

Copyright safeguard

I was most interested in the article by Michael Bergman - "Whose Script Is It Anyway" - in your February edition. Your readers might be interested to know of a copyright safeguard operated by the ACTRA Writers Guild.

We have a script registration service which enables writers, whether or not they are members of the Guild, to register a script with us. That script is given a registration number and registered on the day of receipt.

This system of registering scripts and their retention by an objective third party enables the writer to call upon the ACTRA Writers Guild at any time to confirm that such a script was registered by that writer on a certain date.

The registration number is included on the title page of copies of the script and gives those with larceny in their hearts a warning that the writer has taken steps to ensure against theft.

Incidentally, our position on copyright is that the writer should never sell that invaluable property. What a producer needs is a license, and it is a license for use that the ACTRA Writer Agreements provide for.

Margaret Collier,
National Executive Director,
ACTRA Writers Guild,
Toronto

Save the Parallel

(The following letter was addressed to the *Société Générale du Cinéma*)

I recently received a letter from Claude Chamberlan informing me of the potential demise of The Cinema Parallel due to lack of support from certain institutions.

It would definitely be unfortunate if we filmmakers would allow The Cinema Parallel to cease to exist. The Parallel has offered a showcase of films not easily accessible for viewing elsewhere. It has permitted filmmakers such as myself to show non-commercial films. Particularly, I have been able to show my experimental films, my documentaries and my first feature film (*A 20th Century Chocolate Cake*) when other theatres were hesitant to do so. The Parallel was the only theatre which would run the feature for a week. My film *Extreme Close Up*, about multi-handicapped blind young adults, opened at The Cinema Parallel to a full capacity audience.

Claude Chamberlan has always been receptive to showing my films, and I would be very disappointed if The Cinema Parallel would close its doors. What other theatre in town shows short films, documentaries or non-commercial features by independent filmmakers?

In addition, I have seen excellent films at The Parallel. I first saw *Soldier Girls* by Joan Churchill there, *Fou à délire* by Marco Bellocchio, *An Acquired Taste* by Ralph Arlyck, films during the Festival of New Cinema, even earlier features by Quebec directors, such as *Bar Salon* and *L'Eau chaude, l'eau froide* by Marc-André Forcier.

I often advise my students at Concordia University and John Abbott College to see films at The Cinema Parallel. And the setting for The Parallel is special with its Cafe Melies in front which allows filmmakers to meet and discuss films informally.

I would like to strongly support the essential value of The Cinema Parallel. It would certainly be a crushing blow to see another one of our quality, artistic-minded centers destroyed.

Lois Siegel
Montreal

Charlie Grant misrepresented

I would like to make a few observations about Bruce Malloch's review of *Charlie Grant's War* which appeared in your January issue. Before I do, I feel I should state my biases. I have worked with Bill Gough and Anna Sandor as writers on both *King Of Kensington* and *Seeing Things*. While I have always regarded them as talented professionals and respected both their work as writers and Gough's work as a producer, I believe that *Charlie Grant's War* is the best work they have done in television either separately or together. In fact, I believe it is the best thing to come out of CBC Drama in at least the last ten years.

That said, let me comment on Bruce Malloch's review. Malloch misses the point from the beginning by taking issue with the description of Grant as "an ordinary man who made a difference." He observes that Grant was extraordinary because of his bravery, his sacrifice, and his survival. What makes Charlie Grant such an inspiring character is that he is an ordinary man who acts in an extraordinary fashion. The understated description of him underscores the point of the film. Here is an average guy in 1930's Austria who could have looked the other way, collaborated or headed home, as many others did, but who chose not to, who chose rather to act and in so doing saved hundreds of lives. The message is clear - one person, acting on principle, can make a difference.

Malloch goes on to review a film that Gough, Lavut, and Sandor didn't make rather than the one that was on the screen. He suggests that the people, predominantly Jewish, who befriended Grant might have had an ulterior motive - "to place a sympathetic Gentile foreigner deliberately in an influential position to help them later." This comes dangerously close to suggesting that there was a Jewish conspiracy afoot in the Austria of the '30s, seeking out naive Gentiles who could be hoodwinked into assisting those threatened by the impending Nazi takeover. It ignores the obvious reality, that these people befriended a charming, young Canadian who was down on his luck and drew him into their social circle. Nothing ulterior going on here, just plain old generosity of spirit, humans acting human. Malloch's theory of ulterior motive also doesn't account for the generosity of Paul Trefius who willed his business to Grant when he died. What future benefit did Trefius hope to receive by that action?

It is also an oversimplification to suggest that Gough, Sandor and Lavut come out of a CBC docudrama tradition. By far the largest part of Sandor's writing (I would venture to suggest that it would be close to 95 percent) has been in situation comedy and comedy mystery. And to suggest that the film is "dramatized social criticism" filled with "superfluous newsreel footage" is, for me, to misrepresent the overall impression

that the viewer is left with. The newsreel footage only served to set the place and time. What I came away with was the memory of the people in the film: Grant, of course, but also the people whose lives he touched and who touched his life. His mother, his Austrian friends, the Goldmans, his benefactor Trefius, the bureaucrat who first helped him for jewels and then out of conscience, his girlfriend who couldn't understand why she had to concern herself with politics. Thomson, Rubes, Orenstein, Boretski, Friesen, Charlesworth, Rice, Metz, Negin, and so many others doing some of the best work of their careers.

Malloch ends by calling the film undistinguished. I think *Charlie Grant's War* is a high point in Canadian filmmaking and such a film made in any other country but Canada would have had a successful theatrical release.

One final point which does not have to do with Bruce Malloch's writing, but rather the manner in which Cinema Canada heads its reviews. When I take issue with the heading "Martin Lavut's Charlie Grant's War", understand that I am not in any way suggesting that Lavut didn't make an enormous contribution to the successful production of this film. But to give him the exclusive possessive credit, particularly for a television film, is to slight the collaborative contribution of all the other artists involved in the project, particularly Gough, Sandor and Thomson. Putting such a label on a film is understandable in the deal-conscious, egocentric atmosphere of Hollywood movies and forgiveable in academic publications where film critics, blissfully ignorant of what is involved in making dramatic films, cling to the *auteur* theory, but it really amounts to misrepresentation in a professional trade publication such as Cinema Canada.

David Barlow,
co-producer,
CBC TV Drama,
Toronto

Technological extremism

The series on "Technology, Culture, and Ideology" in the January issue was quite instructive, especially in regard to the comments on the subject of Rock Videos. In the process of defining a basic semiotic of the Rock Video, and a brief exploration of the economic *raison d'être* for the form, the advertising imperative quickly becomes evident as the motivating production force.

It is in this light that Rob Quartley's comments on his video work seem most appropriate. There is no mention of even the slightest pretense of the creation of "art," (if that is even possible given the restricted form of the RV). Mr. Quartley points out that "I am selling an artist, but I put in entertainment." Although selling can, in itself, be relatively harmless, whether it be shoes, music or used cars, Rock Videos have the dubious attraction of being a sort of used-car ad that entertains.

This entertainment factor has little to do with art as an exploration or explanation, and strikes me as an undesirable, though seemingly unavoidable, use of technology within a bourgeois ideology. To quote Gene Youngblood from his 1970 essay: "Art explains; entertainment exploits."

It is easy to become extreme when trying to expose the "teeth of the buzz-saw", as McLuhan put it, to those being processed in a technological society, but at the risk of extremism: How many people will be consuming Rock Videos when the world crumbles around them? Selling used cars, or music, or shoes, is one thing, but selling them with violence, pornography, and images of desire and seduction is quite another.

Malcolm Harris,
Toronto

A superb job

May I remark what a superb job Peter Black did in the February interview with Pierre Juneau! I was with the NFB when Pierre joined it about 1949, and we succeeded each other in several positions until he moved to Ottawa. Mr. Black elicited more of his philosophy about the role of film in Canadian society than I have ever seen elsewhere. A most sensitive and valuable interview. I'm glad to see some newspapers picking it up.

In fact, *Cinema Canada* as a whole is simply splendid.

T.V. Adams,
Adams and associates,
Ottawa

Look out!

Coming up
in
Cinema Canada

- Ontario censor Mary Brown
- Cineplex's Garth Drabinsky
- John Grierson, consultant to South Africa
- Larry Kent then and now
- John Paizs prairie postmodern

and more!

Subscribe now.

CINEMA

C A N A D A