The system of awards is just as unclear and complicated as it ever was before. Previously awards were presented under various curious, and sometimes bizarre circumstances anyway familiar with my own meager acting skills who discover that I won an award for "best dramatic performance" at last year's festival will quickly agree). This year categories such as eliminated and awards were given for whatever was found to be meritorious in a production. This resulted in a total of 17 awards to different productions. Of these, 16 received certificates of merit while seven received certificates of excellence. While I am as confused as anyone else there is nevertheless a kind of Maritime down-home forthrightness about this process and it may be that this is as good as we are ever going to do without resorting to arcane categories.

According to festival director Brian Hannonington, this year was one of healing, and certainly considerable healing was required. The controversy which had raged around the structure of the previous festival had deeply alienated the film and video community from the concept of a festival with, at one point, the National Film Board, the Atlantic Independent Film and Video Association and the Atlantic Co-operative Film Corporation among others, all withdrawing from support of the festival and boycotting its activities. This was obviously an unhealthy state of affairs, especially in a community as small and as close as the Atlantic one. There were great divisions as to the fundamental objectives of the festival and particularly the way it was administered. At the end of last year's festival, which almost ended in cancellation, the previous board resigned and a new one, much more representative of the film and video community, took over.

In practical terms this meant a number of things. One was a much decreased emphasis on films outside of the region. In the past, the programming of the festival was about equally divided between productions from the Atlantic provinces and those from away'. The reasoning was that it was valuable to introduce filmmakers from elsewhere to what was happening in this region and equally valuable for people here to see what was going on elsewhere. As an industry forum it was thought that such an interchange could result in collaborations between areas, and, for one, greatly lessening this narrow focus of the festival since it resulted in an event which lacked some of the sparkle and interest which outside productions could, and did bring. Seeing 35mm features from Iceland but also low-budget documentaries and experimental films from New England helped to open some eyes and bring a wider spectrum of people into the festival activities. So this narrowing gave a slightly dull overcast to the festival and seemed to cut down attendance for the event.

Award-winning photographer and filmmaker Christopher Maga lives in Halifax.

Abitibi-Témiscamingue 4th edition
by Jamie Gaetz

The fourth Festival of International Cinema in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, held from Nov. 9 to 14, represented a continuation of the well-organized, successful events of earlier years. A total of 46 films were viewed by over 4,000 people, averaging approximately 480 people at each screening. The schedule included 11 world premiers, 27 Canadian premiers, a good number of which were Canadian. Adding to the pleasure of the festival itself was the fact that, on every level, the Canadian films more than held their own, often proving more memorable than those films representing well-established film cultures.

Jean-Claude Letourneau, festival director, believes that films should be fun and that a cinematic experience should be an entertaining one. This attitude is reflected in all aspects of the Festival, producing an outstandingly enjoyable event in the crowded calendar of Canadian film festivals.

One of the Canadian premieres, Michel Moreau's Le Temoin tout pantouflant is a disconcerting film in many respects. Moreau explores the phenomenon of Quebec's loto-millionnaires (as representative of a general phenomenon) in a documentary-fiction format. He uses three actual winners as well as one impostor; a clown; and a mysterious and bizarre kind of "master-of-ceremonies" or visible narrator who provides comments, explanations and insights. Le Millon tout pantouflant, in its study of the modern version of the rags-to-riches tale, poses some interesting and piercing questions about modern values, albeit salutary.

Une Guerre dans mon jardin from Diane Létourneau of the NB/ONF uses essentially the same documentary-fiction (dramatized documentary) format. This tremendously moving film re-creates an actual tragedy experienced by the Gentes family of Quebec when a live-ammno shell was thrown into a campfire at the family home, killing one member of the family. Rather than concentrating on the event itself, Létourneau focuses on the important period preceding it. Létourneau treats the story with respect and imagination, making it much more than just a docum

The Grand Prix du Public this year was awarded to Erik Clauisen's Rocking Silver from Denmark. A new prize, the Témiscamingue offers a unique opportunity to see interesting cinema in a relaxed atmosphere. The abundance of Canadian films shows an added benefit for the festival. In the state of this country's cinema. Devoid of pretensions, infused with warmth and friendliness, this festival is like a breath of fresh air on the festival circuit. It is an event with the idea of enjoyment at its roots, an idea that obviously makes all the difference in the world.

The Atlantic Film Festival Atlantique
by Christopher Majka

Those who are familiar with the Atlantic Film Festival are also familiar with its history of administrative troubles. The ship has stayed afloat but it has seldom sailed on calm waters. Happily, it seems that the festival has not put most of those crises behind it.

A new administrator, a new board of directors, a new mandate and a new image (and a new name, Atlantic Festival Atlantique) have radically changed its footprint and it appeared this year, from Oct. 23-26, if not firmly on its feet, at least standing.

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