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Telescene drops commercials and regroups

MONTREAL - The Telescene Film Group has relocated its offices in the Town of Mount Royal and is in the process of dropping its commercial division.

Niel Leger, founder of Telescene in 1977 and executive in charge of the commercial division, has pulled out of Telescene.

After reincorporating in 1986, Telescene jumped into feature production in a big way -

Obsession, A Corps Perdu and Malarek - at the expense of the commercial-making arm of Telescene, according to Leger.

"The money we were making on commercials was being used to buoy up film production. This was fine when we were billing \$3 million but that wasn't always the case," says Leger, who plans to reestablish himself on a freelance basis or join another commercial house.

Leger says the 1986 reincorporation of Telescene into three divisions worked a lot better on paper. This exercise was intended to protect private investments should one division fall into financial difficulty.

During that same year, Telescene moved into office/production facilities at 444 St. Paul Street

which it subsequently sold and occupied as a tenant.

Jamie Brown, executive vice-president of the Telescene Film Group, agrees that the commercial division suffered during the last three years of intensive feature film production.

"There is a perception that if you're busy producing films, commercials will not get full attention. In some ways this is true," says Brown.

Brown says Leger has parted company with Telescene "in an amicable way."

Telescene has renovated its own facilities at 5510 Ferrier in T.M.R. where Brown says they can make more efficient use of the building space and where "taxes are lower."

"The only reason we were in Old Montreal

was for the commercial side," says Brown. "We don't feel removed from the centre as most of our business is done on the phone with Los Angeles."

The Telescene Film Group has recently hired Jean Desormeaux, director of business affairs and Barbara Pecs, comptroller.

At press time, the company was considering no fewer than five different offers for the *The Brylcreem Boys*, a \$7 to \$10 million Canada/Ireland co-production with Opix Films.

Crawleys reorganizes

OTTAWA - Financial difficulties have forced the Crawleys Group Inc. of Ottawa to drastically cut staff and restructure the entire organization, in this, the 50th anniversary of the company that the late "Budge" Crawley built. When a multi million dollar international co-production deal fell through late last year, Crawleys was left owing a million dollars to Telefilm and had to lay off most of its staff. (see *Cinema Canada* no. 160)

Bill Stevens, CEO and co-owner of the Crawleys Group, said at the time that, "We are not bankrupt or insolvent, we just have one huge, huge cash-flow problem." When contacted recently by *Cinema Canada*, he was cautiously optimistic about the future of one of Canada's most famous production houses. "I think we can see the light at the end of the tunnel. If we can sort things out quickly enough we will be fine. There is now someone at Telefilm who is working closely with us and our loans will be paid in a civilized fashion."

The company is finishing work on *The Ugly Duckling*, one of its animated classics, which has been extremely successful for them on CTV and the home video market and Stevens is waiting to hear from the CBC on *Mouse Sports*, four animated half-hours. "We can build on that," he said. So far Stevens has sold off most of Crawleys' assets, like the lab, equipment and sound studio, and the building has been sold. They will be moving into smaller quarters this month. The staff has been reduced to five. "We are confident we can rebuild," said Stevens.

Lifesize: women's film series

HALIFAX - *Lifesize: Women and Film* will host a film series and two six-day scriptwriting and directing workshops for women in the Atlantic region.

Screenings will be held at Wormwood's Cinema in Halifax, May 19 to 25.

Workshops will be held May 27 to June 1 in the rural setting of Tatamagouche. The *Lifesize* office is located at the National Film Board office in Halifax.