The 1988 Genie Awards

What can one say about the Genies this year without sounding redundant? One can say congratulations Un Zoz la nuit (13 times) and one can say, "Right on Rock!" but Megan Follows said it first.

One can say, "Gee! Gordon Pinsent looks great in a tux," and one can say, "For a brilliant actress, Martha Henry sure is a tacky dresser!" One can say, "There's Larry King! He is the King of Kensington!" And one can say, "Who does Donald Sutherland think he is... tonight?"

Despite a well-planned production, this television viewer was left paying more attention to his tortilla chip on Genie Night. Conceptually, Canada's premier award show failed to entertain and educate (read: promote Canadian films which can rarely afford other effective means of promotion). Like a movie script rewritten one too many times, the show was desperately predictable, high in style but low in creative substance. The direction was technically clean and, inasmuch, impressive - a brisk pace, the presentors moving in and out through highly polished doors of a cinema lobby set. But these presentors brought very little to the podium unless you had just been released by the terrorists on your name happened to be Jean-Claude Lauzon.

Host Megan Follows and Gordon Pinsent did what they do best. And their scripted spontaneity was nice and cozy. In fact they are the embodiment of nice and cozy. My complaint is that while Chevy Chase casually picks his nose in front of a galaxy of stars on a stage representing megadollars, we can't seem to get it together. We are far too serious, too formal with our no-nonsense production. Give me back the outrageous, the glitches, the errors, scandal, (I'll take) dramatic irony. THIS IS ENTERTAINMENT!

I missed the embarrassing, female dancers this year, the overweight matinee singer, the odd prop failure. There was not one drunken presentor or award-winner... well maybe one. In putting together a show like the Genies, the least one must do is create the illusion that anything can happen. This is the spirit of live showbiz isn't it? - President Reagan's televised press conferences are more exciting than this year's Genies.

We are not interested in a predictable Canadian awards show nicely blocked, nicely timed, nicely staged in which one might have guessed that one film would bag 75 per cent of the awards. The lesson here is, if you can't entice us you can't hope to educate us (read: promote your movies).

There were, however, one or two bright moments that made more than a few Canadians sit up and drop their tortillas. The greatest moment came halfway through Rock Demers' (Air Canada Award) five-minute tirade against Canada's budding military industrial complex when most Canadians who were not already watching the Genies tuned into what they thought would be The National. Demers' televised assault on the Mulroney government could not have been better timed. Sheila McCarthy (Best Actress), simply had to stand at the podium to eulogize raw starpower, and I particularly liked the historic and auspicious denouement of Jean-Claude Lauzon's struggle to be loved by the Toronto media. Thanks for your support, he said, upon receiving Best Director, "and that's no bullshit."

Jean Chantal