

Joshua budget goes out of control

TORONTO - CBC and Telefilm pulled out of a deal to increase their investment in RSL's *Joshua: Then and Now* to balance budget overruns of \$1.4 million. Douglas Leiterman, executive director of Motion Picture Guarantors, completion guarantors for the film, said in an interview that "Andre Lamy and Denis Harvey pledged to put up extra investment to the amount of \$450,000 and they did not come through. They wanted a better recouplement position." Stephen Roth, RSL chairman, confirmed that discussions had fallen through over the recouplement issue.

The overruns were a result of loss of control, stated Leiterman. "The producers were unable to control the project. A lot of information was not available to us. Cost reports showed unanticipated and significant increases." As examples he cited an art department 100% over budget; the construction department was 1000% over. Leiterman said that RSL "had promised to bring in extra investment." By the time the CBC-Telefilm deal fell through "it was too late for us to take action to restrict shooting." Leiterman said that "the producers and beneficiaries asked us to take over."

Roth denied that there was any loss of control. "The averages," he claimed, "are small as a percentage (10-12%) of the total budget."

The overrun has meant a hefty loss for Motion Picture Guarantors which has responded with cost-cutting measures such as withdrawing from advertising commitments. Leiterman was at pains to emphasize that while "there's no question *Joshua* is the worst case I've ever seen, the nature of our business is to take losses." He said that the loss will not have a substantial impact on the company which is reinsured with Lloyds of London.

Motion Picture Guarantors is a fully Canadian-owned company. It is the largest such company in Canada and the third largest in the world and operates in 10 countries. Last year it guaranteed \$150 million worth of pictures.

Atlantis ready to film sci-fi adventures

TORONTO - Atlantis Films began production at the end of November on the first of three half-hour dramas based on stories by popular science fiction writer Ray Bradbury. Co-produced with Wilcox Productions, the dramas will screen on Global and HBO.

The three dramas are *The Crowd*, *Marionettes Inc.* and *The Playground*.

SHOOT ALBERTA

by Linda Kupecek

Birds of Prey, the low-budget film noir produced by Peter Haynes and Jorge Montesi, started shooting Nov. 11 in Edmonton. The totally non-union shoot, budgeted at \$400,000, has a cast of 40, plus a flock of extras, reports Haynes. Jorge Montesi directs, as well as playing one of the leads, and acting as editor. DOP is Gary Armstrong, with Céline Daignault as production coordinator. Haynes, describing the film as "very stylized", says it is targeted for the film market at Cannes.

Isaac Littlefeathers (now returned to that title after a brief fling as *Drastic Measures*) will premiere Dec. 6 in Edmonton...

Calgary writer Don Truckey's *Tools of the Devil*, a drama about journalism for the *For the Record* series, finished shooting in Toronto in September for producer Maryke McEwan. Truckey, incidentally, is a star reporter at The Calgary Herald... Anne Wheeler directed a half-hour drama based on a Margaret Lawrence story in Edmonton in November for Atlantis Films... On Jan. 13, ACCESS moves to satellite... In November, director Don Owen (*Nobody Waved Goodbye* and *Unfinished Business*) was guest of honor at a reception to celebrate the touring "Canada's Ten Best" Film Festival at the Plaza Theatre in Calgary.

Alberta faces in the crowd at the CFTA Awards in Toronto in November included Bill Marsden of the Film Industry Development Office; Lorne

MacPherson of the Alberta Motion Picture Development Corporation; Ron Brown of ACCESS; Wendy Wacko (*Challenger: The Canadian Rockies*) and others of us who landed at

the Four Seasons for the occasion... Dave Crowe of the Calgary film office has returned from a scouting expedition to Los Angeles... and *Snowballs* is still snowed in 'til January.

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