

Tenth Banff TV fest wraps successfully

BANFF—Banff's 10th Annual Television Festival went off without a hitch this year, which was a tribute to Pat Ferns who is stepping down as president of the Banff Television Foundation. "As swan songs go, I couldn't have asked for a nicer one," Ferns told *Cinema Canada*. "Our intention was to do the best festival ever and I think we achieved that."

Producers were able to meet informally with program executives from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, the U.K., France, Switzerland, West Germany, and the United States in this pleasant tourist town. "I liked the casual feel and the opportunity to meet people from around the world," said Bruce Clawson of Toronto's Cambium Productions, who was attending Banff for the first time. "It's a lot different from NAPTE (the American television syndication market) where it's like a convention of used-car salesmen." Cambium made contacts for some of their programs in development (*Maude's House* and the *Eric Nagler* series) and Clawson is definitely going back again.

The seminars were well attended, but after awhile somewhat repetitious. However, if one got bored inside, there were always the mountains, the hot springs, and the tourist shopping to enjoy outside. "What I took most satisfaction from was the sense that each seminar was a production," Ferns said. "You put them together as a producer for a one-time performance and you have to hope that the chemistry works. I think that each year you get one of the morning sessions that doesn't quite do what is supposed to do, but I was very, very happy with all the major presentations."

Coproductions were on everybody's mind at Banff. Coproductions and the exact nature of the so-called 'television revolution.'

"Americans are co-producing more and the Europeans are facing an Americanization of their marketplace," said Stephen Ellis of Toronto's Keg Productions. "From a Canadian standpoint, we are now seeing the rest of the world facing the same problems as Canada has had in the past five years. The message has been, you have to co-produce or you don't produce at all."

Christina Thomas from the Producers Group International's New York office agrees with this assessment. "Americans are going to need coproducing partners and the British are changing their rules vis-a-vis co-productions. The European market is opening up." Two prime examples of these types of arrangements were to be found in the popular market simulation, a morning long seminar that was packed even after the previous night's justly famed western barbecue.

Gil Cardinal's *Our Home and Native Land* is a 90-minute documentary on Canada's native people being put together with Britain's Channel 4, and a variety of Canadian partners, including the ACCESS Network, AMPDC, Telefilm and possibly Global TV. From England came *Cobbers*, an ambitious sit-com that requires a foreign co-producer, preferable to be found in Canada, Australia or the U.S. "The way the market is moving right now, we have to find co-producers," said producer Paul Jackson.

As for the television revolution, the theme of this year's festival, it appears to be in technology and not in program content. There was a lot of talk about satellites, variety of choice, and globalization, but for the most part, the programs in competition were from the mainstream of British and American television. Ian McDougall of Abaton Productions Inc. and chairman of the CFTA, who were in Banff for a national board meeting held just prior to the festival, was skeptical. "I don't buy the argument that more choice in service gives you more choice in programming," he said. Stephen Ellis thinks that there was "lip service paid to the revolution in content" but the nature of the revolution is technological. The best line about this came from Michel Faure, project director for Quebec's SOGIC: "In the film *My Man Godfrey*, one character says 'Cheer up friend, good times are just around the corner' to which the other replies, 'Which corner?' The television revolution might be coming, but around which corner? I don't see it."

Banff's market seminar produces results

TORONTO—Banff's 5th annual market simulation was lively, informative, and in one case, a deal was in the making. Four real production projects were put before a panel of experts, including Norman Horowitz, president and CEO of MGM/UA Telecommunications, deftly moderated by Banff president Pat Ferns. Each producer, one at a time, was allowed approximately three minutes to present his program idea and sell it to the buyers. Ferns would then move about the convention hall, cajoling the program buyers to compete for the projects at hand.

"We seemed to get some things financed," he

told *Cinema Canada*, "but what is more important is the information that comes from the panel of experts. They were sharing the experience or expertise they have. I tried to get a mixture from children's programming, to documentaries, to sit-coms, to dramas." It was a chance for program makers to pitch their ideas and receive concrete, critical responses from the panel of experts and those members of the audience in a position to make the deals for the various networks.

In the category of documentary there was *Our Home and Native Land*, a \$400,000, 90-minute look at contemporary Canadian native life, society and culture. "It's about people who are winners who are supposed to be losers," said Canadian producer and director Gil Cardinal (*Foster Child*) from Alberta. His British co-producing partner is Christian Wangler of Associates Film Productions. Both were in attendance at the seminar. Cardinal felt his presentation got off to a shaky start and there was a lot of resistance to 'one-off' documentaries in television program schedules. "I don't like the notion that everything has to be made into a series," Wangler said afterwards. "I think this series thing is corporate thinking."

However, during the seminar, Global TV expressed strong interest in the project and the representative from Telefilm agreed to consider Global's offer seriously. Channel 4 in the U.K. has already given a financial commitment and now the producers are looking to the Alberta Motion Picture Development Corporation and the ACCESS Network. "Nothing is signed, sealed and delivered," Cardinal emphasized, but he is confident that Global will make good on its commitment and Telefilm will keep its word. If all goes well, they will be shooting in six months or the spring of next year.

In the drama category there was *Paper Route*, an urban adventure series, featuring an ensemble cast of early teenagers. Producer Nick Kendall, who is a partner in Northern Lights from Vancouver, brought along a two-minute

demo tape which went over very well with the experts and audience alike. "I think we can make a series out of this," Kendall told *Cinema Canada*. "I was nervous but the response was pretty positive. The only problem is that the CBC doesn't have the production money to do it right away. It will take time, but I think a spring start is reasonable." Kendall, who is planning to do 13 episodes initially, found interest from the Australians and West Germans in attendance.

In the children's programming category there was *Chat-boume!* (*Flash-Cats!*) from Quebec. Producer Marcel Sabourin of ACPAV of Montreal also brought along a short promotional tape. "For us, there were not really new things coming out of the market," said Sabourin afterwards. "We have our main broadcaster in place (Canal Famille) and we were looking for an English-Canadian window. It was a very interesting process but next time I should bring the English version. *Flash-Cats!* is a very current approach in the sense that it is a low-budget series which has a specialized channel for the main window. Our concept is a good concept—quality for a low price. On the international market there is a place for that. Maybe not in the U.S., but in Canada and elsewhere." *Chat-boume!* goes into production in July and will be on air in Quebec in September.

Sit-coms were represented by *Cobbers*, a U.K. program being developed by British producer Paul Jackson, who was looking for international co-partners. It tells the story of a classically trained British actor who is forced by circumstances to take a job in a soap opera either in Australia, Canada, or the U.S., depending on who is the co-producing partner. "It came over me," said Jackson (who made the best pitch, lively and to the point), "how lucky and protected we have been in the U.K. We normally have only one player funding the whole program. The absolute imperative to find co-producers is not a fact of life for us. However, the way the market is moving at the moment, we have to make co-productions."

1989 Rockie Awards 10th Banff Television Festival

Grand Prize Best of the Festival Including a \$5,000 cash award to: A VERY BRITISH COUP; United Kingdom, Produced by Skreba Films, Director: Mick Jackson, Script: Alan Plater. **Special Jury Awards Including a \$2,500 cash award to:** CINQ DÉFIS POUR LE PRÉSIDENT; Canada by Daniel Bertolino, Co-production: Les Productions Via Le Monde (Daniel Bertolino) VIETNAM: AFTER THE FIRE; United Kingdom by J. Edward Milner, Produced by Acacia Productions Ltd. **Best Television Feature:** THE TWELVE MONTHS OF SUMMER; Richard Hobert, Sveriges Television, Channel 2, Sweden. **Best Continuing Series:** RUMPOLE OF THE BAILEY; by Mike Vardy, Thames Television, United Kingdom. **Best Social & Political Documentary:** HODDLE STREET; by Jonathan Holmes and David Morgan, A. B. C. Australia, Australia. **Best Limited Series:** A VERY BRITISH COUP; by Mick Jackson,

Skreba Films for Channel 4. **Best Performance Special:** BED AMONG THE LENTILS; (from the *Talking Heads* series), by Alan Bennett, Innes Lloyd for BBC, United Kingdom. **Best Television Comedy:** THE WONDER YEARS: POTTERY WILL GET YOU NOWHERE; by Steve Miner, Marlens/Black Co., in association with New World Television, USA. **Best Children's Program:** RUNAWAY RALPH; by John Matthews and Ron Underwood, Churchill Films, USA. **Best Arts Documentary:** SARAFINA! WORDS OF FREEDOM... SONGS OF HOPE; by Nigel Noble, Lincoln Centre Theater/Noble Enterprises, USA. **Best Drama Special:** DRAGON FOOD; by Jan Schuette Novoskopp Film, Jan Schuette for ZDF, Federal Republic of Germany. **Best Popular Science Program:** LIVE FROM MT. EVEREST: A MAN AND HIS DREAM; by Kanji Iwashita, Nippon Television Network, Japan.