

commercial results

by Connie Tadros

A conservative estimate of the volume of business actually done by Canada at the Cannes Festival this year sets sales at about \$1,000,000 with about 85 per cent of the total going to Cinepix of Montreal. Other figures are quoted, one as high as \$2,000,000. In six months' time, when all the results are in, the actual total will probably fall somewhere between these two figures.

Although twice as much business was done this year as last, the successes were more evenly distributed in 1975. This year Bill Fruet's thriller **Death Weekend** had grossed \$800,000 in cash advances by the end of June, and had been sold to all available territories, according to André Link. The combined advances on Cinepix's other films (**East End Hustle** by Frank Vitale, **The Mystery of the Million-Dollar Hockey Puck** by Jean Lafleur and **Peter Svatek**, **The Supreme Kid** by Peter Bryant and **La tête de Normande St-Onge** by Gilles Carle) had grossed about \$200,000 by the end of June.

Cinepix and Compass Sales (the world sales branch of Quadrant of Toronto) are the only two Canadian companies who go to Cannes as sales agents for a good number of Canadian features. Compass's performance was "below expectations" according to Sam Jephcott. While in a normal year, 50 per cent of Compass's sales are made during the Festival, this year's activity amounted to about half that figure. None of the films it represented (**Find the Lady** by John Trent, **The Keeper** by Thomas Drake and **Love at First Sight** by Rex Bromfield) attracted much attention during the Festival. Jephcott reported at the end of June that a distribution deal had been concluded for **Love at First Sight** with Atlantic Releasing in the States. The deal includes a "healthy" cash advance, a percentage, and provides for a simultaneous opening in Canada and the States. **Find the Lady** has also been sold to a US independent but Jephcott was disappointed in the deal and commented during the Festival that the lukewarm response to Quadrant produc-

tions like **Lady** will lead to a change of production orientation at Quadrant. "At Cannes, there is only room for real quality films or very commercial exploitation films. The films that fall in between, you bury them," he said. And Cannes was doing that, mercilessly, to many Canadian features.

Charles Chaplin of International Film Distributors represented two films: the International-CBC co-production **The Man Inside** by Gerald Mayer and **Point of No Return** by Ed Hunt. Neither film made any sales. Chaplin, weary after battling his way through the enormous crowds this year, commented that there is now "too much chaos to accomplish anything logically" at Cannes, and that the net result of this year's Festival was "discouraging, aggravating and upsetting." During the last five days of the Festival he had appointments every half-hour: a rhythm which no man can follow and remain unscathed. Echoing the thoughts of some, Chaplin wished that he could pass up the Festival completely but, remembering that it's the only place in the world where one can meet so many film people at one time, commented that he can't yet do without it.

Pierre David from Films Mutuel sounded just as discouraged when he said caustically that Mutuel had hoped to pay for the copies and advertising of **Mustang** through its world sales... The understanding was that the film hadn't even done that well. Neither did **Les ordres** by Michel Brault (back for the second time) or **Bingo** by Jean-Claude Lord (back for the third time) do any business worth mentioning. David concludes that "French-Canadian films are a problem to sell as they are presently made. Films made in Quebec, for Quebec, won't sell on the world market."

The Far Shore by Joyce Wieland and **L'eau chaude l'eau froide** by André Forcier were being handled by their producers. Both Joyce Wieland and Judy Steed were watching over **The Far Shore** and benefitted from the good sales counsel of Linda Beath from New Cinema. When they got



André Link and Ivan Reitman, producers of **Death Weekend**, soaking up the sun

onto the intricacies of making a film successful at Cannes they decided not to push the film this year but to come back next year with an appropriate campaign, including the necessary hype, and to try again. Bernard Lalonde from l'Association cooperative des productions audio-visuelles, producer of Forcier's film (which ran in the Directors' Fortnight) made some sales to European countries by relying on the advice of Armand Cournoyer from the Canadian Film Development Corp. Lalonde admitted that "doing-it-yourself" at Cannes was not an easy thing and that, though one learns an enormous amount by trying, sales might have been better had an old hand been representing the film.

Besides having entered **The Far Shore**, Linda Beath was representing the Crawley film **The Man Who Skied Down Everest**, and sales of this film constituted the biggest success story that wasn't of the Festival. With 15 firm offers and world TV sales under her belt, Beath received word from home that Crawley was before an arbitration court in California after a complaint by the American co-producers of the film. She had to stop dealing immediately and must now wait for the court's decision before finalizing the contracts. The loss will be substantial.

Don Shebib's **Second Wind** was being sold by the American Arnold Kopelson, and producer Les Weinstein feared that the film had become just one of many for the sales agent and was not being adequately pushed. There was "nothing exciting" to report.

As for **A Sweeter Song** by Allan Eastman, producer Anthony Kramreither reports that he signed a world sales and US distribution deal on April 30 with Bob Hope's company Epoh. The terms: \$250,000 for US distribution with a \$50,000 cash advance. TV sales are not included. So though Kramreither was prepared to come to Cannes, that wasn't necessary. He did comment that the offers he got from the Cannes showings of the film were inferior and that he wouldn't have accepted them. (Kramreither also commented that he has become an ardent believer in the "back-door policy" to Canadian distribution and world sales: first you sell it and open it in the States, then you make your Canadian distribution deal. "Any film which has opened in the US will do better on the marketplace afterwards.")

Even the National Film Board had nothing to report except a few TV sales and theatrical distribution in France for

Le temps de l'avant by Anne-Claire Poirer, a film which ran in the Critics' Week.

Astral Bellevue-Pathé had a postscript to add to the Cannes dealing. As of the end of June, reports Alfred Pariser, **The Little Girl Who Lives Down the Lane** had grossed \$750,000 in world sales. The film is an official Franco-Canadian co-production and, though Pariser wouldn't give the amount of the Astral investment, he did state that Astral was a "majority stockholder". Astral's **Breaking Point** was not at Cannes because Fox, the co-producer, already holds world sales rights and will distribute the film through its own worldwide network.

The independents

Two Canadian films cropped up in Cannes which weren't on the official lists and which didn't benefit from the corporate publicity of the Secretary of State's Festivals Bureau. The first, **The Last Cause**, produced by Sandy McLeod, is a 165-minute documentary on the International Brigades which volunteered for the Spanish Civil War. It was represented by its director, Alex Cramer. Because the film was only available in 16 mm, it was shown in a small screening room in the Palais des Festivals and Cramer said that few of the distributors he had hoped to interest actually showed up for the screenings. For films like his, "Cannes doesn't matter." He had made his contacts before the Festival and had to follow up afterwards. Cannes was just a "crazy" episode.

Steven Alix was there too with **Angel Johnny**, produced by Dalix Films in Montreal. This hard-core, all-male porno film played to packed houses but made no sales. Alix commented that the censor boards all over the world were a problem and that he could foresee sales only to Sweden and Denmark. Nevertheless, the film had already opened in New York and may be coming to us too through the back door.

The producers

Once the distributors and world sales agents are accounted for, there are still a lot of businessmen in Cannes sitting in the cafés and dealing with a great lot of money. This was the year for the producers, and co-productions were in the making everywhere. Even the CFDC was behind closed doors, trying to wrap up a Canada-West Germany co-production treaty.

Harve Sherman, there for the first time and surrounded by others from Ashling Multimedia, found it an exhilarating experience. In his words, producers need to broaden their power base and must use Cannes to do so. It "broadens the spectrum"; it was "mind-blowing". Ashling was promoting a few projects of its own, and was on the lookout for new productions in which to participate. Sherman found that the reaction of foreigners to producing in Canada was mixed, and blamed the lack of concrete attitudes on the part of the government and other Canadian producers.

Both Cinepix and Quadrant reported a lot of co-production interest, especially under the new Canada-Great Britain treaty. Louise Ranger who, with six others, is establishing a new production company in Montreal, used the occasion to announce Gilles Carle's next feature, **L'exit**. She found that Cannes was a good place to raise support and money from fellow Canadians. Pierre David got support for Mutuel's production of Jean-Claude Lord's next feature.

Perhaps the most telling comments of all came from Michael Spencer of the CFDC and André Lamy of the NFB. At different times, and separately, each said, "I've learned so much." Perhaps, once the confusion of Cannes gets so extreme that no one will be able to make any sense out of the experience whatsoever, film people will still be going once yearly to sit in the sun, to see each other's films, to talk among themselves and to learn "so much" about the realities of film and the commercial world market. □