

PARAMOUNT

FOR AN Industry

All the Canadian distributor was asking for was what he considered to be his natural rights. If Canadian producers were being given millions of tax payers' dollars... to make pictures that they didn't know how to make to practice on, why shouldn't some of the benefit have gone to feed the distribution infrastructure that had been in place for 60 years? But the CFDC, instead, decided in all its wisdom to ignore that structure: "We'll make the pictures. Big monumental productions and the world will beat a path to our door and the Canadian distributor be damned!"

— Daniel Weinzweig

If you go on the premise that the prime concern of the Majors is to make Canada part of their market, then their success in the last 2 or 3 years has been tremendous.

— Martin Bockner

The day of the independent film distributor is dead.

— M.M. (Mickey) Stevenson

by Virginia Kelly

The three men quoted are all former presidents of Canadian-owned film distribution companies. Two of those companies no longer exist; Dan Weinzweig's Danton Films and Marty Bockner's Saguenay Films. Mickey Stevenson left the distribution business after 24 years at Paramount, four more as President of National General Pictures of Canada and seven as President of Astral Films to become an independent film producer (*Humungus*). Each of these men has given a reason why in January 1982 the key question on the lips of every independent Cana-

dian film distributor is not "How well will we do this year?" but "Will we still be in business in January 1983?"

Back in the autumn of 1980 Danton Films and another company International Film Distributors Ltd., headed by Charles Chaplin, closed shop. Just this past August Bockner announced that Saguenay Films was out of business. Dabara Films, operated in Toronto by Sharon Singer, hasn't had a single theatrical release since she opened *L'homme à tout faire* commercially in Toronto over a year ago. The President of Creswin Films, Larry Rittenberg, closed down his office to accept a full-time position with New World Mutual Films. The situation is just as critical in Quebec. It is not an exaggeration to say that in 1982 the Canadian independent film distributor is an endangered species.

Although the media have been singularly indifferent, the distribution sector of the film industry in Canada is the most interesting and, in the long term, the most significant sector of the industry. It is the film distributor who is the middle man between producer and exhibitor, who really holds the power to make or to break a film industry in Canada. That power is economic, and directly affects anyone who has ever plunked down money at the box office. In 1979 (latest figures available) gross receipts from admissions at the box office came in at a whopping \$277,524,000. That same year over 80% of that revenue exited south to the head offices of the "Majors" — industry jargon for the six mammoth companies that dominate the world theatrical film market (Columbia, Paramount, Twentieth Century-Fox, United Artists, Universal and Warner Bros.). With so much money at stake one would logically look to the government for regulatory action but the history of the distribution biz in Canada is a Pandora's Box of miscalculation and cold-blooded complicity in the slow and often painful death of a Canadian industry.

The life blood of any film distributor is a constant flow of product from the producer to the screen, and when there is any interference at either end of the line, the distributor can suffer greatly. To obtain good films is not enough. A distributor's success is ultimately measured by the box office receipts his films generate, so winning the select screens and the prime playtime is as important a function of film distribution as buying good product.

In Canada, the independents have to bargain with either the Famous Players or Canadian-Odeon theatre circuits. Canadian independent distributors can't always get payoff from the larger of the chains, Famous Players (100% owned by Gulf and Western who also own and operate Paramount Pictures). A regular and constant flow of films from Paramount, United Artists and Warner Bros. will always end up on a Famous screen and Odeon can count on the faithfulness of Columbia Pictures and Universal to fill its screens. Twentieth Century-Fox splits between the two circuits. The fidelity of the Majors to the theatre circuits in Canada is unquestioned, and anyone who has tried

to upset the apple cart has been scarred.

For almost 60 years now the pattern has remained relatively unaltered. As N.A. Taylor so aptly points out, the "independent must slip in his product between the raindrops." Len Herberman, President of Ambassador Films puts it this way: "The independent always had to stand on the side lines during certain times of the year and wait for openings to rush in and get his pictures played... The major companies would generally get what we call 'preferred playtime,' the summer playtime, the Christmas playtime, etc. Now at Christmas, for the most part, we can't get into the market."

Shrinking screen time for independent distributors in Canada came to a peak several years ago and reflected a significant shift in the Majors' pattern of film acquisition and marketing. The kinds of films that the Majors now pick up, and the way in which they market those pictures, has had a tremendous effect on the ability of the independents to obtain films and screens. Linda Beath, formerly of New Cinema Ltd., explains the relationship this way: "About three years ago, all of a sudden, there was no screen time available to independents and, because they were under-capitalized, they were unable to fill the demand for income from the exhibition chains. Every year for the last three years all of the studios announced more productions. In one year Warner went from the 8 productions which they had produced for two or three years, to 14 films, and Universal went from 14 films to 32 films, so there was an incredibly large jump in the number of studio productions on screen in Canada. The independents couldn't find playing time for the films that they normally would have been able to expose and therefore couldn't get the kind of income that they'd been used to. Instead of cutting back — and in Canada it's very hard for an independent to cut back; it means deleting one of your four staffers — and instead of amalgamating, they ended up in a weakened position."

Over the last three years the Majors have consolidated and strengthened their positions over the independents (in the United States as well as in Canada). They have either bought or produced the kind of pictures that once kept the independents in business: the

exploitation picture. Low-budget, independently made "B"-type films like *Airplane*, *Friday the 13th*, *Prom Night* and *Halloween*, became the largest money-makers and the Majors were quick to put themselves in a position to benefit from this situation.

Dan Weinzwieg's company Danton Films had lived and thrived off this kind of film. "We started Danton Films in 1968 when the Majors were in a much weaker position than they are today. There was a slump in cinema attendance and production in general, and the independents were able to fill the gap that was left by the Major companies. And they filled it very successfully with a new kind of distribution, a new kind of product that the Majors wouldn't go near. This is the area called exploitation pictures which included everything from action pictures to off-beat, off-the-wall comedies to mildly salacious films. At that time, by using marketing techniques on these films that were a little bit different than what the Majors had been used to, independent distributors were able to become very successful in a very short period of time. They really proliferated in those early years, multiplying like rabbits. It was a good, viable business and they made a very strong contribution to the industry."

Even back in the "good years" of the late '60s, early '70s, the independents found that their most successful strategies for survival were defensive tactics. They could only react to what the Majors were doing and were therefore extremely vulnerable. The independents, because of their small size, depended on continual box office success. They didn't have the cushions of capital that the Majors, as members of multinational corporations, enjoyed. Dan Weinzwieg remembers: "... The cost of distribution went up enormously: the cost of buying media (newspaper advertising, television advertising and other methods of selling your films), and the cost of prints doubled within a couple of years because of the oil shortage and the rising cost of raw stock. So, the overheads of the independents, which had been lower, more cost-efficient operations, started to become seriously overburdened. And since it became more expensive to operate the companies, you had to increase the volume of product to justify your overhead, and that meant you had to go out and buy more pictures. Well, the pictures that the independents lived off of and did very well with were all of a sudden being bought up by the Major companies... And so companies like Saguenay and Danton and the other independents... found themselves without their bread and butter... The majors started taking the place of the independent distributors.

"The other thing that pushed the Majors into increasing the numbers of pictures that they released and acquiring independently produced films was the cost of production, which today in Hollywood is just somewhere under the \$10 million mark per picture average. Now, you can't produce too many pictures that bomb out at the box office before you have to start answering to your shareholders. But you could buy a picture made by an independent producer for a few million dollars and take a shot at it, take a calculated gamble, and if it doesn't work out you recoup your money and make a nice profit in the ancillary rights market. Now who can afford to do that and take those risks but the Major companies?"

Reducing the risk has always been an

important concern, and many in Canada realized that vertical integration - associating a production company, a distribution company and perhaps some theatres - was one way to survive. In Quebec, Pierre David's distribution company, Les Films Mutuels, has long served to distribute films made by Les Productions Mutuelles. He has recently repeated this pattern by using New World Mutual Films, based in Toronto, to distribute films made by Filmplan International, in which he and Victor Solnicki are partners.

Cinepix, a Montreal distributor, had offices in Toronto and, through Cinema International Canada, owned 14 screens in Quebec. When the principals, John Dunning and André Link, went into production as Dal, Cinepix first assured distribution. In Toronto, Linda Beath of New Cinema runs, through L.J. Beath and Associates, two theatres in Toronto, the Fine Arts Cinema and the Revue Repertory, and has built up a repertory circuit for her product across the country. Similarly, Astral Bellevue Pathé runs the distribution company Astral Films in Toronto while it produces in Montreal as Astral Productions and runs the

owned by investors in International Film Distribution Ltd., were sold to Drabinsky, completing the total integration of his operations.

Nevertheless, the premise upon which Cineplex was founded - the use of video projectors to compete with the 35mm houses - has proved faulty. When it became obvious that the technology was not yet ready for implementation on such a large scale, Cineplex started using 16mm prints and projectors. Again, unable to get first-run films quickly enough in 16mm, the existing Cineplex theatres have been converted to 35mm and new theatres will use the larger format. There may be much madness in their methods but regardless of industry opinion on the effectiveness and potential profitability of an enterprise as ambitious and extreme as the Cineplex/Pan - Canadian/Tiberius Films integration, one must admire the determination on the part of Nat Taylor and Garth Drabinsky to establish an independent, indigenous system for the production, distribution and exhibition of films in Canada.

Since the demise of Danton, Weinzwieg has been the chief booker for Cine-

foreigners who have the definite advantage. That's the bottom line. As Linda Beath puts it, "... the Canadian distributors are really victimized by the studio system. In Canada, because the Majors are such heavy bookers with Odeon and Famous, the independents don't have access to the screens and the non-studio, independently produced product is often sold to the Majors as part of the domestic US market."

Discriminated against in their own country, Canadian independent distributors find themselves beleaguered and squeezed on all sides. They can't get product so they can't get screens and if they can't get the screens they won't attract product. The vicious circle is reinforced by the perception on the part of the Majors that Canadian film audiences are just an extension of the American market. Linda Beath is emphatic: Canadian distributors must educate the sellers of product to the fact that the Canadian marketplace isn't simply 10% of the US market but a totally different territory where their pictures can be exploited more profitably by Canadian distributors.

In 1965 a very interesting book *Lament For a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism* was published. Part of George Grant's thesis seems to have been specifically written about the film industry and the government's strange notions of how best to protect culture. Grant writes that "... the crucial years were those of the early forties. The decisions of those years were made once and for all, and were not compatible with the continuance of a sovereign Canadian nation. Once it was decided that Canada was to be a branch-plant society of American capitalism, the issue of Canadian nationalism had been settled. The decision may or may not have been necessary; it may have been good or bad for Canada to be integrated into the international capitalism that has dominated the West since 1945. But certainly Canada could not exist as a nation when the chief end of the government's policy was the quickest integration into that complex. The Liberal policy under C.D. Howe was integration as fast as possible and at all costs. No other consideration was allowed to stand in the way. The society produced by such policies may reap enormous benefits, but it will not be a nation. Its culture will become the empire's to which it belongs. Branch-plant economies have branch-plant cultures. The O'Keefe Centre symbolizes Canada."

Grant alludes to the double standard with which government handles cultural issues in this country. An understanding of this double standard makes the impossible bind which the independent distributors find themselves in quite apparent. Governments have been paying lip service to protecting culture for years, at the same time giving tacit approval to foreign "cultural corporations" to proliferate and profit in Canada. In a sense it has nothing to do with culture. The bottom line is money. It doesn't matter whether people go to the theatre to watch *Raiders of the Lost Ark* or *Who Has Seen the Wind*. What does matter is that 80% of the money collected at the box office ends up in New York City and that the government allows that to happen.

The illusion of a free market is an albatross around the neck of every independent film distributor in Canada. The rhetoric of the free market is thrown up at him every time he might make a

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Bellevue Pathé lab. Currently, it is branching into video, animation and vying for a pay-TV license.

But even these experiments are not conclusive. Filmplan International, the most prolific film production company of the last three years, has ceased, and Pierre David is moving his operations to Los Angeles, commuting back to Montreal. Both Dal and Astral failed to produce in 1981. Already in 1979, Dal found that its own distribution company, Cinepix, could not compete with the Majors, and let its most successful film, *Meatballs*, go to Paramount for distribution in the US and Canada.

The most flamboyant and daring example of vertical integration of the film industry in Canada is the Cineplex Corp. which came blasting onto the scene in 1979 with the opening of the first Cineplex complex of 18 theatres at the Eaton Centre in Toronto. Dubbed as "mini-multiplexes" by Cineplex Corp. President N.A. (Nat) Taylor, Cineplex complexes have opened in 17 locations across Canada with a total of 131 screens.

Within a year of opening it was becoming apparent that the theatres were in desperate need of a guaranteed supply of product. Unlike Famous Players or Odeon, principals Garth Drabinsky and Nat Taylor couldn't count on getting product for their screens from the Majors, so they formed their own distribution company, Pan Canadian Film Distributors Ltd. Several of the films in distribution with Pan Canadian are pictures produced by Drabinsky for his company Tiberius Films. Finally, this year the Kleinberg Film Studios, once

plex Corp.'s outlets across the country and he believes that vertical integration of the sort practised by Cinepix, New World Mutual, New Cinema, Astral Bellevue Pathé and Pan-Canadian is the only way a viable and independent distribution industry can exist in Canada side by side with the US Majors. "The only companies that were able to survive the massacre... in Canada were companies that are vertically integrated with larger companies so that the distribution system could be fed by other businesses... I'm referring to situations like Astral which also has Columbia and Fox which allows them to be very selective in the films they choose to distribute. They're able to maintain a distribution network as a result of product flow from two Major companies. Similarly with New World Mutual. With a continuous supply of strong product from a mini-major company like Avco Embassy, they're able to maintain operations in Canada. Similarly a company like Pan-Canadian which has a support system through Cineplex theatres and through production within its organization. These companies in Canada are able to be viable businesses, to have the necessary financial support and product flow to keep them in business. Without the vertical integration an independent distributor cannot exist today in any meaningful way unless he operates out of a shoe box or out of his basement with whatever film he can scrounge cheaply enough."

The truth is that the US Majors have been allowed to set their own terms for operating in this country. Canadian independents are forced to compete with

little noise and charge foul play on the part of the Majors. And sometimes the independent distributor will use the rhetoric against himself in sheer desperation, trying to come to grips with why his company isn't flourishing side by side with the multi-million dollar corporations. Listen to Mickey Stevenson: "People can run around and cry and whine all they want but it's the law of the jungle, the fittest survive. It's an open marketplace. It's always been survival of the fittest and I don't think that the government can change things. Canada is a geographical accident and I don't think that you can legislate that away." Or Leonard Herberman of Ambassador Films: "...Neither Famous nor Odeon will pull off a picture if it is profitable for them; and if it's profitable for them it's profitable for us. If it's not profitable for them, it's not profitable for us... The independent does not have it easy, but on the other hand, I think several people try to blow the Famous/Odeon thing out of proportion. If you've got a picture that's going to make money they'll play it."

Such is the pervasive influence of the studio system that many of the most capable and experienced individuals in the Canadian industry believe that they are on equal footing with the Majors; that they have the same chances - that if only they were good businessmen like the Majors they would be able to expand and profit like them. There is an underlying feeling in the independent distribution sector that perhaps we really are part of the American market so that as a market territory, Canada should naturally belong to the American studio system, that the Americans have as much right to be here as they do. When one looks at the figures, one can't help but feel angered at the hypocrisy of government policy that has given carte blanche to the Americans. Historically, the government's record in the area of film distribution/exhibition policy is appalling.

Dan Weinzwieg sums up the situation: "...the Major studios live and abide by the regulations of whatever country they're in because they have to and because they're not going to give up millions of dollars... The Canadian distributor really had a better opportunity to survive than anyone else in North America. What happened here was very clear. The CFDC - the government really and the CFDC in particular - turned a blind eye to the independent distributor and really created the hole into which they fell. It was quite within their power and within their mandate to support the structure of the Canadian film industry, not just the production sector but distribution as well. The architect of the destruction of the independent distributor is a man by the name of Michael McCabe. It was his approach, when he came into the CFDC, that really created the lack of policy in this area... it didn't have anything to do with money. That

was a false issue... It became a matter of policy. It was a matter of appeasing, again, the Americans. It goes back to the Canadians as the hewers of wood where we manufacture a native product, a natural resource be it lumber or mining or oil or, in this case, film, and then license it to Americans for a small royalty. That was the policy that was carried out by the McCabe administration with its eye open to what it was doing... I was present at numerous meetings and discussions with the CFDC, and our association attempted to educate Michael with arguments and statistics to show that we were capable not only of surviving but of returning a substantial amount of money to the Canadian producer. And despite the amount of lip service that was paid to us, absolutely no support whatsoever was forthcoming."

The CFDC with its "Canada Can and Does" rhetoric best illustrates the gap that exists between the government's intentions and the decisions taken in the area of film policy. A reworking of that famous cliché "Those that can't do, teach; and those that can't teach, work for the government" goes a long way in explaining why, despite all the years, personnel and money that has been spent in this area, the Canadian film industry is still extremely unstable and vulnerable. When analyzing the decline of the independent distribution sector one finds that it was made to suffer while the production sector flourished. The immense wrongheadedness and bungling of priorities by the CFDC since the onset of the "Boom Years" is best illustrated by exploring the relationship between the production and distribution sectors in Canada during the last few years.

The refusal, or perhaps just the plain inability, of those responsible for making and administering film policy, to see the film industry as a multifaceted, inter-dependent whole was a major error. At all levels of government, bodies responsible for the film industry (Department of Communications, the CFDC, provincial ministries) tackle the problems of a very specific industry with very specific problems. The lack of consultation with working professionals is a very large concern among those working in the independent distribution sector. "...they were ignoring the sector which could have been the strongest support system for production," comments Weinzwieg. "They never availed themselves of the expertise that was available in Canada... Independents have 10 or 20 or 30 years of experience looking at figures every Monday morning and seeing what does business and what doesn't do business. They have screened thousands of pictures and have an instinct, a feel for the market place. Rarely did a producer come to a Canadian distributor and ask him to read a script and to give an appraisal." Linda Beath continues: "I think that the CFDC has to recognize that in order to have an industry here you have to talk about an industry in full and that includes publicity, promotion, distribution, release schedules, bookings, theatres and the kind of support needed there. So instead of appointing people who are at odds with the system and at odds with dealing in the way the system deals, I think that it should be using a lot more working professionals to give advice and guidance and supporting a lot more diverse ventures... There's absolutely no image in the mind of the people who work at the CFDC about

how to operate in the industry and no recognition by the CFDC that the industry is a multi-faceted integration. Until they get that image in their mind, the CFDC is merely a mirage for a young producer."

At present there is still no overall policy with regards to film distribution in Canada. What does exist are two programmes initiated and administered by the CFDC since 1979. Prior to 1979 no assistance was given by the CFDC to Canadian-produced films without CFDC participation. Anne Brown, Advisor, Distribution and Marketing, wrote me a

Until April 1982, there are no funds available under the investment programme. We are working with an interim fund and all commitments must be on a loan basis, with guaranteed payback."

Taxpayers can relax. The CFDC is hardly giving anything away here. In fact, the two programmes are so unattractive and impractical that it is surprising that in 1981 nine feature films took advantage of these schemes to the tune of \$132,000 out of a total CFDC budget of \$4.2 million.

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letter on November 10 outlining these two programmes:

1. Where the CFDC has already been involved in the financing of the film: loan or investment programme.
2. Where the CFDC has not participated in the financing of the film: loan programme only.

Loan Programme

Maximum participation of the CFDC: \$25,000 or 50% of the budget, whichever is less based on matching funds from the distributor. Repayable in 6 months, with interest at prime plus 2% and a set-up fee (\$100 if \$10,000 or less, \$250 if more than \$10,000).

Security: Promissory note and an assignment, i.e. TV contract, first revenues, or the like. Financial statements for the past 2 years from the company issuing the promissory note.

Investment Programme

Maximum participation of the CFDC: \$25,000 or 50% of the budget, whichever is less, based on matching funds from the distributor. CFDC will pay 50% of paid bills submitted or invoices received within 7 days of receipt by CFDC on approved expenses.

Repayable 100% in first position from all revenues, with the same set-up fee as loan.

Remittances to CFDC from first revenues must be accompanied by photocopy of exhibitors' cheque to distributor and exhibitors' statement. Security: Assignment of first revenues until repaid.

Independent and Canadian-owned Motion Picture Distributors

Prima Film Inc. • Cinepix Inc.
Citadel Film Dist. Ltd.
Frontier Amusements Ltd.
New Cinema Ltd.
Ambassador Film Dist. Ltd.
Astral Films Ltd. • Dabara Films
Pan Canadian

Ron Emilio, President of Citadel Films and President of the independents' lobbying group, The Association of Independent & Canadian-Owned Motion Picture Distributors (AICMPD), doesn't think much of the CFDC's present assistance programmes for distributors: "The CFDC is a very peculiar organization. They were so happy that they could offer us this great deal but I told Jocelyne (Pelchat-Johnson), I was straight with her. I said 'You won't put me under the ground. Please don't offer me 25 cents to help me go out of business.' We're not investors in the films we distribute so why should I take out a loan to launch a bad film?"

The independent distributors as a group cannot be criticized for their record of picking up Canadian product for distribution in this country. A look at the films released during the last two years shows a high proportion of Canadian companies distributing films produced recently. However, what is obvious is that, by and large, the Canadian companies got stuck with films that failed miserably at the box office while the Majors ended up with the biggest winners: *Meatballs* (Paramount), *Heavy Metal* (Columbia), *Running* (Universal), *Middle Age Crazy* (Twentieth Century-Fox), and *Atlantic City* (Paramount). The larger box office films distributed by Canadian companies were *Les Plouffe* (Ciné 360 in Quebec only), *Scanners* (New World Mutual) and *Prom Night* (Astral). With the exception of *Les Plouffe* the other films were being distributed by vertically integrated companies.

Through the '60s and '70s, the independent distributors' support of Canadian production was important. Since the Majors were uninterested, the independents distributed all the films, good and bad, and some think that this contributed to the sorry state of independent distribution today. They wish that all Canadian films would continue to come to the independents, so that they could now reap the benefit of some better films. "The simplest way in which the Canadian government and the CFDC could have supported the independent distributor was by simply insuring that they were the distributors of Canadian films, good and bad. The independent distributor would end up

Association québécoise des distributeurs de films (AQDF)

Art Films Inc. • Astral Films Ltd.
Cana-Films Reg'd.
Ciné-Agence du Québec (1976) Inc.
Cinépix Inc. • Compagnie France Film
Corporation des Films Mutuels Ltée
Faroun Films (Canada) Ltée
Films Inter Inc. • Les Films René Malo Inc.
Les Films SMC (Québec) Enr.
Hoggar Films • Prima Film Inc.
VivaFilm Ltée

with some of those 45 stinkers but he might have also ended up with *Meatballs* or *Atlantic City* or *Middle Age Crazy* or *Running* or any of the pictures that were worthwhile and potential money-makers in Canada... Our association put forth a number of remedies in briefs to both the CFDC and the Secretary of State's office... Some included some regulatory systems so that, for instance, the Major companies could distribute in Canada any pictures that they produced without any interference, but pictures that were independently produced and purchased by them for US distribution would have to be sold separately in Canada," says Weinzwieg.

Since it has been shown time and time again that government film industry agencies will not lobby in the interests of the independent film distributor, this effort must be one of self-help. Unfortunately, the independents have been lax in this area. The Canadian Motion Picture Distributors Association (CMPDA), the professional association and lobbying group for the Major companies in Canada, has a much better record of protecting their interests. The AICMPD was originally incorporated in 1976 under the leadership of Dan Weinzwieg. After Weinzwieg's term, the organization became lethargic until an attempt was made by Emilio in the spring of 1981 to reactivate the group.

Emilio's major concern at present is that the independents are being overlooked and left out of important discussions in the areas of film censorship, tariff changes and government film policy. There was no formal exchange between the Federal Cultural Review Committee and the independents, though Emilio has spoken to committee member Michael Spencer. When the Ontario Censor Board changed its structure recently to form a rotating board of censors including representatives from the film industry, Victor Beattie, formerly with Twentieth Century-Fox, was appointed, but no independent distributor was included on the Board. At present, there is a test case (involving Warner Bros.) before the courts which will have crucial repercussions for the independents as the government tries to reclassify the tariff for trailers used on television as commercials and not films.

Where is Ron Emilio and his association? And where is the CFDC whose mandate is to foster the growth of the film industry? As Ron Emilio says: "I think that because we're not members of CMPDA we're not members of anything." Or as Linda Beath sums it up: "Until the government takes some responsibility or until the Majors begin failing enough... until one of those two things happen the situation is not going to get much better. So I think for the people working in Canada it's going to become clear that the alternative is to work with the Americans providing for their system or it's going to be living in a reduced effectiveness, reduced income, reduced potential... The best distributors are going to survive in some form or another but it's going to be despite the CFDC and despite the government allowing the Americans to do anything they want." ●

Since this article was written, Beath has left *New Cinema* to head up *United Artists Classics in Canada*. U.A. Classics, and similar companies being started up by the other Major distributors, are recent efforts to get a foot-hold in the art film and specialized film markets—truly the last bastion of the independents. Ed.

LAMENT FOR AN Industry

The view from Quebec

The following brief was presented to the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) by René Malo, vice-president of the Quebec Association of Film Distributors, on September 24, 1981. Ever since the beginning, the distribution and presentation of feature films in Canada has been under foreign control. Whereas the majority of other ways of disseminating culture and entertainment must, by law, belong to Canadians, this is by no means the case with films. There are two major theatre chains in Canada: one belongs to Gulf and Western; the other, until very recently, belonged to Rank England.

Foreigners have controlled cinema in Canada from the outset — not only the theatres but also distribution. The major American distributors established themselves here between 1910-1920, and ever since then they have considered the Canadian market an integral part of domestic American market. They think of Canada as one of the United States, and an especially profitable one at that. (For instance, Toronto has the greatest per capita cinema revenues in North America.) In 1979, the distribution billings of the "Majors" in Canada was \$75,000,000.00. In 1980, it was \$91,500,000.00, making Canada the most profitable foreign market for Americans.

Not only are we the country that brings in the most to American distributors, we are also the one where they spend the least. In other countries they employ many people to dub their films, run publicity campaigns, plan and print promotional material, make additional prints of the films, and so on... In Canada, they employ a few clerks (all decisions being made in New York or Los Angeles). They do not dub; promotional material comes from the States; prints are made in the States.

Meanwhile, we do have some independent distribution companies in Canada which are wholly-owned by Canadians, and which have succeeded, through their courage and tenacity in capturing about 10% of the market, or some \$9,000,000.00 worth of distribution billings. These distributors, most of whom belong to the Quebec Association of Film Distributors, have a greater cultural and economic impact in Canada with their nine million than the Americans with their ninety-one million.

In cultural terms, independent Canadian distributors on the one hand contribute to the spread of Canadian culture by distributing and very often financing Canadian films; on the other hand, by distributing films from

different countries, they open cultural frontiers on Western, not only North American ways of thinking.

In economic terms, when Canadian distributors distribute a foreign film, 25%-75% of the profits remain in Canada. In addition, since most of the materials needed by Canadian distributors (print, billboards, ads...) are made in Canada, they employ more people in Canada than the American distributors. Canadian distributors have always been involved in the production of Canadian features. In fact, they have often initiated many Canadian productions, by giving advances, investing, or producing the films themselves. It can certainly be said that without distributors like France Films, Cinépix, Films Mutuels, Ciné Art and others, Canadian, and especially Quebec production would be practically nonexistent.

Before the arrival of the "tax shelter" in the film industry, Quebec film production was far greater than in the rest of Canada combined. Without question, this is directly related to the fact

It can certainly be said that without distributors like France Films, Cinépix, Films Mutuels, Ciné Art and others, Canadian, and especially Quebec production would be practically nonexistent.

that independent Canadian distributors are largely concentrated in Quebec. The health of Quebec production has always been directly tied to the financial health of independent distributors. Now, their financial health is precarious, and as a result, Quebec feature film production has virtually shut down.

The survival of independent Canadian distributors today is in greater jeopardy than ever. The Canadian market has already escaped them because the Americans were there first and have never given Canadians even the slightest opportunity to penetrate this market. The truth is, the American Majors own the product, i.e. the American films, virtually lock, stock and barrel, with the independent distributors left to gather up the crumbs.

With the advent of the television, Canadian distributors hoped to gain a

larger share of the market. Unfortunately, however, English language stations bought, and continue to buy, only American films. French language stations used to buy films from different countries (especially France), but now buy more films from America than anywhere else. (See table below)

Country of origin of Radio-Canada films according to observation periods

Country of origin	1974-75	1980-81
	(N: 479)	(N: 496)
	100%	100%
U.S.A.	18	41
France	41	30
England	7	9
Italy	13	7
Canada	3	3
Other countries	19	10

The arrival of pay-television is therefore the last hope for Canadian distributors. The market is shrinking and costs are rising. The Canadian film distribution industry will either be saved or destroyed by one thing alone: pay-television. If indeed we can take part in it, the increase in our resources will allow us on the one hand to get involved in Canadian production in a more substantial way, and on the other, to develop a viable strategy for marketing Canadian products abroad.

It is absolutely crucial that the CRTC require of any licensee:

1° That it obtain all foreign products from Canadian distributors. (Certain applicants include in their requests the desire to favour Canadian distributors: these are pious wishes which do not satisfy us.)

2° That it have only the right to broadcast on its own network; in other words, that it not be allowed to distribute or sell films either in Canada or abroad.

3° That a member of our Association be named to the board of directors of the licensee.

If the CRTC does not accede to the distributors' needs, not only will the market not grow, it will disappear, because the licensee will buy directly even those products that are currently distributed by Canadian distributors. After having allowed the American "Majors" to exploit us, the CRTC now runs the risk of creating a Canadian "Major" that would sound the death knell of the independent Canadian film distribution industry.

We have let \$3,000,000,000 get away. This is not an ulcer, it's an hemorrhage! For the moment, all we are asking for is a transfusion! ●

REVIEWS

Allan Winton King's

Silence of the North

Silence of the North opened in Winnipeg to small crowds, most of them come to see themselves or their friends on screen as extras. At least they came to the cinema.

Silence of the North is the true story of Olive Frederickson (played by Ellen Burstyn), who, in 1919, left behind a stable, dull life to follow her childhood sweetheart, Walter (Tom Skerritt), into the wilderness of the great white north. It is the story of an innocent girl's growth into a strong woman; a story of courage and fortitude against all odds. It's a story that should inspire us. It does not.

It has become fashionable to make films portraying women as strong and independent, positive role models. To some degree *Silence* is a fashionable film. Nothing wrong with that, *per se*, except that too many of Olive's strengths are presented to us as axioms of her femaleness. We do see her in moments of crisis, but are given little insight into the inner conflicts she must have suffered while coming to terms with her lot in life. She appears to gather her resources overnight, and thereafter lives remarkably well in a male-dominated world. It's difficult to believe it was that easy. If nothing else, one expects at least one rip-roaring fight between Olive and Walter. Given the circumstances in which they live - cold, hungry, and very isolated - their relationship is miraculously harmonious.

There's an art to putting a true story on film, and that art demands considerably more imagination and sensitivity than *Silence* exhibits. It demands the ability to distinguish what is important in real life from what will actually work on screen.

As one example of the film's failure in this regard, on their first voyage north, Olive and Walter are accompanied by a friend. They witness his death by drowning. Who this friend is in the general scheme of things we do not know, and why we should care is even less evi-

dent. That a shot of the stormy water over his head is immediately followed by a shot of Walter smiling at his work is not a testament to the resilient human spirit, but a further negation of the friend's importance. Doubtless, the incident had an impact on the real Olive, but in terms of the story the film is out to tell, it is irrelevant.

Similarly, Olive's devotion to her mother, and her love of the violin are insufficiently documented and poorly supported by the rest of the action. They too, as used in the film become useless information. We could forgive their presence if they added anything to Olive's characterization. As used, they do not.

The fact that it's a true story doesn't make *Silence of the North* any easier to believe. Maybe it all really happened exactly as the film portrays it. More likely, the film telescopes a lot of the action in order to fit in as much as possible. Maybe their first child really did appear out of the blue. (It certainly arrives as a complete surprise to the audience.)

Raise your hand if you believe the following: after several agony-filled long, lonely winter days and nights, Olive emerges into the snowy landscape playing a violin (note: undamaged by extreme northern temperatures). Shades of Frankenstein, Walter appears like a jack-in-the-box, his beard freshly trimmed, and a song in his heart. He has just returned from a gruelling sojourn in the wilderness.

Truth is stranger than fiction, you say. Maybe so, but screenwriter Knop and director King could surely have found a better way to translate these truths into digestible screen realities.

One of the film's greatest weaknesses is Walter. He is the crux of the tale, the reason it all happened in the first place. Even for the dreamer that he is, Skerritt's Walter has altogether too many stars in his eyes. Too naive and immature to provide inspiration to anyone, it is no wonder Olive finally abandons him to his foolish dreams.

The time spent in the north and the near death of his family have no appreciable effect on him. Minutes after a "wild man" has robbed them of all he can carry, including their winter food supply, Walter is on his knees, scavenging for safety pins, a knife and hatchet, telling Olive how he'll make a fishing

rod and kill animals with his bare hands. All well and good in reality, but if one closes one's eyes and listens to the tone of his voice, it's too easy to conjure up Mickey Rooney talking to Judy Garland. The only thing missing from this display of resourcefulness is the "gee whizz" and the "golly". One only hopes the real Walter had more to recommend him.

The north too is drained of allure, robbed of its powerful presence. One does not feel cold watching this film. One does not have any sensation of space. And one never loses the feeling that the little wilderness cabin is really not too far from the next cabin, or the next. The only moments of isolation we share with Olive take place *inside* the cabin. While they are very powerful scenes in themselves, they are not supported by the outside environment. Olive might be an agoraphobic housewife wasting away in suburbia for all we know. It takes more than snow, wolves howling, and a grizzly in the yard to convey a rugged existence. Inside the cabin, life is certainly miserable. Outside, the north in *Silence* looks like a winter wonderland. Surviving on tree bark comes across like a romantic interlude.

What saves the film, besides getting Walter and the snow off the screen, is the introduction of John Frederickson, a lonely trapper who saves their lives during a blizzard. Gordon Pinsent is at his finest in this role. It would have been very easy to simply portray Frederickson as one of those quickly desperate men about whom all good mothers warn their daughters. While his desires are threatening - to him as well as to Olive - and may at any moment overwhelm him, Pinsent paints a complex and subtle portrait of a man, gentle to the last; a man remarkable in many quiet ways. He is a constant pleasure to watch.

Come to tell Olive of Walter's death, Pinsent imbues the screen with an awesome blend of emotions, and Burstyn responds, finding the essence of Olive and showing her to us whole, even as she crumbles under the weight of her sorrow. It is a memorable scene and one in which the talents of cast and crew shine.

Indeed, there is a chemistry created by Pinsent and Burstyn that gives life to the film. It appears that their talents in-

spired each other. The results are satisfying. Burstyn's performance improves markedly when she shares the screen with Pinsent. As the young Olive, someone should have told her that innocence is more complicated than bright eyes and a charming smile. But as the mature Olive, playing against a fine actor, her characterization rings true.

The relationship between Olive and Frederickson in depression Calgary suffers only superficial conflicts. It meanders its way towards an inevitable end, thereby draining the couple's trials and tribulations of their significance.

Conspicuously lacking real drama and hopelessly linear, the film fails to blend its various elements into a satisfying whole. The winning moments don't quite make up for the bad.

Silence of the North is not a bad film - one likes it while watching it - but afterwards, over coffee, one talks of something else.

The real Olive must be a remarkable woman. Surely her story deserves a more memorable treatment.

Jane Dick ●

SILENCE OF THE NORTH d. Allan Winton King p. Murray Shostak ac. Patricia Louisiana Knop, based on the book "The Silence of the North" by Olive Frederickson with Ben East co-p. Robert Baylis d.o.p. Richard Leiterman, C.S.C. p. des. Bill Brodie editorial consult. Eve Newman, A.C.E. ed. Arla Saare cost. des. Olga Dimitrov Song "Comes a Time", music & lyrics by Neil Young, performed by Lacy J. Dalton mus. comp. Allan MacMillan mus. adap. & scored Jerrold Immel superv. p. exec. Douglas Green p. man. Gwen Iveson mus. ed. Joan Biel loc. man. Michael MacDonald unit man. Gordon Mark asst. to p. Alma Lee compt. Lacia Kornyo a.d. Rob Lockwood (1st), Libby Bowden (2nd), Rick Thompson (2nd), Kim Winther (3rd) cast. Bill Batliner (L.A.), Claire Walker (To.), Bryan Gjaerman (extras) cam. op. Robert Saad asst. cam. Jack Martin 2nd asst. cam. Raul Randa Steadicam op. Dan Lenny Panagludie op. Craig Di Bona sc. superv. Penny Hynam ed. rec. Bruce Carwardine boom op. Glen Guthrie ed. ed. superv. Jayme Scott Parker, James Troutman, Sound Fx of Canada Inc. sd. cutters Mike Virnig, Jeremy MacLavery, Jim Harrison, Robin Leigh post p. dial. Sharon Lackie ad. rec. rec. Robert L. Hoyt, Nolan Roberts art d. Susan Longmire, Gavin Mitchell, Alicia Keywan trainee art d. Daniel Bradette head ward. mistress Linda Kemp, Nadia Ungaro (asst.) make-up Bill Morgan, Cindy Warner (asst.) hair Paul Le Blanc, Rita Steinman (asst.), Dennis Yungblut (asst.) set dec. Gery Deschênes, Earle Sewchuk prop. master John Berger, Grant Swain (asst.), Doug Shambrooke (asst.), Gus Meunier (asst.) construc. co-ord. Ron McMillan construc. business co-ord. Lynda Haller scenic artist Richard Sturm key grip Andrew Muliani, Robert McRae (asst.) gaffer Ray Boyle best boy Malcolm Kendal gen. op. Rodger Dean unit pub. Prudence Emery stills Shin Suginio stuntman Glen Randall Jr. sp. efx. John Thomas, Ken Johnson (asst.) head wrangler Norm Wells, Lyle Edge (asst.) sp. animal consult. Hubert Wells wild animal handlers Steve Martin, Mark Weiner dog trainer Marc Conway 2nd unit d. Martin Walters 2nd unit a.d. John Board, Rick Thompson 2nd unit d.o.p. Matt Tundo, Keith Woods 2nd unit asst. cam. Dave Kelly, Curtis Peterson, Zoe Dirse, Dan Heather 2nd unit sc. superv. Lily Fournier transp. capt. Nick Sweetman, Pat Brennan (asst.) asst. film ed. Gordon McClellan, Joan Giammarco, Bill Zabala p. co-ord. Trudy Work (location), Judy Roseberg (Toronto) reg. cut. Neg. prop. a. Gabrielle Clery, Dave Hone, Vonnie Hoogstratton, John Webb, Lyn Gibson craft service Roman Bochuk, Debbie Tiffin apprentices Marc Chaisson, Bruce Griffin, Jennifer Coyne, Ted Sanders post p. superv. Don Haig post p. sec. Holly Wise l.p. Ellen Burstyn, Tom Skerritt, Gordon Pinsent, Jennifer McKinney, Donna Dobrijevic, Jeff Banks, Colin Fox, David Fox, Richard Farrell, Larry Reynolds, Frank Turner, Ute Blunck, Thomas Hauff, Freddie Lang, Dennis Robinson, Robert Clothier, Brian Pustokian, Larry Musser, Leah Marie Hopkins, Ken Pogue, Ken James, Albert Angus, Frank Adamson, Murray Westgate, Kay Hawtrey, Booth Savage, Lynn Mason Green, Graham McPherson, Chester Robertson, Paul Verden, Sean Sullivan, Tom McEwen, Chapelle Jaffe, Tom Harvey, Ken Babb, Anna Freidman, Janet Amos, Frank Gay, Peter Stefaniuk, George Myron p.c. Universal Productions Canada Inc. (1979) running time 94 min. dist. Universal

● Given their circumstances, Ellen Burstyn and Tom Skerritt create a surprisingly harmonious relationship



Robert Sherrin's

A Matter of Time

When CBC-TV first broadcast *Home Fires* in November 1980, even Toronto critics had good things to say about it. In *The Globe and Mail*, Rick Groen accurately forecast the future of the series, noting that if Canadians enjoyed the drama of a Canadian family struggling to live in Canada at war, then the first eight segments of *Home Fires* would "multiply as surely as a concession from Neville Chamberlain." Many Canadians sampled the fare; many liked it - hence the production of five more one-hour shows to take Dr. Lowe and his family from 1941 through the middle years of World War II.

The sequel keeps the promises made by the original series. Dr. Lowe gets the chance to prove that he is as good as his word ("You can only let them push you so far") by reporting on benzene poisoning caused by an antiquated ventilation system in the plane factory where his daughter works, and more importantly for subsequent shows, by siding with the strikers there. His daughter Terry, still glowing and engaging but still too ingenuous to be true, matures a little by leading the wild-cat strike. Son Sydney also grows up some by contracting a bad case of Spring fever (a particularly severe, highly amusing strain marked by what seems to be terminal awkwardness). He falls for an evacuee of Great Britain, played by the charming and poised Emma Hewitt. Her fears for her family and friends in England are deepened by Terry's strike, for it occurs at precisely the same time as Nazi bombing of England escalates. Timing, as the title of the first show suggests (*A Matter of Time*), is part and parcel of the dramatic tensions of *Home Fires*. Those German bombs make the just strikers "saboteurs" and Dr. Lowe's support "sedition"; those bombs threaten Sydney's burgeoning love affair by pitting the political concerns of his sister against the emotional ones of his girlfriend. None of this is great entertainment nor is it deeply moving, but after the profound ups and downs of Sunday afternoon football and the latest exposé of institutional corruption parading as altruism on *60 Minutes*, *Home Fires* is a pleasure.

In *Home Fires*, the CBC has an engaging story and tells it well. That "well" is qualified praise, but praise nonetheless, for my first misgivings proved false. There was a visual cliché (a close-up of a ringing telephone for an anxious moment) and a verbal one ("Love... [pregnant pause]... there's that word again."). There was the first cut from the factory, a set faithfully captured in its variety and depth, to the Lowe home, a set so harshly lit that the humans stood out like figures in a colouring book. But these flaws - including the last one, which I used to think a trademark of CBC-TV drama - occurred early and passed quickly, and so the story unfolded without such distractions from its more entertaining aspects.

But one weakness, a weakness not unrelated to the story, persisted throughout *A Matter of Time*. Put simply, there is too much story-telling, too great a reliance on words. And it is not necessary given the skill of *Home Fires'* cast and the power of TV as a silent visual



● The family for which home fires burn

medium. Nor is it consistent with the readiness to trust the audience to put two and two together on other occasions; for example, at the very end when we realize what Terry Lowe does not - that the union triumph is but one little battle in a much longer, bigger war. Verbalizing what is visually clear flattens some of the show's finest dramatic moments. When the strikers have waited twenty-four hours in defiance of an ultimatum from their bosses, when they have waited part of another six minutes in defiance of an ultimatum from the Royal Canadian Armed Forces marshalled outside their plant, an audience knows from the clock, the faces, the postures, the action/inaction that waiting is difficult; we do not need to be told that, but we are. Instead of expanding the dramatic tension, the words explode it.

Despite all that, *Home Fires* is a good story well told. Comic moments and upbeat music remind us of the hopefulness which underlies the series as a whole and qualifies the most disturbing moral dilemmas the characters face. Some splendid ties on the men, some sexy informal jiving by the women on strike, and some curious artifacts (such as the old telephone I've mentioned or Stephenie's two-wheeler) suggest the world of the 1940's. The acting - that of the company, not that of any individual - is impressive. The interplay of Parkes, Yaroshevskaya, Crewson, Spence, and Moore is easy and confident; they create that crucial sense of a family bound together by some common understanding, some shared strength. This sets off

the sparkling performances of Suzette Couture as a feisty, outspoken activist for unionization and of Angus MacInnes as the self-righteous plant manager. His voice is important to one of a number of complex, satisfying dramatic moments: we hear his voice vainly ordering strikers back to work, while we listen to a personal conversation about causes and risks of striking and, most importantly, while we see anonymous workers stop their machines.

Like the original series, *A Matter of Time* whets the appetite for developments to come: Sydney's dilemma must be resolved; Terry's growth from innocence to experience must be furthered, just as her love life must be complicated by the dapper reporter who investigates the strike; Dr. Lowe must pay for supporting the "saboteurs" and his wife must show the value of her constant, quiet strength. Though the innocence, idealism, and dedication of *Home Fires* may now be extinct (or an endangered species at best), it is nice to think for an hour once a week that they are parts of our past. I'll tune in again, and again next year for more *Home Fires*.

Edward McGee ●

A MATTER OF TIME sc. Jim Purdy p. Duncan Lamb d. Robert Sherrin unit man. Bing Kwan post p. Harris Verge p.a. Alan Hausegger, Bill Spahik, Jeanette Solomcoe, Kathryn Buck p. co-or. Laurie Cook p. sec. Susan Procter tech. p. Gerry Lee design. Russell Chick cost. Astrid Janson make-up Daisy Bijac hair Anita Miles l.p. Doug Barnes, Gail Carr, Gerard Parkes, Kim Yaroshevskaya, Wendy Crewson, Peter Spence, Sheila Moore, Suzette Couture, Nancy Beatty, Tony Sheer, Booth Savage, Mary Vingoe, Emma Hewitt, Gini Metcalfe, Angus MacInnes, Gil Yaron, David Gardner, Bill Lake, John Kozak.

Eric Saretzky's

A Private World

A Private World, an intimate look at The National Ballet School in Toronto, is South African filmmaker Eric Saretzky's hour-long homage to the artistry and dedication of young dancers-in-the-making. There is no question that the NBS is interesting material for a documentary because, by combining ballet with academic training, it is unique in North America. The fact that its graduates are dancing in 17 major companies around the world demonstrates its success.

According to Saretzky, however, the film is not meant to be a traditional documentary. "It's not a brochure, a pamphlet or a forum of opinion, because I wanted to convey the essence of the school through feeling rather than fact. A film can't have the detail of a magazine article. Words are spoken only if they don't intrude upon the images." Thus, *A Private World* is not an in depth study, much to the dismay of the dance critics who seem to have been expecting Saretzky, as he says, "to film what they might have wanted to see." As a result, the film has stirred up controversy in the dance world.

Saretzky comes to his first film with a background in photography, architecture, TV camera work and cinematography. He has had several photographic exhibits and it is probably success in this field which accounts for his keen eye that focuses in on the elements of dance - an arm in an attitude, the intricacies of putting on a toe shoe. Overall, the film is very beautiful to watch and repeated viewings have not diminished the impact of the many exquisite images. The emotional high-point of the film, so poignantly captured by Saretzky, is the long sequence devoted to the students rehearsing the second act of "Giselle" for their year-end recital. The tears of frustration, the nerve-racking tension, the delight when something goes right - in short, the agony and ecstasy of being a dancer - are all revealed under Saretzky's relentless camera. An audience cannot help but be moved.

For this writer, however, the film does have contentious points. Saretzky has interspersed footage of the school itself, much as the academic and ballet training, rehearsals and recitals, with teachers and graduates of the school in actual performances. On first viewing, these inserts are jarring. Following shots of a ballet class, we are suddenly greeted with Vanessa Harwood of The National Ballet whirling in a variation from "Le Corsaire". Saretzky justifies the performance sequences in the following: "These dances give all the activity of the school meaning because they answer the question, 'Where does all the training go?' They also show the range of dancing by people closely associated with the school."

Two original works were commissioned for the film. Susanna, the inter-

(cont. on p. 30)

Note: *A Private World* was awarded the special jury prize for documentary at the Chicago Film Festival this November. (Ed.)

BOOKSHELF

ART AND TECHNIQUES

In Directing: The Television Commercials. Bed Gradus, a top director of TV spots, shares his experience of many years. A thoroughly professional and exhaustive guide, his book covers the technical knowhow, as well as the sense of esthetics and the psychological attitudes required of the successful practitioner of the craft. Sponsored by the Directors Guild of America, this book is of invaluable assistance to students of the medium and an unequalled standard of reference to Gradus's colleagues (Hastings House \$26.95/\$16.95).

In the revised edition of **Professional Cameraman's Handbook**, Verne and Sylvia Carlson effectively describe the practical procedures of camera handling. Assembling, threading and troubleshooting are expertly discussed in this authoritative manual's treatment of the characteristics of a wide range of 35/16mm cameras and accessories, with the exception of hand-held cameras, i.e. those with less than 600 ft. capacity (Watson-Guptill \$21.95).

What animation aesthetics and techniques will be in the '80s is projected by Carl Macek in **The Art of Heavy Metal**. This abundantly illustrated book describes the production in Canada of *Heavy Metal*, the R-rated animation feature directed by Gerald Potterton. Extensive use of multiplane cameras, live action, models, reotoscoping, etc. resulted in a highly original and trend-setting film (NY Zoetrope, 31 E. 12 St., NYC 10003; \$9.95).

In How to Read A Film (revised edition), noted film scholar James Mon-

aco considers the impact on contemporary life of the psychological, social and political elements of film. His articulate and thoughtful arguments synthesize compellingly all the components of a complex medium (Oxford U. Press, \$25/\$11.95).

ASPECTS OF CINEMA

Based on information collected by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the **1979 Annual Index to Motion Picture Credits** is an authoritative and complete record of films shown in Los Angeles during that year. Fully cross-indexed, this massive volume provides full data on the film, production personnel and cast. Issued by the Academy since 1934, it is now published by Greenwood Press, 88 Post Road W., Westport, CT 06880; \$150.

Using weekly Variety's extensive files, **Variety International Showbusiness Reference**, a large volume of basic reference value, skillfully edited by Mike Kaplan, offers a wealth of significant facts and cogent statistics on the film, television, stage and music fields of the past 75 years (Garland \$75).

American documentary films of the 1931-42 period are perceptively assessed by William Alexander in **Film On the Left**. His historic scrutiny, based on interviews with leading filmmakers, pinpoints the major trends of this committed genre and the social orientation of their authors (Princeton U. Press \$27.50/\$12.50).

In **Shock Value**, avant-garde director John Waters (*Polyester*, and the earlier, celebrated *Pink Flamingos*) offers a candid view of underground filmmak-

ing. It is a provocative, fascinating and hilarious autobiography, a spirited defense of bad taste that transcends itself to the point of normalcy and reveals a lively subculture of style and substance (Delta \$9.95).

A sweeping panorama of American films of the '30s, Robert Dooley's **From Scarlett To Scarface** is an engaging mixture of film history, popular culture and nostalgia. Thoroughly familiar with the industry, its leading personalities and memorable achievements, Dooley draws an exciting picture of the movies' Golden Days (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich \$25).

The musical Western is explored by David Rothel in his well-documented **The Singing Cowboys**, a tuneful survey that reveals a surprising number of excellent performers surrounding such stars as Roy Rogers and Gene Autry (A.S. Barnes \$10.95).

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Budd Schulberg's **Moving Pictures**, a candid evocation of Hollywood in the '20s and '30s, traces the career of his father, movie tycoon B.P. Schulberg. The era's cutthroat competition and gold rush atmosphere are vividly recaptured in this engrossing memoir, written by a uniquely well-placed inside witness to the momentous growth of the industry (Stein & Day \$16.95).

An unruffled view of the Hollywood scene during the last 60 years, **Starmaker** is producer Hal Wallis's revealing yet low-key perspective on the 200 films he made, the personalities he encountered, and the marking events of a distinguished career (Macmillan \$13.95).

The multitalented Woody Allen is perceptively scrutinized by Foster Hirsch in **Love, Sex, Death and the Meaning of Life**, a probe of Allen's ethnicity and environment, and his highly personal mixture of slapstick comedy and intellectual humor (McGraw-Hill \$5.95).

Lou Costello's daughter Chris (and Raymond Strait) narrate her father's life in **Lou's On First**, a tale of talent and hard work from a man who suffered from the repeated blows of heartbreaking misfortune (St. Martin's \$14.95). British actor John Mills reminisces engagingly in **Up In The Clouds, Gentlemen Please**, an unaffected, warm and occasionally ribald memoir of a successful and versatile career (Ticknor & Fields \$14.95). Jason Bondoroff's unauthorized biography, **Brooke**, presents a lively and intriguing portrait of Brooke Shields — a 15-year-old sex kitten or just an insecure teenager? (Zebra \$2.50).

In **Up and Down With Elvis Presley**, Marge Crumbaker and Gabe Ticker draw a colorful inside story of Presley's ambivalent association with Colonel Tom Parker, his manipulative manager (Putnam \$12.95). **All About Elvis** is an extensive compilation by Fred L. Worth and Steve D. Tamerius of practically everything that has been written about the legendary performer (Bantam \$3.95).

An encyclopedic survey by Scott Palmer, **Who's Who Of British Film Actors** includes some 1500 performers, mostly English but with a sprinkling of Commonwealth personalities. Vital statistics and credits are provided in this valuable reference work (Scarcrow \$27.50).

George L. George ●

REVIEWS

(cont. from p. 29)

nationally-known teacher and choreographer, performs a long segment which, although it shows her artistry at an advanced age, lacks the sparkle and excitement which the footage of her flamenco class conveys. "Dedication" by graduate Ann Ditchburn raises more than a few eyebrows. A student, Sabina Alleman, and her teacher, Sergiu Stefanski, dance a frankly erotic *pas de deux* in the empty stillness of a studio. Saretzky was unprepared for the ramifications of this ultimate schoolgirl fantasy. "I gave Ann the music, Ravel's "Sonata for Violin and Cello" and the idea about uncertainty in a young woman. I chose the dancers for their qualities. I didn't think of them as student or teacher!"

The so-called leisure sequences are questionable because they appear staged although Saretzky claims they are not. "That boy had a paper airplane in class. I just told him to throw it out the window. The girls told me they had pillow fights so they improvised one for me. I put in these parts for the kids who will be watching the film. They love them."

Also irritating are the many seemingly gratuitous shots of the changing seasons. Saretzky challenges this criticism. "Coming from South Africa, you can't help but see how the seasons influence life here, especially the huge intrusion of winter. For the rest of the world they have great significance. They affect the

nature of light, mood changes and they underline rhythms."

Perhaps Betty Oliphant, principal of the NBS, best sums up the thorny question of how to treat this documentary by saying that it calls for an emotional response on the part of the viewer rather than an intellectual one. As a documentary, however, the film is limited in its informational output. It allows the audience to watch the students of The National Ballet School mould their bodies in pursuit of their craft while never touching upon the inner politics of the institution.

Paula Citron ●

A PRIVATE WORLD p.d.cam. Eric Saretzky ed. Margaret van Eedewijk, Leslie Brown asst. to d. Joy Richards gaff. Jock Brandis light. Jim Plaxton asst. cam. Robert Holmes, Paul Dunlop, Carl Harvey, Lynn Rotin, Henning Schwartz 2nd asst. cam. Michael Torosian sd. Don Book, Anton Kwiatkowski, Don Latour, Ao Loo grip. David Hynes, Mark Manchester grip asst. Rodney Daw, Greg Pelchat, Ivan Petef, Tom Pinteric set asst. Patrick McEvoy st. man. Adrian Goldberg, George Carter sp. etc. Film Opticals add. re. Saretzky sd. trans. Larry Johnson, Chris Cooke 2nd asst. ed. David Coleman dub. mix. Terry Cooke sd. ed. Margaret van Eedewijk dancers Vanessa Harwood, Sabina Alleman, Sergiu Stefanski, Claudia Moore, Robert Desrosiers, Susana, Karen Kain, Frank Augustyn, Anne Adair, Serge Lavoie, Jeffrey Kirk.

INTERVIEW

(cont. from p. 21)

"Why do you want to do this? Everybody else wants to nail me to the wall so they can go to the Chemical Bank and discount it and make the film!"

Those companies which have dealt traditionally with Canada are somewhat familiar with the process but those who haven't find it shocking, and it is bad business practice. Why should we be put into the position of actually diminishing the potential protective benefits we can offer the unit holders because of the structure of the financing? It doesn't make any sense.

The second key element is going to be interim financing linked to the viability of the industry. We now have a situation where probably the only bank publicly stating that it is willing to participate in feature film interim financing is the Roymark (the Royal Bank).

We have to make the financial community realize that there are opportunities for it in terms of support for the film industry. And that hurdle we haven't leapt. If you buy a house and put 10% down, you can probably get a mortgage for the other 90%. If I buy a film and put 10% down, I probably can't get the other 90% financed because everyone knows what a house is worth and can evaluate it and decide if the risk is worthwhile, but you can't do that with film. That's our problem.

Ultimately, we have to establish the viability of film as a business first, and then move backwards into the financing

methods thereafter, and that means that we have to continue to finance the production of films in other ways. One way we have found in *Cross Country* has to do with the co-production environment. The official co-production treaties which Canada has are frankly viewed as complex vehicles which no one wants to become involved in. From my point of view, they're very well suited to the kinds of problems we face at the moment, because the countries with whom we have treaties don't tend to have our problems. They tend to have a greater degree of maturity in terms of how they view an asset, and what is tax shelterable, as well as the manner in which the money comes in. And so there's cash available from a co-producer which then reduces your need for interim financing, and so forth...

In general, I think the situation has bottomed out, for a couple of reasons. On the feature film front, I find a lot more rationality to what it is we're proposing to undertake and how it is we're proposing to undertake it. The budgets are smaller, the films are more reasonable. They have been more carefully thought through and vetted with the distribution community, so that we know they're viable. Then we have added to it the whole thing about pay-TV. While I don't think it will be a panacea, it is another element which adds to the impact which television production will have in the future.

Interview by Connie Tadros ●