the audience.

The issue resurfaced at various points throughout the Forum. The response to producers' cries for more development money was always the same. Development is high risk and the program buyers are in the business of minimizing risks. It all came back to business and making sound business decisions. Robert Lantos, president of RSL, urged his colleagues "to go about one's business in a rational way and enhance the possibilities of success." Creativity lay in structuring deals. Co-production was imperative because in, Lantos' words, it was "absolutely impossible to recoup cost of film from home market - even in the case of a low-budget film which succeeds."

Cineplex president and CEO, Garth Drabinsky put hard numbers on Lantos' statement. "Very few films achieved more than \$1 million box office. Take that as a gross. Exhibitors will get \$400,000. An additional \$200,000 will be spent on prints, promo, etc. The distributor will take \$200,000. The net to producer is \$150-200,000. From pay-TV (prices will drop because of monopolistic situation in Canada) you can expect no more than \$100,000. Again the distributor takes his fee, leaving \$75,000. In the area of video cassettes - hard to see a film penetrate \$2,000-\$2,500 figure. The share after expenses to the producer is \$20 per cassette or \$40,000. Producers can take up to \$400,000 in Canada." In the face of such figures there seemed no alternative but to seek deals.

As far as that went, the Forum heard conflicting advice. Damon and Weitzman suggested intermediary organiza-

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Fassbinder, Wenders, Duras and videos in New Cinema Fest

MONTREAL - A slight name-change; an ever-greater focus on high-tech's art form, the video; a film market; and the usual mad celebration of world independent cinema characterize the 13th Montreal International Festival of New Cinema and Video, which gets underway here as of Oct. 18.

And for 10 days thereafter, some 80 feature films, including two 16-hour celluloid marathons (one being Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*), 25 shorts, 170 videos from 21 participating nations, workshops, and special guest appearances by film and video artists such as Jean Rouch, Wim Wenders and Bill Viola, will provide this year's visual proof of the dynamism and creativity of art cinema's on-going struggle for originality and renewal.

This year's festival will present 11 world-premieres including Wim Wenders' work-in-progress *Tokyoooo*, about Japanese filmmaker Yasujiro Ozu; Marguerite Duras, Jean Mascolo and Jean-Marc Turine's *Ernesto ou les enfants du roi*; Werner Herzog's Nicaragua-set *La ballade du petit soldat*, and, from Quebec filmmakers, Jean Beaudry and François Bouvier's *Jacques et Novembre* and Fernand Bé-

langer's *L'émotion dissonante*.

Among some 14 North-American premieres, including Godard's 1980 video *France tour détourné deux enfants* and Raoul Ruiz' *La ville des pirates*, German filmmaker Edgar Reitz' 16-hour *Heimat (Home-land)* comes complete with a telegraphic endorsement by Werner Herzog, Alexander Kluge, Volker Schlöndorff, Margarethe von Trotta and Wim Wenders. Other noteworthy films having their North-American premiere at the fest are Alain Resnais' *L'amour à mort*, Jean Rouch's *Dionysos*, Theo Angelopoulos' *Voyage à Cythère* and Raymond Depardon's *Les années déclin*.

A definite theme at this year's fest is the music, dance, performance, and theatre film featuring such works as British filmmaker Peter Greenaway's *Four American Composers*, accompanied in-person by composer Phil Glass who did the haunting track for *Koyaanisqatsi*; also from Britain Ken McMullen (*Resistance, Ghost Dance*) returns with a new film, *Being And Doing*; another film by Raoul Ruiz, *La présence réelle*, and Chantal Ackerman's *Un jour Pina a demandé*.

The festival continues its workshop exploration of the role of the director of photography, with Xaver Schwarzenberger, who d.o.p.'d five Fassbinder films, including *Berlin Alexanderplatz* and *Veronika Voss*, and Johanna Heer, whose camerawork illuminates Gabor Body's *Dog's Night Song* being presented at the fest.

Turning to home-grown images, the Images d'ici section, programmed this year by fest director Claude Chamberlan and Quebec filmmaker Louise Carré, includes an homage to Micheline Lanctôt's *Sonatine*, the first authentic Québécois film ever to win a Silver Lion at this year's Venice festival, as well as recent films by André Gladu (*Zarico*), Michel Lamothe's *Face à la caméra*, Nesya Shapiro Blue's *Uncertain futures*, Lois Siegel's *Bad News Bananas*, Kalle Lasn's *Japanese Women*, and Jeanine Manzi Comeau's *Métaforme*.

A substantial program on international video, programmed by Thrassyvoulos Giatsios, covers recent video work from America to Japan and includes an anthology of works by video pioneer Bill Viola. The Video Canada section, with 65 works by 40 Canadian artists (from Vancouver's Paul Wong to Toronto's Lisa Steele) offers the most important exposition of current Canadian art videos ever presented.

A new feature of the festival this year, the independent film and video market, announced with some fanfare earlier in the summer, has, due to funding difficulties, been forced to take on a more modest complexion than originally planned by festival organizers. But Fest director Chamberlan, at a press conference Oct. 9 to announce the festival programs, said a

videocassette service would make many of the films available to interested distributors. "Our operation will be more low-key than we had planned," Chamberlan said, "but it's a start. We want to facilitate meetings between filmmakers and distributors, even coproductions. It'll be even better next year."

Festival headquarters this year will be at the Hotel du Parc, site of festival press-conferences and the indie market. The films themselves will screen at the triplex of La Cité, the Outremont Cinéma and the Cinéma québécoise, while the videos will screen at the Cinéma Parallèle, the National Film Board videotheque at the Guy-Favreau Complexe, and the Spectrum.

Broadcast Fund

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things tough for commercials: technicians take the attitude that feature film work is 'first choice,' while commercials are 'second choice.' And some equipment, such as generators and lights, are in very short supply."

Viau added that this high demand had contributed to a general increase in technicians' hourly rates, and a decline in the overall quality of available equipment. Concluded Viau: "We can bring people in from Toronto - which is what many companies are doing right now - but that ultimately increases costs. It's a tricky situation: the industry is booming, which is great, but at the same time this makes things tough. I know I would relax a bit more if we didn't have such competition for services."

In Toronto, production is well up on the previous year, said Gail Thomson of the province's Film & Video Office. Budgets were up to \$56.65 million for the first nine months of this year, compared to \$55.1 million for the entire year last year.

NABET business manager Linda Gardon agrees things are looking good. "Things are much more steadily busy," she said. "At the present time demand exceeds supply and it looks as if it will stay that way until Christmas." And while there's a fair amount of American production, "the greater amount seems to be Canadian, particularly television," said Gardon.

At Atlantis Films assistant producer Cindy Hamon-Hill said "Production has increased three-fold."

Producer Annette Cohen gave "an unqualified yes" when asked if production had increased. "The Broadcast Fund is working," she added.

Producer Michael Hirsch of Nelvana noted that "it's reached the point where some producers are having to use inexperienced crews." He attributes the production boom to the Broadcast Fund which he calls "the most successful government policy instituted anywhere in the world"

OTTAWA - Investment Canada (formerly the Foreign Investment Review Agency) approved Oct. 4 an application by Orion Pictures Distribution Corp. of New York to do business in Canada.

On Sept. 30, 1983, FIRA had disallowed an earlier application by Orion. A second application was resubmitted, and in spite of the earlier disallowance, the American distributor's Toronto office remained open for business. The situation is now fully legalized by the Investment Canada decision.



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Trade Forum

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tions like theirs as a way of extracting better deals from the majors. "Deal with us," said Weitzman, "and you come out better. At worst we uncross rights revenues."

Jim Jimirro, president of Disney Channel, was interested in "building assets. Ownership is our future." Drabinsky and Lantos strongly advocated retention of Canadian rights. Damon was pessimistic about those prospects. "The major studios will fight tooth and nail to keep Canada because of precedent. For them to give up Canada is a major, major battle not easily won." Michel Roy of Los Angeles-based Film Accord concurred. "It's a difficult situation with majors and mini-majors. 90% of the time you cannot win." Lantos dis-

agreed. "It's a battle worth fighting. We have to have a healthy distribution system." That was another issue to rouse the audience.

Bockner called for a lobbying effort to legislate the protection of Canadian distribution companies. "I would suggest that everybody in this room get on the back of the new government." Drabinsky was with him: "The time is ripe for lobbying to control Canadian distribution in this country." Out of that will grow additional opportunities. The more Canadian pictures we can acquire and have ancillary rights to, the more clout we have in dealing with ultimate exploitations of the film. We can go to pay-TV and say you need me because of CRTC requirements. Only if the rights are retained do we get pressure on ancillary markets and maximize revenue from ancillary sales."

Ancillary sales appeared to be the wave of the future. The home video panellists spoke glowingly of brave new markets. Brown Johnson, vice-president, East Coast film acquisitions at Vestron, U.S. video distrib, quoted predictions of fourfold growth of VCR units in American households by 1990 (from 12 to 48 million). James Marrinan, vice-president of international marketing for the Warners/ABC-owned distrib, Viacom, hoped "to become more and more active in Canadian production community." Barry Collier, president of U.S. independent distributor, Prism, set up office in Canada in August and was "looking for alternate program sources." Jay Press, director of sales and marketing for Thorn EMI Video, assured his audience that "Canada was a very important and profitable market for us."