

reflections on our home movies

Picking up where Harris and Gallup left off, *Cinema Canada* is pleased to present the first results of a recent audience poll. The time slot chosen was 8:30 p.m. Wednesday evening March 17: the CBC presentation of *Home Movies*, a one-hour look at the trials and tribulations of the feature film in Canada.

compiled by Connie Tadros

It seemed too good a chance to pass by. On Tuesday evening, March 16, calls went out from **Cinema Canada** across the nation to ask people to watch **Home Movies** and to send us their thoughts about the program or about the industry as they thought of it after the program. The choice of people was arbitrary but we tried to cover all bases both geographically and in terms of different interests in the film industry.

Our request was met with enthusiasm and the responses came in quickly. The fact that so many did respond seemed to underline the importance of the issues and the urgency which is felt; there is a will to come to terms with the conditions of feature filming in Canada and to get on with the job of making good and/or successful films.

As one might expect, the following letters are varied and precise but the consensus is difficult to find. It all depends on where you sit. And what you like. And whether you think that culture is vital to Canada. And whether movies represent that culture or not.

The boxed quote is from Gordon Pinsent as he closed **Home Movies**. It represents the thesis of the program.

*In a small way, we hope to have opened the dialogue on what is a most important subject to all working or interested in filming. Programs like **Home Movies** are only as good as the feedback they elicit. The comments we received do not constitute a balanced cross-section of the industry. We hope that by your letters, Opinions, articles or calls you will use **Cinema Canada** to continue the conversation.*

If only one province demands that Canadian movies must play that province's theatres – the Big American Film distributors and theatre owners would begin to treat us like a nation... not like another state of the union without right or need for home grown product.

Film is more than a business. It remains one of the most powerful expressions of mass culture in the world. That is just as true in Canada as anywhere else. Will we ever know how much of our so-called identity crisis grew out of evenings at the movies? Because what we see on the screen is somebody else – familiar and heroic – but not ourselves. We're comfortable with it and this is the trademark of a colonial culture. Yet we have the talent, we have the energy, we have the filmmakers, what we need is the commitment. Since 1967, the government has made its greatest effort to date to foster and encourage production. But now we need a further commitment – to put Canadian films into the national distribution system – where they belong. If we don't see today as the time to build on the momentum, then we may lose it all, and that, to put it simply, would be a tragedy.

Gordon Pinsent

"...focussed on the elite"

Les Wedman

Canadians spend \$200 million a year going to the movies, most of them American and very few of them Canadian films.

Why? was the question asked in CBC-TV's **Home Movies** segment of the six-part series, *The Great Canadian Culture Hunt*. But the hunt still was on for an answer when the program ended.

For those who care about Canadian films, **Home Movies** nevertheless was important. Those who don't care—and they are by far the majority—at least might have been infected with some of the enthusiasm displayed by those who appeared on the show.

At the same time viewers must have been confused by the divergent views expressed on the same subject, indicating the possibly insurmountable difficulty of ever reaching a solution that will satisfy everyone who wants to make films in Canada.

Peter Pearson cried the blues until he won an Etrog at the Canadian Film Awards. Don Shebib announced there's no way to beat the system because there is no system. Sandra Gathercole, chairperson of the Council of Canadian Filmmakers, described the system, American-controlled of course. Famous Players' President George Destounis confirmed that his chain and Odeon Theatres split most of the movies business and reiterated his opinion that any good Canadian film has no problem getting exhibition in Canadian theatres, and old clips supplied by the National Film Archives told how independent Canadian theatre operators were squeezed out of existence by the chains.

Gathercole and Secretary of State Hugh Faulkner showed how wide apart government and filmmakers are; she demanding fixed quotas and box-office levy and Faulkner oozing optimism that the present "voluntary" quota will work and that Famous and Odeon do not have any responsibility to finance film production although they are investing nearly \$2 million a year in Canadian features.

To those of us who write about films, there was absolutely nothing new in **Home Movies**. The show left the feeling that if the Canadian public truly was to be informed and turned on, the program should have gone further afield than Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Never mind that westerners weren't included, but there was too much emphasis on English-Canadian head-against-the-wall banging.

After stating blithely that Quebecers flock to see Quebec films, Gordon Pinsent had nobody around to contradict him. Michel Brault was the lone Quebec filmmaker to show, and the least provocative. Where were Claude Jutra, Gilles Carle, Denys Arcand, Denis Héroux? Where were the producers, French or English? Budge Crawley hasn't made a feature since *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* apart from two documentary features that are being distributed. John Bassett Jr. made sense but he's not an active producer at the moment.

Worst of all, **Home Movies** focussed on the elite in the business, those already firmly entrenched, those who will keep on making films if there are films to be made. It would have been far more worthwhile to hear what students in Canadian film schools think of the present and future.

Missing too were interviews with Canadians like Norman Jewison, Arthur Hiller, Sidney Furie, who left to seek fame and fortune in Hollywood. Their views on the state of films in their native land would have been welcome.

And finally where were the comments from businessmen

as to why they do not invest in Canadian films. And where were Michael Spencer, Sydney Newman and Andre Lamy, men of influence in the film industry?

Home Movies was good but not good enough.

Les Wedman
Critic
Vancouver Sun



"...our track record
in features
is lousy"

Sydney Newman

Home Movies in the *Great Canadian Culture Hunt* series was a fascinating program (film?) which seemed to take for granted the challenge of making a successful big screen movie. One might think it was a snap!

It was useful to consider quotas, levies and government aid but to be frank, I was bothered by its approach of personifying the McLuhanism: that is, we often try to go forward by looking through our rear view mirrors. By this, I'm referring to Gordon Pinsent's closing lines most passionately spoken "our lives are shaped by the movies". They certainly were in Gordon's generation, and mine, but I'm not too sure that it's true today. While it is true that big sums of money are made by one out of 10 features, the hard facts are that cinema attendance in all western countries has declined disastrously and, in many countries, the decline continues. It would appear to me that it is television that has supplanted the big screen in shaping our lives. (God help us!)

I wish the program had delineated more clearly the reasons Canada needed a feature film industry. Was it to shape minds? To make a buck? National pride? Resentment against foreign ownership and expression? Creative opportunities as well as a livelihood for thousands of Canadian writers, directors, actors and technical people of all sorts? Glamour?

The program was not clear on basic objectives and consequently got stuck in the rut of foreign ownership and blinded itself to other options open to us.

Sure, we must plow some of those profits back into Canadian film production! The program was strong on desire but damn light on how to do it in relation to the legislated complexities in our country. The program might have served us better by examining other ways for providing opportunities for creative people to "blow our minds" in cinematic expression.

It was also damn light on how tough and rare it is to be able to successfully marry together all the elements — talent, skill both creative and entrepreneurial — which the Americans with their chutzpah are so good at.

For me, the program helped crystalize some of our strengths. If we don't own the theatres in Canada at least we had one foresight and that is to own our television. Let's use it! If our track record in features is lousy (and with respect, it is) we do have, thanks to John Grierson, one of the world's best reputations as makers of short films. (Maybe it's for history to judge that our feature film fiasco today is his fault — in 1939 he did not create the CFDC but the NFB!)

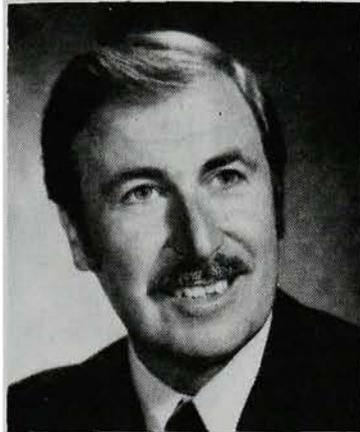
It also occurred to me that the program took no account of the importance of Canada's burgeoning theatre with its creative skills so allied to the dramatic arts. Only when we take all these into account, might we have a better chance of spinning-off our talents into the blue-chip world of the large screen cinema.

Home Movies was a useful program.

Sydney Newman
Ex-producer, film & television
Ottawa

"films that
can't compete
shouldn't be made"

Charles Mason



There is more than a touch of irony in the CBC showing on St. Patrick's Day a documentary concerning the search for Canadian culture. If any country can be said to have a distinctive and highly visible culture, that country is Ireland. It was obvious from the program **Home Movies** that any national culture this country possesses is still well hidden. It will hardly be found in a feature about American rock star Janis Joplin, even if Canadian theatres were forced to show it by government legislation.

The CBC program illustrated one of the reasons for the sad failure of so many Canadian features to win public acceptance; it set out doggedly to make a statement and in doing so relinquished any pretense of entertainment. **Home Movies** suffered from overemphasis. Was it really necessary to have the Secretary of State say the same thing over and over again? Or was it done intentionally to make him look foolish? In any case, his reference to unnecessary intrusion into the "marketplace" when speaking of a proposed film quota escaped editing, and added a welcome touch of logic: rare to such a controversial subject.

Ted Kotcheff's praise of the British quota and levy system must have sounded too good to be true to the uninitiated viewer. It is too good to be true, since after a quarter of a century of government interference, the British production industry is all but invisible; and British theatres are disappearing faster than Canadian government grants. The casual viewer of the CBC program may well have asked, "If the strength of the American film production industry is so overwhelming, how much help did it get from the U.S. government?" The impression obtained from **Home Movies** was that all its help came from Canadian authorities.

Canada undoubtedly possesses many talented film people, but John Bassett Jr. made a good point when he said that Canadian films that can't compete shouldn't be made. The fact is that Canadian films are being made, and with large budgets and getting international distribution. It is strange that people like Harold Greenberg and David Perlmutter weren't even mentioned in this program. Was it because they are doers not talkers; and it would have ruined the program to show successful Canadian feature film producers? In the end, one picture is still worth a thousand words; and this air time could have been better used in showing a

good Canadian film. Canadians willingly spend \$200,000,000 annually to see movies; and \$400,000,000 unwillingly to support the CBC. Untrue? Then look at the television ratings in those areas where the CBC has commercial competition. Private enterprise will beat government-legislated entertainment every time; and that's where Canadian culture sits. Is it any wonder that the CBC program preceding **Home Movies** was titled **Dam, The Beaver**?

Charles Mason
Odeon Theatres Ltd.
Toronto

"...intelligent airing
of our problems"

F.J. Quinn

Reference CBC Canadian film program, Wednesday night, I think first we should all give a cheer for the CBC and Producer Robertson for putting the program on, but when one realizes the simple statistic that \$200,000,000.00 was spent last year in going to the cinema by Canadians, you also realize the impact of film on the public. There has to be an audience out there somewhere.

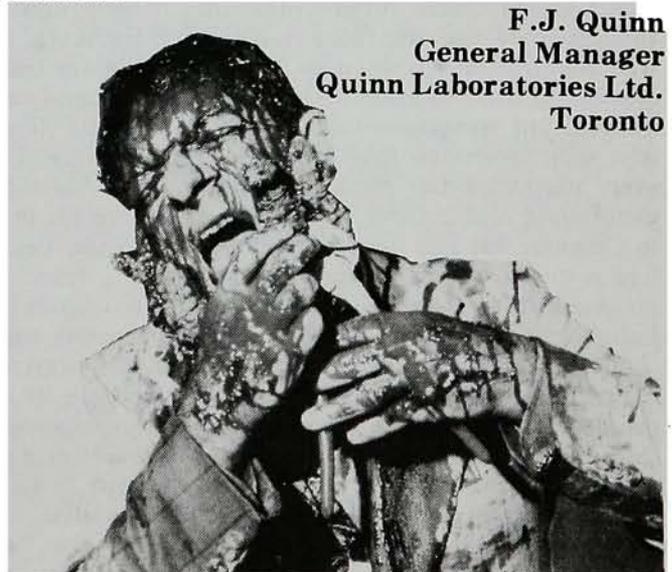
Not very much was said by anyone that wasn't said before, but probably more of the right people heard it this time. It was pleasant not to hear the raving nonsense one seems to get once a year or so from certain quarters.

We have always been blessed with great politicians in the Secretary of State's office who promised us everything from cessation of NFB's activities in production of other government department films (some eight or ten years ago), to politicians who promise unenforceable handouts from the exhibitors. This time we seem to be blessed not only with a politician, but with one who isn't overburdened with the brights.

If I were to ally myself with anyone's opinion that seems to have the most sense it would be with Hofsess who very sensibly supports "commercial" filmmaking being funded without shame by the CFDC in order to allow us to be able to support the making of less commercials and more cultural films. We simply cannot have one without the other.

The more intelligent airing of our problems as a group trying to be an industry we get, such as last night, the more likely we are to obtain some real moral support among our fellow Canadians.

F.J. Quinn
General Manager
Quinn Laboratories Ltd.
Toronto



Shivers... a bloody good way to make money

"...depressing,
downbeat
little pictures"

Paul Morton



In assessing the *Great Canadian Culture Hunt* it is regrettable that the primary focus of the show was a rehash of the very valid and real complaints which existed about the situation in the past, further trite statements by Sandra Gathercole, and simplistic preaching by Gordon Pinsent.

What's done is done. I can't defend or excuse the actions that have taken place in the past, but it would be interesting for once to see a discussion on the subject of feature Canadian films devoted to the future. Gordon Pinsent argues that the entire system is set up to sell foreign pictures. Perhaps he should consider that we, as commercial theatre operators, are set up to sell pictures, period. A critic, Bob Fothergill, blames the audiences who are not prepared to accept the filmmakers who want to make serious films. There is a market for serious films, but it is not the commercial market that thrives on and desperately needs entertaining films. Gordon Pinsent again voices the old argument that bad American pictures play while good Canadian pictures remain on the shelf. I beg of him to tell me one Canadian picture that has any chance of success at the box office, which has not played in the major Canadian markets. George Destounis and John F. Bassett perhaps put it best, in the limited exposure they were allowed, by espousing the point of view that "commercial films should be allowed to compete", and those pictures which have no chance of commercial success, should not be made. If there is a desire to make non-commercial pictures, let them be financed by the government, but don't put them into the competitive commercial mill where they are doomed to failure and used as further examples of why Canadian pictures won't do business. There is a place for them, but it is not in the commercial theatre.

The statement was made during the course of the show that Canada makes curious films that nobody wants to see. In support of this the Honourable Hugh Faulkner, differing with Sandra Gathercole, does not appear to place the responsibility for this situation with the distribution and exhibition system, but recognizes that ultimately it is the filmmakers who will determine their own success or failure. He, however, supported the pleas of the Canadian filmmakers by demanding and getting a quota from the two major circuits in Canada, but this does not solve the problem, because before a quota becomes a rational alternative, there must be an excess of unplayed Canadian films. Again, as in the past, I challenge the Honourable Minister to name me any decent commercial Canadian-made film which has not played.

Perhaps the root of the problem is the failure by so many people on the Canadian production side who appeared on the show to recognize the basic nature of the film exhibition business. Don Shebib speaks of the system being against Canadian filmmakers because they are Canadian and they are small. Unfortunately, the audience is the "system", and the filmmakers must recognize that certain merchan-

dising and entertainment ingredients are what attracts them to pay their money at the box office.

George Anthony complains that with all the talent and stars we have in this country more films should be made: I believe that Mr. Anthony knows the difference between talent and stardom. Stars do not necessarily have to have talent, but they do have that undefinable *something* that makes people want to read about them, know about them, and most important – pay to see them. That, perhaps most of all, is what is lacking in the Canadian industry. We have virtually no stars, either as actors, actresses, writers, or directors. Talent, Yes, but stars, No.

For the future, if there is to be a film industry in Canada, it will have to be done with the co-operation of all segments of the private sector together with government. The very problem referred to on lack of stars is something that must be corrected. The CBC, a Crown Corporation, provided the vehicle for further criticism of exhibition and distribution, but where have they been when we have asked for the support in publicizing of a Canadian picture? Where have they been when the additional money of an advance sale to TV would allow a picture to be made? Where are the magazines and newspapers who could be publicizing Canadian films, and, again, stars and their activities, both on and off the screen? It is vital that there be progress in these areas if there is any hope of selling Canadian pictures.



Goin' Down the Road... a difficult one

However, the greatest problem is still how to finance a Canadian motion picture. The CFDC, as it is now constituted, has been a failure and will continue to be so, as it attempts to be all things to all men. Let the CFDC work with the National Film Board in the area of non-commercial motion pictures suitable for the educational market, television, or for whatever other purposes the government chooses to finance pictures. But do not expect commercial theatres to play these. On the other hand, take the government out of direct financing of commercial pictures, let them provide tax incentives to private capital by extending capital cost allowances past the 100% mark. There is no magic in that figure and there is nothing to preclude capital cost allowance from being at 115% or 125% for a few years as an experiment. This would not cost the government any more than they are currently spending with the CFDC, but it would stimulate private capital, and the ability and creativeness of the people who manage it, and bring them into the field of film production. What's wrong with trying some new approaches? The old ones haven't worked, and the quotas won't work, but not for the reasons that Sandra Gathercole believes. Pictures are now being financed and made in this

country, but only by the competent and commercial filmmakers, the others who have failed, and will continue to fail, are asking the government to legislate ability; it won't work! What must be done is to develop further sources of financing that will allow more pictures to be made that are exciting enough to get people to pay their money at the box office, not only in Canada but in other parts of the world. For too long we have been attempting to make the depressing downbeat little pictures that nobody wants to see in our country or anywhere else. What we need for the future is not a film industry for Canada, but a film industry in Canada.

Paul Morton
President
Odeon-Morton Theatres Ltd.
Winnipeg

**"And who
 will come to look?"**

Harry Gulkin



The *Great Canadian Culture Hunt* is on. This time the quarry is movies, *Canadian* movies. Our movie men earnestly though modestly (very Toronto) wave their Etrogs and lament that their countrymen don't come to see Home Movies.

Could it be that Canadian filmgoers in their infinite wisdom prefer to leave Home Movies at home? Maybe our movies, Etrogs aside, are kind of lousy. After all, we've only been in the business seriously (quantitatively that is) for about six years.

No! No! No! protest our filmmakers, critics, and self-anointed cultural nationalist spokesmen. It is the inequity of the distribution system that is at fault, not the inadequacy of our films.

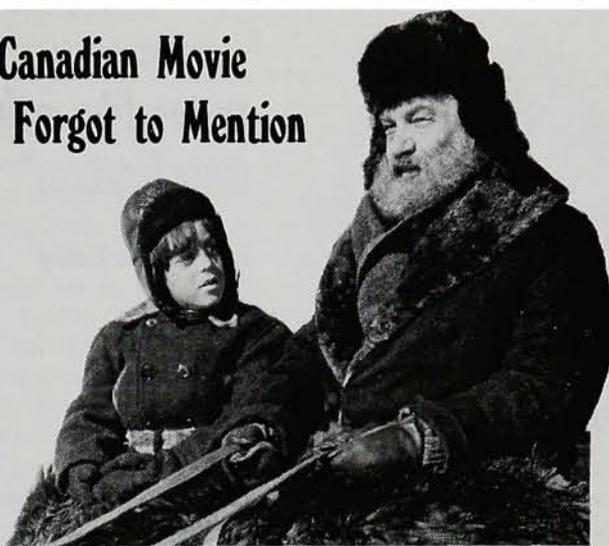
The distribution system is certainly inequitable but surely our human perceptions have not been so dulled by nationalist bleating that we cannot understand that our English-language movies (apart from a few notable exceptions) are lousy.

What Canadian movie men and women should be discussing, and more to the point *doing*, is improving their movies. How about importing a few experts for a time? It might help. Remember John Grierson?

Sure, we need quotas and we need levies. But to what use will we put that levy money, and what will we put on those hundreds of screens for four weeks a year? And who will come to look?

Harry Gulkin
Producer
Lies My Father Told Me
Montreal

The Canadian Movie They Forgot to Mention



Strange that the producer and researcher of *The Great Canadian Culture Hunt - Home Movies* were unaware of or chose to ignore what has been achieved by **Lies My Father Told Me**.

The Prime Minister of Canada, who is surely not as close to the film scene, expressed his awareness as far back as Feb. 17 in a congratulatory letter to the undersigned.

Some of the salient facts about **Lies** that would have been of interest to Canadian filmgoers watching the program:

Recognition of Quality:

- Winner of Hollywood Foreign Critics Award (Golden Globe) as Best Foreign Film of 1975. Other nominees were: **The Magic Flute** (Bergman); **Special Section** (Costa Gavras); **And Now My Love** (Le-louch); **Hedda** (with Glenda Jackson).
- Winner of Grand Prix (Golden Venus) Virgin Islands International Film Festival.
- Winner of Christopher Award (Awarded by a New York Catholic lay media organization).
- On 1975 Ten Best List of *National Board of Review* and several other publications.
- Academy Award nomination for Best Screenplay.

The accolade accorded by the distinguished Quebec film critic André Leroux writing in Montreal's *Le Devoir* on Sept. 27, 1975: "... the film constitutes a remarkable peak in the history of Canadian film, an important stage in the evolution of English-Canadian cultural life."

Quality and commercial success are not necessarily unrelated phenomena.

Commercial Acceptance:

- International box office gross to date \$4,500,000: more than any other Canadian film to date. General release only started in February when the film played in 52 New York City theatres for four weeks.
- 20th week on *Variety's* list of the 50 Top Grossing films. Was 7th on list for two weeks. Will probably climb higher.
- Has played in Canada, USA, Israel and Australia. Just opened in Norway, Denmark, Thailand and Uruguay. Further openings scheduled in coming weeks and months.

Harry Gulkin



"...more
to the film industry
than features"

Harold J. Eady

We watched the CBC show last night on the Film Industry in Canada and as requested, I am forwarding some comments.

First of all, there is a great deal more to the film industry than features and unfortunately the show last night concentrated primarily on that aspect of the industry. One comment made during the show referred to French-Canadians' support for their feature films. I believe there is support to any film, as long as it's entertaining, whether it be French or English-Canadian or from Hollywood.

In total, the program was not overly impressive, particularly because Gordon Pinsent and George Destounis were cast in too formal a setting.

However, one of the bright lights of the show was Budge Crawley, one of Canada's pioneer filmmakers, and a joy to behold in seeing and listening to his comments.

I trust these few comments will be of assistance.

Harold J. Eady
President

Canadian Film and Television Association
Toronto

"Well-intentioned
but terribly
over-centralized..."



Tom Radford

Thanks for small blessings, CBC, but thanks all the same... after all CTV was playing **Dirty Harry** in the same time slot.

But I'm curious to know why Toronto should again have been chosen as the measuring stick for the Canadian industry, especially at a time when production in other parts of the country is in many ways as interesting and as vital. The problems of the program were the problems of the CBC itself, well-intentioned but terribly over-centralized, struggling to represent a Canada it has lost touch with.

Surely the importance of **Les Ordres** goes far beyond the fact that it closed in Toronto after two weeks? I'm interested

in how it did in Quebec, in how it did in an independent theatre in Regina.

I'm tired of hearing Don Shebib bellyache about how small-time it is here, or having Peter Pearson or John Bassett tell us that **Paperback Hero** is a beautiful film about western Canada when it isn't. It's a Toronto film, made from and for a Toronto mentality. Shebib's attitudes may be valid in "his" context but let's not call that the "Canadian" context. Did the Czech new wave or the Swiss new wave rise because they were "big-time" in the sense he talks about, in the American sense?

Where in the program was the Quebec experience? In many ways I think we have more to learn from it than we do from Toronto. What of the whole CFDC low-budget program?

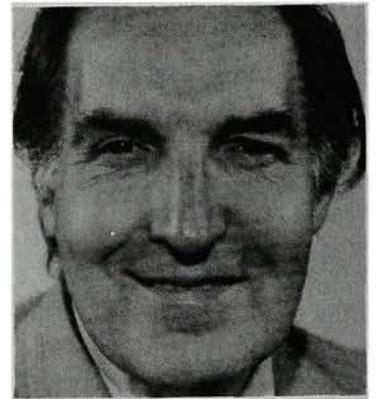
Where was Vancouver? What of the \$800,000 feature CTV and Alberta producers are currently shooting in Alberta? What effect will the regionalization of NFB production have on young filmmakers across the country, many of whom will be an important part of whatever future the feature industry has in this country?

There are many fights going on in this country in the name of Canadian film, and for many of us decentralization is first and foremost. That fight is well advanced and it astounds me that whoever put **Home Movies** together could ignore it. Winning a tough quota system is as important an issue for a filmmaker in Edmonton as it is for one in Toronto. We must work together. Toronto is important, but not by itself. A program which doesn't give you any sense of what is happening in the rest of the country ultimately does whatever cause we must fight together a disservice.

Tom Radford
Producer, NFB
Edmonton

"...how severe
our shortcomings are"

Gerald Pratley



Home Movies. The title is unfortunate. Too many people are inclined to think the standard of most Canadian films is even worse than that of most 'home' movies! The director seemed bent on injecting a fast pace and 'filmic qualities' into the proceedings: Don Shebib is expected to discuss the matter deeply while changing gears and watching the traffic, Peter Pearson stops and reflects while coaching his swimming star, Don Owen talks and follows his camera, and only Michel Brault stands still for a moment while contemplating the issues. We surely needed nothing more of **Janis**, and Bassett, who would sell his grandmother for a US dollar bill, might well have been forgotten. George Destounis told us that Canada was number one in America's foreign market, which, by implication, shows us how severe our shortcomings are, while Hugh Faulkner proved once again that the government is petrified of US big business. What stands out from the rushed proceedings are the remarks by Fulford, who quite rightly points out how growing up with American films has affected the attitudes and outlook of Canadians everywhere; the well-spoken and irrefutable

comments of Sandra Gathercole; and the quiet, convinced and deeply-felt delivery of Gordon Pinsent. He alone is proof of the fact that we have artists to be proud of and who should have wider access to the public.

Gerald Pratley
Director
Ontario Film Institute
Toronto

"No Good, Don't Print"

Phil Auguste



The reference is, of course, to the slate used in one of the old movie excerpts shown in the CBC's **Home Movies** in the *Great Canadian Culture Hunt* series, and not to this article. However, you may feel differently after reading it!

It was the second time within three days that I had had the opportunity to watch **Home Movies** and it was also the second time I was struck by the significance of a Canadian actor and writer, Gordon Pinsent, appearing in what seemed to be an empty theatre vestibule. Perhaps the producer intended the scene to serve as an indication of Canadian moviegoers' usual attitude to Canadian movies in general?

Before I proceed with further observations, let me say that I considered it to be an excellent program and essentially truthful and entertaining throughout. I felt that most of the participants were completely honest in their opinions even when naturally biased and sometimes misguided.

To return to the reason for selecting the above title, my impression, after seeing many Canadian movies, was that the reverse of every slate should carry the 'no good, don't print' instruction and that it should be used far more often, sometimes for complete movies. From a consensus of opinion, it seems that we lack producers and directors sufficiently experienced to do a first-class job. There are, of course, exceptions. I'm not going to be specific, but most of us know which is which. Unless one has been fortunate and able to gain experience outside Canada, then the main problem is lack of suitable opportunity to gain that very necessary experience. This would seem to be the main reason for making the program in the first place and I hope that, somehow, the message will finally get through to the people who are in a position to do something about it.

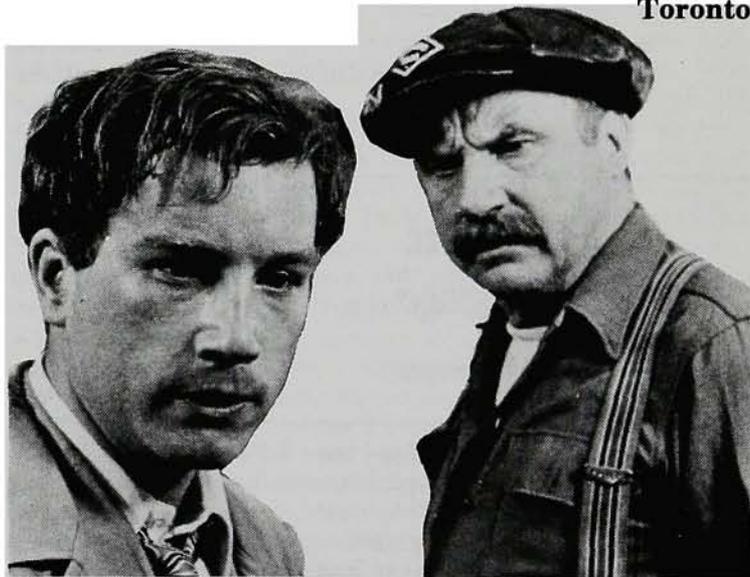
Generally, I believe that Canadian movie makers are too introspective and lacking in enough daring to grab that essential world market. Perhaps again, that is something that will come with more quality experience. Another criticism I have often heard is that there is too much talk in Canadian movies and not enough action; too much art and not enough craft. To create a strong industry we must make films with an international appeal. It is not enough to appeal to Canadian audiences only; and we can't even do that now! I believe the world will be interested in Canadian stories only after we have achieved an acceptable reputation as filmmakers. Perhaps Ted Kotcheff made something of a breakthrough with **Duddy** but he has been fortunate in gaining his main experience outside Canada. Whilst on the subject, I have to ask why he felt it necessary to bring in a camera-

man and film editor from England? Although we are usually lacking in film leadership, we have very experienced cameramen, film editors and talent available who are invariably underemployed. I observed very good craftsmanship in **Duddy** but nothing that couldn't have been done equally well by Canadians. Obviously, attitudes have to change within the industry as well as audiences and government.

Regarding voluntary quotas and levies, let us not forget that the first consideration of both Famous Players and Odeon must be to their shareholders and that any benefit that may accrue for the Canadian film production industry is purely incidental. For that reason, I don't believe that voluntary quotas or levies will achieve any more for us now than they have in the past. The only thing to do that is making good movies that people will happily pay to see. That's why we need help from legislation; the government must act as a catalyst and cut down on some of the talk and get some real meaning to that first word of any take, "action." Let's face it, the voluntary \$1½ million is not enough to make even one really good movie and four weeks screen time a year is completely inadequate.

Finally, as a resident of Ontario, the "Province of Opportunity", when do we get our share of opportunity?

Phil Auguste cfe
President
Canadian Film Editors' Guild
Toronto



Duddy made a buck... for himself and for the industry too

"...the killer instinct for exploitation"

Keith Cutler

We were naturally disappointed that the West did not share proportionately (both blame and credit) in the survey of filmmaking in Canada. After all, we do have the best people and facilities next to Toronto in the English-language industry.

In general, the program had a pronounced "inside-out" feel about it. It was a pretty thorough rundown of all the facts and fictions about our industry that we have encountered in print and at seminars and, in fact, anywhere industry people try to express their mutual concerns.

But how much of that means anything to the general movie-going, television-watching public? I wonder how many we held past the first few minutes of the program to where Sandra Gathercole began doing such an excellent job of relating the industry to the Canadian consumer. And of those who did sit through the hour, how many still say "when they make good Canadian movies I'll go see them, not before..."

We have missed the point so well-known to the Americans that they take it for granted. Distribution of motion pictures is an exercise in exploitation. A good picture will not sell itself. It takes promotion... money... energy... money... inventiveness... money... a sense of theatre... and money.

For every production dollar there must be an exploitation dollar. We have started at the wrong end in Canada. The first concern of a commercial film producer must be to ensure that people will walk up to the theatre box office with three or four dollars each, ready and willing to see the film that is playing... regardless of where it was made!

There are many reasons Canada does not have a thriving film industry. Most of them were indicated in Wednesday's show. What we did not talk about is that quality that makes the U.S. respected and feared throughout the film world... the killer instinct for exploitation.

But then that isn't a problem unique to the film industry, is it?

Keith Cutler
President
British Columbia Film Industry Association
Vancouver

"...so biased in the message"

Len Herberman

I was fascinated watching the T.V. program **Home Movies** last night. Fascinated because it was so well done, so very interesting and yet so biased in the message to its viewing audience. Just about everyone interviewed seemed so amazed that with the great and wonderful movies produced today in Canada, and with the great talents available in Canada, Canadian movie production was so limited and those films that were produced should receive such a limited play in the theatres of Canada.

As an independent Canadian distributor, I would like to make a few comments on **Home Movies**, and its message as I received it. Before doing so, I want to make it perfectly clear that I am very strongly in favor of seeing a feature film industry in Canada, and in that end have not only distributed Canadian films, but have also invested in such films as **Shoot, Find the Lady, It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time, Second Wind, and Why Shoot the Teacher.**

Ambassador Films is also co-producing two films this year this year in conjunction with Amicus Films of London, to be shot in Toronto, with a combined budget in excess of \$2,000,000.00.

The problem as I see it is that the film industry is a combination of two basic interests, each one as important as the other, and yet highly incompatible with each other. That is to say it is a combination of the business world and the creative world. The business end is concerned with the financing, the distribution, the advertising and with the end result, the profits.

The creative end is concerned, as it appears to me, with its self-expression. The incompatibility between the two be-

comes evident as in most cases the members of the artistic world cannot comprehend that distributors, investors etc., require a profit at their end in order to continue distributing and investing. After all, why should I as a distributor invest \$30,000 to \$50,000 to distribute a film whose subject matter or treatment is of no interest to anyone other than the director who made it?

In the few cases where I have distributed such a film with the obvious results, the filmmaker then expounds as follows: "I had a bad distributor who put the picture in the wrong house and didn't advertise it properly." In all truthfulness I have never met a producer who made a bad picture, only bad distributors, and I have discovered a lot of bad theatres.

Now let me talk about Canadian talent. I basically agree that we are fortunate in having a great number of talented artists in Canada. As a matter of fact we have some great talent in our country. Unfortunately in many areas we do not have the know-how to implement this talent. Instead of squandering millions of dollars of taxpayers' money by allowing novices to make films we would be far better off using these dollars by means of grants to allow our talent to apprentice with experienced filmmakers from around the world in order to be able to combine knowledge with talent.

In closing I would like to make one more point. Our filmmakers seem to think the word "commercial" is obscene. They also seem to think the phrase "American made" an obscenity. I would like to point out that American films, good or bad, try to be commercial. They recognize that few films recoup their negative cost in the country of origin and in order to sell films on the world market, they study these markets and try to produce films which appeal to the masses. This apparently is beneath Canadians who do not seem to understand that pictures do not make money because they are American or lose money because they are Canadian. They win or lose strictly on whether or not they are commercial.

Len Herberman
President
Ambassador Film Distributors Limited
Toronto



"...a pretentious hour-long program"

Evelyn Cherry

The program was irritating and made one angry... and it should have been the *issue* that made one angry.

One week ago the series opened with a powerful statement about Canada's cultural situation. What followed was a pretentious hour-long program purporting to be about the feature film industry... evading, rather than confronting its subject.

Quoting one young viewer: "I'm not interested in listening to what seemed ten hours about nothing, and most of it was. It's a lot of fun doing that for fun; but this subject was *important*. ... it was a half-hour stretched into an hour."

And, sadly, there was real material in there for a good

hour; the remarks of Gordon Pinsent revealed that without doubt. He seemed, in this program, to be squeezed back into a corner: quite different from the earlier program a week ago.

It floated around; it opened a crack to vital knowledge, then closed it to go off into scenes taken from "great" Canadian movies... with no apparent purpose.

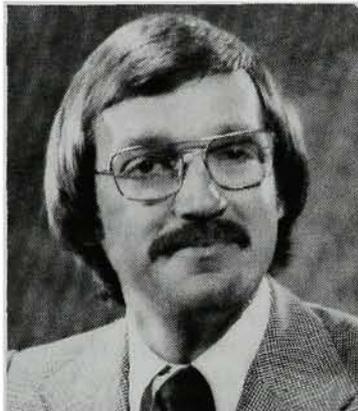
It would seem that it can but add to the general feeling of frustration throughout Canada in this search for a way to define our very distinctive culture... and in the search for a clearly stated purpose for filmmaking in Canada.

Often a program such as this kills the potential for the subject to be brought up again. Is there hope, we ask, that a serious look could be taken at *Canadian* filmmaking in Canada, with, say Gordon Pinsent and Sandra Gathercole, backed by people from across the country who are vitally concerned in cinema as related to the culture of our country; ... in which the *Why* of things would be discussed fully; ... in which TV distribution, provincial jurisdictions, dramatic series, etc. would be discussed;... in which the controversial subject: *What is a Canadian film?* in discussion, might well reveal much of the uniqueness of our Canadian culture?... Is this possible? And, if not, why not? Why not come out with the reasons why things are as they are? It's going to happen one of these days, and it might as well be now.

Evelyn Cherry
Producer and filmmaker
• **Regina**

**"...legislation
will do little
or nothing"**

William Soady



The CBC Program *Canadian Culture Hunt*, the second, in a three part series, dealing with Canadian Movies was shown on Wednesday March 17th. The Editor of **Cinema Canada** asked if I would give my opinion of this show from a Distributor's point of view. I found the hour-long show very informative and most entertaining although I must say it was very biased in its point of view, in that it always continued to criticize distribution for the failure of Canadian Films. However, no distributor was asked for his opinion at all whether the distributor be American or Canadian. Sandra Gathercole, who seems qualified in all aspects of the business did go into a brief explanation of how films were distributed in Canada and made the statement that the American Distribution Companies are virtually guaranteed theatres for every motion picture that was brought into Canada. If only this was true, it would make my job so much easier. Even though Universal has distributed some of the larger, more successful films in the past, and hopefully will continue to do so in the future, if they make a bad film or a

film that is not accepted by the public, the theatre owners of this Country and for that matter, every Country in the World whether they have large chain affiliations or are independents, will not play the films. Exhibitors want to play films that will draw people to the theatres and of course make money for themselves. If a film is good and received well, there is no problem whatsoever in getting this picture dated in the theatre chains of this Country.

The main thrust of the program was that if quotas were enacted in Canada, we would have a viable Motion Picture Industry and the public would automatically go to every Canadian Film. Of course this is ridiculous, you cannot legislate people to pay \$3.50 to see something they have no desire to see. If the picture is good, the public will support it whether it be Canadian, American, Italian or French. I don't think that there is any question in anyone's mind that there is a great quantity of good Canadian talent in Canada available to make motion pictures as has been proven by some of the successes namely **Duddy Kravitz**, **Mon Oncle Antoine**, **Goin' Down the Road** etc. and these films have been accepted without quotas. In spite of what some politicians in this Country would have us believe, the "Free Enterprise System" in Canada is not dead. Canadian films should be able to compete in the international market place if they are going to be successful. Everyone knows that a Canadian Film, no matter how good, cannot possibly earn its money back in Canada. Therefore, it must be successful in other Countries in the World if it is going to make a profit. People that make successful Motion Pictures realize this. People like Budge Crawley, John Bassett Jr. both indicated in the program that the quotas were not the answer to making successful Canadian Films. Yet we kept hearing time and time again throughout the program that the quotas were the only answer, and of course, the justification for a quota is that films are a cultural expression. While most films in cinemas today, although they are entertaining, I debate the fact whether they have any cultural value whatsoever. The biggest grossing film of all times now is **Jaws** in which, although most entertaining, I fail to see any cultural merits whatsoever. Everybody seems to think that all films that are made, "make money". This is just not true. The Motion Picture business is and always has been a very high risk business. The number of films that fail at the box office is staggering. Some of these films have been critically acclaimed world wide and have even won awards, however the public in their own wisdom are the ones that must decide whether to lay down their \$3.50. Motion Pictures are an international item that appeals to the masses. If a film is entertaining and arouses the curiosity of the public, the filmmaker is guaranteed a ready outlet in any Country in the World whether his film be Canadian, American, English, Italian or French. Canada within its own borders cannot support a Canadian Film Industry but it can produce films that are accepted both in Canada and the other major markets of the world as has already been proven. However every film that is made is not going to be a success at the Box Office and no form of quotas or legislation is going to change this. Making a Canadian film with broader audience appeal can virtually guarantee a successful film. The onus then, in my opinion, is on the filmmakers of Canada, to make publicly acceptable films that can compete in the market place on their own merit. Quotas and legislation will do little or nothing to further the fortunes of the Canadian Film Industry.

William Soady
President
Universal Films (Canada)
Toronto

"Try rats eating babies"

Peter Bryant

As for me, I thought that it was great... but I don't know what to say. The one thing that impressed me is that the program will do more for the efforts of filmmakers than all the briefs put together, because it gets out there to the public, and that has been perhaps the hardest thing to do. The program was also entertaining (I thought) and the clips used well selected. I don't see how someone watching could not learn and sympathize. Bassett should have made a comparison with the Canadian Football League rather than with hockey. Hockey players is about all we have to offer. The CFL keeps the Canadian game a little Canadian by having a *quota* on American players. I have long thought that asking the government to guarantee us 4 weeks in our own theatres is the most incredible thing of all; whose country is it anyway? What people mean when they say international is really American. The Italian, Swedish, French films we are lucky to see aren't really hurting us. American films, like American culture, is predominantly one of violence, exploitation and fantasy. When we say international we really mean sex and violence. These are the films that are in the way, not the art films, or cultural films. The more meaningful American films have their own problems (in getting distribution), and they too are welcome.

The fact is the newest big hit will be the snuff porn movie. Plenty of real sex, real violence, international appeal. Box office does not always mean something is meaningful, worth doing. Failure does not always mean a lack of quality and entertainment. The truth is so many films are aimed at the lowest common denominators (prurient interest and vicarious thrills being a couple) that I really don't think it is that hard to make a commercial movie. Try rats eating babies. Maybe John Hofsess will find something in it, since he seems to accept whatever the public will buy as the *de facto* definition for quality or worth. If that were the case we wouldn't need critics; we could look at the figures.

The program was good, but it would be nice to see some new faces. I'm beginning to think the Canadian film industry is made up of six people, two directors, Shebib and Pearson, two critics, Fothergill and Hofsess, one exhibitor, one spokesperson and a bureaucrat. It was nice to see Budge Crawley on the show. Let us hear about the other filmmakers in the country once in a while, particularly the ones who live outside of Toronto – or is there an outside to Toronto?

Peter Bryant
Director of *The Supreme Kid*
Vancouver

"big brother below...phobia"

John Dunning

My only feeling after seeing Wednesday night's program was one of despair. It seemed like half the people talking were never directly connected with filmmaking, film distri-

bution, or film exhibition, but they did have strong opinions on what's good for the industry and the Canadian public at large. Maybe given their head they can eventually lower the industry to the level that the publishing industry in Canada has now reached. By feeding on the big brother below the border controls us all phobia, the clique has successfully repressed its outside competition and now we're left to the tender mercies of *Maclean's* and *Saturday Night*. I'm always afraid of people who know what's good for me – it usually ends up being very good for them.

John Dunning
President
Cinepix
Montreal

"...didn't pull their punches"

Sandra Gathercole

I think **Home Movies** is the best thing CBC has ever done for the Canadian film industry because it is the only thing CBC has ever done – on network prime time – to explain the industry to Canadians*. Given that most Canadians are more bewildered than aware of what's been going on with the CBC and \$25 million of their tax dollars, such a program was long overdue.

And more credit to CBC, when they did get around to focussing on the film industry they didn't pull their punches. The message of **Home Movies** was clear: we are culturally colonized and our exclusive diet of foreign movies over the last fifty years has a lot to do with how it happened. The program could have done nothing more than tell a few million Canadians that there is such an animal as a Canadian film industry (which would no doubt have been shocking news to many of them), and startle them with some of the more grotesque facts on the extent of American control of our theatres. But it went beyond that to draw some pretty strong conclusions about the talent and energy of Canadian filmmakers who are trying to build their own feature industry against a foreign controlled distribution/exhibition system which is in conflict with their goal.

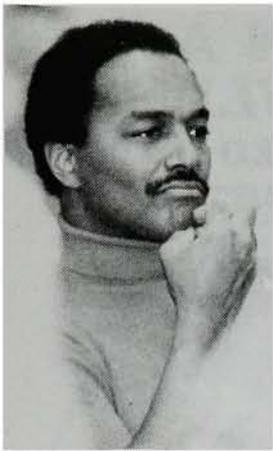
I thought the program had some nice irony. George Anthony pointing out that the films wouldn't go to waste on the shelf if your mother was running the country. And then there was George Destounis giving, on air, a classic definition of a combine as he described how the system really works. What a difference between Mum and George.

Home Movies was designed to inform the public about a complex situation. It focussed on the feature industry in English Canada and didn't have time to do justice to Quebec, the NFB and regional production. But it probably helped Canadians to make some sense out of the squeals and yelps of complaint which have been coming out of the industry for years.

One viewer was so outraged by what he learned that he called the producer and said he wanted to know what he, as a film consumer, could do about the situation. That's the spirit. Let's hope CBC's **Home Movies** spread it far and wide across the country.

Sandra Gathercole
Chairperson
The Council of Canadian Filmmakers

* On Oct. 12, 1975, the CBC's French network, Radio-Canada, presented an hour-long documentary on the state of the film industry in Quebec. Ed.



**"...a group
of whimpering
malcontents"**

Fil Fraser

CBC's attempted analysis of problems within the Canadian feature film industry left me feeling embarrassed and angry; embarrassed at the portrayal of this industry as a group of whimpering malcontents looking for someone to solve their problems, embarrassed at the poorly written script that Gordon Pinsent had to read, with what was to me obvious discomfort. I was angry that so much of the tone was set by critics and others who have nothing to do with the making of films, and angry at the negative tone of the entire piece.

My guess would be that most Canadians watching the film would wonder why anyone should do anything for Canadian filmmakers. As a television production, the program was sloppily edited and lacked continuity. It did no service to people who are looking for support to make films in this country.

At the moment, I'm too busy producing my film to indulge myself with this kind of crying.

**Fil Fraser
President
Fraser Films Ltd.
Edmonton**

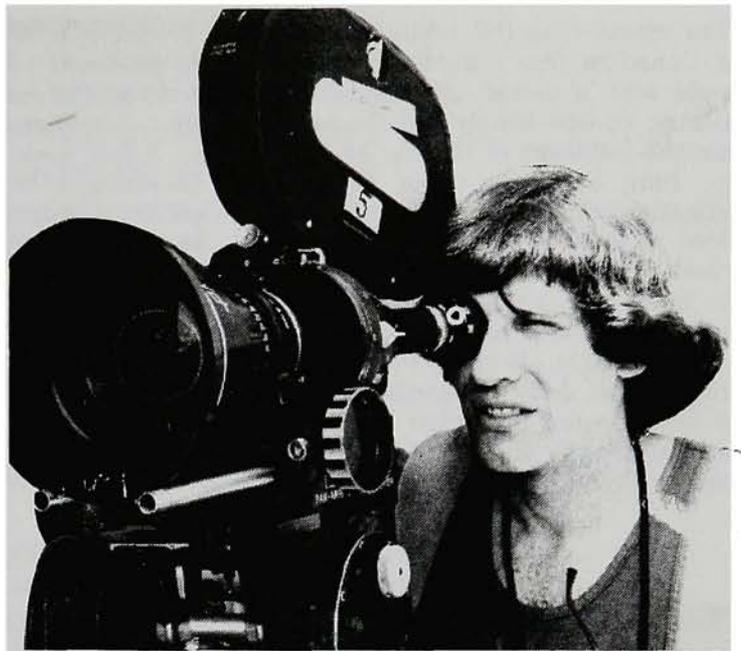
**"...to reinforce
...pre-conceived
ideas"**

Anthony Ross

I watched the second edition of this series with considerable interest, for two reasons. First, I wanted to see if a case could be made for unique *Canadian* films, and second, I wanted to see if the economic facts of the industry would be presented fairly, if at all.

Unfortunately, I struck out on both accounts. While the footage of the few Canadian films which made it at the box office were entertaining, little was done to indicate why they succeeded where dozens of others did not. (The answer is a mixture of quality, universal appeal and good entertainment value.) And, as is so often the case these days, the distributors and exhibitors, whose whole existence depends on saleable films, were largely ignored.

True, George Destounis got some coverage as an exhibitor and John Bassett Jr. as a successful financier, but compared to the time allocated to producers, directors, critics and full-time seekers of public funds, this was little indeed. No mention was even made of the fact that

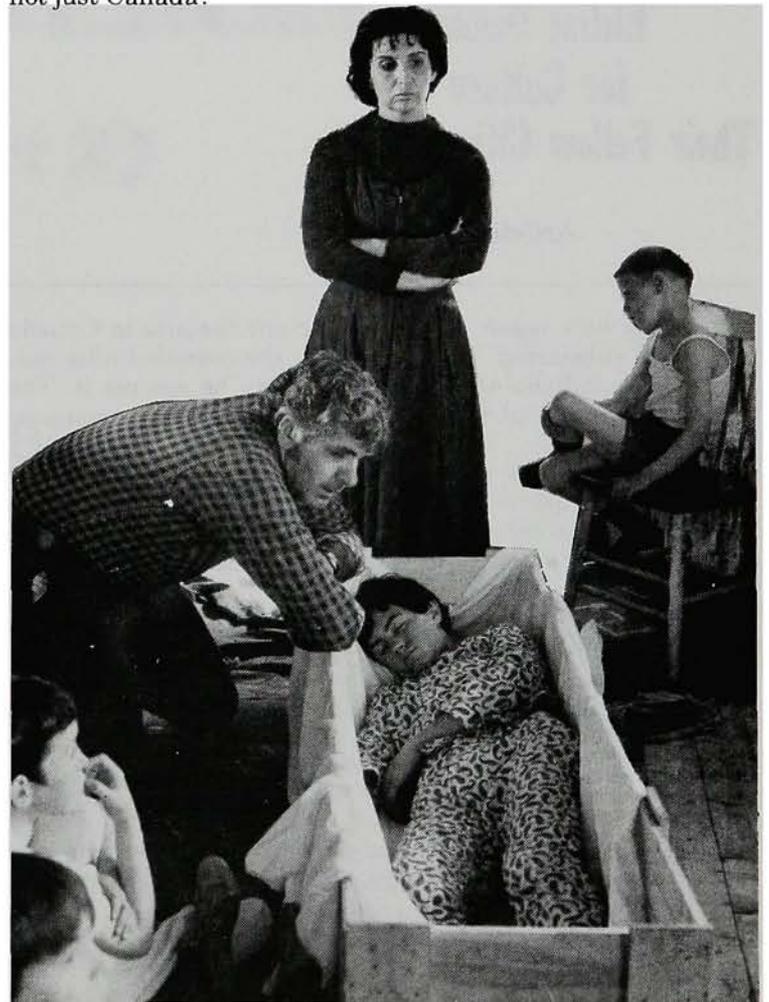


David Cronenberg behind the camera

photo: Attila Dory

exhibition and distribution in Quebec is more than half independently owned, with no appreciable impact on the provincial industry.

Where were the interviews with Harold Greenberg, Andre Link and David Cronenberg who have made money producing films in Canada? Or, why did we not hear from the hundreds of talented Canadian actors and actresses who had to go to Britain or the United States to find a decent script or a property with some chance of box office success? Many of them have since become international stars. Or, why did nobody bother to analyze the implications of tax write-off rates on investment in films - in any country, not just Canada?



Mon Oncle Antoine... the first Québécois film to play across the nation

I'm afraid that the problem with most productions on the Canadian film industry is that they are produced by people with a vested interest in a government-subsidized industry, or who simply feel the need to protect Canadians from the influence of the big bad Americans. A few weeks ago, Judy LaMarsh, under the guise of journalistic investigation, threw a distributor (Mickey Stevenson of Astral Films) to the wolves in the ratio of 5 to 1. She did this not to seek the truth, but to reinforce her pre-conceived ideas. Mr. Stevenson is to be commended that he did not blow his cool under such treatment.

Unfortunately, Gordon Pinsent was cast in much the same role as Judy LaMarsh on March 17. It seems that the media is not interested in telling the public the whole truth about the film industry in Canada. One can only wonder, why?

Anthony Ross
Director, Information Services
Canadian Motion Picture Distributors Association
Montreal

Should a Small to Tiny Minority of People Impose Their Seemingly Elitist Demands for Culture on Their Fellow Citizens?

Ardele Lister

If a poll were taken on whether or not the arts in Canada should be subsidized by government, the overwhelming majority of Canadians would most probably be against it. The Canada Council and the CFDC, to name two organizations, could go home.

As long as this is the case, one cannot hope to have any grass roots support for this nebulous entity of which we speak, Canadian culture, which has as its most popular hero, 'the loser'. And without that popular support the arts will always be dependent on the whims of whichever government is in power, and will remain as removed from the life of the average citizen as it is now.

I wouldn't know where to lay blame.

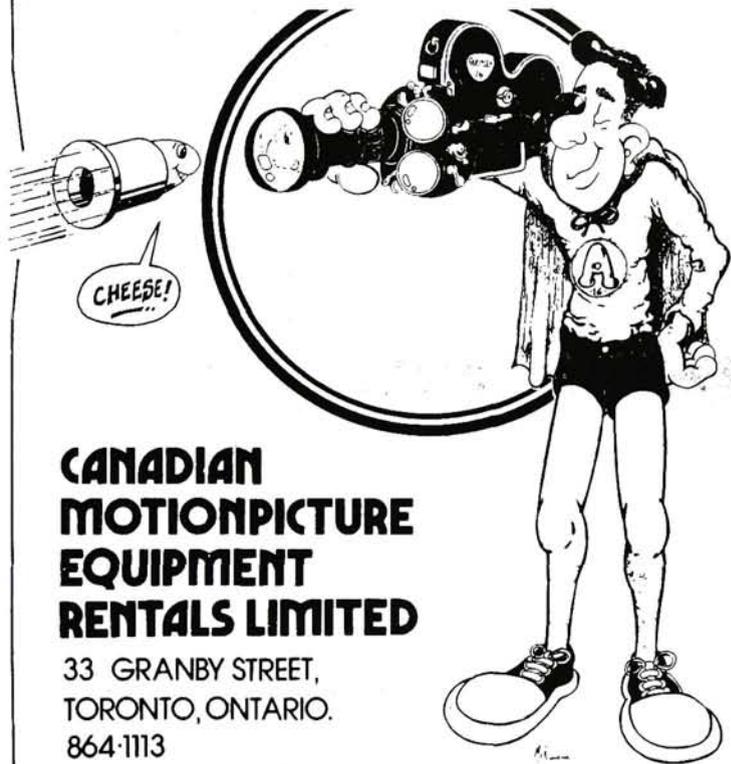
So, finally, to what end would one criticize the one attempt on the part of the CBC to deal with the current plight of the Canadian film industry? I might say I've heard it all before, and unfortunately I'll hear it all again before anything changes.

We have to acknowledge how many people turned to *Chico and the Man*, to *Cannon*, to *Maude*, to *California Split* half-way through *The Great Canadian Culture Hunt*.

And we have to keep believing/working/hoping/living here. Or do we?

Ardele Lister
Filmmaker, editor of *Criteria*
Vancouver

FASTER THAN A SPEEDING BULLET THE HIGH SPEED ARRI 16 AND WE'VE GOT IT!



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