

## Demers: a pan Canadian vision

TORONTO – *La Grenouille et la baleine* (*The Tadpole and the Whale*) is the top-grossing Canadian film of 1988 with box office receipts of \$1.79 million – almost all of it in Quebec.

When Rock Demers, producer of the film – the sixth in his family-oriented *Tales For All* series – received his Golden Reel Award at the 10th annual Genie Awards, he had a speech prepared for his audience.

Last year, as winner of the Air Canada Achievement Award, Demers slammed the federal government for proposing to spend more on submarines than on culture.

This year, he pointed out the perennial Canadian problem of French and English-language films unable to cross the language barrier.

This is the second Golden Reel Award for Demers whose *La Guerre des tuques* (*The Dog Who Stopped the War*) won in 1984.

*La Grenouille et la baleine* was nominated for three Genies, original screenplay, original song, cinematography.

The following is the English-language portion of Rock Demers' acceptance speech, Genie night, March 22, 1989:

"I am happy and I am sad. Will we see a time when the Golden Reel Award will be given to a film released without hiding its identity, equally successful in both its English and French market and with at least \$5 million at the box office?"

Three of the five Golden Reel Awards over the last five years were given to French-Canadian films. All three of them had the potential of even greater success in English Canada; and the same is true of the success unachieved in French Canada by the two English Canadian films which got the Golden Reel Award.

We have to solve that problem. Generally speaking, it is easier in French Canada because, among other reasons, our media is much more

attentive and supportive of the work we are doing and also because less than 50 per cent of the films shown in our theatres last year, for instance, were American.

Nobody should quote me wrong here. I like American films, especially if made with the contribution of Norman Jewison or Donald Sutherland or Geneviève Bujold or so many other Canadian talents.

The only thing I want is for Canadian films to obtain the success they are entitled to, all across Canada. For that, we in the profession have to create works aimed at entertaining large sections of the population, and the media has to devote much more time and space to what is happening in this country. Our media – and then the public will follow – have to be less addicted to American products, show more support and confidence in our own creative community and not wait until one of us has been recognized down south before realizing he has talent and saying it loudly.

Do you know why all this has not been achieved? Because it is not easy for all the reasons that we know. And it will not be easier with free trade. At the rate that large Canadian corporations are selling their interests to larger American corporations, I wonder what political and cultural control we will still have over our country 30 years from now.

Happily, for the time being, we have a strong minister of communications, well aware of the importance and the future of the cultural industries for a modern nation. It would be great, in a not-too-distant future, to be able to say the same of our minister of finance.

The same way that French Canada will meaningfully be part of Canada forever, Canada should meaningfully be part of North America forever.

It is the second time I am honored with a Golden Reel Award and as we say in French, *jamais deux sans trois*."

## NFB apologises to Quebec filmmaker

MONTREAL – A battle has been won but the war is not over for Gilles Carle who is fighting for the rights of French-language dramatic authors.

The well-known Quebec filmmaker counts among his victories an apology, in early April, from the National Film Board of Canada.

Carle, who has directed numerous films for the NFB, was refused NFB funding for his latest feature film project *La Corriveau* on the grounds that funding priority would be given to younger up-and-coming NFB filmmakers according to the NFB policy mandate.

Studio C, the French-language drama studio, also indicated that Carle's budget, estimated at \$5 million, was too high.

Also in question, according to Michel Montagne, communications NFB, was the nature and quality of the script.

However, Carle, who admits that it is not unusual that a script is rejected, charged the NFB with discrimination and threatened to use the full weight of the Paris-based Société des auteurs et compositeurs dramatiques (SADC) to prohibit the Cannes Film Festival screening of a retrospective homage to the NFB on its 50th anniversary which he directed.

It didn't take long for Interim Film Commissioner Joan Pennefather to issue a written apology to Carle admitting that there had been evidence of discrimination.

Carle did not get the funding but is reportedly satisfied with the apology.

It was questionable, says Montagne, whether Carle had the legal and moral authority to stop the NFB retrospective at Cannes as he had already been paid for his work by the NFB.

What is certain, says Montagne, is that Carle, who is also the president of the Canadian

committee of SADC, would have made "a lot of noise" in Cannes.

Carle and SADC are insisting that French-language dramatic writers be given the same rights to remuneration as European writers (as a percentage of revenues everytime the film is aired).

The federal government and the government of Quebec are expected to announce, in May, what measures they will take to support the so-called European principle.

Most commonly used in Canada is the American principle whereby the author is paid a lump sum of money and the producer claims all rights to the property.

Carle has said that most of his present day earnings are from repeated European broadcasts of his films. The European principle also gives the author the moral authority to block the use of his film.

## Montreal supports festivals

MONTREAL – The City of Montreal will spend close to \$500,000 to promote festivals in the city this summer and fall.

Film and video related festivals to receive funding are the Montreal World Film Festival, Aug. 24 to Sept. 4, which will receive \$80,000 for promotion and the International Festival of New Film and Video, Oct. 19 to 29, is slated for \$30,000.

Future Images will receive \$45,000 to promote its bicentennial exhibition on the French Revolution

TORONTO – *Martha, Ruth and Edie*, a film by Deepa Mehta Saltzman, won first prize – Best Feature Film – at the 11th annual International Festival of Women's Cinema in Florence, Italy, March 8 to 12.

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