

'Clearing Hurdles' to make way for indigenous production in B C

VANCOUVER – Beautiful British Columbia last year wooed almost half of the foreign productions being shot in Canada, with its various locations, professional crewing potential and the alluring dollar situation. However, of the 160 domestic productions done for television and features, B.C. was responsible for only six – an unsettling 4%.

The realization that a malaise exists prompted the British Columbia Film And Video Industry Association to study the issue in-depth and to draw up a task force report that will be submitted to every level of government to outline the deficiencies and attempt to recommend a cure.

The report, "Clearing Hurdles," was prepared by Gerald Testar and judges, individually, the various 'players' – such as the CBC, the CRTC, Telefilm, private broadcasters, pay-TV, the NFB and the provincial government – and attempts to itemize why low domestic productivity exists while potential lies either dormant or largely untapped.

All too often indigenous productions are unable to find adequate project funding, meet with the strangulation of regulations that disallow movement, or eventuate in obscurity with poor market access, the report says.

The belief within the B.C. film community is that there is enough inherent potential in the province that even a competitive Canadian dollar, which currently allows foreign productions to save 20%, would not sound the death-knell for the industry. There is every reason to expect that given proper incentives and workable regulations, domestic production can well escalate within the province.

For the independent producer, amelioration of financing potential must rely on the revitalization of interest from the investment community in Canada and an exploration of what markets exist at home and abroad.

Well-known to American filmmaking traditions, money must be spent to make money. Films from by-gone days contribute return of capital that is fed into on-going projects. Convincing would-be investors, talent and producers to remain north of the line will have a long time return.

At present, Canadian English-TV viewers see less than two hours of original Canadian drama in the average week. Yet "it has been ascertained that each \$100,000 in indigenous production creates approximately 1 1/2 years of industry employment, thus 150 million dollars' worth can yield 2,250 person-years of employment. Indirect employment could

bring the total to over 3,500 jobs... allowing significant cultural and artistic expression from all regions of the country," the report says.

The report recommends that the CRTC use its power in less clandestine, subsequent moves and conduct hearings to elucidate the reasons that a licensee has failed in executing the conditions agreed to, and

to "show cause" or be temporarily suspended.

Outcries about the paucity of visibility lead the report to suggest that the CRTC ensure that Canadian audiences have the option, at all times, of viewing a domestically produced drama, variety program or documentary.

Deferring to the power of its regulations, the report suggests

that the CRTC should look closely at the conditions for substantial commitment from all licensees in Canada and that any broadcaster whose ownership exceeds 10% should not qualify for such.

The provincial government – in its 1985 Budget Paper – made provisions that established a tax-credit equal to 30% for capital venturing companies, in the

interest of promoting the private sector. The Task Force would like to convince the government that a mutually beneficial bed-sharing exists between both, and that investment in film and television scripts and project development should receive the same credit. It is imperative to the survival of the film and video

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BC films

community that the provincial government become a stronger ally, with a broader and more defined support system for the nurturing of a domestic industry more promising than most, the report says.

Further to this interdependency, the provincial government, in defining its responsibilities, should consider an inter-departmental committee with representations from the motion-picture production industry to evaluate policy initiatives and their effect on all aspects of the business.

Substantially weighing in its favor are the statistics related to the revenues created from the industry itself. As a business, the government, at any level, should pay heed to the obvious economic return, especially of foreign investment within the province - in 1984, \$60 million in production

costs paid-out - and to encourage the private sector to work toward the establishment of a production studio, which will serve to establish confidence in local, national and foreign investors.

The department of Communications, according to the report, should examine the possibility of forming an umbrella policy over both theatrical motion-pictures and television programs, with a responsive review of the broadcasting guidelines in Canada in so much as they do not nurture and support the domestic industry. To further the emphasis of increasing production potential, the government should provide operating support to the associations that operate for the betterment of independents, such as the British Columbia Film and Video Industry Association.

As a long-established participant in the growth and development of production in British

Columbia, the BCFA, continuing in its status as a non-profit body, could best investigate potential markets of national and international venues, with special examination of the accessible Pacific Rim opportunities.

LA Animation fest

LOS ANGELES - The first Los Angeles International Animation Celebration takes place Sept. 25-29. The premiere event is the only festival in the United States to function both as a competition and a showcase for classic and contemporary animation from around the world.

Submitted films (16mm and 35mm) and videos (3/4" and 1/2" VHS and Beta) must be received by Aug. 11. Deadline for entry forms and fees is July 20. All entries must have been completed after Jan. 1, 1983.

Belmondo shoots *Hold-Up*, talks financing in Montreal

MONTREAL - On the day before shooting began on the \$8 million Franco-Canadian film *Hold-Up*, a press conference was held by the Chambre de Commerce Française au Canada on the theme of Franco/Canadian Cinema: A Question of Business.

The panel, May 6, included the film's director Alexandre Arcady, French superstar, actor/producer Jean-Paul Belmondo, Canadian executive producer Denis Héroux and Canadian actress Kim Cattrall.

Co-producer Héroux and Belmondo said two thirds of the film's financing was coming from French investors, including the French government, while one-third was coming from Canadian financial

backers. Telefilm Canada is investing \$1.3 million from the broadcast fund, half of the total Canadian financial involvement. Héroux would not disclose the identity of other Canadian investors.

Lead Belmondo himself has \$4 million invested in the project. When asked why he decided to invest as well as star in *Hold-Up*, Belmondo replied that "as an actor every time I make a film I am taking a risk, but when one feels good about a project, he might as well back it with money."

Equally enthusiastic about *Hold-Up* is the film's young director Alexandre Arcady. Arcady, 37, who received critical acclaim in France for his film *Le Coup Serpico*, described *Hold-Up* as a comedy/thriller. *Hold-Up* is an ingenious bank robbery in which there is no violence or bloodshed.

Director as well as panel members were also enthusiastic about location-settings in Old Montreal's Place d'Youville and about working in this city.

Arcady explained that Montreal offered the perfect North-American architectural setting while eliminating any language barrier on this majority French production.

Shooting began May 7 in Montreal and will continue for 23 days before heading for other locations including Paris and Rome. The film is expected for release in October.

Murphy moves to TV

LOS ANGELES - The formation of ACM Television was announced Mar. 7 by Jack Murphy, former president of Montreal-based Criterion Films, and now president of American Cinema Marketing Corp. of Los Angeles and Montreal. The new television division will acquire and distribute feature films to the domestic pay/cable, network and syndication markets.

Due to the increase in number of independent television stations and the amount of independently produced motion pictures, said Murphy, product is not being fully distributed in the syndication area. ACM's objectives are to offer producers equitable terms and prompt reportings, to operate a cost-effective, computerized facility responsive to the special programming needs of the expanding small and mid-sized markets.

Among ACM's initial feature film offerings are Canadian films such as *Ghostkeeper*, *The Rainbow Boys*, and *Reno and the Doc*, which was nominated for four Genie Awards this year.

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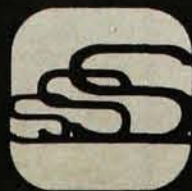
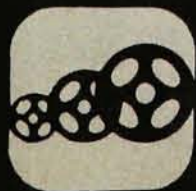
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