

SHOOT ALBERTA

by Linda Kupecek

Alberta is entering 1986 with high hopes, after a year with increased location shooting, regional production, and a boost to the economy. From a modest drama such as Dreamland Picture's *Rat Tales* to the glitz of Hollywood imports like Hal Needham's *Rad*, the scene was much more active than in the past.

"It's been an excellent year," says Dave Crowe, film commissioner for the City of Calgary, who estimates that two location shoots, *Rad* and *Hyper Sapien*, pumped \$17 million in

the economy in southern Alberta. As well, about 80 local people were picked up for crew positions on both shoots, which by Crowe's guess, totalled 2500 manpower days on *Rad* (30 shooting days x 78 people) and 3476 on *Hyper Sapien* (48 shooting days x 79 local people).

Crowe is typically modest about his involvement in attracting the productions. "They looked at Vancouver, but saw they were going to have a problem getting crews. The Vancouver people suggested they take a look at

Alberta. Bill Marsden's department arranged some location work. They liked what they saw, and decided to do both pictures here." Crowe admits to "cautious optimism" regarding 1986, expecting some overflow from Vancouver, which may have trouble hosting shoots due to Expo.

Bill Marsden, director of the Film Industry Development Office for Alberta Economic Development, estimates, in addition to the \$17 million from the two big shoots, an extra \$6.7 million from the "bread and butter" industry. About twenty million a year is spent in the province on goods and services (hotels, restaurants, equipment rentals) related to the film industry. Add to that the jobs created, both for crew and for talent, and the benefits are obvious.

"We have an edge in Alberta," says Marsden, "with no hotel taxes, restaurant or sales taxes. But what dictates where the film will be shot is the script. We have lost projects like *Kane and Abel* because although the producer wanted to come here, they needed an east-coast look, so went to Toronto... B.C. and Ontario have larger labour crews than we have. But, in English-speaking production, we are the number three location, and gaining."

Part of the boost to the production scene has been *Mania*, a four-episode anthology series about urban crime, which filmed at ITV in Edmonton in November and December. The Simcom of Toronto production was part of a three-package deal, the other two components being *Bullies* and *High Stakes*, two feature films shot in B.C.

Funding for *Mania* was pulled together from Telefilm, outside investors, BCTV and Allarcom (hence the ITV location). As well, the half-hour stories, each with a twist ending, were actually set in Edmonton.

Ray Sager, head of Canadian production for Simcom, was production supervisor (for all three productions) and line producer, while Paul Lynch (*The Hard Part Begins*) who is head of production of Simcom in Los Angeles, directed two episodes. David Robertson and John Shepherd (who also wrote all four segments), directed the remaining episodes.

The budget for *Mania* was \$1 million, part of the total package budget of \$5 million.

The cast was totally Canadian, drawing actors from Toronto, Edmonton, Vancouver, and Calgary, including Lenore Zann, Richard Monette, and Elan Ross Gibson. Production

manager was Bob Wertheimer, camera was handled by John Spooner, and the crew was a mix of ITV crew and Toronto and Edmonton freelancers.

Mania is slated for broadcast on Superchannel and BCTV, with possible future sales to free television.

Edmonton producer Allan Stein won the award for best music video at the Yorkton Short Film and Video Festival for his turn-on effort, *Turn It Off*. He is also working on completion of his documentary feature, *Shooting Stars*, with doc material in the can, and dramatic scenes about to be lensed. As well, he and co-writer Harvey Spak are working on an AMPDC-assisted project, *Dream Horses*, with a second draft now completed for producer Ron Cohen.

But his most ambitious project is a major symposium to preface the AMPIA Awards March 8, a western regional caucus of all the major players (AMPIA, BCFIA, regional directors of television, ACTRA, IATSE). He is planning a massive plenary session and work session for exchange of views, intended to stimulate and provoke positive action. Stein, energetic in all his endeavours, serves on the board of AMPIA.

This long-overdue symposium has already attracted interest from a number of areas, since it offers filmmakers in the western region an opportunity to meet and network, as well as develop policy and position papers.

Tentative dates are March 6 and 7.

The Southern Alberta Branch of ACTRA, headed by branch president Douglas Riske, hosted a party for membership and engagers in December. Talent and members of the film and television community celebrated the work of the past year at the historic Wainwright Hotel in Heritage Park... Canadian Cinegraph of Vancouver visited Alberta to shoot a series of Seven-Eleven commercials, titled *Warming Up*... M.P. Harvie Andre was in the hot seat on the free trade issue on CBC radio in Calgary, quizzed by host Liz Palmer and Douglas Riske, as part of the "Adopt an MP" program initiated by ACTRA. Andre's final quote, certain to be remembered, was "There is no question that the government would not willingly express anything but great concern about anything that might reduce our sense of Canadianism, our sense of culture, our sense of nationalism of which culture is such an important part."

Best of the Fest highlights pickings from Toronto's fest

TORONTO - Local filmgoers who missed seeing the independent documentary and experimental films offered in the Perspective Canada series at last September's Festival of Festivals got the chance to catch up Jan. 19 when the "Best of The Fest" screened at the Bloor Cinema.

Offered by the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre and Toronto Film Now as the fourth program in the latter's series showcasing independent/art film productions on a commercial screen-time basis, the nine-film screening resulted after the CFMDC's Nora Currie received several interested inquiries about the titles featured.

The "Best of The Fest" films, which appeared in mid-day slots or as pre-feature film 'shorts' during the Festival, were: Richard Kerr's six-stories *On Land Over Water*; Laurie Lynd's *Together And Apart*; Peter Dudar's *Transylvania 1917* (an exploration of the ambiguities of transylvania's myth and history); Ron Mann and Elliott Lefko's *Marcia Resnick's Bad Boys* (inside looks at John Belushi and Mick Jagger, among other celebrities); Joyce Wieland and Hollis Frampton's *A and B in Ontario*; Colin Strayer's *Red Rocket* (a look back at Toronto's enduring streetcars); Midi Onodera's *Ten Cents A Dance (Parallax)*; Bruce Worrall's *Conditions*; and Barbara Sternberg's *A Trilogy*.

While several of the above directors' works have already received both domestic and international exposure, one, Laurie Lynd's *Together And Apart*, will soon be added to the acclaim. A Toronto native currently finishing a Fine Arts masters' program at New York University, Lynd's film has been selected for this April's 1986 New Directors Series at New York's Museum of Modern Art. The 26-minute tale of a young poet's dinner party reunion with his ex-lover was also screened last year at Minneapolis' Walker Arts Centre.

Michael Korican, co-organizer of the Toronto Film Now series, expressed hopes the "Best of The Fest" would provide the best turnout to date. The series, which Korican said has attracted a "very supportive" community reaction, has drawn Sunday-afternoon audiences ranging from approximately 200 to approximately 400 viewers in the 946-seat theatre (sufficient figures, he said, to continue the monthly offerings).

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