

VANCOUVER VISTAS

by Rona Gilbertson

The Telefilm Canada arm in Los Angeles - in the persons of director Lorraine B. Good and liaison officer Sam Wendel, met recently in Vancouver with independant producers, writers and various organizational bodies of the film industry.

The main thrust of discussion focused on offering information on how they work south of the border, as the 'eyes and ears' of Canadian filmmakers. Changing from the original NFB-sponsored Film Canada Center to Telefilm means the L.A. office is now able to reach further into an international market. While sharing regular Telefilm labors such as providing reader's reports on scripts, Telefilm L.A. has merged into the infrastructure there, finding funding potential, reading present trends for potential script topics, accessing channels of production and distribution, and securing casting elements. Comingling with the workings of the U.S. market, Telefilm has managed to expand its distribution mandate by reaching into European markets with Canadian productions.

Sam Wendel comes out Los Angeles production, where he has been both independant producer and creative director for Norman Lear Productions. His expertise is in market analysis and recognition of potential and pitfalls. At the Vancouver meeting, Wendel stressed the need for an equal balance of realism and persistence. His best advice was that emphasis be given to a strong script. He reassured audiences that though the life and death of projects is rapid in that milieu, a good idea was bound to surface and, someday, come through. He said in the endless adult game of musical chairs, producers change allegiances to different studios often, and "a promotion comes with a good idea, so these guys do remember."

In Canada, literary agents are few, while in L.A. it is the agent who stays with a project throughout that gets the benefits. It is Telefilm's interest to access more of these agents to guide producers, and reduce the exploratory experience.

Reading the latest trends, Good said that there are development dollars available in Los Angeles. The independent syndication market, for example, is becoming more and more lucrative. Previously all production was bought pre-packaged from networks. The appearance of pay-TV has changed that, leaving syndicators short of money and long on inexperience. They are willing to come in on some co-production possibilities, leaning

on the expertise of others. This is just the situation in which the Canadian filmmaker can initially move. Metromedia was cited as a good example: with their new prime-time license, they are ready to discuss access to good, network movie programming.

As for marketing Canadian productions, Telefilm said that these lower-budget works may be packaged with more recognized titles as conglomerate bundles are more saleable than single items.

Without a good-track record (which both L.A. representatives urged should be developed when possible within Canadian borders), studio payments on options are oftentimes minuscule, contracts are never re-

liable insurance and the project could expire at any stage. But, more and more recently, a change is making itself apparent.

Canadians have felt that impact with such productions as *Joshua Then And Now*, with the support of 20th Century Fox, *Father Christmas* with Phil Borsos at the helm and producer Peter O'Brian acting with the Disney team, Pieter Kroonenburg and Jamie

Brown's *Toby McTeague* in collaboration with Spectrafilm and Paul Saltzman's *Danger Bay*, made with a troika of Disney Channel, CBC and Telefilm Canada.

The key to theatrical successes with the smaller budgeted production is often to engage a producer's representative, who will exceed the task of agents by tracking and pro-



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photo: Bertrand Carrière

ANNE TRISTER IN POST-PRODUCTION

Anne Trister, Léa Pool's latest film, is now in post-production. This new feature film, following Pool's highly successful *La Femme de l'hôtel*, is a co-production of the National Film Board and Les Films Vision 4 Inc., and stars Albane Guilhe in the title role; Louise Marleau, Kim Yarochevskaya, Hughes Quester and Guy Thauvette. Based on an original screenplay by Marcel Beaulieu and Léa Pool, the story is about a 25-year-old Jewish woman who leaves her native Switzerland after the death of her father and comes to live in Québec. To deal with her grief, she throws herself into a love affair and an extravagant, insane painting project. *Anne Trister* was filmed in Québec, Switzerland and Israel with Pierre Mignot, the director of photography. Now in the editing rooms of the National Film Board, the film is scheduled for release in the spring of 1986.

CROP POLL ON NATIONAL FILM BOARD

Results of a recent CROP survey reveal that the National Film Board is a well-known cultural institution and that over half of the Canadian adult population have seen an NFB production in the past year.

The CROP survey, based on 2,044 in-home interviews, between April 22 and May 14, 1985, was commissioned by the Film Board's Program Evaluation office. The data will be used as part of the Canadian marketing and distribution study which is currently underway.



Louise Marleau and Albane Guilhe in scene from Léa Pool's forthcoming feature: *Anne Trister*.

Highlights of responses to the 13-question survey indicate that 52% of Canada's adult population have seen a National Film Board film in the past 12 months and nine out of ten were satisfied with what they saw. Furthermore, eight out of ten adult Canadians have, at sometimes, seen an NFB film; four out of ten knew they could arrange to see Film Board films or videos through public or NFB libraries; and eight out of ten thought the Film Board provided valuable products and services to Canadians in general. However, seven out of ten people who had heard of the NFB indicated they do not consider themselves well informed about the products and services of the Film Board.

The new institutional goals at the National Film Board are designed to improve and modernize product information about NFB films. Arrangements with public and community institutions to establish film/video centres, such as the recent agreements with La Biblio-

thèque de Québec in Québec City and the public library in Chicoutimi are concrete examples of how the NFB will increase its network and will establish more dynamic communication with the public.

UP-COMING TELECAST

Speaking Our Peace, a one-hour documentary exploring the global questions of war and peace and the nuclear arms race from the perspective of women, will be telecast Tuesday, August 6, at 8:00 p.m. on CBC. Co-directed by Bonnie Sherr Klein and Terri Nash, *Speaking Our Peace* presents the passionate points of view of women who have committed their lives to attaining permanent world peace. The film was shot in Canada, Britain and USSR and was produced by the Film Board's Women's Studio. Significantly, the August 6 telecast date coincides with the 40th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima.

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Vancouver Vistas

moting projects through any amount of festivals for the producer. This is known, in common parlance as, "special handling." It makes the difference in a marketplace that assumes the character of a vacuum for whatever isn't tied down. While submitting in international markets with the Festivals Bureau, Telefilm is

building contacts with producers' representatives.

In response to questions about television marketability, Wendel and Good spoke of the syndicators who have risen like phoenixes from the ashes of pay-TV. As the 'repetition factor' almost killed pay, the competitive edge today is hungry for fresh works. However, the pay-TV that previously paid \$100,000-400,000 for licensing fees, now offers minis-

cule sums and no strong marketplace for much other than good mini-series.

Home video is now the great prize, while ironically presenting a great dilemma to filmmakers. Telefilm urges a good research plan before leaping, for the lure of up to 50% buy-in spells danger. The attractive offer also dictates that a large amount of royalties from cassette sales be signed over, often world rights, theatrical rights,

product rights, while with maximized performance, the production's worth rises with each market. The price should be built-in to recognize this escalation clause, initially.

Lastly, Good and Wendel offered insight into how to gain greater favorability with Telefilm. Since the days of the 100% tax shelters, greater weight is now being given those who do their homework. Now, as a sign of good faith from players in

the field, Telefilm demands letters of support, not necessarily financial commitment, but proffering encouragement and enthusiasm, in the initial stages of bargaining.

The general feeling, as a 'wrap' was declared on the meeting, was that contrary to many beliefs within the Canadian film community, with Telefilm assistance, the game's a whole lot easier on our side of the border.

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Bob Vince

Jacque Ross

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Pearson appointed

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"The film financing system does not work. Thirteen major features were produced in English Canada in 1972. Six in 1973. Only one in 1974 (to date).

"The film distribution system does not work. In 1972 less than 2% of the movies shown in Ontario were Canadian, less than 5% in Quebec - the supposed bedrock of Canadian cinema.

"The film exhibition system does not work. The foreign-dominated theatre industry, grossing over \$140 million at the box office in 1972, is recycling only nickels and dimes into future domestic production.

"Clearly something is wrong.

"It is no wonder then that the Canadian Film Development Corporation cannot possibly work and neither can we."

When the government failed to move on distribution Pearson called the voluntary quota then in place "tokenism" and stated, "I think it's all fiction and the generation that has fought since 1968 to make a film industry is basically lost. Every country in the world has solved this problem... It's a political problem."

In the last five years, Pearson has had a strong sense of purpose. He told Cinema Canada then that he felt his generation of filmmakers had been given their chance, and that it was time they move on and assume leadership positions within the industry to try, yet again, to create that vital industry which had yet to be realized. His feeling was that if they had not already made their marks as filmmakers it was less interesting to keep plugging away than to enter the government agencies which, in Canada, are ultimately responsible for the state of filmmaking. Shortly after that conversation, Pearson was named to head the Broadcast Fund. With this recent appointment, Pearson now has a major role to play in the shaping of Canadian film and television policy.

As readers of Cinema Canada know, Pearson's film credits include *The Best Damn Fiddler from Calabogie to Kaladar* which won eight Canadian Film Awards, *Paperback Hero*, many CBC programs including *Insurance Man from Ingersoll* and

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