

Changing the game with a name

The Entertainment Business Branch! So that's the name of the game now for all Canadian filmmakers seeking financial participation from Telefilm. Address your enquiries to the Entertainment Business Branch.

It was bad enough when the Canadian Film Development Corporation suffered the name-change to Telefilm Canada. The change of name brought about a fundamental reorientation of the agency, away from a distinctly Canadian feature film to television programming. Now those interested in artistic programming, documentaries, or blatantly cultural or experimental product, will have to fit the "entertainment" bill to tap into Telefilm funds. This time the implications of the new name seem abundantly clear. What is of greatest concern is that the new orientation goes a long way towards undermining the thrust of Communications minister Marcel Masse's cultural policies – and this, it would appear, with Masse's tacit approval.

But if Telefilm's exclusive concern now is "entertainment", or as its executive director Peter Pearson prophetically told the Toronto Trade Forum last September "the entertainment business", what does that mean? For one, it means that Canadian filmmaking (or, at its broadest, the projection of Canadian culture by means of film and television) has been drastically collapsed from the qualitative notion of culture to the quantitative one of entertainment. In a word, that entertainment is numbers: business deals, ratings, audiences, markets.

And if entertainment *is* business, then that leaves the door wide-open to every other business cliché in circulation these days – namely, that the best kind of business is free-enterprise, that what's good for business is good for America, and what's good for America – as Jack Valenti, on behalf of the U.S. film industry, never hesitates to remind his audiences – is the free-trade that returns to U.S. film and TV production an annual \$1 billion surplus in the balance of trade. And so, in a twinkling, we are faced once again with the U.S.-Canada free-trade question and an issue that's at the heart of that debate; namely, the role of the Canadian cultural industries and their relation to Canadian government cultural policy.

Here, MCA's (read Universal) recent buy-in of one-third control of Cineplex Odeon provides a useful illustration of the kinds of contradictions that business freedom leads to for Canadian cultural policy. When Cineplex-Odeon chairman Garth Drabinsky began the first in a set of moves that have allowed him to lever a U.S. Major into exactly the kind of vertically integrated production-distribution-exhibition system that is illegal in the U.S., it was with the assistance of the Canadian government's Combines Branch. Drabinsky had charged unfair collusion by the U.S. Major's distributors, and with Canadian government leverage, was able to get a hearing for his case. The idea that a bidding system (also illegal in many U.S. states) would solve the problem was planted in the mind of the Director of Combines Investigation – by guess who? – an American Major.

So the long and the short of it is not that a Canadian cultural industry has gained greater space for itself at the expense of the American hold on the Canadian market – but exactly the contrary. MCA's buy-in of Cineplex means that, after two years of unprecedented rhetorical posturing about Canadian cultural identity (be it Cineplex's attack on the U.S. Majors, Marcel Masse's verbal victories, the sad saga of Bill 109 in Quebec, or Roth-Raymond's motherhood litany on behalf of Canadianization), two U.S.

Majors still hold prominent ownership positions in key Canadian cultural structures (and Cineplex – a by no means insignificant player on the Canadian theatrical film scene – has found for itself a place in the California sun as one of Hollywood's cultural emanations.)

The kind of tongue-tied confusion in which all this leaves Canadian cultural policy is all too painfully evident in a speech Marcel Masse had written for, but did not deliver at, a Canadian film industry gathering at Montebello, Quebec, on Jan. 17. This is a speech that opens with a quote from the great French reformer and educator Ernest Renan on the fact that a nation's cultural inheritance is transmitted as a whole.

Masse (or whoever wrote the speech for him) then proceeds to engage in some wholesale rewriting of Canadian film history – most appallingly, misdating the creation of the CFDC by seven years, and making the outrageous claim that "the best achievements in Canadian film were obtained when Canadian television networks commissioned the films," a success that supposedly prompted the creation of the Broadcast Fund. In fact, the fund was created because Canadian networks did not then and still do not now commission Canadian feature films.

Along with such revisions of Canadian history appear statements about the spiritual and cultural values of Canada, the fact that Canada "is more than just a market. It is a separate country. It is a separate culture." After all of which, though, comes the contradictory conclusion that "the most sensible approach to these problems is an industrial one." Which, rhetoric aside, is pretty much where things have always stood – and why nothing changes.

This general policy – which amounts to saying one thing and doing another – is reflected with complete clarity in Bill Nichols, Joanne Marion and Françoise Lachance's report last month on Peter Pearson's visit to the Queen's Business School last November in which Pearson defined Telefilm's *raison d'être* as profitmaking. As this month's letters to the editor show, Pearson maintains that he did not say what the authors heard, and calls *Cinema Canada* "perverse" to have found the article worth printing.

One is left in a quandary; it becomes very unclear whether the Canadian government, its elected officials and cultural agencies are in the business of developing Canadian culture (as the various laws meant to regulate their activities might suggest), or of promoting free-trade.

As Masse put it in the Montebello speech: "Film is considered a major part of what Americans call the 'leisure and entertainment' sector of the economy. It is highly profitable, with potential for expansion that is unknown in other sectors. Canada is a major part of the film market."

This is exactly the kind of language that leads to (and encourages) the creation of Telefilm's Entertainment Business and MCA's buying an important share of Cineplex Corp. This too is the kind of language that echoes and reflects the Americans' own consistent interest in Canada as a quarter of the total U.S. global market and why, under general free-trade, this will only be reinforced.

Now, free-trade with the U.S. may be central to the economic policies of the present Conservative government in Ottawa. But free-trade obscures the fact that such policies have nothing whatever to do with the furtherance of Canada's separate and different culture. Maybe Telefilm should stop playing cultural games and from now on simply report directly to Industry, Trade and Commerce.

LETTERS

Pearson faults Queen's report

On November 7, 1985, I visited Queen's to appear at the Q'BET Conference, and in conjunction with that event, I had a session with the students in the Department of Film Studies.

On January 3, 1986, I received an article from Bill Nichols, Head of the Department of Film Studies, Joanne Marion, and François Lachance, with an article that they had collectively authored. In the letter, the authors wrote "we hope you will let us know if there are any factual errors in the article." Forth-

with, I undertook to answer their request.

On January 7, four days later, I forwarded my observations.

On January 30, 1986, I received a letter signed by Joanne Marion, informing me that the article, submitted in draft to me, had been sent "to *Cinema Canada* at the same time as sending it to you. So, while what we ideally would have liked to do was to respond to your comments by rewriting the article, making clarifications and corrections where necessary, this has proved well-nigh impossible."

I believe Professor Nichols, Ms. Marion and Mr. Lachance have been extraordinarily remiss in their behaviour.

1. While I would not claim that at any point I requested that the session with the Queen's students be "off-the-record", clearly it was an informal get-to-

gether, wide-ranging, and unstructured. There was no indication from anyone at any time that anything I said would be recorded, or indeed quoted.

2. I understand this article was submitted to *Cinema Canada* under the letterhead of the Department of Film Studies, and therefore reflects a certain intellectual rigour as befits any academic paper. Regrettably, there is no direct quotation of any remark I supposedly said. Nor indeed, is there any paraphrasing.

In conversation with Bill Nichols on January 30, he led me to believe that the article was written, not only with no tape recording of my remarks, but not even with any note-taking as a basic information document.

3. Telefilm has been, since the inception of the Broadcast Fund in 1983, exceptionally transparent in its disclosure

of information. Each month a public document is made available, listing all of the financial information and sources of financing.

Further, at regular intervals, to anyone who so requested, we have provided lists of titles, producers, directors, writers and stars, for scrutiny.

In addition, at the completion of each fiscal year, we have provided a detailed examination of each year of the Broadcast Fund. For your information, *After Two Years* is our most recent report on the Fund.

4. None of this information was either requested, or used in the drafting of this document.

5. While at Queen's, on November 7, I lunched with Bill Nichols and Peter Morris, specifically to encourage

Confessions of an extra

They can't make a movie without us — so why, oh why do we not get the respect to which we are entitled? It is a fact that extras, those unacclaimed mortals you see in every film released, those oh so very important adjuncts to the finished product, are never given the credit they deserve. But never mind, we console ourselves: just let the cheques keep coming in.

Pin money I call it, after I've done my stint with the likes of Sophia Loren, Liza Minelli, George C. Scott, Geneviève Bujold, Angie Dickenson, Donald Sutherland, the late David Niven, and others.

I am a grandmother yet I have been in some 40 films now. It is a great way to add to my fixed income. Hardly a film is made which does not require someone in a cocktail party or restaurant scene. Sometimes the scripts calls for the girl in the lead to bring her lover home to meet Maw and Paw — even granny too.

Funerals are big for extras. In the script someone is always killed somewhere along the line — ergo, funerals. On one such occasion — fortunately a comedy flick — one of the extras fell into the grave as we stood around watching a make-believe coffin being lowered. We were asked to peer sadly into the cavity but this extra turned her ankle on a stone and, plop, into the grave she went. She was pulled out weeping, but it seemed so bizzare that we couldn't help laughing, possibly the first time that cemetery had echoed with laughter. Since it was a comedy, the scene was kept in and shown on screens across the land.

In another funeral scene I set out to show everyone what a great actress I was. Wearing a black hat, veil, black dress, crossing myself devoutly and weeping real tears, I watched as the coffin was lowered. I was congratulating myself on a great effort until the director tapped me on the shoulder and said "Cut the comedy. You are only here to



• Riches to rags, the extra's fate:



Nettie Harris in contrasting roles

make sure that gangster is buried. You hate him." So much for my great scene, but why, oh why can't they ever tell us beforehand? We extras never get to see the script.

If a film is being shot in the rain, or out of doors on a freezing day, wardrobe girls will bring out raincoats and sweaters, but even then the waiting-around can still be uncomfortable. On the other hand, many scenes are so easy that it seems a crime to get paid for them. A street scene, for instance. Wouldn't a city street look unnatural and barren if there were no people walking around? So extras are hired to walk around. Simple.

Say there's a concert. Sometimes hundreds of extras are needed to sit around in a theatre and clap hands on-cue. Not hard to do at all. I was in one such scene with Mickey Rooney who had been flown from New York to Montreal to appear in the film. The film itself never

appeared. I don't think it ever was released, a fate suffered by many.

But with the many films being shot in Montreal and Toronto, the rush to get into the movies has become a stampede. Recently I answered an "extras needed" call on a shoot. At nine o'clock in the morning, there was already a line of young and old folks four deep that stretched solidly along two city blocks. Many had been standing in line since six o'clock in the morning. I beat a hasty retreat.

Extras do not need to be in *Actra* although this writer is. They do, however need a work permit. Unscrupulous agents (and there are some) will obtain work permits for their sisters, cousins, uncles, aunts, children and grandmothers. With the whole family in as "extras" you can garner quite a windfall. Supposedly, Canadian films must cast the first 25 extras from *Actra* ranks but this rule is seldom adhered to. Small

wonder that many of us sometimes feel like left-overs. The ranks are getting tougher and tougher to break through, experienced or not.

Yet who can resist a call? Who can resist the excitement of make-up, wardrobes, hair-stylists, crew members, cameras, all focussed on you as a member of the cast, even if the part is minuscule?

And then the director calls, "Silence please."

"Cut." The light wasn't right. Silence please. "Cut." Wrong angle. Silence please (and now you can hear a pin drop). "Cut." A passing truck ruined the sound. Silence please. Good, it is a take. It will be in the can.

At home that night I tell my daughter, "I'm in the can."

"No surprise" says she, laughing. "Isn't that where you usually are?"

Nettie Harris •

LETTERS

Queen's to examine the operations of the Broadcast Fund, and additionally of Telefilm, to undertake precisely the kind of scrutiny of our operations which has been so badly lacking, particularly from the academic community.

I further stated that, given most of the information is within the computer, we could break out on a statistical basis, any particular analysis they so wished.

6. On several occasions, both as Executive Director and as Head of the Broadcast Fund, I have spoken publicly on many issues concerning the future of

film and television in Canada. On each of those occasions, I have taken the trouble to provide and prepare a text, in order that people can clearly understand the positions and the thinking of this organization.

Again, no effort was made to obtain any of these statements, or public texts.

7. I now find myself prisoner to a circumstance which is mightily disagreeable: words and attitudes have been put for my attribution, which are clearly not my own.

Conclusions and extrapolations have been made, which reflect no intellectual scrutiny or analysis.

Thus, to rebut this document will

give it a credence and authority which it does not deserve.

Cinema Canada in printing this piece is circulating views that are not my own nor that of Telefilm, employing facts that are simply wrong or incomplete, and arriving at conclusions which are perverse, all under the guise of scholarly dispassion.

Peter Pearson,
Executive Director,
Telefilm Canada,
Montreal

Grierson correction

In the January 1986 issue of *Cinema Canada*, Tom Waugh erroneously reported in his article about the 1985 Grierson Documentary Seminar that I was president of the Ontario Film Association. Juliette Gillespie was and is president of the Association. I was co-ordinator of Grierson Documentary Seminar in 1985, and will, in all probability, co-ordinate the Seminar in 1986.

Christine J. Boulby
co-ordinator,
Grierson Documentary Seminar.

ASPECTS OF CINEMA

Producer Paul N. Lazarus expertly defines his role in filmmaking in a concise volume, **The Movie Producer**. It covers informatively the diverse areas of the job – development, production, marketing – and includes facts, case histories and anecdotes that clarify the complex process (*Harper & Row, NYC, \$7.95*).

A new title in the excellent "Media Manuals" series, **Motion Picture Film Processing** by Dominic Case is a comprehensive reference source of high technical standing. Its explicit text, supported by many illustrations, covers the physical and chemical properties of raw stock at each stage of processing (*Focal Press, Stoneham, MA, \$14.95*).

A professional handbook written in an engagingly lively style, **The TV Commercial Film Editor** by Carmine R. De Sarlo fully encompasses pre- and post-production of TV spots. It covers live action, animation, rotoscoping and video tapes, and provides practical advice and tested procedures (*McFarland, Jefferson, NC, \$27.95*).

If you're seeking a career in any area of moviemaking, the newly revised and updated edition of Mel London's **Getting Into Film** will prove immensely helpful. Authored by a working writer/director/producer, this well-organized and clearly written manual discusses with intimate knowledge stemming from professional experience each facet of film work, whether creative or technical (*Ballantine, NYC, \$12.95*).

The updated edition of a classic, Vincent J-R Kehoe's **The Technique of the Professional Make-up Artist** covers authoritatively the fields of stage, film and television. Both theatrical and practical, and extensively illustrated, it fully describes the newest techniques in basic and advanced make-up, laboratory and special effects procedures, and professional make-up artists' work methods (*Focal Press, Stoneham, MA, \$59.95*).

The 15th edition of **Audio Video Market Place 1985-86: A Multimedia Guide** is an exhaustive, cross-indexed directory blanketing in 4500 entries the industry's manufacturers, producers and distributors, as well as services, techniques and applications in the U.S. and Canada. A listing of 10,000 names of individuals and firms is included (*Bouker, NYC, \$49.95 + shipping*).

Daniel J. Goulding, in **Liberated Cinema**, follows the development of Yugoslavia's film industry during the last four decades, and the political and artistic forces that shaped the surprising twists and turns of its most significant movies (*Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, \$25.*).

French film production, from Lumière's 1895 pioneering work to the 1980s, is knowledgeably surveyed in **French Cinema** by Roy Armes. He stresses its rich variety of trends and styles, and probes the approach to film of leading French directors against a background of historic, cultural and political change (*Oxford U. Press, NYC, \$25/10.95*).

In **New German Filmmakers**, Klaus Phillips discusses 21 innovative direc-

tors who, between 1950 and 1970, re-shaped German cinema and brought it to international prominence. Fassbinder, Herzog, Wenders are among those analyzed in this informative volume (*Ungar, NYC, \$24.50/12.95*).

Compiled by Herbert Kline, **New Theatre and Film** is a stimulating anthology of articles published during the 1930s in the magazine of the same name which he used to edit. Written by and about outstanding personalities of the time, they assess the impact on the popular arts of the significant issues of those turbulent years (*Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, NYC, \$24.95/13.95*).

THE REFERENCE SHELF

The 1985 edition of **The Producer's Masterguide** is an exhaustive store of production data on the motion picture, television, commercials, cable and videotape industries in the USA, Canada and Great Britain. Compiled by publisher Shmuel Benzion and edited by René S. Ash, this hefty manual provides detailed and accurate information on every facet of production, and stands out as an authoritative reference source, indispensable to industry professionals (*Producer's Masterguide, 611 Broadway, NYC, \$69.95 in USA, U.S. \$85 in Canada, + \$4.95 shipping*).

Clear and precise definitions of over 3000 words and phrases currently used in the film and video industries appear in **The Complete Dictionary of Television and Film**. Compiled by Lynn Naylor Ensign and Robyn Eileen Knap-

ton, this is an up-to-date reference work, useful to professionals and students alike (*Stein & Day, NYC, \$35*).

Michael Singer's valuable yearly reference guide, **Film Directors** (3rd edition) lists 1400 active U.S. and foreign directors with a cross-indexing of their films. Also included are vital statistics, home and/or agents' addresses, and stimulating interviews with six leading directors (*Lone Eagle, Beverly Hills, CA, \$34.95*).

In **Cinema and Technology**, Steve Neale explores the historic progress of the image, sound, and color technologies in motion pictures. Neale attributes these developments to a combination of individual inventor's breakthroughs, economic pressure on the industry to renew itself and esthetic innovations by visionary artists (*Indiana U. Press, Bloomington, IN, \$25/9.95*).

A new collection of film scripts, **RKO Classic Screenplays**, featuring movies from the 30s to the 50s, has been launched by Frederick Ungar Publishing Co, NYC. The five initial volumes include John Ford's **Wagonmaster**, Josef von Sternberg's **Macao**, Garson Kanin's **Tom, Dick and Harry**, George Cukor's **What Price Hollywood?** and Robert Stevenson's **The Woman on Pier 13**. These illustrated screenplays, knowledgeably selected by Andrew Velez, afford an informed view of the period's story-telling techniques and social concerns (*\$8.95 ea.*).

George L. George •

L E T T E R S

cont. from p. 7

- "Dead Ringer" deals with a husband and wife who conspire to kill a stranger and pass his body off as that of the husband in order to thwart an investigation into the husband activities as a large-scale embezzler. In order to cover their tracks, they find it necessary to kill two other people – both male. At the end of the show, when the two schemers are tracked down, the husband is killed, not the wife. There is, again, no violence toward women in this episode.
- "Neighbors" deals with the problem of a residential neighborhood that goes berserk when the opening of a halfway house in the neighborhood is followed by the rape/murder or a housewife in the community. This episode does, admittedly, deal with violence toward women. The murder/rape, I should point out, occurs offscreen, the scene ending with the woman's frightened discovery that there is an intruder in her house.
- "Payday" is about the efforts of a team of convicted bank robbers to recover their previously unrecovered loot. The sister of the robbers, who is involved in the crime as a go-between, is held captive by the opposing faction in thieves. There are homicides in the show – but they are all perpetrated by males or males.
- In "Moonlight", series regular Stevie Brody, a female detective, is romantically involved with a man suspected of complicity in a series of truck hijack-

ings. A truck driver and a gangster, both male, are murdered. There is no violence toward women, except that Stevie is held at gunpoint when the bad guys discover that she is a cop.

As I hope this summary shows, in some small way, the care we at **Night Heat** have taken to avoid precisely the sort of gratuitous and sexist violence Ms. Nelson, with so little substantiation, accuses us of purveying. I feel strongly that anyone watching our show on a regular basis could hardly come to the conclusions Ms. Nelson reaches. And why, while we're on the question of fairness, does she raise the additional issue of crime shows that consistently portray "blacks, Chicanos and native peoples" as "heavies", and fail to note that in 26 episodes, **Night Heat** has had only one Black villain, has had no Chicano villains, has had no Native American villains?

It seem to me, when there are unfortunately all too many appropriate targets for criticism on the grounds of excessive violence and racial and sexist stereotyping, the failure to recognize a show that has made a conscious and deliberate effort to compete in this market on altogether different grounds is, in the long run, playing into the hands of those to whom such distinctions are meaningless.

A police series, to be sure, must deal with violence. The temptation, of course, is to sensationalize this violence, to cram as much of it as possible onscreen in order to "capture" the audi-

ence. We at **Night Heat** feel there is another way to tell such stories, and the success of this Canadian made series with American audiences on CBS is, I hope, proving us right. In this context it is, I feel, especially unfortunate that our efforts to demonstrate our belief in a more civilized method of storytelling has been done a great disservice by a critic utterly unable to make the distinction between the graphic depiction of violent acts seen elsewhere and the "on-scene references" to violence she so brutally condemns in **Night Heat**.

Philip Rosenberg
Executive Story Editor
Night Heat
Toronto

Bravo for Nelson

(The following was addressed to **Cinema Canada** television columnist Joyce Nelson)

Always enjoy your observations. You're completely correct in your estimation of the cynical anti-female presence in **Night Heat**. (Series producer Robert) Lantos is an interesting character to look at in that light.

Appreciate your contributions,

Michael Douglas,
Douglas Communications Ltd.,
Edmonton

Lost Pharaoh's right director

I read with great interest, Michael Dorland's article on Donald Brittain (*Cinema Canada* No. 126) and found it exciting and informative. The scope of Mr. Brittain's work is truly astounding. However, I did notice you listed Mr. Brittain as director of **The Lost Pharaoh** when in fact he was narrator and Nicholas Kendall, a principal in Northern Lights Media Corp., was the director. We would appreciate a correction.

I enjoy your publication and appreciate its contribution to the media.

Jhwon Ahma Zysman
Public Relations,
Northern Lights Media Corp.,
Vancouver