

FRONTS WEST

by Kathryn Allison

VANCOUVER – Between the Tory surtax on U.S. performers, U.S./Canada free trade talks, and the groundswell of U.S. support-industry resistance to the growing trend of out-of-country production, the next few months could bring some

changes to the film industry on the Coast.

As far as the surtax goes, George Chapman of IATSE 891 has already joined a letter-writing campaign to Michael Wilson and Revenue Canada, in which they are encouraged

to differentiate between visiting rock stars who hire very few Canadians while here and take the gate back home with them, and visiting film producers who bring a handful of performers into the country, "and promptly open a suitcase full of money and start spending it – on Canadian technicians, equipment, services and so on." If all entreaties fail, and the tax on film industry-related performers' expenses prevails,

Chapman says there's consolation for the West. Because the Western chapter of IATSE has significantly lower wage and benefits rates than their eastern counterparts, Vancouver would still retain an edge over Toronto as an economical location.

The out-of-country production resistance movement in California will undoubtedly gain strength in the future, but the economic advantages of coming to Canada are still unbeatable and the trend to shoot here has been documented in the U.S. press as a major factor in keeping production costs down. Locally, a wait-and-see attitude prevails, the B.C. Film Commission continues to actively promote the area, and the service sector is continuing its support of the development of the Dominion Bridge Building, which is one of the largest and cheapest studios in North America. A coalition of service sector groups was formed during the summer, and a proposal to lease and operate the building has been submitted to the owners of the property. A decision is expected this fall, with the coalition, known as Dominion Stages of B.C. expected to win the bid.

Part of the B.C. Film Commission's strategy to keep Vancouver's profile high in the minds of international producers is to work with Expo on a one-day publicity extravaganza called B.C. Motion Picture Production Celebration Day. Hundreds of invitations have been sent out to leading international producers, government representatives and commercial houses and corporations to attend the one-day event on September 27. The morning portion of the program is described by organizer Julia Frittaion as a mini-trade exposition with between 25-30 production houses and service companies showing their wares at a series of booths in the Royal Centre's Cineplex theatre complex.

In addition, four feature films will be screened in the Cineplex, including Sandy Wil-

son's *My American Cousin*, Phil Borsos' *Grey Fox*, Disney's *Never Cry Wolf* and the premiere of ITC Productions' *The Stepfather*, which will be attended by the cast and crew. Later in the afternoon, there will be VIP screenings of various Expo films on-site, and in the evening there will be a buffet dinner hosted by the B.C. Pavilion, which will later show screenings of its two films, *Challenge* and *Showscan*. Bill Reid, the new Minister of Tourism, will speak at the dinner. The event is sponsored by the B.C. Pavilion, B.C. Tourism, the B.C. Film Commission, Telefilm Canada and the B.C.F.I.A.

John Juliani, the DGC's first national president from the West Coast, is going to remain based in Vancouver for at least a year. Juliani, who keeps up a busy schedule with executive-producing work at the CBC among other projects, says he is comfortable with the delegating process, and trusts that his colleagues in Toronto will keep him up-to-date on the eastern point of view. He sees the Guild's priority as increasing communications with other unions and groups and strengthening their feeling of co-operation.

Several Western filmmakers will be represented at the Toronto Festival this year – a partial list includes Anne Wheeler's feature *Loyalties*, Jack Darcus' feature *Overnight*, Ric Beirsto and Harvey Crossland's feature *Close to Home*, and Guy Madden's 1/2-hour *The Dead Father*.

WINNIPEG – Things are looking good for the 80-member Winnipeg Film Group, which has experienced spectacular growth and recognition in the last 18 months.

With most of its support coming from Film Manitoba, the Provincial Arts Council, Culture, Heritage and Recreation, the City of Winnipeg, and Cultural Industries, the Film Group's budget has doubled since last year to \$400,000 for 1986/87. With Manitoba's new ERDA agreement in place, there is every indication that more federal support will be accessed by Manitoba filmmakers.

Executive Director Carmen Katz notes that there are currently 27 films in production, ranging from 3-minute educational films to 90-minute features, and in addition to supporting all that production, the Film Group is preparing gala showings of John Paizs' feature *Crime Wave* and Greg Hanec's new feature, *Tunes of Plenty* with the support of Film Manitoba. They are also putting to-

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→ gether five video packages as part of a pilot project to see what the local public would like to see in the stores. The packages include a 45-minute collection of films for kids, 90 minutes of experimental shorts, a trilogy of John Paizs' work, an hour of comedy and

an as-yet unspecified fifth. Film Group members have done well in recent international festivals, and the Group plans to co-ordinate more entries for the coming year. They credit Telefilm for assisting with dubbing costs, and have found an enthusiastic international booster in Alf Bold, a

Berlin Festival programmer from West Berlin's Arsenal Kino who invited Greg Hanec's *Downtime* to Berlin last year. Bold discovered the Film Group when he was a guest curator at the Centre for Eclectic Cinema in New York a year ago and saw Hanec's work there. In addition to having en-

tries in festivals all over North America, this is the third year the Group has an entry in the Toronto Festival of Festivals, with Guy Madden's 1/2-hour *The Dead Father*.

Katz admits that the Film Group as an organization has had to undergo enormous changes in the past year, as a

result of its member's successes: "The sudden burst in activity and response has left us madly scrambling to keep up. We're not just grassroots anymore." Grant Guy, the director of programming, points out that the Film Group now has a double purpose: to nurture novice filmmakers and keep the more-established filmmakers in the province. "We don't want to lose our more established filmmakers, so we're changing our *raison d'être* to accommodate their needs." Accessing larger production budgets is one way of doing so, as well as acquiring more and better in-house equipment. With larger budgets come increased paperwork, and the Film Group executive plan to hire more office staff to handle the increase. The Group will act as executive producer on many larger projects, to free the filmmakers to concentrate on the creative aspects. They are already playing that role on a half-hour program for CBC called *The Washing Machine* for which they hired a line producer to oversee production and provided the seed money, with support from Film Manitoba. Guy, in particular, is protective of the Group's filmmakers and their need for creative freedom, which is undoubtedly one of the reasons that the films produced by the Film Group are so original.

The Film Group, as the only distributor in Manitoba, plans to play that role in relation to Telefilm's feature film fund when filmmakers apply to access the funds. They plan to strengthen their distribution arm and work closely with their exhibition branch, The Cinematheque, which is run by David Barber. Unlike Cinematheques in other areas, Barber's programs are heavily larded with Canadian content, and he admits that he'll resort to every ruse to get people to see a Canadian program. He doesn't isolate Canadian films in special programs but incorporates them into international programs. Last spring he ran a double bill of John Sayles' *Baby It's You* with Sandy Wilson's *Growing Up at Paradise*. A former journalist, he sees the biggest problem in getting audiences in to see Canadian films is a basic lack of awareness of them. He credits the local press with giving good coverage of Canadian showings in Winnipeg, but complains that so much film activity is lost because it gets inadequate media attention.

The Film Group actively cooperates with other film co-ops, and recently did exchanges with Toronto's Funnel, Calgary's Group, and will be exchanging NIFCO's *Faustus Bidgood* with John Paizs' →

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→ **Crime Wave** this fall. They participated in a cross-country tour of co-op films organized by Montreal's Main Film last year. Cross-fertilization of talent extends beyond exhibition of films — a glossy brochure describing a 1984 documentary

about the Royal Winnipeg Ballet's Arnold Spohr showed an interesting mix of names in the credit list: director, Gabriel Markiw; producer, Jancarlo Markiw; executive producer, Don Haig; writer, Max Wyman; music, Michael Conway Baker; editor, Per Asplund.

When asked if the Group feels isolated, Katz states that they are happy with the growth of international recognition, and the continued interest within the province. In terms of Telefilm decision-makers, though, she admits there is a problem. "If you're

living in Toronto, it doesn't cost you anything extra to make films — no airfares, no couriers, etc. Doing projects of any magnitude is hard when you're outside that little community." Considering their success in and out of Manitoba, it would appear that the basic

philosophy of the Film Group echoes that of Arnold Spohr who once said: "The world will not come to Winnipeg, so Winnipeg will have to go to the world."

Montreal debates to make PBS series Dialogue Two

MONTREAL — Internationalism was the operative word when ambassadors, politicians, editors and students from across North America and Western Europe gathered in Montreal in early September to participate in a series of televised debates for PBS, The American public TV network.

Montreal City Hall was the site of a two-day series of debates (Sept. 6 and 7) shot in 13 half-hour segments by executive producer/director Larry Shapiro and crew.

Dialogue Two will be aired on PBS in early October and throughout Europe on Europa TV (Holland). Twenty-six university level debaters from 12 countries in the European Economic Community (EEC) and Scotland have been paired-off against 26 top-flight debaters representing universities throughout Canada and the United States.

Topics such as whether Europe has become too economically dependent on North America or whether U.S. armed retaliation against Libya is justified are included among a wide range of debate resolutions.

Host of **Dialogue Two** is David Johnston, principal of McGill University and president of the Canadian Association of Colleges and Universities.

Among the invited moderators are Barry Chase, president of News and Public Affairs for PBS (Washington); Douglas Fishburn, senior editor-in-chief of *The Economist*; Moorehead Kennedy, former Iranian hostage, author and president of the Centre for International Understanding (New York); Betty Franklin, associate editor of *Forbes Magazine* and Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. Among other Canadian politicians invited to participate as moderators are Robert Bourassa, David Peterson and Canadian UN Ambassador Stephen Lewis.

Shapiro's **Dialogue One**, a 13-part debating series between Canadian and U.S. university students, was carried by 200 PBS affiliates in October 1985. A native of Montreal, Shapiro has also produced **The Editors** series for PBS, shooting also in October.

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