

Good for a laugh

I was quite startled to read David Clarke's review of *Scandale* in the "In Progress" section of the April issue of *Cinema Canada*. I always understood that even in Canada the natural progression of events dictates that a film be at least finished and seen before opinions can be formed and judgment rendered. But if Mr. Clarke wishes to practice prescient criticism, that's his privilege and I won't question his right to dismiss any film he hasn't yet seen.

What I do question though is Mr. Clarke's blatant disregard for the accurate reporting of facts, his careless misspelling of the names of people he quotes, his high-handed labelling of a potential audience as yokels, and his use of out of context misquotes to support his predetermined conclusions.

To begin with the name of the supervising editor referred to in the article is not Rick Wallace but Rit Wallis. *Scandale* was shot in sixteen and a half days, which true enough is less than a month, but then again so are thirty days in some cases. When Mr. Clarke visited in early March, post-production had not only started, but picture editing was nearly completed. If Mr. Clarke confuses pick-up shots with establishing shots, he should have asked for an explanation. The location we lost two and a half hours before shooting which comprised our first week of sets is not the Palais de Justice as inferred, but the old court house, now a performing arts conservatory under the auspices of the ministère de la Culture.

When speaking of certain unavoidable compromises which occur when making a film so fast, with extremely tight deadlines, what I said was that I'll know the difference, and other filmmakers might know the difference, but I doubt if a general theatre audience will ever notice. Besides, if it is funny, then even those who do notice will forgive you because the scene works. This statement occurred during a discussion on being forced to compromise between performance and technical perfection (not quality) in improvised situations (i.e. losing the sets for the first five days shooting). This in no way inferred inferior photography or craftsmanship. Simply put, sometimes one is forced to sacrifice a pawn to save a knight. If this is the attitude Mr. Clarke finds so graciously "not as reprehensible as it sounds," I would just like to mention that it may be contrary to his experience but this "attitude" is taught at all successful film schools. It sort of goes like this: "The show must go on."

While discussing the politically sensitive nature of the film I said that we could have specifically satirized the Parti Québécois government or we could have satirized government. It was decided to satirize all governments in all their universally inherent pompous silliness and corruption, while still poking fun at the one which happened to get caught with its pants down. Besides, everyone in Quebec knows who they are and what scandal inspired this film. This approach, it was felt, was much more accessible to world markets and even to people in the other provinces who all have silly governments to contend with.

In conclusion, as long as elitist pseudo intellectual biases gleaned from translations of old issues of "Cahiers du cinéma" appear as film criticism - exhibiting a totally naïve misunderstanding of the realities of filmmaking, and obsessed with fitting the round peg of auteurist theory into the square whole (sic) of the Canadian feature film industry - unfortunately, Mr. Clarke, I haven't much choice but to laugh.

George S. Mihalka
Director, *Scandale*

Backing the Board

Mr. William Johnson, columnist in the *Globe and Mail*, in his mostly fatuous attacks on the National Film Board of Canada, found it necessary recently to bolster his myopic views with the opinions of Mr. Serge Losique (dubbed by him Mister Cinema in terms that better describe the second coming) as some kind of verification.

Who is Mr. Losique? As the promoter of a film festival he's compelled to be besotted with the glitter of star-laden highly touted feature films which will bring the customers in. Why, therefore, should he find any value for, among other reasons, a film board which unpretentiously goes about its job of making and distributing short documentary, non-fiction or animation films? Losique, of course, conveniently forgets the high batting average of the NFB's occasional forays into fiction i.e. *Mon oncle Antoine*, etc. etc.

But, it's Mr. Johnson's view that needs a good hard look.

He says he doesn't object to the NFB's "offensive exercises in ideology... tiresome critiques of society from the viewpoint of intelligentsia morality and intelligentsia esthetics... but only to their being made at public expense."

Mr. Johnson doesn't seem to begin to think about who in Canada will attempt "exercises in ideology" or films with an "intelligentsia" approach. It is to the very credit of this publicly owned and world renowned film organization that of its 100 or so films made each year, two or three of them do tackle "critiques of society." What the hell is "intelligentsia morality" and "intelligentsia esthetics" supposed to mean anyway? Surely he's not suggesting that there's a morality and an esthetics for ordinary people and one for the intelligentsia? Doesn't that sound suspiciously elitist - the very thing a few weeks ago he accused Denis Arcand of, who made the Film Board's "*Le confort et l'indifférence*", and which made Johnson wonder if the NFB was not now obsolete?

So what if some of the films are "offensive" or "tiresome" to him? Of all the films made in Hollywood or Elstree or in our own befuddled country, what percentage of them would he rate as "tiresome" or "offensive"? Plenty, I'll bet. And properly so.

Johnson betrays his ignorance of the group creative process by which each film runs the hazard of being a prototype that is not for duplication. In this respect, the imprimatur of an M.G.M. or of Columbia Pictures or even of the little NFB cannot guarantee success.

Piously, he asks that the Film Board should make films that "people want to see." Considering the hundreds of awards won by the Board, his sugges-

tion is laughable to conceive that since 1960 the NFB's 30 Hollywood Academy Nominations and four Oscars go to films no one wants to see. Although children in thousands of schools around the world will have their own views, are we to believe that millions annually who see its films do so at gun point?

Finally I'd like to offer a suggestion to Mr. Johnson. As in so many cases, there is no doubt room for improvement in the Film Board, but that he not particularly looks to Serge Losique for them. Years ago, when I was Chief Executive of the Film Board, Losique came to ask for some film equipment. I can only say that he's the kind of guy who, when only given an arm after he has asked for an arm and a leg - well, there's the possibility that he doesn't forget easily.

No, despite Mr. Johnson's knocking copy, the Film Board is one of the best of the smaller investments the parliament of Canada has ever made.

Sydney Newman, O.C., F.R.S.A.

"Echoes" off target

I was pleased to read your February 1982 issue. Up to this point your publication was unknown to me...

As a filmmaker here in the Maritimes, I was most disappointed to read the "Atlantic Echoes" column. The writer Mike Riggio, certainly is 100% off target with his assessment of how filmmakers survive in this part of Canada. Having visited our studies Mr. Riggio should have had the insight to see that our firm certainly is not dependent on the Canada Council or the National Film Board.

Our firm has been in operation in Nova Scotia since 1971, and only in the last two or three years have we been successful in obtaining any National Film Board contracts. We have never received, nor asked for, any funding from the Canada Council.

We are not alone, there are at least two other production companies and several "independent" producers operating in this region. None of them "depend" on any funding agencies as such.

We all, as in any business, are dependent on our clients. There is the difference between those who are dependent and those who are, more or less, independent, those who are dependent are not producing commercially viable products so they are dependent on funding.

The funding that keeps them from becoming independent comes from our tax dollars. Now, let's take another look at who is independent.

R.G. Sandoz
ABS Productions Limited

Costs accounted for

I would like to reply to Tom Crighton's comments on *A War Story* in the April issue. He states: "Being a National Film Board production, it's impossible to calculate exactly what the film cost, as so many of the expenditures are classed as 'inside costs.' I haven't been informed that the 'real cost' of the film was in the neighbourhood of \$650,000. If this is the case, that budget is not on the screen."

It is possible to determine the costs of

a Film Board production. Our accounting system imputes all indirect costs ("inside costs" covering fixed services, equipment, overhead, etc.) to the budget of each film project. In the case of *A War Story*, the total cost, direct and indirect including overhead, was \$368,310.

Furthermore, I think all of the above budget and more is on the screen. The film was shot on a 12:1 ratio with only six shooting days for 40 minutes of drama. A complete period set had to be constructed for the prisoner of war camp scenes. A six-person documentary crew shot for 18 days in England, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore, carefully retracing the steps of a remarkable Canadian adventure story. A marvelous score by Maurice Marshall and the narrative by Donald Sutherland were again produced on the tightest of budgets. The film was produced by the North West Production Studio in Edmonton; and, as is the case with all NFB regional studios, nearly the entire crew were freelancers.

To my mind, Anne Wheeler is one of the finest filmmakers currently working in the country and *A War Story* can stand up to the majority of feature films shot in this country at much, much greater cost.

Tom Radford
Executive Producer North West Studio

Sharing the credit

I must thank Gerald T. Campbell for his generous review of my film *The Passion of Christ* but I feel obliged to point out that although Wally Weaver was extremely helpful and gave us an excellent mix at PFA, he is not wholly responsible for the sound track that Mr. Campbell liked so much. Credit for that and for the picture editing should go to Mairin Wilkinson whose considerable skills as an editor had a lot to do with the success of the film. Credit should lie where credit is due and hence this letter. Thanks Mairin!

Philip Earnshaw

It all began with the cinematographers...

Say, that was quite an impressive 10th anniversary edition! Fact is, though, that is the 15th (come September). The old Canadian Cinematographer burst out in its new cover format, *Cinema Canada*, with issue no. 32, Sept.-Oct. 1967. A beautiful, young Genevieve Bujold graced the entire cover. Writers included Gerald Pratley, Dr. Bill Bluem, Kelly Duncan and Grahame Woods. Seems eons ago, of course, but they were truly the halcyon days in filmmaking.

Art Benson

Cinema Canada was originally the house organ of the Canadian Society of Cinematographers, and was published as such from 1961 to 1970. In 1972, the magazine was revived, and re-numbered, beginning again with no. 1, March 1972. It then ceased to be the cinematographers' magazine and addressed itself to all those working in the industry. At present, it is published by the *Cinema Canada Magazine Foundation*. Ed.

Commendable courage

I wanted to congratulate you on the excellent article "Lament for an Industry" which appeared in the February issue of *Cinema Canada*. This is precisely the type of in-depth analysis which is needed, but too frequently left undone because of the fear for future employment which pervades a freelance industry. Your courage is commendable.

I hope you will continue to look at the various aspects of the industry with the same honesty and critical insight that you demonstrated in your last piece. *Cinema Canada* is also to be congratulated for continuing to provide a forum for outspoken viewpoints. Good work.

Kirwan Cox
Director, Research and
Policy Development
National Film Board

No assistance needed

Your issue no. 81 dated February 1982 arrived today and, as always, is interesting reading.

However, we respectfully point out the omission of this company's name from the listing on page 26 of that issue under the heading "Independent and Canadian-Owned Motion Picture Distributors."

Additionally, we take strong objection to the comments from various past and present Canadian motion picture distribution executives to the effect that Canadian-owned independent motion picture distributors deserve 'assistance' from government agencies of the industry generally with respect to distribution of Canadian and/or other motion pictures in Canada.

The marketplace is open, competition is free.

The activities of this company indicate that, similar to any other business,

Who's who and where at Cannes

(cont. from p. 22)

ROUILLARD, Maryse, d.
Filmoption International

SILCOX, David
chairman, CFDC, Film Canada
Hotel Majestic

SIMMONS, Kathleen
gen. man., Bloor Cinema of Toronto
Hotel de la Grande-Bretagne

SMITH, Maurice, p.
"Death Bite", "The Magic Show",
"Julie Darling", "The Soldier Story",
Cinequity Productions
Film Canada, Palais des Festivals

SMITH, Roland, d.
Les Films SMC (Québec) Ltée
Hotel Florian

STEPHENSON, Helga
Government of Ontario, Festival of
Festivals and Simcom Ltd.

success is predicated upon productivity and management efficiency - nothing else!

The production and the distribution of motion pictures in this country, or anywhere else in the world, is a risky business and those who go into it must follow the maxim "caveat emptor." The success of Len Herberman and his comments belie the comments of some others that your writer quotes who have been more or less successful.

Peter Bogdanovitch, with his new motion picture, *They All Laughed* starring Audrey Hepburn, John Ritter and Ben Gazzara, has seen fit to place the picture with this company, as have other important producers, because of its adherence to good, intelligent business practices.

We are blessed with a good experienced staff. We rely on self-help, as all other successful enterprises must do.

Continued success to you and to your publication!

M. Beverage
President
MovieTime

The list, as published, named only the members of the Association of Independent and Canadian-Owned Motion Picture Distributors, and not all the companies which might fit that description. MovieTime was not listed by the Association. Ed.

No hasty charges, please

I should like to clarify the record regarding Keith Lock's relationship to Canada Council in his attempt to negotiate the rights of a short story by Alice Munro.

Contrary to the allegation by Ms. Munro's agent (as quoted by John Kramer of the National Film Board) Mr. Lock at no time misled Council as to the ownership of the rights. Our grant was made in the full realization that such rights still had to be negotiated.

Françoise Picard
Film Officer
The Canada Council

SURJICK, Steven
Saskatchewan Culture and Youth
Film Canada, Palais des Festivals

SYLVESTRE, Claude
Radio-Québec
Hotel Montfleury

ST-GERMAIN, Marc, d.
Art Films Inc.
Résidence Gallia

TAYLOR, Franck
Toronto Festival of Festivals

VILLENEUVE, J.R. Brian
Ontario Film Office
Film Canada, Palais des Festivals

WERNER, Marvin, d.
Cinépix Inc.
Palais Miramar

FOR REFERENCE AND RESEARCH

Sponsored by the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAP) and published by the American Film Institute, the **International Index to Film Periodicals 1979** provides a comprehensive, annotated guide to 91 of the world's most significant movie magazines, including *Cinema Canada*. Edited by Frances Thrope, the 100,000 entries of this massive volume reflect the work of 34 film archives in 25 countries (AFI, JFK Center, Washington, DC 20566; \$85, standing order price \$72).

An indispensable guide to production in the Eastern United States (including basic data on Ontario, Quebec and Canada), the **New York Production Manual** edited by Shmuel Bension provides updated, informative and thorough coverage of every phase of pre-production, production, post-production and distribution (NY Production Manual, 1 Washington Square Village, NYC 10012; \$53.45 incl. shipping, in Canada \$10 add'l).

John Mercer's knowledgeable survey, **The Informational Film**, supplies a rich fund of relevant facts and ideas on a field boasting some 15,000 non-theatrical films completed in 1977. His outline of types of educational films, their production techniques and distribution potential, as well as their teaching methodology and usefulness, provides invaluable guidance to both educators and students (Stipes, 10 Chester St., Champaign, IL 61820; \$6).

TALENT ON PARADE

Academy Award winning directors since the 1927 inception of the event - 53 in all - are surveyed in **The Oscar Directors** by I.G. Edmonds and Reiko Mimura. The career records of such topnotchers as Cukor, Ford, Huston, Coppola, Friedkin and Stevens provide the basis for perceptive evaluations of their individual approach to directing (A.S. Barnes \$9.95).

The 7th volume in that excellent series, **The Hollywood Professionals**, offers well-drawn portraits by Leland A. Poague of directors Billy Wilder and Leo McCarey, with knowledgeable analyses of their major films' themes, styles and techniques (A.S. Barnes \$12).

In **The Films of Robert Altman**, Alan Karp assesses the versatile director, focusing on the broad range of his innovative concepts, his unique approach to widely differing film genres and the recurrent use of the dream mode as a narrative method (Scarecrow \$10).

From G.K. Hall, three meaningful studies of directors: **Sydney Pollack** by William R. Taylor, **John Schlesinger** by Gene D. Phillips, and **Sacha Guitry** by Bettina L. Knapp. These additions to the scholarly "Wayne Theatrical Arts" series provide in-depth evaluations, informative comments, extensive filmographies and other relevant facts - especially valuable in the case of the lesser-known French director Guitry (\$14.95 ea.).

A new perspective on the later German director, **Fritz Lang: The Image and the Look**, edited by Stephen Jenkins, seeks persuasively to present Lang as responsive to changing social conditions rather than as a pessimistic chronicler of 20th century paranoia (NY Zoetrope, 31 E. 12 St., NYC 10003; \$24.95/\$14.95).

A well-deserved tribute to the outstanding cinematographer, Todd Rainsberger's **James Wong Howe** documents the career of a highly creative craftsman whose innovative techniques and striving for perfection won him two Oscars (*The Rose Tattoo* and *Hud*) and 10 nominations (A.S. Barnes \$17.50).

Performers' lives generally make for good, juicy copy - a characteristic appropriately describing three recent memoirs. In **True Britt**, Britt Ecklund writes candidly about the romances and heartbreaks that marked her career (Prentice-Hall \$9.95); in **The Quality of Mercy**, Mercedes McCambridge reveals the private woman behind a highly visible facade and the pitfalls of excessive honesty (Times Books \$10.95); in **Finchy**, Peter Finch's widow, Yolanda, describes with astonishing frankness her life with "a drunkard, a womanizer, a genius" - the man she loved (Wyndham/Simon & Schuster \$12.95).

ASPECTS OF CINEMA

From an enterprising new publisher, two auspicious volumes: **Combat Films 1945-70** by Steven Jay Rubin is an insightful study of eight war films, focusing on their makers, their search for authenticity, and their success in creating honest evocations of historic events; **Horror Film Stars** by Michael R. Pitts analyzes with keen appreciation of the genre the contrasting personalities of some 40 performers who specialized in terror movies and the effect this had on their careers (McFarland, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640; \$15.95/11.95 and \$16.95/12.95 respectively, postpaid).

David J. Hogan's entertaining encyclopedia **Who's Who of the Horrors and Other Fantasy Films** surveys over 1000 professionals involved in this popular genre, a richly illustrated large-size volume, pinpointing the contribution of directors, performers and technicians to the nurturing of our favorite illusions (A.S. Barnes \$19.95).

In **Theories of Authorship**, editor John Caughie presents a scholarly collection of essays scrutinizing the film author as the central figure in cinematic theory and critique. Philosophical and pragmatic debates of this controversial issue are ably synthesized in a broad rethinking of the authorship concept (Routledge & Keegan Paul \$28/\$14).

The current crisis of American filmmaking is discussed in David Thomson's **Overexposures**, a provocative book that links the decline in theatre attendance with producers' reliance on formula variations of past film successes, increased dependency on television as the prime distribution outlet, and generalized intellectual fatigue (Morrow \$13.95/8.95).

Les Keyser's survey, **Hollywood in the Seventies**, is a selective array of facts, opinions and assumptions that accurately reflects the problems and contradictions besetting the film capital (A.S. Barnes \$5.95).

Lillian Ross's classical reportorial gem, "Picture," originally published in *The New Yorker* and dealing with the making of John Huston's *The Red Badge of Courage*, finds a deserved spot in **Reporting**, a collection of her brilliant articles (Dodd Mead \$8.95).

Film buffs' familiarity with cinematic lore is thoroughly probed in Rob Burt's **Illustrated Movie Quiz Book**, an ingenious compilation of wide-ranging questions and challenging tests (Rutledge Press \$5.95).

by George L. George