

Plight of Canada Council

I wish to respond to two aspects of Kathryn Allison's article on the Winnipeg Film Group under the title Fronts West (October 1986). Though the Winnipeg Film Group is pleased with the coverage it has received in the past year from *Cinema Canada*, two inaccuracies exist that must be clarified.

Ms. Allison listed our funding resources, but somehow excluded the Canada Council. It is vital that the Canada Council is recognized as a significant contributor. In Ms. Sternberg's "On (Experimental) Film", she accurately described the plight of the Canada Council. The Canada Council has played and continues to play a major factor in the establishment and nurturing of the artist-run film production access centres (film co-ops) and the cultural film.

With all the "big bucks" flying around from Telefilm corresponding to the decline of the Canada Council's budgetary options, the important contribution of the Canada Council is being lost.

Since *Cinema Canada* is primarily an industrial magazine, and applauding the deal-making achievements to secure a conventional film industry, one can then, in responding, be crass enough to say, taking things at face value, that the filmmakers that the Canada Council supports are spurs that impel the industry to wakefulness (to paraphrase Walter Benjamin). But that is a glib overview. The Canada Council is forced to meet all the demands of filmmakers neglected by Telefilm. In the world of deal-making, it is my concern that there will be, indeed, an increase in film production, but in the end with very little quality. The Canada Council is the only component in the film infrastructure where quality is still considered, where innovation is still considered, and where personal perspective is still con-

sidered. To take it one step further, it is probably the last place where film is still liked. Telefilm is not the prime culprit in our failings, by virtue of its market-driven mandate, as opposed to being interventionist, a film industry of quality will not merge. The Canada Council, as crippled as it is by governmental deficit reduction policies, can answer those needs. Again, only partially as explained by Ms. Sternberg. It deserves a reversal of its present funding. Not only restored but increased annually so that it can properly fulfill its mandate. It deserves to be looked upon by the film industry as a vital player for a comprehensive film community. Not as a home for future development, nor as a home for amateurs waiting to grow up and become real filmmakers.

Without the Canada Council there would be nothing.

The second aspect of concern was Ms. Allison's brief mention of Telefilm's Festival Bureau's participation in the subtitling of *Downtime* which was screened at the Berlin International Film Festival. Ms. Allison simply mentioned it as fact. The story behind it is indicative of an attitude. When approached to assist in the subtitling, we were told by the Festival Bureau that they had already done enough for the kid (Greg Hanec). It was pressure from Berlin that reversed their decision. The story is important.

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Even under the most favorable circumstances, investing in film production is a "crap game," writes Trisha Curran in *Financing Your Film: A Guide for Independent Filmmakers and Producers*. The book offers practical advice on assembling a package attractive to potential backers and information on how to draw up a detailed budget and a distribution plan. It also includes suggested sources of funding. A complete case history - John Sayles' presentation for *Lianna* - provides a concrete example of effective packaging (*Praeger, NYC, \$29.95*).

An exhaustive compilation of production and cast credits for all special effects movies nominated for Academy Awards from 1929 through 1984, *Trick Cinematography* by R. M. Hayes also includes a list of nominated films, the technicians involved, and a thorough cross-index (*McFarland, Jefferson, NC, \$29.95*).

Two additions to G. K. Hall's excellent "Guide to Reference and Resources" series: *Michelangelo Antonioni* by Ted Perry and *Luchino Visconti* by Elaine Mancini. Both provide comprehensive bibliographies of existing printed material concerning these directors' artistic careers. Format includes a biographical chapter, a critical survey, credits and synopses of films, writings about and by the director, archival sources, film distributors and other related matter. Well-researched and scholarly, these books offer a wealth of data invaluable to students and buffs (*G.K. Hall, Boston, \$40 and \$45*).

One of the classiest performers of Hollywood's Golden Years is portrayed by expert film historian Lawrence J. Quirk in an attractive, amply illustrated large format volume, *The Complete Film of William Powell*. Well-remembered as the suave and charismatic detective Nick Charles in *The Thin Man* series, Powell starred in the nearly 100 movies discussed in this engaging pictorial biography (*Citadel, Secaucus, NJ, \$15.95*).

James Danziger assembles in *Beaton* a stunning collection of Cecil Beaton's photographs of Hollywood stars, royalty and fashion models. Garbo, Dietrich, Monroe, Bergman, Crawford and Hepburn are among the glamorous sitters that Beaton portrayed with unerring taste and sensitive insight into their personality. Danziger's informative text relates the history of Beaton's times and the events in his life to his photographs (*Holt, NYC, \$14.95*).

Lena Horne's autobiography *Lena*, co-authored with Richard Schickel, was first published in 1965. This paperback edition, while not updated, brings out with honesty and candor memories of her life and career, and airs her incisive views of the way Hollywood mistreated her and other black performers (*Limelight Editions, NYC, \$8.95*).

An entertaining look at the movies' early days, *Nickelodeon Theatres and Their Music* by Q. David Bowers evokes the pre-1915 era in a well-documented, engrossing text and priceless vintage photos (*Vestal Press, Vestal, NY, \$24.95/14.95*).

George L. George •

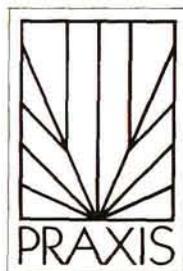
Coming up in...

CINEMA

Do critics make a difference? When? How? Jamie Gaetz and Dr. Brian Lewis compile the results of their examination of 4 case studies in the next issue of Cinema Canada.

"A 10-day celebration of excess in the snobbish pursuit of the superficial in our post-nouveau moment of diseased modernity...?" Michael Dorland looks at the Festival international du nouveau cinéma et de la vidéo.

The past and, above all, the future of documentary. Magnus Isaacson direct from the Grierson seminar.



Applications for the Spring Session FILM DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

PRAXIS is a newly created program for the development of independent feature films. It has been designed to give film writers, directors and producers an opportunity to work on their own projects with the support of distinguished guest professionals from the Canadian and international film communities.

The Spring Session is a four-month program that combines five weeks of group meetings in Vancouver with two months of semi-independent work in the participants' home cities. Beginning with a first draft of the script, each project will be developed in consultation with respected screenwriters or script consultants. (Our pilot workshop in the fall featured Kit Carson, writer of *Paris, Texas* and Hanif Kureishi of *My Beautiful Laundrette*.)

In late February, guest professionals and Fellows will meet in Vancouver for a week of intensive script consultation, along with a symposium on scriptwriting which includes public screenings and discussions of the guest writers' films. After two more months of work on the scripts, all participants will reconvene in May for a month-long workshop that involves consultation with directors, cinematographers, production designers and producers, as well as scene development with actors on video.

Applicants may be writer/directors or writer/director/producer teams. Up to three people may accompany each project. In exceptional circumstances, a writer may be admitted alone to go through the script development stage only, or to bring in a director at a later date.

Applications are due January 2. Decisions will be made by an independent jury and announced in late January. Each applicant must provide a first draft of the script, along with resumes of all participants, and relevant options and rights agreements. Scripts will be judged on originality, excellence, and feasibility. Applicants must be Canadian citizens or landed immigrants.

There are no fees for participation in the workshop, but participants must pay their own travel and accommodation costs. We can suggest a number of federal, provincial, and private funding programs that might subsidize these expenses.

For further information and application forms, write to PRAXIS at 350 Robson Street 2nd Floor, Vancouver, B.C. V6B 2B2 or phone (604) 682-3100. PRAXIS is a program of the Centre for the Arts at Simon Fraser University, funded by the B.C. Government's Fund for Excellence in Education and the Foundation to Underwrite New Drama for Pay Television.