

Technical innovations for post-production highlighted 17th UNIATEC conference

MONTREAL – “The strengths of the electronics field in the next decade will increasingly be applied to post-production,” says Ed Zwanaveld, organizer of the 17th UNIATEC conference, held in October in Montreal (in honour of the NFB’s 50th anniversary). Under the theme, “The Challenge of Change,” this year’s Congress marked the first time the bi-annual assembly of the International Union of Technical Cinematograph Associations had been held in North America.

Veteran Quebec filmmaker/cinematographer Michel Brault set the tone for the Congress, calling for a “rapprochement” between film and video. In his keynote address to the delegates, Brault said, “Sooner or later, you will make a film which will only be for broadcast.” He cast the experience in a positive light, citing his telefilm *L’Empire*, which, he noted, had an audience for a single broadcast three times greater than the total theatrical attendance for Denys Arcand’s *Decline of the American Empire*.

Brault, considered by many a film purist, predicted the advent of a “third way,” a new form resulting from the fusion of film and video, which will be more supple and flexible than the two current systems. Acknowledging the current poor state of video reproduction vis-a-vis film, Brault pointed out that new technologies – such as HDTV and digital imaging – have exciting potential for filmmakers. Brault concluded by expressing the hope that “These sessions will accelerate the process and inspire creativity.”

Although the conference represented a chance for technicians and researchers from around the world to strut their stuff, Canadians are doing some of the most innovative work. Among the roughly 40 papers given at the conference, Zwanaveld, who is Assistant Director of Research and Development at the NFB, cited a presentation by Berenger Ltd. of Toronto, on the introduction of digital, optical sound to film. A related, exciting Canadian innovation is the development of a system for placing electronic bar codes on film (and developing machines to read them), allowing automated handling of film in the post-production stage.

The five days of the Congress were busy ones for the member organization delegates from more than 30 countries. Presentations are grouped into sections with the titles: *Production;*

Film, Video and Computers; Post-Production; Projection and 3-D; Sound; and Distribution. Large screen rivals IMAX and Showscan will be present. And rival Japanese and American groups presented their differing approaches to visual effects – Quantel, the Americans, use a digital process, while the Japanese make use of HDTV, an analog method.

The 15th Technical Film Competition was held concurrently with the congress. A jury awarded prizes to *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*, NFB-produced *The First Emperor*, and *Baron Munchausen*, for technical innovations.

In an effort to make the Congress more accessible, Ryerson’s Alvino Sauro, a member of the Toronto programming committee, organized a special program which allowed more than 70 students from film schools across the country to attend. “After all,” says Zwanaveld, “these are the people who will be working in film in the ‘90s.”

The 18th Congress will be held in two years time, probably in Moscow.

Major New York showcase of Cdn. films under way

MONTREAL – The Museum of Modern Art in New York, together with Telefilm Canada, is presenting a major exhibition of Canadian cinema, entitled *O Canada: L’Amour du Cinéma from North to South*, at the museum from October 13 to December 24.

The showcase kicked off with a gala on Oct. 11 featuring Denys Arcand’s prize-winning *Jésus de Montréal*. Faced with an overwhelming task, Museum Film Curator Adrienne Mancia has generally chosen wisely to give a comprehensive guide to the history of Canadian film. The 120 programmes, to be presented at the Museum’s two theatres, include 45 features and more than 90 animated works grouped into four sections. The first section is Recent Independent Work, and includes feature-length efforts by David Cronenberg, Hubert-Yves Rose, Guy Maddin, John Paizs, Bill MacGillivray, John N. Smith, Yves Simoneau, Marquise Lepage, Frank Cole, Anne Wheeler, Kay Armatage, Michael Snow, and Atom Egoyan, among others. (Noteworthy by their absence, however, are Léa Pool and Patricia Rozema).

In the second section, entitled *Rediscovered Filmmaker*, the Museum will present recently discovered and restored films by writer/director/actress Nell Shipman, who specialized in rugged outdoor dramas. Three features, including *Back to God’s Country* (1919), will be shown, along with three short films by one of the first women to found her own film production company.

Canadian Highlights 1928 – 1980, presents

GO WEST YOUNG MAN

Philip Hoffman is heading west this fall to screen his own films, as well as packages of experimental films he has selected from the Canadian Filmmakers’ Distribution Centre. The films chosen, under headings such as Autobiography, Kaleidoscope, and Re/viewing the Apparatus, will showcase a wide variety of filmmakers – Al Razutis, Isabelle Rousset, Carl Brown, Lisa Miles, Stan Brakhage, Mike Hoolboom, and more. Phil’s approach is pluralist; he feels it’s time to expand definitions, not narrow them down. So far, confirmed venues include F. A. V. A., Edmonton; Saskatchewan Film Pool, Regina; Calgary Society for Independent Filmmakers; and he will be at Cineworks in Vancouver for a workshop in filmmaking. Do you want Phil to show and tell at your place? (and are you somewhere between Toronto and Vancouver?). If so, call CFMDC at (416) 593-1808.

T. O. GETS SECOND DOME

A new group has emerged in Toronto for the exhibition of experimental film – *Pleasure Dome*. Screenings will take place Fridays, more or less monthly, at the relatively new Euclid Theatre in the DEC centre. These screenings will augment, enhance, balance or unbalance the regular X-film offerings which the Innis Film Society continues this fall every Thursday night. Yay, More!

....AND THE CONGRESS

What was much in evidence this past spring at Toronto’s International Experimental Film Congress was lots and lots of film work. Most of what has been written thus far has concentrated on the event itself, or rather, on what the Congress wasn’t. What has been overlooked in the various critiques is any discussion of the films themselves. So I want to mention the overwhelming number of filmmakers, who, films in hand, did attend. The Open Screenings were unable, in 25 hours, to handle all the work. Many very strong films were shown, some with decidedly political subject matter or social commentary, including: Valerie Tereszko’s *Human on My Faithless Arm*, which dealt with the “authority of language” – how language influences people like landscape “via the struggles of a deaf woman; Oliver Hockenhull’s *Determinations*, a journey in the present, how to live knowing all we know is around us? Barbara Hammer’s new film *Endangered*, as in film as an endangered species, amongst other things; *Half Sister* by Abraham Ravett, which used footage of an interview with a woman who had been in a concentration camp, combined with footage from the Nazi machine – for me, this film got at living memory, memory in the present tense; *Lived in Quotes* by Laurie Dunphy, which not only told of the denial of native language to Africans because of white people’s inability to pronounce certain sounds, but due to the withholding of the completion of a song (begun over and over again), made the audience desire the African to be able to speak in her own tongue. Also in the open screen, I was happy to have seen *Imaginary I & II* by Moira Sweeney, films I felt very akin to in their use of Super 8 texture and in the feeling through the motion of camera and cut. These were but a very few of the 73 films scheduled in the Open Screenings, not to mention the alternate screenings filmmakers arranged for themselves with the assistance of Martin Heath. So, as I say, there was a lot of work – a lot of life in the ol’ genre!

Two films in the curated program also impressed me and gave me hope. Amongst Steve Anker’s beautifully programmed selections was a film by Mike Wallin, *Decodings*. And in the West German Program of Alf Bold, a film by Stefan Sachs, *Paramount*. Both these films by men seemed to not only question men’s position as one can do still from a relatively safe footing, but to unsettle, to move into an area of unknowing. From such a position, movement can occur. Women can’t change society alone.

Bruce Bairnsfather’s 1928 film, *Carry on Sergeant* (recently screened at the Montreal Festival in a tribute to Gordon Sparring, who was assistant director), as well as more recent classics from both English- and French-speaking Canada. Included are *Goin’ down the Road*, by Don Shebib, and *Nobody Waved Goodbye* by Don Owen, Claude Jutra’s *Mon oncle Antoine*, and André Forcier’s *Bar Salon*.

The more than 90 animated films represent the work of most of Canada’s top animators, both NFB staffers and independents. Programmes are under such titles as *Cartoon Birds*, *A Satirical Look*, *Mind Games* and *Face the Music*.

Winter Prophecies

MONTREAL – NFB filmmaker Don Winkler has unveiled his new film, a portrait of poet Ralph Gustafson, entitled *Winter Prophecies*. Winkler’s previous film subjects have included F. R. Scott, Earle Birney and Irving Layton. The 30-minute documentary introduces us to the poet of Quebec’s Eastern Townships, who says “People are missing one of the greatest pleasures in life by not reading poetry.” Gustafson’s 1974 collection of poems, *Fire on Stone*, won the Governor General’s Award.