

The office of the Alberta Motion Picture Industry Association is battle-weary after the recent Film and Television Awards, but it smells of roses and ambition. AMPIA just got a new executive director: Joanne Riediger-Duebel. Sitting behind a mound of paper - her desk - she points to a bunch of roses: "No boss ever bought me flowers before." She smiles. "But I deserve them."

When she arrived at AMPIA eight weeks ago, there was work to be done. Riediger-Duebel had only six weeks to organize the Alberta Annual Film and Television Festival Awards. She had even less time to submit AMPIA's funding applications, and she had to cope with a telephone system "that cuts people off."

"It was hectic, says Riediger-Duebel. "I got dunked in head-first."

A few weeks later she had everything under control: "The festival went very well. We started by mailing out the application forms..." She says she got a lot of help from board members and volunteers, but confides: "We've been working 14-hour days." Two days after the festival, looking a bit worse for wear amongst the paper and the roses, she is already scheduling events for AMPIA's 15th year.

Since 1973 AMPIA has promoted film and video production in Alberta, involving itself in every aspect of the industry. Its activities include organizing seminars, lobbying government, developing and marketing the industry, and offering news, information and insurance plans to its members.

"Of course we have board meetings," says Riediger-Duebel. But she already knows what the priorities will be for 1988: members, politics, and promotion of the industry.

Her main concern, she explains, is public awareness. "Our Awards Ceremony gives us a lot of publicity. AMPIA has the longest-standing provincial awards ceremony, and the only televised one. This lets people know what the industry is doing in Alberta. There are two components to the industry: culture and business. Alberta Culture and Alberta Economic Development and Trade both need to know what we're doing. The trick is to keep the balance between those who think in cultural terms and those who think film must be economically viable."

Riediger-Duebel is talking to every government department that will listen. And politicians do listen. The ministers of Culture and Multiculturalism, and of Education attended this year's awards ceremonies. Alberta Economic Development and Trade sent several representatives. "That's great. We need a voice to inform the government. The industry is diverse; without AMPIA we wouldn't have a voice."

A planned membership drive should further increase AMPIA's clout. "We know who we want to join," says Riediger-Duebel. "... All the people who attended the Awards Festival that aren't members."

In addition to the membership drive, AMPIA plans several seminars, including one for producers on how to deal with bankers. AMPIA has also joined *Brown Bag*, an industry networking group which meets monthly to dissect various issues. AMPIA will host the next meeting, and supply the crowd with entertainment and popcorn. "We're going to watch some of the more obscure award-winning films so people in the industry have a chance to see what their colleagues have been making."

In spite of Riediger-Duebel's ambition, AMPIA may be in trouble. After the Awards Festival, the staff was cut by half. The office was already short-staffed during the Festival preparations. A few events had abysmal turnouts because press releases didn't go out on time. Alberta production missed meeting potential clients at a screening of corporate-sponsored video because nobody showed up.

That's unfortunate, since sponsored video could have used a boost. Bill Marsden, director of Alberta's Film Industry Development says, "It seems to me that the amount of business isn't growing as fast as the number of filmmakers." The solution, he says, is to go worldwide. "We're getting into international markets."

Not only is Alberta attracting international business, it is also drawing visitors from neighboring provinces. The six-month-old Manitoba Motion Picture Industry Association sent two members to observe this year's award ceremonies.

Attendance at the actual awards ceremony was higher than ever. Riediger-Duebel says she sold 380 tickets, 100 more than last year. She says there is a growing interest in Alberta productions, citing *Shooting Stars* as an example.

"*Shooting Stars* attracted a crowd of 2,500. Nobody thought we could draw that many to see a documentary, but we did." And it was made right here...

"It's important to develop indigenous productions that 'speak 'Albertan' not 'Los Angeles'," warns Riediger-Duebel. "I have a lingering feeling that Canadians are ashamed of their film. If they are it's because they don't know Canadian film. I think Alberta should be proud of its filmmakers. We are making excellent quality products," she says.

Riediger-Duebel is also proud of her organization. "I think we're getting a better voice. I'm planning to stick around for a while to see my dreams come true."

But Riediger-Duebel isn't a hopeless dreamer. She knows when to wake up and smell the roses. "I have two weeks wind-down time from the awards. Then I have to pay the bills."

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