

For five days, Canadian films ran non-stop at the Canadian Film Awards. There were also discussions, forums, and press conferences which dealt ardently with the state of the film industry and the state of the art of filming. Carmel Dumas captures the flavour of these discussions and gives us the essential arguments.

the etrog shines again

by Carmel Dumas

The 26th Canadian Film Awards, organized by Sandra Gathercole and chaired by Jack Gray, ran from Oct. 7 to Oct. 12 at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. Of the 285 films entered, 64 were chosen by pre-selection for viewing by the Jury over a five day period. The structure of the Awards, the programme and the retrospective screenings were announced in issue no. 22 of Cinema Canada, p. 16. The feature films which were entered are all included in Natalie Edward's Casules on p. 50. David Beard will review many of the short films in the next issue. Robert Rouveroy, who served on the pre-selection committee gives us his impressions of the pre-selection in Roughcut on p. John Hofsess gives us his opinion of the final evening on p.

The Awards this year were especially important because of the quality of the discussions which were almost as non-stop as the films themselves. The Meet the Filmmaker Forums in the evening provided a rare opportunity for filmmakers to confront each other and to deal with the critical questions which must be faced and answered if the industry is to move ahead.

"This year's Canadian Film Awards? Huh. Coast-to-coast TV coverage this Sunday night. The Hollywood envelope-opening bit. Glamour. It's all so ridiculous," the Quebec filmmaker was quoted as saying. If either he or the reporter had been informed they would have known that not only were the 1975 Awards not to be telecast, but a special effort had been made to keep them truly Canadian, and English Canadian at that. The fantastically full programme the 1975 CFA offered to its participants was largely influenced by a desire to question the presence of Hollywood in the Canadian film industry.

The 1973 "affair" practically put a 25-year tradition on the shelf forever. By boycotting the event that took place in their city, Montreal filmmakers wanted to protest the poor attempt they felt the CFA made to compete with Hollywood, mainly by selecting commercial films rather than what they considered as the culturally important ones. Although the English Canadian filmmakers agreed to a large extent with these protests, the problem for many seemed to lie in the impossibility of getting French and English Canadian cinema together in the same festival. It was therefore agreed that from then on, Quebec and the rest of Canada would go their own ways, remaining on friendly terms. At a meeting shortly after the '73 fiasco, it was voted that English Canada would keep the name of the Canadian Film Awards for its festival and that Quebec would operate under a different formula.

The English Canadian group applied to the Secretary of State's office for a budget, but only got organized in 1974. English Canada got it together before French Canada because a few people invested time and energy in something which they felt was crucially important for the industry.* In the same *Toronto Star* interview, Jutra, who on the one hand

(continued on p. 26)

* The Quebec participants have not yet had a meeting to determine the future of the "Quebec Festival", and no concerted effort has been made to repatriate the funds which were once available from the Film Festivals Bureau in Ottawa. Ed.

Carmel Dumas had her own column, "Youth Beat" at the *Toronto Star* before moving to the CBC as researcher and director of "Quebec Now" and as researcher on "Daybreak." Currently she contributes to *Maclean's* and does theatre reviews for the *Toronto Gazette*; she has just finished her first novel, *A la pige*.

THE WINNERS

Best Feature Film: 1975

Les ordres.

Film of the Year: 1974

The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz.

Feature Film Craft Awards

Direction:

Michel Brault, **Les ordres.**

Performance by an actress:

Margot Kidder, **Black Christmas** and **A Quiet Day in Belfast.**

Performance by an actor:

Stuart Gillard, **Why Rock the Boat?**

Supporting actress:

Lila Kedrova, **Eliza's Horoscope.**

Supporting actor:

Henry Beckman, **Why Rock the Boat?**

Original screenplay:

Michel Brault, **Les ordres.**

Screenplay adaptation:

William Weintraub, **Why Rock the Boat?**

Category Awards

Feature film, non-fiction:

Janis.

Documentary film over 30 minutes:

Cree Hunters of the Mistassini.

Documentary film under 30 minutes:

At 99: A portrait of Louise Tandy Murch.

Animated film:

The Owl Who Married a Goose.

Theatrical short film:

Along These Lines.

TV drama film:

A Bird in the House.

Craft Awards, Feature and Non-Feature Films

Direction, in a non-fiction film:

Robin Spry for **Action and Face.**

Performance by an actress in a non-feature fiction:

Jayne Eastwood for **Deedee.**

Performance by an actor in a non-fiction feature film:

William Hutt for **National Dream.**

Supporting actor or actress in a non-feature fiction:

Pat Hamilton for **A Bird in the House.**

Non dramatic script, feature film:

Donald Brittain for **Dreamland.**

Screenplay in a dramatic non-feature:

Patricia Watson for **A Bird in the House.**

Editing in a feature film:

Stan Cole for **Black Christmas.**

Editing in a non-fiction feature film:

Arla Saare for **Next Year in Jerusalem.**

Cinematography in a feature fiction film:

Paul van der Linden, for **Eliza's Horoscope.**

Cinematography in a non-fiction film:

Ken Gregg for **Next Year in Jerusalem, Deedee, A Bird in the House.**

Art direction in a feature film:

François Barbeau for **Eliza's Horoscope.**

Sound editing in a feature film:

Ken Heeley-Ray for **Black Christmas.**

photo: Stephen Chesley



The chairman of the 1975 Canadian Film Awards jury was writer, broadcaster, festival director, juror, teacher and head of the Ontario Film Institute, Gerald Pratley.

Members were (from l. to r.) Polish filmmaker, teacher and theoritician Tadeusz Jaworski; Montreal director Denis Héroux; Czech filmmaker Václav Taborsky; director, writer, actress and critic Janine Manatic; *Vancouver Star* critic Les Wedman, Czech writer Josef Skvorecký.

Sound editing in a non-feature film:

Barry Greenwald for **Metamorphosis.**

Sound recording in a feature film:

Patrick Rousseau for **The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz.**

Sound recording in a non-feature film:

Jean-Pierre Joutel, for **Goldwood, The Owl that Married the Goose, Whistling Smith.**

Sound recording in a non-feature film:

Dan Gibson for **Wings in the Wilderness.**

Sound recording in a feature film:

Steven Dalby for **Eliza's Horoscope** and **The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz.**

Original Music Score

Non feature film:

Marius Benoît for **La Légende du Vent.**

Feature film:

Nick Whitehead and Black Creek for **Lions for Breakfast.**

The jury gave three special awards for "auteurs" contribution to:

John Straiton for **Horseplay** (animation),

Michael Asti-Rose for **Silent Movie** (short fiction),

Gordon Sheppard for **Eliza's Horoscope** (feature film).

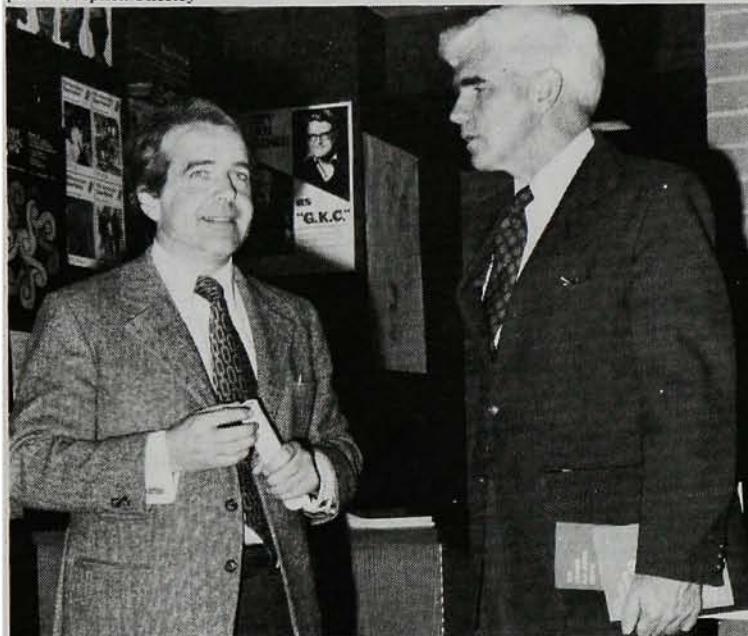
There was no award given in the experimental film category, nor was there a Wendy Mitchener Award.

The John Grierson Award was presented to ex-CRTC chairman Pierre Juneau.

had been complaining about the impossibility of making films, said "The reason the awards system hasn't changed is largely our own fault. We've been too busy making films to do anything about it."

Later in the day, at the CFA, he said that the reason why so few Québécois films were shown at the Awards was because "English Canada is respecting our desire expressed back in 1973 not to take part in the CFA. They asked Michel Brault and I if we would agree to show our films here (*out of competition - Ed.*), and we said yes. That's all there is to it". He then went on to say that Quebec still hadn't received any money for its own show: "But of course, we're not very

photo: Stephen Chesley



After the NFB Retrospective Opening, Government Film Commissioner André Lamy chats with CFA Committee Chairman Jack Gray (right).

organized." Obviously, Jutra had more than one fact muddled. He didn't even know that Brault's **Les Ordres** was in competition.

But the organizers and participants of the 1975 CFA felt there were more urgent things to deal with than a two-year old misunderstanding. "We are glad to support and will not interfere with anything Quebec wants to do," said chairman Jack Gray.

Gray and his team had quite a challenge to face on home ground. Almost 300 films were entered in the contest which was open to all Canadian films produced, dubbed or subtitled in English. And the week-long festivities were to include non-competitive films and a variety of conferences which would hopefully revitalize Canadian cinema.

Some people thought Niagara-on-the-Lake was too far from downtown Toronto, and that it would be difficult to draw an audience to the Shaw Festival Theatre. But those who came thought it was a great place. In any case, the cost of renting hotel and theatre space downtown would have been far beyond the CFA's means. Although increased support from the Secretary of State's Festivals office meant that the entry fee for this year was dropped, the overall budget left little place for extravagances.

Several people suggested that the successful week-long festivities could be made more popular in the future by introducing a market for producers and distributors. Members of the executive from the National Film Board, regretting the fact that they couldn't stay the week, said it may be possible in future years to plan executive meetings to coincide with the Awards, justifying a longer stay. Also valuable would be private screenings of directors' and actors' work, following Clay Borris' example of this year.

The '75 committee succeeded in putting the Awards back on the scene. André Lamy, the new Film Commissioner, and Gratien Gélinas, from the Canadian Film Development Corporation, both officially expressed how pleased their organizations were with this new beginning.

The National Film Board

As it turned out, the NFB was prominent in the 1975 CFA. Ex-film commissioner Sydney Newman made a very brief appearance on the final night, to give out the award for the best screenplay, and didn't as much as mention his new appointment as film advisor to the Secretary of State.

But for André Lamy it was quite different. He thought the opening night of the CFA was a good occasion to announce his policy concerning cooperation between the federally-run NFB and the private Canadian film industry. He was the first to open the discussion on influences from the United States which affect Canadian cinema, and gave promising previews of the sort of thing the NFB could do to help counter them.

"We want to see a truly national production and distribution system, working in both French and English: a system that will link the private sector and the government film agencies, a system that will utilize the NFB's 27 offices along with its many associated libraries across the country."

Lamy went on to say that the NFB wanted to help private enterprise, rather than to compete with it. He noted the fact that more freelance work is available in the NFB and that special programmes have been developed to train people in filmmaking and film techniques. Finally, he denounced the American input in the field of educational film.

"The real competitor for both the Film Board and the private filmmaker is the American producer... A study done by our distribution branch on the use of film in educational institutions shows that more than 60 per cent of the material purchased is imported from foreign countries, predominantly from the USA. Yet the study also shows that it is Canadian films that are being used by teachers most of the time. Some 65 per cent of the films used by Canadian teachers are of Canadian origin.

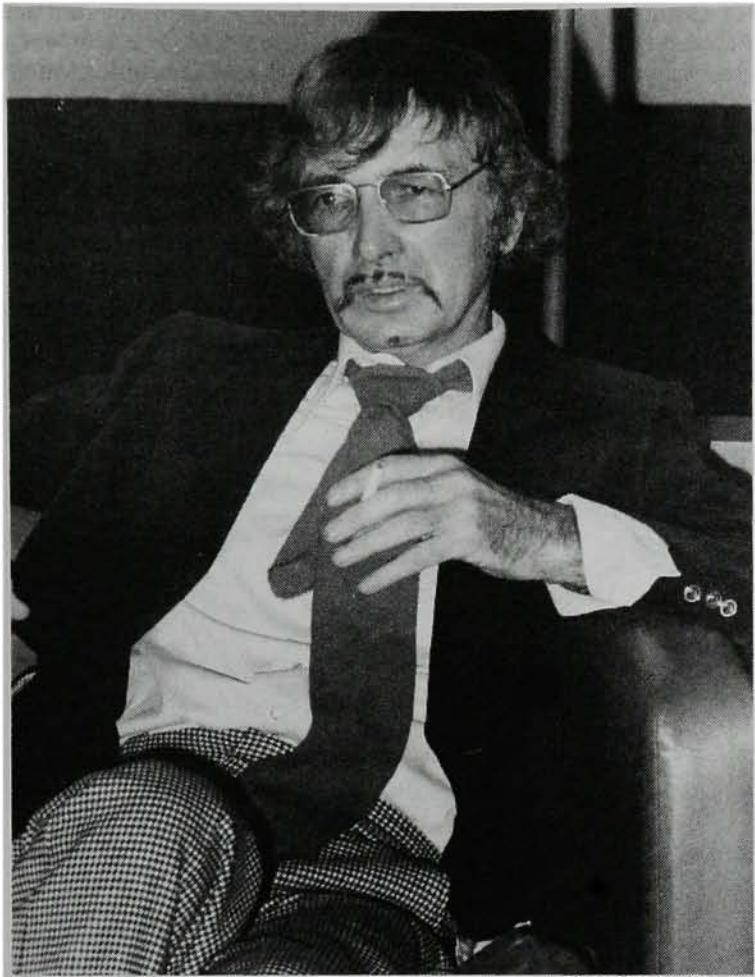
It is clear, then, that while Canadian productions, both from the private sector and from the Film Board, are what teachers demand and use most, the bulk of the films purchased are from the United States. This is the major competition facing the Canadian film industry. There must be closer cooperation between the NFB and the private sector."

This year's CFA included daily screenings of old NFB productions. Jack Gray pointed out that too often the NFB is taken for granted: "It has produced a steady stream of films whose quality and spirit have earned awards around the world and at home... Its role as an educator and trainer of Canadian filmmakers has been especially important. Many of the films entered in this year's awards were made by those whose initial training was with the NFB."

A forum grouping Norman McLaren, Bill Mason, Robin Spry and the new film commissioner brought up the question of freedom at the Board. Bill Mason, who has just recently joined the staff there after years of freelancing, expressed his delight at the freedom he found. Not only were the others surprised by such a statement, but they clearly disagreed with it. "Well I guess what I mean," said Mason, "is that I've never had a film turned down."

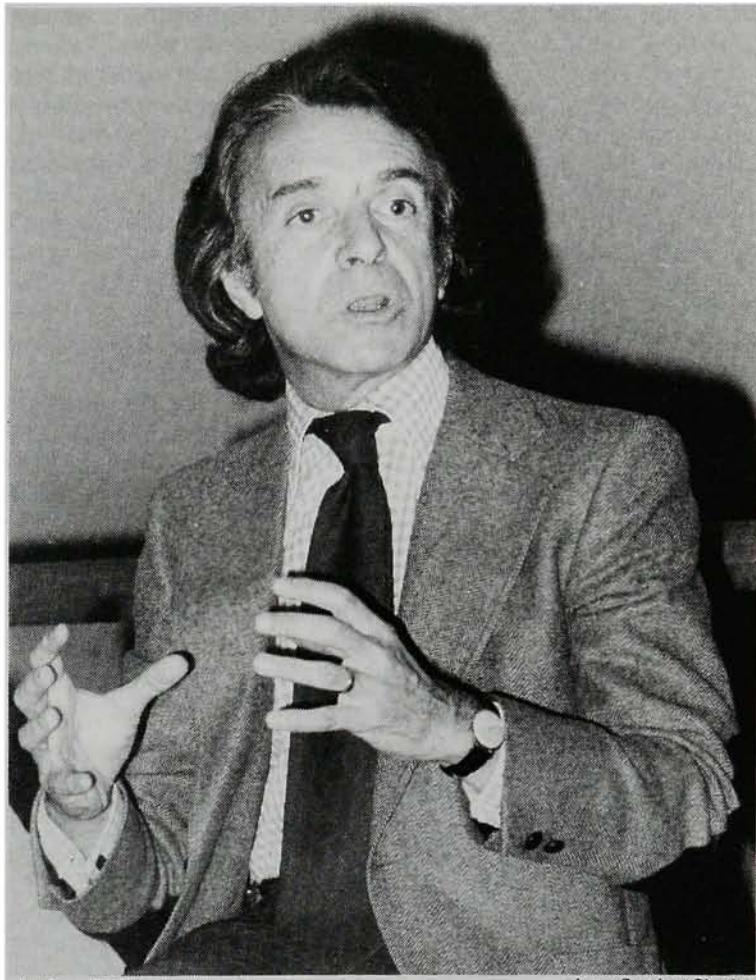
It was all very lucky for him, McLaren and Spry responded, that he submitted the sort of idea the NFB needed to fulfill its mandate, because as Lamy put it: "There's no complete freedom. We're all under an umbrella, because we're part of a government agency."

McLaren talked about self-censorship: "You don't use public money to be completely free. I have an idea for an



Norman McLaren

photo: Stephen Chesley



Arthur Hiller

photo: Stephen Chesley

erotic film, but there are many ideas I reject because I feel they are not right (for the Board)."

Spry said he had had difficulty trying to make good use of the security of employment offered by the Board to do things he couldn't do elsewhere. At the opposite end of McLaren's argument Spry suggested "only at the Film Board could I make a sexy movie without being accused of exploiting the market."

Hollywood and the Canadian filmmaker

But most filmmakers at the 1975 CFA are on the other side of the fence, hustling to put money together to do a film, thinking of going to Hollywood to try for the big time, or making a living outside the country already.

The week's non-competitive programme included daily screenings of films made by ex-patriate Canadians, featuring Norman Jewison's **Fiddler on the Roof**, Ted Kotcheff's **Outback**, Silvio Narizzano's **Georgy Girl**, Sydney Furie's **Ipcress File** and Arthur Hiller's **The Americanization of Emily**.

Hiller, who remains a Canadian citizen, said he wouldn't "If you want to be a film director, go out and do a movie." He implied that even a 10-minute film could open the Hollywood doors, if producers and agents could see some real possibilities in it. But he admitted, "You have to do good work, and you also have to be lucky."

And lucky he has been, since he settled in Hollywood twenty years ago. **Love Story** may not be his favourite film, but it brought him fortune. Now he can afford to pick the scripts he really likes, "entertaining, but with a meaning too," like **Emily**, or **The Hospital**, or the upcoming **W.C. Fields and Me**.

Hiller, who remains a Canadian citizen, said he wouldn't do a Canadian film just because it was Canadian: "I would have to find a subject that could work - I mean a story." But he agreed that if Canada could find financing for its

film industry, the skills and the means would quickly build up.

Later in the week, directors Allan King, Peter Pearson, Don Shebib and Gordon Sheppard were asked why they were still in Canada. "I could make films in Europe and in the United States," said King, "but I prefer to speak to an audience that I know. I found that I could best make films in Canada about the experiences that I really knew. I've always found my best audience in Canada. But there is a strong cultural bias towards American film. Our audience is denied access to the expression of its feelings."

"I think it is clear that our audience is North American, not Canadian. I don't understand the idea of some kind of electrical fence," countered Gordon Sheppard, who earlier explained his reasons for wanting to make films in Canada. "We're all in some kind of peril at the moment and the politicians can't help us. But with entertainment you can affect more people more. I remain Canadian because I believe Montreal is the best vantage point for viewing North America. We are the best conscience (for NA) because we don't have the responsibility."

Peter Pearson, who was chairing this filmmaker forum, then insisted the discussion be limited to filmmaking rather than politics. This came as a relief to most of the audience who had followed the other discussions throughout the week. Everybody agreed there couldn't be a better sampling of the wide range of moods and styles found in our national product than the sample at the CFA, and Shebib and King differed on the principles of the craft as much as their films differ in style and content. The discussion which followed was fascinating for those who had seen the two competing television dramas, **Deedee** and **A Bird in the House**.

"Making a film is a very physical thing," said Shebib. "I approach it from a gut level."

"Making **Eliza's Horoscope** took the silliness out of me," said Sheppard, "It made me an adult."

"I started making films to make a living," said King.

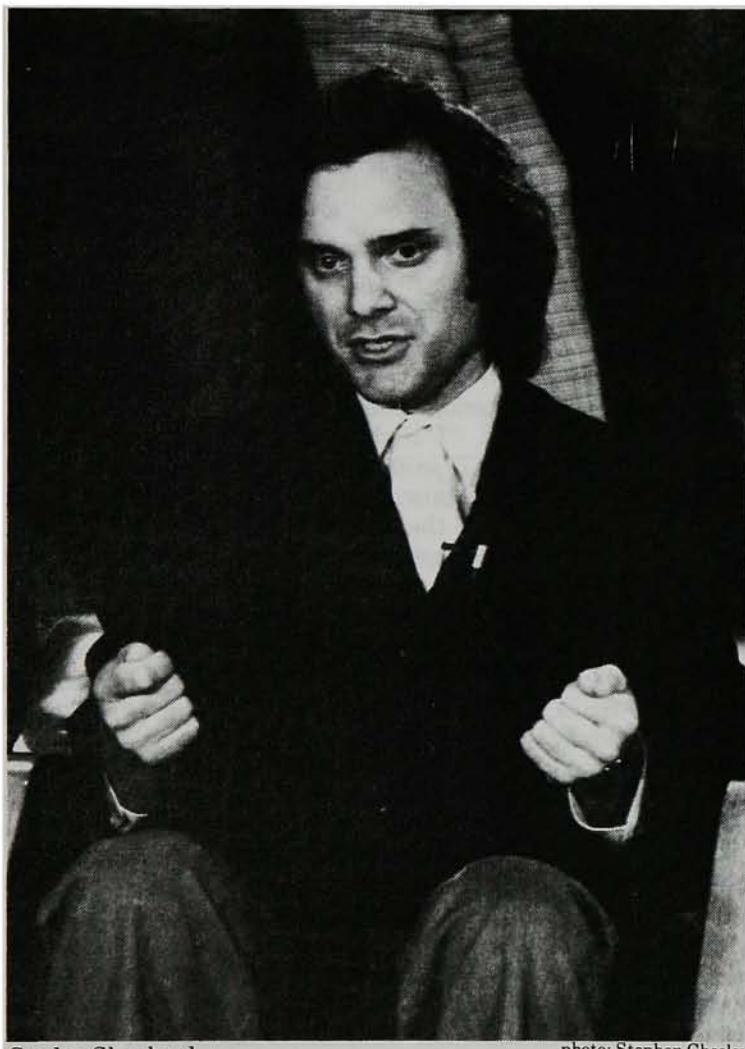
"It happened because I was bothered by something, I wanted to explore a subject - childhood, marriage, skid row..."

But why did they all choose this medium, wondered Kirwan Cox? Why choose an art that requires a minimum budget equivalent to what many people earn in a life-time? As another member of the audience put it: isn't it terribly self-indulgent? Isn't the director on a ego trip?

"I hear the word self-indulgence all the time. I don't understand it. There's really no time. In exploring your feelings deeply, yes. But there are far too many people dependent on you for ego tripping," replied King.

Shebib, the devil's advocate, said he thought "film is one of the arts in which it's easy to be self-indulgent." But Pearson emphasized how much more complex the question was. "It's a big boy's game. None of it comes easy. The pressure and the effort and the difficulty of doing it is something that no textbook or teaching can explain. As a result, the question of indulgence is to be put aside... The director is dealing with 100 to 200 people and is trying to understand the different needs of each one of them."

The conversation turned to the comparison between the mature and successful Canadian shorts and documentaries and the still fledgling feature films. The filmmakers discussed their progression from documentaries to features.



Gordon Shepherd

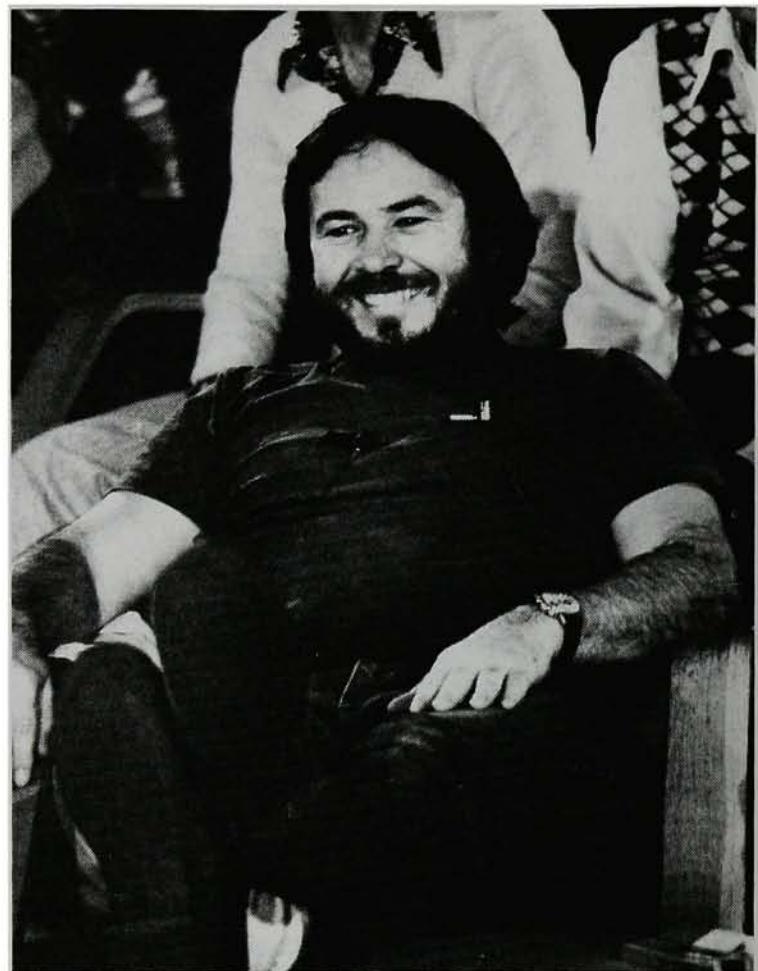
photo: Stephen Chesley

For King, the transition came easily: "I always made documentary films as story films. We are better in documentaries because we have a tradition there. I would like to work in dramatic film in a much more spontaneous way."

"Our environment pushes to documentary," said Sheppard. But for Shebib, who said few people realized what pressure winter put on the Canadian filmmaker, the heart of the problem is the lack of real screenwriters.

"You have to have a screen mind - an eye. The important thing in film dialogue is what it doesn't say. Most people

in Canada pick up a book and adapt it, and it's boring. There's no money in this country to develop a property. Nobody has the power to say they'll throw something away. If the CBC spends money on a script, it has to go on air even if it's bad."



Don Shebib

photo: Stephen Chesley

"There has to be more intensive work between writers, directors, and actors before the creation of something original and indigenous occurs," added King.

Sheppard suggested "a lot of Dale Carnegie courses" would give some power of positive thinking to the Canadian film industry.

But it was in talking about actors that the directors proved to be most personal. King thought there were a lot of good actors growing in Canada and suggested "stage is a good place to work because it's economical and allows people to discover a lot about acting. The switch from stage to camera is not anywhere as big as is feared. They have different rhetorics, but the central part is always getting the emotions of the character."

But Shebib has little faith in the stage actor when it comes to film. "I think the most important thing for a film actor is what you are, not what you can do. A film actor has to be more honest and truthful than a stage actor. He has to get to the heart of it immediately. It's very hard to find a male actor in this country with any balls."

"What you're looking for," said Sheppard, "is someone with magic." And he, as a director, sees his role as a seducer.

Teddy Moore, "as an actress, almost ex-actress in this country," could only say she felt "you can't grow unless you're practicing."

Quotas and levies

And in fact, she was pin-pointing the tragedy holding up the Canadian film industry: the money simply isn't there.

The voluntary quota announced on August 5, 1975, by the Secretary of State was violently denounced. "It's pure tokenism," said Peter Pearson. "I think it's all fiction and the generation that has fought since 1968 to make a film industry is basically lost. Every country in the world has solved this problem... It's a political problem, not Famous and Odeon's problem."

Les Wedman, from the *Vancouver Sun*, said "Mr Faulkner has demonstrated he's a dilettante, and cares nothing, knows nothing about film. If the Canadian filmmakers are going to have a chance to work, there is going to have to be legislation. The voluntary quota is a stall."

"It's nothing more, nothing less than strict colonialism," commented Kirwan Cox, comparing the big distributors with other multinational corporations presently under attack in Canada. As one government official unofficially put it; "It's an economic issue. It must be defined in those terms to convince the powers."



Peter Pearson

photo: Stephen Chesley

In the middle of the week, Odeon theatres sent public relations man Charles Mason to meet with filmmakers and critics at Niagara-on-the-Lake. Mr Mason didn't give the impression his company was worried at all, except by the fact that it would have difficulties finding films to live up to the voluntary quota, which according to an agreement with the Secretary of State should be in operation February 1, 1976. Although Odeon will be doing mass bookings as never before on Canadian films, opening them in several theatres at a time, Mason said there was little hope of ever making money out of the process.

Confirming the filmmakers worst predictions, he even added: "If we come to the Secretary of State after a year, having given it (voluntary quota) a real try, and say we have lost money, it will be very hard for politicians to justify any quota at all." Later, asked by Robin Spry why

Odeon had chosen the year when the least films were being made to try out the quota, Mason said: "We're sure we can meet the quota, but if we can't that's going to mean that you haven't made enough films." He couldn't name five feature films likely to be made in 1976. But it is time to force the big distributors to put more money into domestic production; time to impose a levy on all box-office receipts to help Canadian cinema. "If film is entertainment," commented Mason, "then it's business. And if it's business, then it's intended to make money. If films are art, then they should be subsidized like theatre and opera which have never been financially profitable." As for Odeon chipping in... "That would be like asking Ford to finance Bricklin."

Spry's conclusion was that the big distributors were just trying to "compound the disaster." Faced with Mason's comments, those concerned with the fate of Canadian film could only insist on the urgency of legislated levies, as well as quotas.

The films

One member of the audience from Alberta said he would "rather not have the opportunity to choose from the films I have seen here this week. They are basically crap."

"If you want my opinion," replied Cox, "you won't be forced to see anything. But what about 32 weeks of *Jaws*? What about the freedom of seeing *Duddy Kravitz*?"

"In fact," said Pearson sarcastically "the possibility of making films you will be forced to see doesn't exist."

And as sad as it may be, it was this desperate feeling that dominated the 1975 CFA. The young filmmakers present were completely silent about what they thought politically and culturally, and the older ones, who have been fighting for years, had the impression the younger ones were waiting for the first ticket to Hollywood.

Still, the films shown demonstrated that the technique and the imagination are here: what is missing is the means. True, the feature films didn't have much novelty to offer an already initiated audience, but the more modest productions show that talent is still growing.

The Winners

And when time came to give out the Etrogs, one had the feeling the jury was trying to encourage the efforts some Canadians had made to improve the industry rather than to determine the winners in a competition.

The *Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* was selected for its popular appeal, *Les Ordres* was voted best feature, and Gordon Sheppard got a special jury award for *Eliza's Horoscope*: three winners? More likely, three important films. Margot Kidder was chosen as best actress in a feature film, not only because of her performances in the competing films, but also in recognition of an important career. And why wasn't American Richard Dreyfuss the best actor? Well, Stuart Gillard is Canadian. And so on. No award was given in the experimental category, which had been brought back into the competition because it supposedly gave a chance to the beginner and the underground filmmaker. Did the jury overlook the importance of the young breed?

Still, the distribution of the gold-plated Etrogs stirred people quite deeply. "I hope that tonight will give some hope for the future," said Ontario Arts Council member Ron Evans.

The Canadian Film Awards may yet live to be an impatiently awaited event. If the Jack Grays and Sandra Gathercole can keep going, it may not always be necessary to knock on doors for money and to call the competitors and ask them if they will be coming to find out whether they won or not. □