

ON (EXPERIMENTAL) FILM

by B. Sternberg

On the international front, interest from Europe in Canadian independent film continues:

• Vasja Bibich of SKUC productions (Students Cultural Centre), a filmmakers' co-op in Ljubljana, Yugoslavia, recently presented three programs of films in Toronto. As Bibich explained, the group, in-

terested in film as an international language for contemporary critical thought, wanted to show their films in "media-developed" countries to see whether their experiences are accessible to North Americans. The answer is yes, the films could bring something to people here. Bibich was also here to learn how our films are

made - conditions of production and systems of distribution. To complete the exchange, the Funnel will take a package of films to Yugoslavia in September.

• Luca Gasparina from Turin, Italy is in Toronto now pre-selecting for the Festival Internationale Cinema Giovanni, the International Festival of Young Cinema.

• The London Filmmakers' Coop in England is celebrating 20 years of independent and experimental filmmaking with

a multi-media event, Oct. 10-19, which will cover the following areas: 16mm and Super 8 film, videotapes, installation, performance, and 'expanded' work. Canadian filmmakers are invited to submit work and External Affairs is assisting with shipping.

• Midi Onodera recently returned from the Oberhausen Short Film Festival in which her film *Ten Cents A Dance (Parallax)* was screened. In seeing other works, and hearing other concerns, she sensed

a difference between European and North American films, the former being more political. She made contacts and spread the word about Canada and Canadian independent film. The Oberhausen screenings for competition took place in a 1000-seat theatre followed by discussions between audience and filmmakers. The screening in which *Ten Cents A Dance (Parallax)* was programmed, ended at midnight with a discussion continuing until 2 am. Travel costs for Onodera were covered by the Oberhausen Festival, Ontario Film Development Corporation, and, after considerable arm-twisting since it apparently is not their policy, Telefilm Canada. Telefilm and the DOC both send contingents to various festivals (Cannes, Berlin), but Canadian filmmakers with works in a festival have no way of attending unless the festival pays to bring her/him over.

The most recent DOC-initiated study on film distribution and exhibition, "The State of Things," by Dr. Brian Lewis says once again, 'A fine mess you've gotten us into!' - and underlines it with cold hard figures: foreign (read U.S.) companies collect 70 per cent of all distribution revenue, but paid, in 1981-82 \$0.3 million in Canadian royalties and \$231.9 million in foreign royalties. So, we've been reminded once more that film distribution and exhibition is foreign-controlled. Now that that has been substantiated and recommendations made - good recommendations, remedial recommendations - but NOW WHAT???

An additional note, not to undermine, however, what the study did do, but was there any examination of the distribution of short films, documentaries, experimental films, or the relationship between the NFB's distribution practices and other distributors handling similar films? That, of course, will now be the job of yet another Task Force headed, I must note, by François Macerola, chairman of the NFB. Has this Task Force noted the lack of funds available within the Canada Council for film distribution? Will they recommend that a reasonable sum of money be set aside for the distribution of experimental films and alternative independently made features and documentaries? Some small percentage of the money recently given to Telefilm (the \$33 million) could be administered by Canada Council for an area of distribution which serves this segment of the film community, historically served by Canada Council and which

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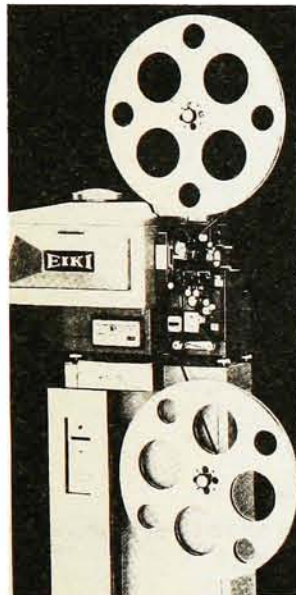


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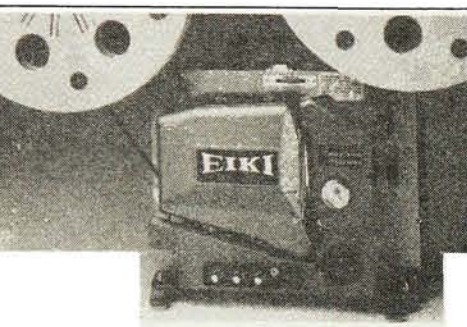
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is so obviously not a part of Telefilm's concerns.

During the week of May 19, the annual meeting of the Independent Film and Video Alliance (an umbrella organization whose member groups are production, distribution and exhibition co-ops) took place in Quebec city. Implicit to the organization is the emphasis on 'independent'. This may be broadening somewhat now as many working within the co-op system, are also working commercially. The co-ops themselves are pressed by cutbacks in funding to seek commercial sources of revenue. Ross Turnbull commented that as an administrator of a non-profit distribution centre he had felt it very important to attend the Alliance meeting to be among like-minded groups, to consolidate and build a network. Out of a strong network. Turnbull believes, arises the primary function of the Alliance - advocacy, the continued development of a profile for co-ops and the independents working within them.

This was the first year the Alliance has had stable funding for a full-time coordinator and regular publication of its magazine, *Composition*. Members of the Alliance are: Association Coopérative de Productions Audio-visuelles, Montreal; Atlantic Filmmakers Co-op, Halifax; Association pour le

Jeune Cinéma Québécois, Montreal; Coopérative Audio-visuelle de la Bouille d'Éloïze Ltée, Moncton; Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre, West and Atlantic, Toronto, Vancouver, Halifax; Centre for Art Tapes, Halifax; Cineworks, Vancouver; Cinemarvie, Edmunston; DEC, Toronto; Em Media, Calgary; Film and Video Assoc., Edmonton; Funnel, Toronto; Groupe Intervention Video, Montreal; IDERA, Vancouver; Island Media Arts Coop, Charlottetown; L.I.F.T., Toronto; Mainfilm, Montreal; Monitor North, Thunder Bay; New Brunswick Filmmakers Coop, Fredericton; Newfoundland Filmmakers Coop, St. John's; Pacific Cinematheque, Vancouver; Parlimage, Montreal; PRIM Video, Montreal; Saskatchewan Filmpool, Regina; Satellite Video Exchange, Vancouver; Spira-film, Montreal; Trinity Square Video, Toronto; Video Pool, Winnipeg; Vidéo Femmes, Quebec; Winnipeg Filmgroup, Winnipeg; Women in Focus, Vancouver; Yorkton Short Film and Video Festival, Yorkton.

The Alliance's board of eight represent Canada's three areas, (west, central, and east) with two members selected by each region and two additional 'floaters' nominated from the floor at the annual meeting.

Continuing with the conversations German film journalist Florian Hopf held with Canadian filmmakers, Amnon Buchbinder of Vancouver says: "The argument producers give for making films for the American market (*Porky's* did well in the U.S. but that is an American movie even though it's Canadian!) is that the Canadian market is not large enough to make it economically viable. The alternative is to ask what kind of films can we make on a budget that is realistic within the limits of the domestic market? Instead they talk about \$2-3 million low-budget movies (as in Hollywood) when in terms of the Canadian industry it's not low-budget at all... I don't think of it as American versus Canadian exactly and I agree with some Canadian producers when they declare that film is an international medium so why should they make 'Canadian' films? I don't think any of us have it at the top of our list to reflect Canadian cultural identity. On the other hand, there are different ways of positioning ourselves in the world. For all of us, film is a medium to explore consciousness. This generation of filmmakers is challenging the status quo and will continue to."



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