

## Dalen and relationships

TORONTO—Zale Dalen, two pictures into his directorial career, is not worried that he doesn't have a new project lined up. After all, the gap between his acclaimed first feature, *Skip Tracer* and the multi-Genie nominee *Hounds of Notre Dame* was almost four years.

*Hounds*, which Dalen shot for producer Fil Fraser in Saskatchewan (scheduled to be distributed through Pan-Canadian Films), was an immensely satisfying project for Dalen, although he did not initiate it.

"The script had a lot of heart, and provided wonderful opportunities." The shoot in Saskatchewan was logistically challenging as well. "We tried to create a blizzard and I learned a lot. When you're blowing snow between the cameras and the actors you learn suddenly that snow is very light absorbent and all you get is white. So we had to use smaller snow and less of it. Later, we had a real blizzard and learned that you can't do anything in a real blizzard."

The shoot lasted five weeks and involved a crew of twenty-five and a cast of seven professional actors. An assortment of non-professionals played the students of the school. Despite the outstanding results obtained from the non-professionals, Dalen prefers working with professionals. "With a professional actor you can ask him to build a character, and it takes far fewer words to achieve the characterization. With non-professionals, you cast by physical type and hope that, basically, they can play themselves."

What did Dalen do in the long gap between his two films? "I wrote a screenplay—a comedy, very drug-culture oriented, and I think I managed to convince most of the people in the industry that I was crazy. The people who put money into Canadian films just don't have that kind of background." He also worked as a sound man, and ran the equipment rental house that he and his wife, Laara, own in British Columbia.

According to John Board, who worked as Dalen's assistant director on *Hounds*, Dalen has a very quick grasp of a scene. Dalen says that he makes his decisions on the set by

considering the structuring of the scene—where, for example, you want to use a closeup as punctuation. "Character also has a lot to do with it. In *Skip Tracer*, you had this very cold, sterile character. In *Hounds*, it's almost Dickensian—Pere Murray is practically slovenly, and you have all the clutter in his office, the activity in the school. When I got the rushes they had been touched with a golden sort of light—I'm not sure we used that in the release print, but that golden sort of feeling was what we wanted."

When Dalen describes the screenplay he is currently working on with John Board and Rob Iveson, he talks about the emotional values, its warmth. For many, these words, and indeed *Hounds of Notre Dame* seem a little strange coming from the man who made *Skip Tracer*. Dalen sees no contradiction. "Emotions, relationships with other people are all we have. *Skip Tracer* took the same story from the other side—a man who was almost a robot. What it said was maybe the robot doesn't like being a robot."

## Bunraku film makes sales

TORONTO—Marty Gross's *The Lovers' Exile*, a feature film recording the performance of the Bunraku Puppet Theatre of Japan, has been acquired for showing at Joseph Papp's Public Theatre in New York.

The film, which has just finished a successful Sunday run at Toronto's Festival Cinema as part of New Cinema's Festival of New Films, will be released theatrically in Toronto by New Cinema, hopefully day and date with the New York premiere. The Public Theatre in New York has previously showcased such prestigious films as Fassbinder's *In a Year of Thirteen Moons*, as well as screening retrospectives of filmmakers like Kenji Mizoguchi, Otto Preminger, and Samuel Fuller.

*The Lovers' Exile* has also been sold to The Public Broadcasting System in the U.S. for a fall airing.

## MORE FROM LES

by Les Wedman

VANCOUVER—British Columbia was the pioneer in the use of warning captions in advertisements to augment and expand on the ratings the provincial film classifier gives to movies shown here.

The first warning caption was written in 1964 by Ray MacDonald—then called a censor. After viewing the sensationalistic Italian documentary *Mondo Cane*, he decided the public needed to know this was no ordinary Restricted film. Newspaper ads for the movie were required to include the caption: "Be Warned—all the scenes in this picture are true—some of them are very shocking."

Today about two-thirds of all features shown in commercial theatres bear warning captions. A survey proves audiences generally approve but occasionally they also get a laugh from the captions. Like, for instance, the warning applied to Richard Lester's *The Three Musketeers*: "A considerable amount of sword fighting." MacDonald privately declared that he never wrote that but publicly, since it came from his office, he was stuck with it.

Now his successor, Mary-Lou McCausland, has introduced a new warning caption.

"Not suitable for children," it reads.

Her action was prompted by two so-called comedies—*Cheech and Chong's Next Movie* and *Used Cars*, both rated Restricted by the Motion Picture Association of America. In B.C. they were given Mature ratings, but movie exhibitors also were required to display the following warning captions in all ads and in theatres.

"*Used Cars*—Not suitable for children. Frequent coarse language and swearing; some nudity and suggestive scenes."

"*Cheech and Chong's Next Movie*—Not suitable for children. Frequent coarse language; a satire on drugs and sex."

Says the classifier "Hollywood has begun to play games with us. The film studios are trying to predict our reaction to certain kinds of material and are making their movies with the various rating systems in mind."

B.C. has three categories of classification—General, Mature and Restricted. Under provisions of the B.C. Motion Pictures Act the classifier has censorship powers—she can order cuts in films. But following the policy established by her predecessor, Ms. McCausland prefers captions to scissors.

"Our Restricted rating does not really reflect the spirit of

such films," she says of the offending movies, "but they're not quite mature either." B.C.'s Restricted category contains material that could be a strong R or a non-hardcore X in the U.S.

"People have tended to forget that Mature is not General. The 'not suitable for children' caption is a reminder," says McCausland, "one that puts the responsibility back where it should be, in the hands of parents."

Signs point to a busy time for major film production in B.C. starting about April, according to Justis Greene, provincial film development officer. Bulk of the action will be American as Hollywood gears for threatened strikes by both directors and writers.

Less talked about but still getting made were two low budget British Columbia features. One is *Take-off*, done on Vancouver Island by Victoria's Randy Cheveldave for \$750,000. The other is *The Butcher of Burquitlam* produced by Lawrence Keane and directed by Chris Windsor for a mere \$250,000.

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