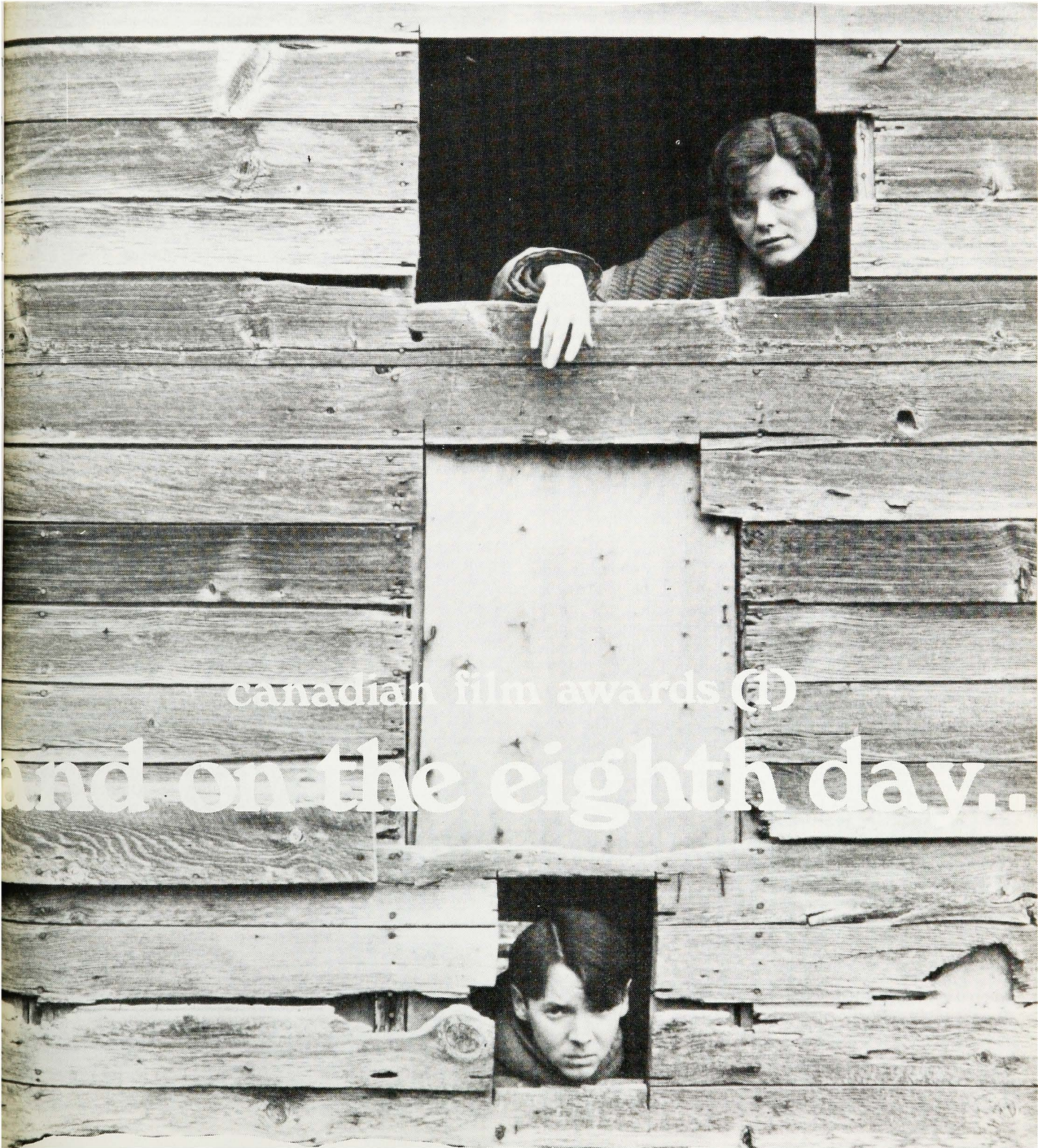


CFA selection committee members toiled for seven long days to screen 11 fiction features and 126 documentaries, shorts, animated works and TV dramas. On the eighth day they voted, and went home to sleep.

by Nathalie Edwards



canadian film awards (1)

and on the eighth day..

In an effort to provide more time for publicity of the finalists for the 28th Canadian Film Awards, the Committee devised a new selection system for the 1977 event. Neither Oscar-emulating craft votes nor empire-fuiling guilds were to have full power – nor was an impressive jury of performers, academics and Respected Types to take the final responsibility. Instead, each of the 12 member organizations of the Canadian Film Awards Committee was to select two representatives to share the duties of both judge and jury. First, they would screen and vote for the four finalists in all categories for Best Film, and the craft award finalists in fiction feature as well as non-fiction-feature film; then second, they would make a final vote to be sealed and sent to Morris Klayman, C.A. for the announcements on November 20 at the banquet in the Convention Centre of the Toronto Harbour Castle Hilton Hotel.

Delegates were also invited from across Canada. Attending were Ron Robertson of Alberta, representing ACCESS, Len Klady of the Winnipeg Film Group, and Lionel Simmons of the Atlantic Film Co-op. Roch Demers tried, but no Quebecois appeared to be available for the strenuous week, BCFIA didn't respond, and Saskatchewan was not asked, an omission which Executive Director Pat Thompson says will certainly be rectified next year.

From the member organizations of CFA's board, the following representatives donated their time or were paid by their organizations to attend the screenings: ACTRA, Jim Henshaw (writers), and Gerard Parkes (actors); CFTA, Gunter Oldenburg; CMPDA, Jim Murphy from Twentieth Century; CSC, Al Rubin; CCFM, Natalie Edwards and Ed Jull; DGC, Barbara Laffey (features only) and Bob Barclay, Alfred Benson and Vlad Goetzelman (all other categories); AICMPD, Linda Beath, manager of New Cinema, and Laela Weizweig of Danton Films (both for features, and shared other categories); MPTAC, Jeremy Katz of Twinex, Brian Lester, independent booker; CFEG, Brian Ravok (features only) and Ron Sanders. CAMPP's selected representative Harve Sherman was missing, while the AFM's John Allison could only stay for some of the features and therefore agreed to withdraw his vote.

This working jury started as the usual group of disparate types, eyeing each other suspiciously, each wondering how ill-qualified or prejudiced the other might be. But it became a close-knit bunch of hail-fellows, with a few marys (Linda, Laela, Barbara and me) exchanging opinions gleefully, and all, without exception, impressed with the experience of seeing a solid week of Canadian product and getting to know people in different aspects of the industry.

There was a fiery debate when Linda Beath's possible conflict of interest as a distributor was queried. The group finally decided that she had so many films in competition (**J.A. Martin** and **Outrageous**, with two others under consideration), and that Laela Weizweig of Danton, or Jim Murphy of Twentieth Century, or for that matter Jeremy Katz of Twinex or practically anyone else, could be considered to have conflicting interest too, that the solution was to accept all votes and figure whatever conflicts there were in the end would cancel each other out.

The jury was strong – and even bloody-minded on some points. The CBC was roundly condemned for not using enough Canadian talent in starring roles, though it was commended for the high quality of some of the shows that did. The NFB came in for furious criticism because it ignored entrance rules requiring all films to be in English, or subtitled, dubbed or accompanied by a synopsis (for the sake of the English-speaking jurors) and entered a number

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## What's in an initial?...

ACTRA	Association of Canadian Television and Radio Artists
ACCESS	Alberta Educational Communications Corp.
BCFIA	British Columbia Film Industries Association
CFTA	Canadian Film and Television Association
CSC	Canadian Society of Cinematographers
CCFM	Council of Canadian Filmmakers
CMPDA	Canadian Motion Picture Distributors Association
DGC	Directors Guild of Canada
AICMPD	Association of Independent and Canadian-Owned Motion Picture Distributors
MPTAC	Motion Picture Theatre Association of Canada
CFEG	Canadian Film Editors Guild
CAMPP	Canadian Association of Motion Picture Producers
AFM	American Federation of Musicians

of films that looked interesting, but the jury felt incompetent to judge, and was forced to omit.

The consensus on this point was that the NFB's lack of proper subtitling was unforgivable, and strong words were spoken about the responsibility of the NFB to lead the way in making films accessible in both languages in this country, the obvious need for subtitling, which should be automatically budgeted, and the presumption and arrogance that led to entering films in competition without following the rules which others were expected to obey.

The jurors had another problem with the abundance of CBC and NFB films entered; how to judge works made with large budgets and under protected circumstances, with low-budget, homespun films made under the strain of time and financial pressure and the insecurity of marketless conditions? There was some talk of devising another category for big corporations and sponsored films. And speaking of categories, it was also deplored that the category for Experimental Film was removed this year making it appear the CFA didn't care about experimentalists, and causing several films to find no comfortable category in which to compete.

Finally, everyone became an expert on the 1977 Canadian psyche: Judging from these 137 films, we still appear to be hung up on scenes of bucolic bliss, a nostalgic and apparently endless re-examination of our past, and a sense of physical fitness, wholesomeness and mental discipline that seemed totally foreign to most of the urban, decadent and contemporary types sprawled around the screening room in



After winning at Cannes, Monique Mercure wins again in Toronto. (from **J.A. Martin** *photographe*)



Hollis McLaren, who was nominated for **Outrageous**



Len Cariou in his tough-reporter-with-a-heart role in **One Man**

the basement of the Twinex Building in scrungy downtown Toronto.

Each member of the Committee maintained that seeing this wealth of Canadian films, despite a certain repetitiveness of subject, occasional blandness and neutrality, was a real eye-opener, and wished that co-workers and industry friends could see for themselves the amazing talent and training that Canadian filmmakers exhibited.

In previous years, to some extent, they could. After the Film Awards were reorganized in 1967, Gerald Pratley took a package of winning films in 16mm around the country, where, with the help of co-operating film societies and other organizations, free showings were arranged for the public. Gerald remembers doing this four times from 1969 to 1972, with Pat Thompson sharing the country with him in 1970. In 1973 the Film Awards were in Montreal, and the resulting fiasco caused them to disappear in 1974. In 1975 they appeared again in Niagara-on-the-Lake under the guiding hand of Sandra Gathercole, who did not have the budget to reinstate the travelling exhibition.

Nat Taylor's dominant influence as Chairman of the CFA for the second year, was felt again in the pressure to have the show appear on TV, where he feels a national broadcast will result in more public awareness of the CFA and its Etrogs. CTV's budget cuts denied them a repeat of last year's generous move of having the show broadcast from the Agincourt studio 'almost' live. So, this year Nat energetically recruited the CBC, and a taped show was offered which would be aired at 10 p.m. November 20 concurrently with the actual physical public presentation of the awards.

Taylor's business acumen and persuasive personality has also been responsible for getting the CFA on sound financial ground, and his skill at putting aside half of the Secretary of State's allotted \$30,000 for 1976 so that a 1977 event could be held here, (\$30,000 is to be given alternate years by the government to the English and Quebec film awards) can only be applauded.

It's regrettable, however, if directing energies toward a TV show and banquet means that there is too little time and money to arrange public screenings or the travelling exhibition of winning films. Certainly, for once, the problem with features is eased by the distribution of a number of the contenders. **Why Shoot the Teacher** is popular across Canada and **Who Has Seen the Wind** most assuredly will be too. The NFB appears to be dragging its feet in settling on a distributor for **One Man**, but before long, circumstances will force a distribution deal. Meanwhile, **Outrageous** is guaranteed good crowds and much notice in urban centres, and **J.A. Martin, photographe**, will pick up appreciative audiences in cities where the use of subtitles is acceptable. It would do even better if the NFB utilized the pool of superb radio actors in Canada and dubbed this feature with skill and sensitivity! **Rabid, Ragtime Summer** and **Rituals** are also available, and it is to be hoped that the effective chiller **Skip Tracer** soon will be too.

But the public might like to see the shorts, or have another look at the documentaries and dramas that pick up awards. Not much point in advertising Canadian film on a national broadcast, if many people never see anything but a few features, and only then if they live in major centres. Are the solutions in trying to get money for touring an exhibition, in encouraging the CBC to buy and show them, or the National Gallery to distribute "packages", or just to put them in the hands of energetic short-film distribution companies who could flog them to a public that just might be ready and curious enough to take a look at itself?

Like the Selection Committee members, they just might find the experience an "eye-opener". □