

# Festival fever :

## Candid comment on the

# Montreal and Toronto fests

**Gerald Peary**  
writes on film for *The Boston Globe* and other  
Hub-area publications.

Crowds, crowds, crowds. Serge Losique, Quebec's self-proclaimed Little Dictator, at last has mobilized the masses - 200,000 strong climbing the escalators of Le Parisien for this year's 7th Montreal World Film Festival. Losique's last laugh - he's in for good at Montreal, after his troubles of 1982. Napoleon back from Elba.

I'm sure he'll listen even less than before - if that's possible - but couldn't Losique at least ask for English-subtitled prints of the latest French films? And couldn't somebody tell him to let go of American producer-director Stanley Kramer, whose baseball-bat liberal films (*Judgment at Nuremberg*, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?*) are discredited in the U.S.? "He's got great anecdotes" was one feeble defense for why Stanley Kramer gets the Montreal royal treatment - this year a celebration of the 70th birthday of the man who has given the word "theme" a bad name.

The first Chinese-Japanese coproduction, *The Go Masters*, won the Jury Prize at Montreal this year. Hmmmm. I admit a guilty pleasure at this naive tale of a Chinese family suffering through World War II, a post-Maoist *Winds of War*, friendly Socialist Realism, but first prize?

(I can even break down the "secret" vote of the jury, 4-3. My guess: for *The Go Masters*: actress Marie-Christine Barrault, Roger Ebert, Harry Rasky, and Chen Xuyi, from Shanghai's dubbing studios; for Andrzej Wajda's *Danton*, the three European intellectual directors: Krystoff Zanussi, Reinhard Hauff, and Daniel Schmidt.)

The high point at Montreal was, undoubtedly, the vindication of Margarethe

von Trotta's *Labor of Love*, a startling new feminist film starring Hanna Schygulla and Angela Winkler. It was cheered for many minutes at Montreal after it had been hissed and dismissed at the Berlin Film Fest in February. Ms. von Trotta was mighty pleased.

The second high point? After-hours Montreal smoked meat. I've been coming from Boston to the Montreal Film Fest for five years, and Schwartz's hangs on with the best sandwich in North America.



• Lightstone & Znaimer

The Toronto Festival of Festivals has the friendliest press office in the world and lots of dandy parties, much better than the sedate and formal celebrations at Montreal. (Parties count.) And Toronto also had Jean-Jacques Beineix in person and his most recent film *Moon in the Gutter*, which had its throat slit by the critics and catcallers at Cannes '83 and had premiered indifferently in Canada at Montreal's World Film Festival in August.

In 1981, the Festival of Festivals fell flat on its back for *Diva* and *Diva's* first-time director. This year Beineix personally introduced *Moon in the Gutter*, warning the audience that they should remember *Moon* "is only a film," and then he left before the screening - frightened that his Toronto friends would abandon him.

Well, Toronto's response was polite applause at the end - few walkouts and no booing - but hardly anyone was turned on by Beineix's delirious opus. Here's a minority opinion: *Moon in the Gutter* is a gorgeous celluloid poem about obsessive love, incest, violence, the stars and the sewers. It's a mirror looking at a mirror, a marvelously painted ingrown toenail. If anything, *Moon* is an *improvement* on *Diva*, a deeper work, a more profound and Poesque descent into the maelstrom, and confirms the position of Jean-Jacques Beineix as the first new talent in the French cinema in years.

Let a thousand Annie Girardot-Simone Signoret bourgeois comedies and nose-blowing dramas be buried in the Gallic ground. Hail *Moon in the Gutter*, a brave film!

Irony of ironies: the *best* films at Montreal were from Europe; the best films at Toronto were from *Quebec*. I mean Pierre Perrault's astonishing documentary of Québécois hunters, *The Shimmering Beast*, (*The Deer Hunter*

told right and told honestly). I mean Jean-Pierre Lefebvre's sensitive diary film, *To the Rhythm of My Heart*. I mean Anne-Claire Poirier's feature fiction *La Quarantaine/Beyond Forty*, a gentle and pensive reunion of childhood friends after 30 years. Needless to say, none of the above have distribution in English Canada.



• Karen Black in Toronto

## Michael Rechtshaffen

is Toronto correspondent for The Hollywood Reporter.

If one were to pick a single element that differentiates Canada's two major annual film festivals, it would have to be the klieg lights. Montreal doesn't have them.

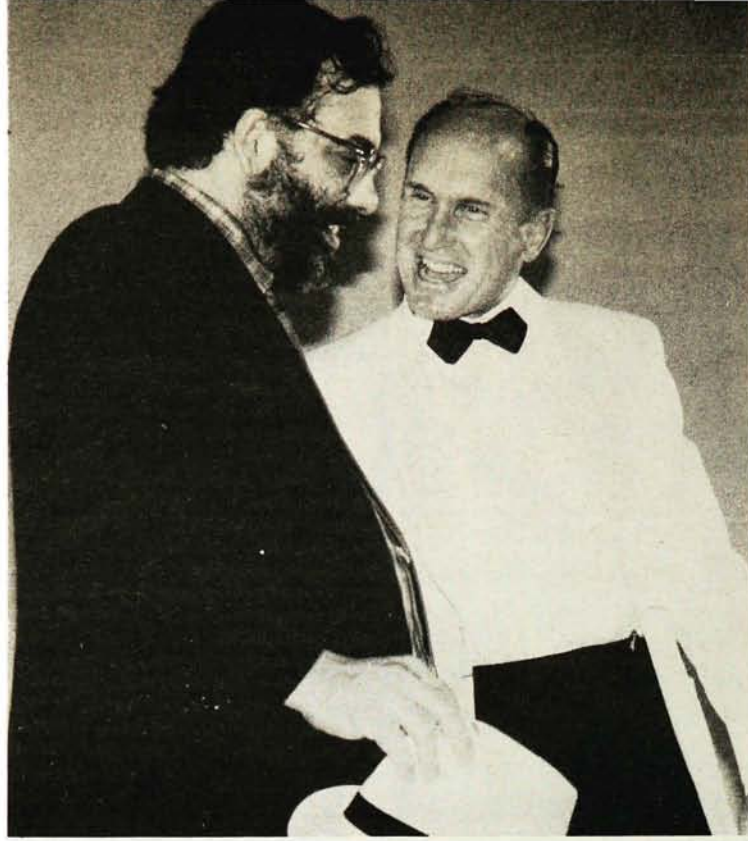
Although there are several minor distinguishing factors – Montreal has a market, Toronto doesn't have a jury, the official languages, – there is a primary point of distinction. Le Festival des Films du Monde appeals to the film buff while the Festival of Festivals is aimed essentially at the movie buff. Both have a place. A quick look at each festival's line-up helps to illustrate the classification. Montreal '83 had Jean-Louis Trintignant and Liv Ullmann, Toronto had Michael Caine and Karen Black. Montreal opened with the new Truffaut while Toronto kicked off with the latest by Lawrence (*Raiders of the Lost Ark*) Kasdan. Toronto has galas, Montreal has films in Competition. Toronto has theme parties thrown by art collectors and French casual fashion designers, Montreal has soirées at Man and His World sponsored by the Quebec government.

Each festival reflects the respective personalities of the men behind them. Wayne Clarkson, who has been director of the Festival of Festivals for the past six years, is basically a low-key individual, but has patrons to consider who aren't particularly overwhelmed by the likes of Margarethe von Trotta or Marco Bellocchio (hence the klieg lights). Serge Losique, on the other hand, appears to embrace controversy with considerable fervor, and has, as role models, a bizarre hybrid of Henri Langlois, Napoleon and Norma Desmond.

Clarkson, who surrounds himself with an able group of programmers, is generally more in touch with current American cinema and its artists than is Losique, whose method of selection is somewhat less democratic. When both festivals plan their homages, Toronto has gone with Martin Scorsese and Robert Duvall while Montreal has opted for Stanley Kramer and, from Losique's annual jaunts down Sunset Boulevard, Joan Fontaine, Kathryn Grayson and Ginger Rogers.

In terms of day-to-day operations, Toronto has done much to clean up its act, although Montreal still leads in punctuality with films starting on time to the microsecond. Because Montreal has no galas, there is no bias in presentation, meaning Alfred Hitchcock's *Rope* is given the same treatment as Kramer's *It's a Mad Mad Mad Mad World*. Montreal shows less films than Toronto, but has more repeats. Toronto's program selection is far more inspired, but also more frustrating as most titles are only screened once. With all Montreal's screenings under one roof, it's possible for the serious filmgoer to enter the Parisien five-plex at 9:00 a.m. and not emerge again until the wee hours of the following morning. Toronto's facilities are spread out, thus ensuring several daily contacts with the outside world and delaying the effects of film festival fade-out.

All things considered, general comparisons between the two festivals are really unnecessary. Judging from record attendance at both events this year, each has its own distinct and loyal following. Personally speaking as one who takes film in both its popular and purist forms, each has its merits. Still,



● Francis Fox Coppola takes his hat off to Robert Duvall at the Toronto fest's tribute to the American actor

nothing quite captured the imagination as Montreal's closing night party held at the suburban Rockland Shopping Mall. It was there this native Torontonian struck up a conversation with Volker Schlöndorff in front of Radio Shack, while René Lévesque was being introduced to Ginger Rogers as the band started into Take the "A" Train. The moment was pure Losique.

## John Harkness

is film critic for the Toronto newspaper Now.

The difference between the World Film Festival and the Festival of Festivals this year was that Montreal was fun and Toronto was not. This had nothing to do with the Festivals and everything to do with the cities. Montreal is not my home festival – it is a vacation, one story to file at the end of it, a couple of interviews to do, and the rest of the time lounging about the Cinéma Parisien or the air-conditioned splendour of the Hyatt Regency (where I caught a cold – someone should tell those people that they will never be a three-star hotel until you can open the windows).

Toronto is my home festival, and I must write more, do interviews, make the party circuit to maintain my paper's profile, and endure being denounced

from the stage of the University Theatre (along with the other Toronto critics) by Claude Fournier, who took exception to the Toronto reviews of *The Tin Flute*.

There was not much to choose from between Toronto and Montreal in terms of films this year – most of the major pictures (*Merry Christmas*, *Mr. Lawrence*, *Carmen*, *The Ballad of Narayama*, *Sans Soleil*, *The Fourth Man*, *Danton*, *The Moon in the Gutter*) were in both Festivals. Toronto had a definite lead in sheer star power – Robert Duvall, Michael Caine, half the cast of *The Big Chill*, Lawrence Kasdan, Beau Bridges and Bonnie Bedelia, Diane Kurys, Bob Swaim. Montreal had the lead in civilised parties – not one function I attended in Montreal had the zoo-like cramping of the parties that followed Toronto's Tribute to Robert Duvall and the gala screening of *Vertigo*.

The worst things about the Montreal festival is that there are too many films without subtitles (especially egregious with the opening night selection of Truffaut's *Vivement Dimanche*); a brutal, leg-killing hill between the hotel and the theatre; and, unless one knows where to turn on the radio, it is almost impossible to get coverage of the Toronto Blue Jays.

The best things about Montreal are the convenience of having all the screenings under one roof and the fact that the audiences seem more seriously interest-

● Beau Bridges and Bonnie Bedelia toasting it up in Toronto



ed in the films than in the surrounding media event.

The worst things about Toronto are the hordes of people in blue three-piece suits wearing little gold lapel buttons indicating their status as patrons (superflak David Novek asked me if I could point out a single patron at the Montreal fest, and I couldn't) and the idiotic Trade Forum, where members of the most insular industry in the world get together to manufacture large quantities of hot air.

The best things about Toronto are the ease of setting up interviews (the distributors handle most of their own films); the fact that, given the Festival's dedication to doing serious retrospective programs and their extensive prescreening programs, one has more freedom of choice when deciding what to see: I only saw seventeen pictures during the Festival proper, but have seen over 70 of the 150-odd films.

I have no idea what the average Festivalgoer thinks about the two gatherings – if such a creature as the average Festivalgoer exists. I am, however, beginning to understand why "Toronto Star" reviewer Clyde Gilmour would schedule his vacation to coincide with the Festival in its early days.

## Andrew Dowler

is a Toronto videologist and a frequent contributor to Cinema Canada.

The official festival myth is that it is a party. Yes, programmers still have to play host, administrators administrate and press and PR staff (to judge by their outputs, virtually indistinguishable at festival time) have to produce interviews and interviewees, but that's routine. Really, says the festival, we're all here to party, see the movies and have a good time. The trade forum and craft conferences get relatively little attention and this isn't even a distribution festival. According to programmer David Overbey, who's been with the festival since it started, "All that gets done at Cannes. Distribution deals just don't happen here, except for odd, almost accidental exceptions, like *Divya*. This is really a festival for the public."

If that's the case, then what is one to make of: the seriously new wave young woman who is faster on the draw with her business card than the middle-aged executive-type she's nose-to-nose with; the slovenly-dressed journalist whose smile is as fast and bright as any PR woman's and who kills it just as fast when the smilee turns out to be another journalist; the 15-minute conversation that runs its course without either participant pausing in his scan of the room to look at the other; the fortyish woman deep in conversation with a passholder who, without explanation, apology or good-bye, breaks off in the middle of her own sentence to dash across the room and buttonhole a filmmaker and who, five minutes later when he does the same thing to her, looks deeply resentful.

These little bits of behaviour, and dozens of others like them, play out again and again at parties, in theatre lobbies and in the hostility suite (even the PR staff has given up calling it "hospitality suite"). To a degree, they're explainable by festival fever, that malady brought on by too many movies, too many people, too little sleep and too much festival food and drugs and that brings its sufferers such whimsical distortions as remembering Wim Wenders'



● The Big Chill's William Hurt, Kevin Kline and Jeff Goldblum

*The State Of Things* in colour, though it was shot in black and white.

More likely, though, is the explanation that the people doing them (and there are far more of them than of genuine, carefree partygoers) are working the festival. Like miners working a lode and barkers working a crowd, they know what they want and they're toiling to get it.

Sue Dosso and her husband, Jeff Holvec, are behind the bar in the hostility suite. They work from nine in the morning to eight at night, every day of the festival, dispensing drinks, clearing away dirty plates and glasses and cleaning up. The only help they have is the occasional busboy who brings stuff to and from the suite. Since the suite seldom has fewer than a dozen people and more often as many as forty, they spend most of the day on the run.

Sue and Jeff are actors. He's got the lead in *Tribes*, a limited series hitting the box sometime this winter; so far, she's been less lucky. They're both working the festival for more work.

"We were thinking of putting up a banner: Now Playing At The Bar: Sue And Jeff," says Sue. "But we didn't think Wayne Clarkson would like it."

"I won't tell anyone what I do unless they ask," adds Jeff. "The festival won't allow it and it is taking advantage of the situation. This place is not for that. It is for play, not for work."

Yet they continue to work as best they can, making themselves unobtrusively noticeable, despite the smoke and din and the weariness in their faces that gets more pronounced every day. They do it with wit, charm, jokes, smiles that convey a genuine friendliness, and close attention to names and faces.

Halfway through, it's paying off for Jeff. He's made three solid contacts - a comedy troupe, an ongoing production company and a one-shot feature - and he's proud of his luck. Sue, again, has been less lucky. "The problem is the foreign directors. They want to work in their own languages and, so far, none of the Italian ones has come in yet."

But the festival still has five days to run.

Kate Wheeler is an actress, too, working the festival from a booth at the trade forum. But right now she's collapsed in a chair, panting, having danced the kinks out to the postdisco sounds at Maximus, where some party or other is struggling to get off the ground. She's a

little zoned, but as soon as I introduce myself, she raps out a list of credits, including a comedy pilot called *Hairdressers* and interest from CITY-TV for their weathergirl spot, the name of her agent and his phone number. None of the subtlety of Sue and Jeff for her. "Because the crowds are so thick, I really have to work. I make damn well sure that where a director or producer is seen, I'm there. Robert Duvall liked me. He asked me for my name and my agent, who's Jerry Lodge by the way, and he said he liked my carriage and my presentation of self.

"And now I've got to go and get any beauty sleep. I've got to be up and fresh tomorrow morning."

Neither morning nor fresh are a problem for Godfrey Jordan. He's here on a Festival Pass, so his time's his own and his hard-earned writer's pallor goes well with the mordant wit and level gaze. He's in fine form to work the festival as a writer, but he won't actually say that that's what he's doing. He'll hint. He'll say, "Talking to people... making contacts... this 'n that," but that's as far as it goes. Godfrey's an old acquaintance from York. He's usually pretty reticent about what he's got going - maybe he views me as competition - but I've never seen it as bad as this. He won't even say how he came by the pass, just,

"it was a gift," accompanied by a mysterious little smile.

So, when I leave Godfrey propping up a wall in the hostility suite and bump into John Foster, with whom I share an Ottawa background and who tells me strange stories about my parents' early days, and when John, unasked, hands me the name and phone number of a producer looking for ghost stories, I slip it in my pocket and decide not to mention it to Godfrey. For all I know, it might not even interest him. He could be working the festival for some arcane lode of mystique that he sees as an end in itself. There are lots of things to work for besides money.

There's sex, for instance. Three stories, two from source, one hearsay; all without names - this is commentary we're writing here, not exposé. One: A festival staffer finds herself in the front seat of a Mercedes-Benz, on a residential street, at mid-evening, getting, uh, plowed by an internationally-known heartthrob. "Sometimes it's just easier to give in and get it over with than to keep on holding out," she sighs. Two: Another staffer finds herself being invited by a festival heavyweight to fuck a visiting director. It seems the staffer and the heavyweight share the same birthday, so fucking her would be like fucking him, sort of. The staffer stayed worried until the director showed himself disinclined to pursue the matter. Three: Somewhere there's an ex-staffer who parlayed her sexual encounters into a fat job in London, proof that sometimes when the festival is being worked, it works back.

A *quid pro quo* arrangement is just fine with Karla, too. She pops out of the crowd at some party or other to bum a light and tell me that she comes up to the festival from Buffalo every year - this is her third. "The movies and the parties are really great, y'know? The only problem is I'd like to find someone to stay with. I'm with some people now, y'know, but I'd like to find somewhere more private, y'know?" She shoves her 22-year-old breasts at me just to make sure I don't miss the point. Thanks, Karla, but no thanks. That's fine with her and she easily shifts her attention to the fiftyish three-piece suiter I've been talking with. When I run into them again, a couple of days later, they both look perfectly content.

Karla works it on the barter system, but at yet another party I stumble, by accident, across a couple of pros. Call

them Gerda and Mandy. They don't say they're hooking and I don't come right out and ask them, but their attitudes, their language, their stories and their vagueness about their careers as a dancer and an actress all work to give the impression.

"We're not officially connected with the festival," says Mandy, stressing 'officially'. "We help promote events. People call us up and invite us to parties. We're very outgoing, generous, giving people."

"And we like to have fun," adds Gerda and tells a story about crashing the Oscars and pirating Jack Lemmon's limousine out from under his very nose, about showing up at another awards show in a Frederick's of Hollywood number.

They're happy with this year's festival. They've made a lot of contacts and seen some good movies. "Especially *Carmen*," says Gerda. "She had all this power over these guys. She messed with their minds and I liked that."

So, for a while, the talk shifts to sex and power over men, while a steady stream of unaccompanied males drops by the table to whisper a few words in one or another of their ears, deposit a business card and leave.

"Contacts," says Mandy proudly and brings out a walletful of cards to show me, while Gerda decides she's going to hypnotize me - a process that involves stroking her body, rolling her eyes and licking her lips. Their dreams of getting into showbiz may be real, but somehow I don't think their methods are.

Jonathan Gross, on the other hand, is very realistic about his methods. He's a rock writer for the Toronto *Sun* and, as he zips through the mob at the Bam Boo Club, he barks out that his stint as guest programmer in the Video/video series is a calculated and deliberate move to get out of journalism, away from the *Sun* and into producing rock videos in New York.

"I'm a video guy, not a film person. I like to party. And you can't write rock journalism forever. After you reach a certain age, you start to lose credibility," he insists and mentions a colleague or two by way of example.

Gross has a lot to say about the festival and video being treated as a poor sister and he spits it out fast and bitter, so that when he finishes with, "I'm very close to getting out. I'm very close to getting out," it sounds more like he thinks he's trapped for life. But, two weeks after the festival closes, it's announced: Jonathan Gross will be leaving the *Sun* to freelance in New York.

Back in the hostility suite at the end of the week, I'm vegging quietly in the corner when André Bennett comes over. Bennett heads a distribution company called Cinephile. They've got André Forcier's new movie, *Au clair de la lune* and I said some nice things about it in print. So Bennett is happy to talk to me. Specifically, he's happy to talk to me about any other films I've seen that I think he should pick up. I close my eyes and start to hunt titles, mostly from last year. When I open them again, I see that Bennett has his notebook out and is writing them all down. Then he asks me if I have any notions on how he should promote *Au clair de la lune*. "I do," I say, realizing belatedly that this is business. "And I'll be happy to do something for you at a very reasonable rate."

"I'll get back to you on this when I've got the money sorted out," says Bennett and bounces off.

Sometimes when you're working the festival, the festival is working you.



● CBC's Peter Herrndorf, NFB's James Domville, producer Marie-José Raymond and Communications minister Francis Fox at the pre-opening reception for *The Tin Flute*

## Peter Wintonick

is a Montreal film and videomaker, currently working with Peter Watkins on *The Nuclear War Film*.

Crowds and more crowds. The crowds were once again milling about outside the Parisien Cinema – the site of this year's most successful edition of the World Film Festival. Were they waiting for Liv Ullmann's limo? For me to arrive on my skateboard? No. They were all standing awestruck in a huge circle gawking at Conrad Dubé, the world's most remarkable man. A victim of that almost forgotten disease, polio, Mr. Dubé has struck back by travelling around the world seven times in the past 30 years on a bicycle. We talked together in a silent way about our life's journeys. I gave him a little money for his supper and wished him luck. He was about to leave on another circumglobal voyage, this time through China. I, too was about to go to China using the cool comfort of magic realism called cinema. I was going to see yet another film – *The Go Masters*, the first epic Japanese/Chinese co-production and the eventual compromise winner of the best film award at the festival. This small and fortuitous incident in the dying light of a very august day warmed my heart greatly and reminded me of why I love film so much.

Film is the International and Cross-cultural Language. It reunites and links together varied souls. It teaches us of others and it externalizes our own perceptions of our own culture. Its multi-spectral nature offers other systems and ways of seeing the world: systems of political organization, of religious and moral experience, of familial groupings. At the same time it connects our laugh with the laugh of a Botswanan bushman (*The Gods Must Be Crazy*), our emptiness with that of a young Spanish girl (*The South*), our tears of daily life with those of the people of St. Henri (*The Tin Flute*), our struggle to understand death with that of an old Japanese woman (*The Ballad Of Narayama*) and our idea of friendship with that of two German women (*A Labour Of Love*). This is the true value of this international film festival. You can travel through another's world, and you can do this not only vicariously but directly and permanently. You never forget the experience of watching a great film. It lives with you. This year a large number of films dealt with the issues of war and peace. The memories of past wars, the meaning of the present ones and the horror of the future One. These films brought me to the feeling that film might be the only option left open to us in an increasingly hostile world. Because of its ability to cross international barriers, film might save the world from itself. There was at

this year's festival a large section dedicated to the new Soviet cinema. This kind of cultural exchange and reel contact with that unknown monolith is necessary if we truly want to understand the way to peace. If those boys in the Kremlin and the Pentagon watched films all the time like I do, then they wouldn't have the time to think about shooting down planes and murdering innocent people. I'd even be willing to supply the popcorn.

Now, if only I could get Andropov and Reagan to go out on a double date... I'd take them to an all-night drive-in overlooking Geneva... they could watch a Jerry Lewis film, maybe a Chaplin just to get them warmed up... then I'd hit them with *Dr. Strangelove* and *The War Game*. Then, as the sun was rising over the lake, I'd introduce them to Conrad Dubé and he could tell them a thing or two about suffering, peace and the human spirit. Not bad, eh? The world would be saved. And only in 300 words... (THIS IS THE WORDPROCESSOR SPEAKING / MR. WINTONICK YOU HAVE GONE OVER THE LIMIT / YOU'LL HAVE TO WRITE ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE / THANK YOU / PRESS ENTER / PRESS EXIT)

I love the Toronto Festival of Festivals. A journey up an exotic river (THE SAINT-LAURENT) to an exotic country (CANADA) and an even more exotic city (SCARBERIA, TOBONTO) does wonders for one's health after watching too many films in Montreal.

The Festival of Festivals was again this year the Festival of Parties, the Festival of Golden Starlets, the Festival of Corporate Sponsors and – lest we forget – the Festival of Some Interesting Films.

The real discovery for me at the Festival and the real reason that we were all drinking to forget was the FACT of VIDEO/video. VIDEO/video was a section of the festival entirely devoted to the world's best documentary, fiction, rock, art, experimental, and made-for-television video. Video's presence was omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, omnivorous and omnifarious.

Video is not just another five-letter word. Video has changed and it, in turn, will change your life. Watch out for card-carrying zealots with ray-gun eyes bearing strange pamphlets with quirky terminology emblazoned on the cover: NTSC. PAL. SECAM. CMX – 340x. LEVEL THREE INTERACTIVE VIDEO DISC. TIME BASE CORRECTION. Frightening. Get out your dictionaries. Start learning again. The first priority of this video conspiracy is to change the name of Cinema Canada to Video Canada. Not as catchy to the ears of the novitiate but it's "soon come" as they say in Jamaica.

Leading the troops in this video cult is a wonderful person named Marien Lewis. Ms. Video is a leading proponent of the cause, a video curator, creator and aviator and an all-round nice feminist. This is the third year she's organized Video/video and it just keeps getting better. She told me in a harrowing taxi-ride down the Bay street canyon that the real star of the festival was not Pia Zadora or Karen Black but General Electric's Large Screen Television Projector PJ5850. I just had to see it. I entered the screening theatre deep down in the heart of the Royal Ontario Museum which was located one floor below the dinosaur collection (appropriate, I thought) and sat down to watch a wonderfully moving video documentary



• VIDEO/video's Marien Lewis

made by *Global Village* in New York entitled *The Pursuit of Happiness* (appropriate, I thought) and it was then and there that I fell in love for the first time that day.

This machine, brought to you by the kind people at GE, the creators of toaster ovens and nuclear power plants among other things, will revolutionize your life. This one small portable unit measuring 22" x 17" x 32" and weighing only 50 kilos is capable of throwing a very large (25") and sharp video image over the heads of 600 people to a bright screen 140' away with all the quality we are accustomed to in a "regular" cinema.

Good-bye filmmaker. Good-bye film producer. Good-bye film editor. Good-bye film lab. Good-bye film distributor. Good-bye film. Good-bye cinema. Kiss it all Good-bye. Kiss instead the GE PJ5850. Embrace video. Take a closer look at the revolution and the new technology. Wipe that sleepy film dust out of your eyes and replace it with star-gazing of a different sort. Join with this sick sycophant in celebrating a new-found cure for a dying cinema. Imagine the future. The future is NOW.

## Kevin Tierney

teaches film at Sir John Abbott College and is a frequent contributor to *Cinema Canada*.

The Montreal Film Festival was never getting the same reaction to any film from any two critics.

The Montreal Film Festival was being able to see Zanussi's *Imperativ*, Xie Jin's *The Herdsman*, James Ivory's *Heat*

And *Dust*, and Patrice Chereau's *L'Homme Blessé* in the space of two or three days, while smiling at the thought that *The Gods Must Be Crazy* would actually open after the festival.

The Montreal Film Festival was being told in advance by Serge Losique how a festival should be covered and what a journalist's responsibility is.

The Montreal Film Festival was attending a press conference where some hushed-voice, bespeckled photographer asked Liv Ullmann what she "thinks of El Salvador."

The Montreal Film Festival was thousands and thousands of people in line for hours on St. Catherine Street, waiting to buy tickets for movies which may have been good or bad, but were almost always worth seeing.

The Montreal Film Festival was hearing an impressive array of six German directors at a "Table Ronde" assuring one and all that in the rite of passage from "New" German cinema to German cinema, one thing is certain – it will survive.

The Montreal Film Festival was seeing *Carmen* in the afternoon and leaving the theatre wondering how one should go about getting dictionary writers to change the spelling of 'soaring' to 'Sauraring.'

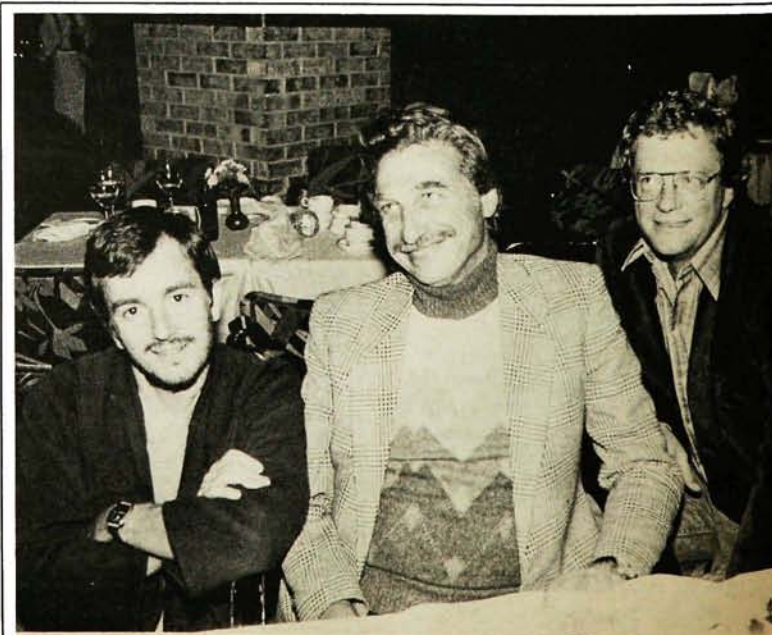
The Montreal Film Festival was Margarethe von Trotta's splendid *Labor of Love*, and seeing the director as elated by its reception here as she had been disheartened by its pounding at the Berlin Film Festival.

The Montreal Film Festival was having 'too good' a film in the official competition, *Danton*, such that the whole thing was a foregone conclusion. Or it should have been. Instead, the results pointed out how juries resemble marriages: neither A, nor B, but a lifetime of C's.

The Montreal Film Festival was a good opportunity to reflect on the obvious fact that five years ago, NO ONE would have predicted the festival would one day outgrow its five-theatre home at Le Parisien.

This year's Montreal Film Festival seemed more like a convention than any of its predecessors, but was, above all, a feast for movie lovers, those who continue to give the festival the only *raison d'être* it really needs.

• The remarkable Conrad Dubé



• Talent in triplicate: director Jean-Jacques Beineix, Jean-Pierre Denis and Ralph Thomas

# Science fiction revisited : David Cronenberg as programmer

David Cronenberg looked surprised at the suggestion that this year's festival was a plot to make him respectable.

"This is one of those rare occasions when something happens that you had nothing to do with," he replied. "The festival approached me and said they wanted to do a retrospective and asked if I was interested in participating. I said I was delighted, of course. Then, the Academy was looking for a book to do and they talked with the festival and arranged it so the publicity would come together. Finally, the festival said to me, 'By the way, we have a science fiction series. Would you care to program it?' I'd never programmed a film series before, but I'd fantasized about it, so I leapt at the chance. I gave them some of my choices, *Satyricon*, *Taxi Driver*, *The Devils*, and they said, 'Great! Do it!'

"I never really thought about being respectable."

And a good thing, too, because common comment from festival-goers wondering about seeing any given selection from Science Fiction Revisited was, "This time he's gone too far. There's no way this is science fiction."

That, of course, depends on your definition of science fiction, but it is precisely on the question of definition that SFR gains much of its value, despite Cronenberg's comment that, "I think categorization and definition are of interest to academics and, at the other end, to distributors, who worry if they don't have a label, but I don't think even a festival-going audience is that picky."

But festival-going audiences are that picky and for good reason: the definitions one brings to new experiences shape one's perceptions of those experiences. This is the idea that underlies feminist commentary on, and concern for, the underlying masculine bias in language. More dramatically, an experiment once took place in which a group of African tribesmen were shown a movie. Lacking any conception whatsoever of moving pictures, they were unable to construct any sort of narrative. They could see the man walking through the door. After the cut to the inside of the room, the man and door became a different man and door. Similarly, definitions and their lack can lead audiences and critics alike to be confused and alienated by the material on the screen.

Science fiction in the movies usually means *Return of the Jedi* and its ilk. It is, I hope, not necessary to point out that the science and technology in such films are pure window-dressing and that plot, character, theme and shooting style could be transplanted whole to any number of other genres without significant alteration. Cronenberg demonstrated this perfectly by programming Robert Wise's 1955 costume epic, *Helen of Troy*. Cronenberg's own comments are wholly accurate: "It is the same movie as *Return of the Jedi*. It features exotic castles and towers, strange inhabitants in the forests, swords, no definite connection with reality."

A better definition is the traditional literary one: science fiction is the extrapolation into the future of contemporary trends. This makes films like *Dr. Strangelove*, *On The Beach* (both part of SFR), *War Games* and *Coma* solidly mainstream. But that makes science fiction a very small category and one that excludes far more than it includes.

The best definition going these days is the one that arose from the critical battles between Old Guard and New Wave science fiction writers in the late '60s. Science fiction is literature (and films) based on the premise, "What if..." What if warlike Martians landed on Earth? (*War of the Worlds*, among many others). What if, one day, a man woke up and found he was shrinking steadily? (*The Incredible Shrinking Man*). Like the traditional literary definition, this makes SF an art of extrapolation, but with one very serious alteration: to its most serious practitioners and adherents, the letters "SF" do not stand for "science fiction", they stand for "speculative fiction". Speculative fiction opens the field up wide: What if the Nazis had won WWII? (Len Deighton's novel, *SSGB*, which, in fact, reads like a thriller). What if sexual energy were the power source for star travel (Philip José Farmer's novel, *Image of the Beast*). What if Christ had a homosexual relationship with Prometheus? (Harlan Ellison's short story, "The Place With No Name"). Cronenberg programmed a few in this vein: *The Creature From The Black Lagoon* (What if evolution had produced a humanoid directly from fish?), *Mad Love* (What if you thought your hands had a murderous will of their own?), *Vampyr*, *The Fearless Vampire Killers* and *The Golem* (What if supernatural entities were real?). But that still left a number of films that fell firmly outside any accepted definition for SF.

For an understanding of these, in this context, we're thrown back on Cronenberg's definition of SF and, at first, it seems a rather poor one, not thought through and, at best, highly personal—something Cronenberg freely acknowledged: "When I handed the festival my finished list, I asked them if they still wanted to call it 'Science Fiction Revisited'. They said they did, so we went

with it."

Cronenberg's SF, "can embrace anything that is not essentially realistic. That includes exotica, psychopathology, horror, bio-chemistry, historical fantasy reconstruction, hallucinations, madness, existential and medical paranoia, metaphysics and other planets."

The internal contradictions are apparent and they become worse when one considers some of his selections. Jean Vigo's *Zéro De Conduite* is an imaginative recreation of schoolboy life, feelings and fantasies. Though there is a surreal, dreamlike quality to some of its images, of actual hallucination or madness, there is nothing. *Un Chien Andalou* and *L'Âge D'Or* do, indeed, "serve up our dreams on a platter," but what makes that science/speculative fictional? Cronenberg's comment that "Bunuel and Dali were much influenced by Freud, but was Freud a scientist or a poet?" only muddied the issue.

Things cleared a bit in Cronenberg's presentation of *M*, *The Devils* and *Taxi Driver*. They are, as he says, "studies in pathology," both social and personal, and that makes them speculative, or science, fiction (depending on your views of social and personal psychology). But their status, and excellence as such will only be recognized by the viewer who is already familiar with the pathologies involved. The controversies around the latter two films on their releases indicates that not a lot of (re)viewers possessed the needed familiarity.

When Cronenberg discussed *Taxi Driver*, his position became clearer still: "De Niro is a sleepless alien who does a poor job of passing himself off as an earthling. He can't really figure out human sexuality but he wants to get involved anyway." It's a position he seems to have arrived at, whether consciously or instinctively, by seeing connections between *Taxi Driver* and *Alphaville*. "The opening two shots of

both films are the same: first the car moving through the night, then the eyes of the driver. And Scorsese's New York is like Godard's Paris. Both films were shot on location, but Godard's Paris is not of this earth and Scorsese's New York isn't the New York we'd see if we visited there, or even that we see in other movies. It's New York seen through the eyes of an alien."

What statements like these indicate is that Cronenberg has arrived at his view of SF through perception, not definition, that he felt certain connections between the films he offered in SFR and labeled these "SF"

It is an approach he supported with a reference to Borges: "I take my cue from... Borges when he states that a phenomenon such as Franz Kafka actually creates his own precursors, linking together strings of writers not seen to be connected before Kafka's emergence: 'His work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future.'"

Though no central figure appeared in SFR to link the films, Cronenberg himself, through his films displayed in the retrospective, could almost fill that position, for the images and themes that recur throughout SFR are the ones that recur in his own work. One example: the killing children of rage of Cronenberg's *The Brood* (1979) are a strong echo of the killer dwarf, dressed as and mistaken for a child in Nicholas Roeg's *Don't Look Now*, (1973) which in turn, echoes the devil as a little blonde girl with a white ball in Fellini's *Toby Dammit* (1968), itself almost a direct visual lift from a purely supernatural, mid-'60s thriller directed by Italian Mario Bava (a film not in SFR; the others were) and ultimately traceable to Luis Bunuel's writings of the late '20s or early '30s.

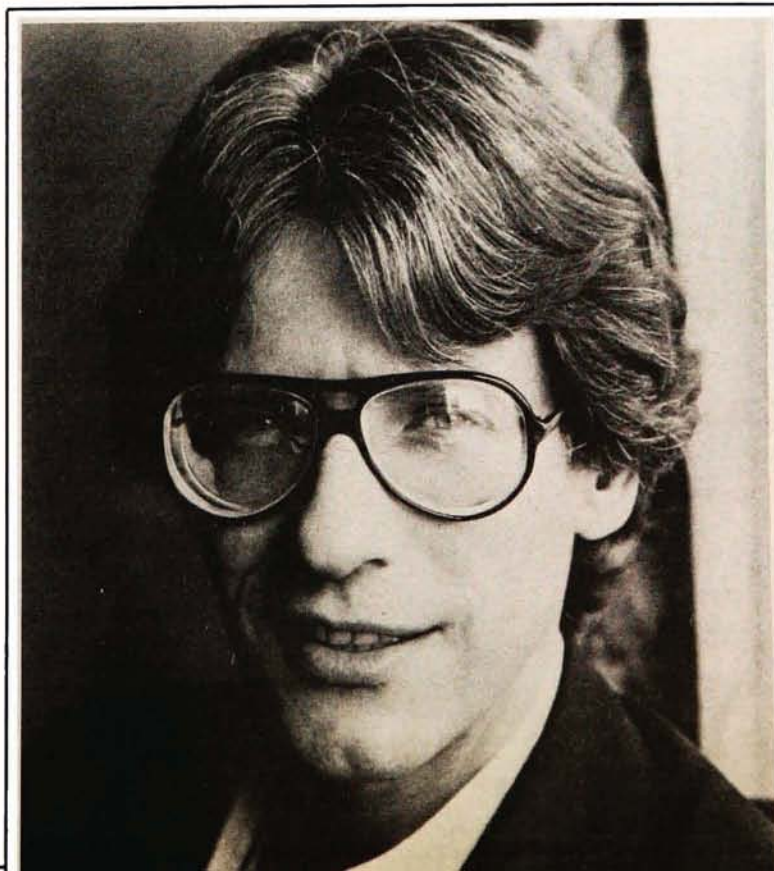
By breaking the definitions and programming by his perceptions, Cronenberg has, in effect, claimed that SF is an attitude and a perceptual set in the viewer as much as it is a set of contents in the material. He has also extended the viewer an open invitation to broaden, or re-structure, his or her working definition of SF and to apply it to materials not overtly labelled as such.

Agreement with Cronenberg's definition is not the point. (Personally, I'd have linked his selections with the word "imagination", for the major part it plays in the creation of the works and the lives of the characters). The point is that, for the reasons noted above, viewers whose perceptions of SF have blossomed will find themselves in much better positions to appreciate such under-rated films as *Bring Me The Head Of Alfredo Garcia*, *King of Comedy*, *Exorcist II*, *Excalibur*, and a host of others, including Cronenberg's own *Videodrome*.

Ultimately this re-evaluation will rebound to the benefit of those filmmakers who are only restrained in their flights of imagination by externally imposed notions of "what the public will accept."

Finally, the only thing wrong with SFR was that it was a one-time event. The large numbers of people turned away from the Backstage I and II every night indicates that there is an audience for this kind of programming. Perhaps one of Toronto's smaller theatres, like the Bloor, would find it profitable to run the series again.

Andrew Dowler ●



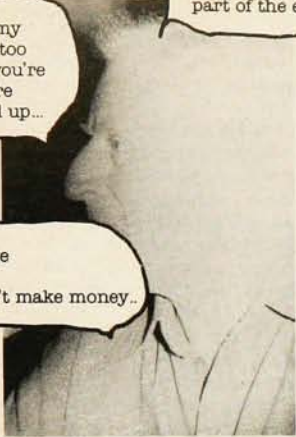
(RE Filmmaking)

...Make it the way you saw it in your mind's eye, whether it's right or not...

... I'm an old activist who whether I like it or not, has arrived at an age where I am an automatic part of the establishment...

... I'm not proud of any of my films. I always worked on too big a canvas... as soon as you're proud and as soon as you're satisfied, you're all washed up...

... No-one's against message pictures... they're against message pictures that don't make money...



Stanley Kramer - Filmmaker

## Cheap shots at

(What do you like most in this world?)

"My dog... but please don't tell my wife and children that!"

"My wife doesn't care about the Bomb. She's more interested in tennis."

(Your children's reaction?)

"... tremendous indifference..."

(The moral question posed by a (Neutron) bomb which destroys people yet spares property)

"... People are the Enemy Soldiers.

Property is civilian property."

"War is the nature of Man. There's always been War, ESPECIALLY in Europe, to put it mildly..."

inventor of Neutron Bomb, sharing his wisdom in WAR AND PEACE.



MASSED MEDIA



Joseph Rodl  
SANS LIMITES



Robert van Ackerman  
LA FEMME FLAMBÉE

...Thank Goodness none of THEM are in action (!! ) when you go to see them in a gallery... they're in still life!!! ...Women are obsolete in films... they are nothing ZERO... they should be something... that time seems to be gone... it's a gone generation... maybe because Women are not interesting??? What do you think about that, Ladies?????!!

I didn't have any difficulties as a child. I loved my mother. I loved my step-father. I loved my bicycle. It was only when I started in film that I began to have problems...

Does this mean we get our pictures in the paper ???



TWO HOPEFUL YOUNG FILMMAKERS

Ruben's Nudes ???  
(Press)

Cigarette me, big boy... Well, light it!

I don't like seeing a nude body in a movie... in action... It's not Art...

Ginger Rogers - Actress

Ginger Rogers - Actress

...so far I haven't quoted anyone correctly for the past 5 years... but they all seem to think it's all right...!



Unidentified movie critic for unidentified Montreal English daily

I prefer B&W - films and still photography... it's hard to get backing for a film if you tell them it'll be B&W... if you remember my films in B&W that is a deep compliment to me...



Daniel Schmid - Director HECATE

## loose talk

by Linda D. Hammond

Linda D. Hammond is a paparazza working out of Toronto and Montreal.



stay provincial...  
hard enough to work  
3 or 4 German Filmmakers.

WE Germans may not know everything  
about how to live... but we know  
everything about how to die.  
- from WAR AND PEACE

It's DIFFERENT when you make a  
film within the U.S. system...

What if COPPOLA (himself) invited  
you to make a film in the U.S. ???  
- U.S. Press

Life is a game in which  
you have no control  
- from WAR AND PEACE



Coppola should come to Germany to  
make a film...  
(muttered reply)

Christel Buschmann  
COMEBACK

Margarethe von Trotta  
A LABOUR OF LOVE

Volker Schlöndorff  
WAR AND PEACE

Kevin Tierney  
CINEMA CANADA

Reinhard Hauff  
THE MAN ON THE WALL

PUTTING IT ON AT THE RITZ

(Joshua - Then and Now) "...a Canadian movie  
in which the Canadian location is not a  
geographic accident..."



Robert Lantos - RSL Films

I have never in my life played a  
subdued woman... (re WILD DUCK) I  
found it enormously hard to be reserved  
because normally I would end up  
committing suicide...

...and one of the A.D.'s informed  
me, "By the way, Penelope -  
Directors shouldn't carry  
purses..."

Qu'est-ce que tu penses ?



Rien.

we change our roles according  
to the circumstances... we never  
know when we are being manipulated  
into a role which isn't ours...

Did I say anything  
clever the last two days  
I've been here ?



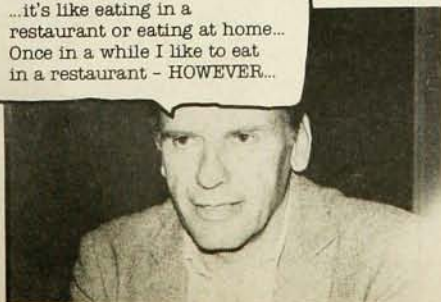
Rutanya Alda - Actress Richard Bright - Actor

Liv Ullmann - Act. THE WILD DUCK

Penelope Spheeris - Dir. SUBURBIA  
Lauren Hutton - Act. HECATE

(Remaking a film in the  
U.S. vs. France) ...  
...it's like eating in a  
restaurant or eating at home...  
Once in a while I like to eat  
in a restaurant - HOWEVER...

It's hard to say something when you're asked  
to say something...  
EXCEPT... (!!!)



Richard Bohringer - Act. LA BÊTE NOIRE

Jean-Louis Trintignant - Act. VIVEMENT DIMANCHE

Steven Lack - A Canadian actor living in N.Y.C.

(cont. from p. 6)

fellow production assistant on *U-turn*... And look where Douglas Bowie is today, not to mention Mr. Carmody.

**John Wardlow**  
Stunts Canada  
North Vancouver, B.C.

*The crew credits we publish come from the production companies. If certain craft categories do not regularly get listed, we urge those concerned to inform the productions of the oversight. - Eds.*

**Co-production flap**

(The following letter was addressed to Cinema Canada's associate editor)

Further to our conversation concerning your article published in issue no. 99 of Cinema Canada entitled "NFB Opens French Studio for Co-production with the Private Sector", I am restating in writing what I have told you verbally: "I did not make that statement" regarding the NFB and the opening of a new co-production studio.

In your article, we read and I quote: *Three years ago, the private sector had rejected the Board's proposal for what was then called "coproduction par jumelage" ("three films from us, three from them," explains Verrier). Today, Association des producteurs de films du Quebec president Pierre Lamy adopts a tone that is scarcely more welcoming. "We've got nothing to do with them," he told Cinema Canada. "Whatever they do, they're not going to listen to us anyway."*

As president of the Association des producteurs de films du Quebec, I cannot take any other official position than

the one made public last year by our past president, Mrs Nicole Boisvert, which is the same as the one put forward by the Institut quebécois du cinéma. It reads as follows (I am quoting the French text knowing that no official English translation exists):

*La participation de l'Institut aux films coproduits par le secteur privé et le secteur public dépend des conditions suivantes:*

- 1- le contrôle général de la production est assumé par le secteur privé, quel que soit l'apport financier du secteur public;
- 2- les biens, services et personnel affectés au film proviennent majoritairement du secteur privé de l'industrie;
- 3- le réalisateur n'est pas un employé permanent d'une entreprise de production du secteur public;
- 4- 50% de l'investissement venant du coproducteur public est consacré à des biens et services acquis du secteur privé de l'industrie. L'autre 50% est calculé à des tarifs compatibles avec ceux en vigueur dans le secteur privé;
- 5- l'investissement de l'Institut est établi, selon les critères et les maxima prévus à ses programmes d'aide, sur la portion du devis assumée autrement que par le coproducteur public;
- 6- ce qui est considéré comme investissement privé selon les programmes de l'Institut constitue au moins 25% du devis total du film.

As an independant producer, it is virtually impossible for me to be against co-productions with the NFB, being presently engaged in a co-production with the Board. Claude Jutra's *Le silence*... presently in production, is the second film produced through an agreement between my company Les Productions Pierre Lamy Ltee and the National Film Board, the first film being Francis Mankiewicz's *Les beaux souvenirs*.

**Pierre Lamy**  
President  
Association des producteurs  
de films du Québec

*After consulting the notes to the news piece referred to by Mr. Lamy in issue No. 99, Cinema Canada stands by its story as reported. For further amplification of some of the points raised by Mr. Lamy's letter, see the story on page 25 of this issue. - Eds.*

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please note**

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