

FRONTS WEST

by Kathryn Allison

Alan Simmonds and Candace O'Connor's Canandal Productions Ltd. has got a broadcast letter from CBC for their \$2.5 million made-for-TV movie, **Tinsel and Ice**. The Rick Drew script is set in a post-WWII prairie town, where a teenage boy comes to terms with his veteran father.

Simmonds, who recently moved to the coast from Toronto, has found it difficult to put the real together from here. "It used to be that Rudy Carter was five minutes away - now it's 3,000 miles and \$1500 to pick up my broadcast letter." While Simmonds is finding the deal-making aspects of Vancouver life difficult, he claims he is committed to living and working here, and is hoping to set up a small private development fund, whose sole purpose is to develop projects for theatrical and television release. He believes that the pool of writers here is exceptional, and believes that his nose for good scripts coupled with his producing experience could make a small development fund useful in getting promising projects off the ground.

While he claims to be mystified by the provincial government's slow progress towards setting up a film fund, he admits he's the new kid on the block, and is watching and listening, cautiously hopeful that B.C. will get a film fund.

In the meantime, he is putting the deal together for **Tinsel and Ice**, and is looking to shoot next January somewhere in the prairies.

Cineworks, Vancouver's independent filmmakers' society, has got a cause to sink its teeth into, with Telefilm's return of \$17.4 million to the national treasury from the Feature Film and Broadcast Fund. Cineworks, as part of the national group - Independent Film and Video Alliance - joined in a protest against Telefilm's funding policies, which exclude low budget features and art films. Cineworks sent a letter to Tele-

OTTAWA - The penetration rate of videocassette recorders in the Canadian market continues to climb, according to the A.C. Nielsen Company of Canada.

A 4 per cent increase since March 1986 brings the national average VCR penetration rate to a current 41 per cent.

The Canadian mid-west shows the highest increase of 35 per cent to 42 per cent. Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia reflect the national average while the Atlantic regions is slightly lower at 39 per cent.

film which outlined its major concerns, and called for the establishment of a development fund.

"The fact that \$17.4 million was sent back when a development fund could have been established is irresponsible and lacking in vision. The Canada Council Media Arts Section struggles to fund cultural filmmaking with a budget so low many worthy projects have to be turned down each jury. The money that Telefilm does not spend or refuses to put into development of cultural and artistic filmmaking should be given to a responsible agency such as the Canada Council so that films that truly reflect Canada and the sensibilities of our film artists can be made. The track record of international awards, screenings and broadcasts attests to the viability of these non-market driven films."

In the middle of all the outrage and hoopla over the \$17.4 million return (which was relocated to Heritage and Museums) Telefilm and Praxis hosted yet another Vancouver information meeting, where novice producers were to be instructed on how best to fill in Telefilm forms. Commented Cineworks member Peg Campbell, who attended the session. "They keep sending people out to show us how to conform to their funding biases. What they don't seem to understand is that we want them to change and accommodate the realities of this industry. Specifically, we want script development and recognition of the viability of low budget features." Is anybody out there listening?

Praxis is accepting submissions for its fall screenwriting program. Completed first drafts (no treatments) will be accepted until July 15 for the 10 week session, which will bring back Sharon Riis, Kit Carson and Sandy Wilson as guest writers, as well as bring in a few as yet unannounced new faces.

The New Play Centre continues to offer a steady diet of television and feature scripting courses. Two intensive workshops are slated for July, one in writing for television led by Hart Hanson, the other for feature writers, led by John Wright. Another New Play Centre project, "The Test Tape Competition" is underway - three scripts were chosen in an open competition, to be workshopped by local directors, leading to 10-15 minutes video excerpts. Jack Darcus, Nick Kendall and Sandy Wilson are the participating directors in the project.

Alliance deals in First Choice TV

TORONTO - Alliance Entertainment Corporation and First Choice Canadian Communications Corporation have signed a multi-million dollar deal to make Canadian feature movies.

The three-year agreement between Alliance and First Choice, operators of the First Choice-Superchannel pay-TV channel in Eastern Canada, will result in the creation of 10-15 Canadian dramatic movies.

Under the agreement First Choice will invest in some of the productions or pay license fees that vary in relation to the number of First Choice subscribers.

"The agreement allows for license fees that automatically grow as the number of First Choice subscribers grow; the funds for Canada's production community are inextricably linked to our future successes," First Choice president Fred Klinkhammer said.

Klinkhammer termed it a groundbreaking agreement for the pay-TV industry in Canada. Under the agreement movies must be made in English, must be released theatrically for at least one week in Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, Vancouver, and Edmonton and meet federal government Canadian content regulations.

Klinkhammer said in English Canada about 22-24 movies are made annually and that is not a large enough number to fill requirements set out by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) for pay-TV.

The CRTC requires First Choice to maintain 30 per cent Canadian shows during prime time (6 p.m. to 10 p.m.) and 20 per cent during other hours.

"Ideally, it would be nice to have 100 Canadian pictures," he said.

Klinkhammer said Alliance is

one of Canada's largest production companies. He explained that the agreement between the two companies will mean that Alliance receives a predictable flow of cash over the next three years.

At least three of the movies will be shot outside Toronto or Montreal.

The first movies under the agreement are **The Gate**, starring Stephen Dorff, Louis Tripp, Christa Denton and produced by John Kemeny and **Nowhere to Hide** starring Amy Madigan and Michael Ironside. **Nowhere to Hide** is produced by Andras Hamori.

Robert Lantos, president of Motion Pictures for Alliance, said "This agreement with First Choice for theatrical pictures dovetails in a timely way with Alliance's extensive production commitments with Canadian broadcasters especially with the CTV Television Network."

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