

FRONTS WEST

by Calvin Wharton & Mark O'Neill

The new, moved and improved Vancouver Film Festival is over. Thank you Hannah Fisher & Staff. We were hoping to have some attendance and revenue results for this episode of Fronts West but they're not ready yet. However, it seems next year's Festival will be held in October but perhaps a week or two sooner; obviously the early statistics are encouraging. The only bad date this year was closing night which fell on Halloween, an evening all but the most fanatical filmgoers make their own movies.

Expect some similarities between next year's Vancouver Festival and those in Chicago, Denver and Montreal (Serge Losique? *Mais non!* Le Festival du nouveau cinéma et vidéo.).

During the Vancouver International Film Festival, the Praxis Film Development Workshop hosted several successful seminars on various aspects of film, including Canadian Filmmakers (with guest Patricia Rozema); Third World Filmmakers; Women in Film; Indian Filmmakers (with Shashi Kapoor); a session with director Paul Cox; and a critics' seminar.

Among those taking part in the critics' seminar (to examine the critic's role in film) were critics Françoise Maupin (*Le Figaro*), Tony Rayns (*Sight and Sound*), and Ian Caddell (*Georgia Strait*); actor Jackie Burroughs; filmmakers Peg Campbell and Peggy Thompson; animator Marv Newland; and writer Phil Savath.

Discussion in the workshop ranged from the critical process to the effect of festivals and the critic's responsibilities.

Rayns claimed the critic's responsibility is to himself or herself, to the filmmaker, to the reader and to the journal written for - in that order. Caddell felt his main priority is as a sort of consumer advocate.

Maupin said the profile of Canadian cinema is changing. At one time, she claimed, people in France would never go to see a Canadian film, but now they will because of the success of several recent Canadian films there.

And, congrats to the Trade Forum crew. Two days of good contacts, reasonable coffee and great catering (Myrna's). All this set in an All-Sets set (try that to the cadence of "How much wood would a woodchuck chuck...").

BC Film CEO Wayne Sterloff seems to have had no trouble at-

tracting qualified people to join him at the new provincial agency. Maria Falcone, who worked with Sterloff at Telefilm's Vancouver operation, has signed on as Projects manager. One time winner of the Jack Nicholson screenwriter's Awards at the University of Southern California, Gordon Roback is exec. in charge of Production and Creative Development. And two second-generation members of well-known media families are also moving into Suite 1200-1185 West Georgia (V6E 4E6): Susan Brinton of the CanWest/CKND clan is in charge of Financial and Legal Affairs and Christine Moffat is Sterloff's executive assistant. There's even a new phone number: (604) 684-3323.

One step forward, one step back. North Vancouver City Council has approved rezoning for the proposed Cannell Studio complex but spokesman Steve Sassen says the whole idea is "up in the air" at the moment. He's under strict orders from Cannell not to elaborate and didn't. However, the fact that talks with Vancouver film unions are "still proceeding" seems to have something to do with it. Indications are that, unless Cannell wins some major concessions, North Van will end up with a new shopping centre but none of the six proposed sound stages.

Peg Campbell has received a Canada Council grant to make a film called *In Search of The Last Good Man*. The film will be a seven-minute, single-shot sequence and Campbell is considering shooting in 35mm.

Campbell, together with Peggy Thompson (Two Pegs Productions), is also working on two feature films. The first, *Pardon Me For Dying*, is a *film-noir* mystery centred around the death of a relationship, and was co-written with Peter Eliot Weiss.

The second feature for the Two Pegs will be *The Midnight Operator* - which Campbell describes as a mystery of equal pay for equal work. Written by Vancouver playwright Pearl Hunt, the film is set in 1919 at the time of the Winnipeg general strike but covers the sympathy strike in Vancouver. This project will be a coproduction with producer Merit Jensen of Winnipeg.

"You can see I'm interested in mysteries these days," Campbell says.

The Christmas season got an early start this year with the British Columbia Film and Video Industry Association's Wrap Party on December 5. The party (western theme) will take place in the Effects Stage building at the B.C. Film Centre and is expected to attract about 1,000 people. Bring your own lariat.

When the Gemini awards for English-language Canadian television programs are announced on December 9, there will be a number of nominations from B.C. Among these will be Brad Turner for *Danger Bay*, "The Otters Return" - best direction in a dramatic or comedy series; Michael Mercer for *The Campbells*, "Autumn and Smoke, Pt. 2" - best writing in a dramatic series; Otto Lowy for *Man Alive*, "Journey to Prague" - best writing in an information/documentary program or series; Bob Ennis for *Danger Bay*, "Eye of the Storm" - best photography in a dramatic program or series; and Terence Kelly for *Red Serge*, "The Bender" - best performance by a lead actor in a dramatic program or mini-series.

November 2nd was back-to-school day for 18 new students at Capilano College. They are all natives who have been working in film or video at a community level and want to improve their skills. The Chief Dan George Foundation struck a deal with the North Vancouver college and the 18 are participating in the well-established and well-respected Film and Theatre program.

What will they do to use those skills when school lets out? Leonard George, son of Chief Dan, has a project in mind. He wants to produce a feature on his father's life.

The Vancouver Society of Independent Animators (VSIA), a non-profit organization established to support, promote and inspire the production, of animation, will celebrate its fifth birthday December 15. Happy Birthday!

If you'd like a peek at Cinema Canada's palatial Vancouver office, watch for an upcoming episode of *MacGyver*. Our quiet West End street is the location of who knows what dastardly crime. We're on the Northwest corner with a large persimmon tree in the window.

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"Myrna Casino of Myrna's in Vancouver notes a rising interest in exotic tastes, spicier food, and anything that's fresh. She finds seafood and barbecues particularly popular this year, as well as international hors d'oeuvres..." excerpt from Canadian House and Home Magazine.

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