

The '85 Genies, Mickey Mouse and the International style

by Michael Dorland

"The case of Canada is interesting... At the outset of its film development, it was, in most cultural respects, rotted with spiritual colonialism: measuring itself at every turn against the examples of Europe and the United States."

— John Grierson (1948)

"I believe the magic of film can transcend all reality, if you let it."

— Al Waxman, Genies '85 co-host

"I'd like to set the record straight. To the media who imply that these awards are meaningless, I'd just like to say this is very meaningful to me."

— Ivan Reitman, '85 Genie recipient

Average Canadians watching this year's Genie Awards — and the number crunchers predict there will have been more average Canadians watching than in any previous year¹ — must have come away from the show convinced of the tremendous importance of what the Canadian film industry likes to call "our" industry.

For they would have been treated to an excellent television spectacle, smoothly and professionally produced, intellectually coherent, visually attractive.² They would have learned fascinating facts such as "Canadian movie-goers consumed two million kilos of popcorn last year." They would have seen clips from films they are already familiar with: *Amadeus*, *Places In The Heart*, *Return of the Jedi*, *Ghostbusters*, *Stripes*, *Meatballs*, and *Porky's*. They would have seen two Canadian Oscar winners — a hairdresser and a student filmmaker — one week before the rest of the world. They would have seen actors they already know, if not by their names

certainly by the programs they appear in: *Dynasty* (Lloyd Bochner), *V* (Marc Singer), *Hill Street Blues* (Mimi Kuzyk), *Cagney and Lacey* (Sharon Gless, Al Waxman). They would have seen the likes of Malcolm McDowell, Michael Sarrazin, Mary Steenbergen. They would have heard Canada's minister of Communications salute such "exemplary representatives" of Canada's cultural industries for "preserving and enhancing our Canadian identity." They would have heard, again and again, that international recognition is important, that our films have triumphed from Moscow to the Oscars,³ that impressive numbers of Canadians began their careers in Canada and have since gone on to international acclaim on Broadway and on (international?) network television.

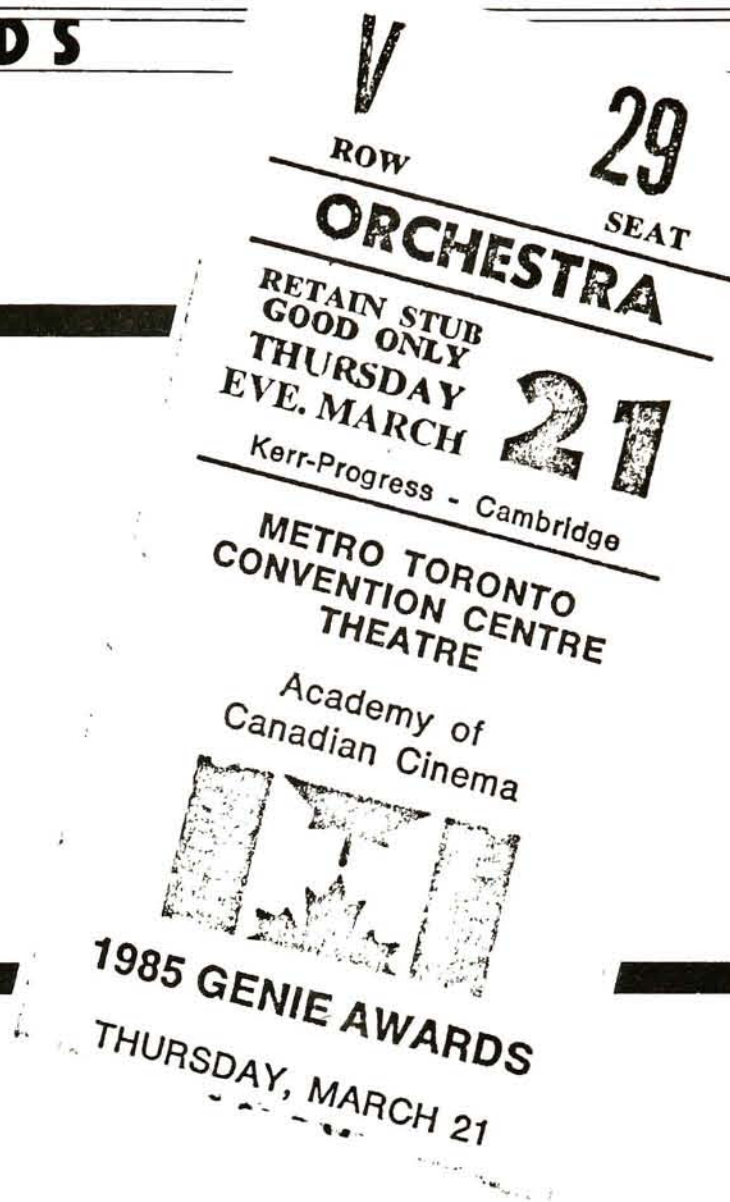
Watching the '85 Genies, the average Canadian would have felt confirmed in what his movie-going or television-watching habits already tell him: that films and television-programs originate from an international Elsewhere. To add to this insight, he or she might have 'learned' that the Canadian industry is an important supplier of producers, writers, technicians, and actors to the international industry. The more thoughtful viewers might have wondered how this so-called international industry manages to somewhere along the line turn into the very national, American film and television industry, but such thoughts are probably confined to a tiny minority. Just as the less thoughtful viewers might have been puzzled by the intrusion of certain films they would not have heard of already, foreign-looking films with foreign-sounding titles like *La femme de l'hôtel* or *Sonatine* or the painfully visible discomfiture of some Genie recipients from a foreign-sounding place called Québec, speaking a foreign lan-

guage that is neither Anglo-Canadian nor American, English Canada's two official languages.

Such unimportant doubts aside, the 1985 Genies were certainly impressive stuff, a fast-paced celebration of success in the best 'seamless whole' traditions of contemporary television. Canadian viewers could thus see Larry Mann, who portrays the obnoxious squeaky-shoed boss of Bell Canada's Telemarketing commercials' fame, appear on the Genies set one moment and then moments later through the magic of television in the real thing. Or one moment after seeing Ivan Reitman, producer/director of *Ghostbusters*, join in further pecuniary celebration with the Ford Motor Company's derivative Pricebusters commercial. In other words, what they were seeing was simultaneously being legitimized not only by the surrounding commercial culture, but also by the Canadian government represented in videoclip by its minister of Communications and institutionally by Telefilm Canada. And since all this was being carried by the CBC and hosted by the Academy of Canadian Cinema, with sponsorship by Air Canada — impeccably Canadian bodies all, heavily subsidized by the Canadian taxpayer — what possible reason could there be to question the authenticity of this particular representation?

Just one. It's an illusion, a stage show, a production, a particular organization of images and words assembled by a specific set of human beings who get paid to do what they do: technicians to operate cameras, scriptwriters to come up with the words, actors who read the words written by the scriptwriters, and an industry audience whose job it is to laugh and clap on-cue. People working. Except that these people work at what viewers on the whole consider not

work. Instead they see it as Entertainment or Fun or Art — anything but what it is: work of the same order as driving a truck, or manning an assembly line. Work in an industry that like any other industry has labour-management tensions, consists of an uneasy agglomeration of differences: different people with different backgrounds, with different views and opinions which, given the nature of organizations, translate into different politics, different political strategies, factions and competitions over money, markets, and the nature of product production. What makes this particular industry different from, say, an industry producing buttons, is that this is an industry producing cultural products, namely films and (increasingly) television programs. And in the name of sometimes cultural, sometimes industrial production, the Canadian government is heavily implicated in this industry to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars. What the Canadian government wants out of this is not clear and never has been — sometimes the objectives are purely industrial (more jobs); at others cultural — and cultural in some specifically Canadian sense. Again, it is not clear what this means either: after all, what is a Canadian film? A film with a Canadian story? Any story with a Canadian producer? Any film with a Canadian director? Any film with a Canadian crew? Is an American television program like "somehow Canadian because lead Marc Singer comes from Canada? Is an American film like *Ghostbusters* somehow Canadian because its producer/director, a Czech immigrant named Reitman, went to school in Canada before moving to Los Angeles? Does the fact that many Canadians live and work in Hollywood somehow Canadianize the American film industry such that its cultural pro-



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duction becomes metaphysically Canadian?⁴

In the face of such Byzantine and unresolved debates, a largely Toronto-based film and television industry has grown to respectable proportions, thriving handsomely in the nooks and crannies of Canadian confusion about culture and cultural production. It is an industry whose prosperity is far more directly tied to the internationalization of American production and the denationalization of Canadian production than to specifically Canadian forms of cultural production.⁵ In keeping with the best traditions of Canadian industrial production, the privately-owned but publicly subsidized Canadian film industry is predominantly a branch-plant industry. Any production or industrial practice requires an ideology that makes its practices seem natural, right and proper and deserving of further subsidy that it may continue and multiply. That ideological high-point was unmistakably reached at the '85 Genies which very coherently articulated the internationalist, integrationist, continentalist world-view that defines Canadian production as essentially a farm-team for the major American league.

In this view, Canada is an excellent launching pad for more serious endeavors elsewhere. What makes it such a good training-camp are public-sector 'schools' like the National Film Board, the Canadian Broadcasting Corp., or funding bodies like Telefilm Canada with its deep understanding of the need for helping businessmen minimize risk, and the even more understanding federal government with its large pools of public funds for assisting ambitious Canadian cultural entrepreneurs in making the jump to Hollywood.

The cultural and industrial benefits of this well-oiled system are well-paid producers, working actors, writers and technicians, large influxes of U.S. film and TV capital to offset Canada's chronic cultural trade deficit and of course "international" recognition, celebrated this year in the form of the 'international' Genies, Canada's warm-up act to the 'international' Oscars. And, it goes without saying, this is how things have been since the beginning of motion-pictures on this continent and how they should continue.

Let's see how all this worked itself out in practice at the '85 Genies.

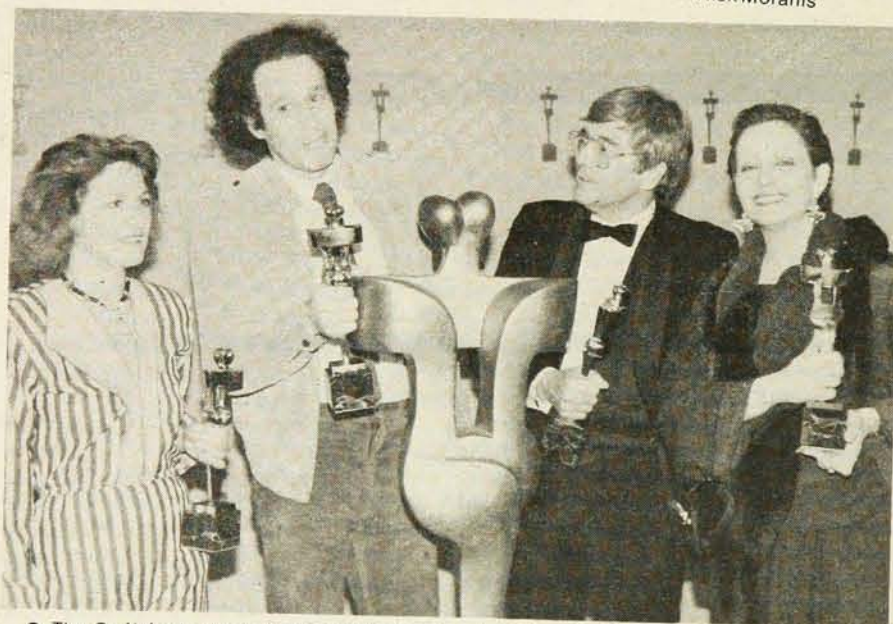
On television, the Genies set, whose style could be termed Greco-New Wave, as seen by a TV camera on a Canadarm from the ceiling of the cavernous Toronto Metro Convention Centre's bunkerlike underground theatre, looked like it was built to last forever. In real-life, like the industry's internationalism, it's just cardboard gilded with Fool's gold, flimsy and portable. About the only solid-looking things were the winding staircase, dangerously coated in laminated plastic, and host Al Waxman.

Waxman, who in co-host Kerrie Keane's cleverly cruel jibe "is the only man to have gone from King (of Kensington Street) to lieutenant (on Cagney and Lacey) and thought he was getting a promotion," delivers the opening token pitch.

"I'm proud to join with you in celebration of Canadian movies and Canadian moviemakers. I'm proud of Canada just as all of you who work in them are proud of Canadian movies and just as all of you who watch them are proud of



● Special award-winner Ivan Reitman (*Ghostbusters*) with presenter Rick Moranis



● The Québécois: best director Micheline Lanctot (*Sonatine*), best actor Gabriel Arcand (*Le Crime d'Ovide*), best film producer Denis Héroux (*The Bay Boy*), and best actress Louise Marleau (*La Femme de l'hôtel*)



● Special award-winner Paul Leblanc (*Amadeus*)

Canadian movies." Translated, this means proud of Canadians who make it big elsewhere and since only 2-3% of the Canadian moviegoing public actually

see Canadian films, Waxman's definition of 'Canadian movies' must mean of the *Porky's* or *Meatballs* variety only.

Enter co-host Kerrie Keane, a very

personable actress in a green ruffle dress whose screen credits are announced as a series entitled *Hot Pursuit* and another called *Death In California*.⁶ Keane immediately sets the proper tone.

"I'm really delighted to be here tonight to be part of this international movie event. Canadians from movie capitals of Canada and the world have gathered tonight to pay tribute to our films."

According to Waxman, Canada has two movie capitals, which must have come as a complete surprise to both places.⁷ "They are all here from Vancouver, Montreal, Hollywood, London, Paris and Rome." If Malcolm McDowell can still pass for someone from London, certainly no one who appeared on-stage was from any international movie capital other than the American one.

With this promising beginning, the awards-giving got underway. Surprisingly both presenters for best supporting actress were Canadian, actress Lisa Langlois from something non-Canadian called *Sluggers Wife* and actor Chuck Shamata, appearing in the shot-in-Canada ABC movie-of-the-week *In Like Flynn* and the officially Canadian but American-starred, *Joshua Then & Now*. The Genie went to Linda Sorenson who, in obviously the right career move, now lives and works in the U.S.

Canadian comic relief was soon provided by Bell Canada Telemarketing 'boss' Larry Mann who delivered the technologically internationalist tip that "One conference call (to the U.S., no doubt) could have taken care of the whole thing," adding dubiously "I'm not sure but maybe next year you'll get the rest of the operation correct."

Levity aside, it was indicative that by the first commercial break, Canadian films, brief clips of which had appeared on the rear-projected screen, had received fewer references than the more celebrated 'international' product.

While TV viewers at home were treated to commercials like PetroCanada's nationalism-at-the-gas-pump: "We haven't forgotten Canada's future. PetroCanada. Putting Canada first," Genie-goers got to relax. The minute the TV monitors go black, the entertainment workers hang loose. Sets are moved around. Comic Danny Mann, son of Larry, and co-writer of this year's Genie script, tries to keep the house from falling asleep, while Al Waxman wanders about, sipping from a glass of water and Kerrie Keane goes to get her hair done. Then the countdown begins and 10 seconds before the cameras come back on, Danny Mann whips the house into hearty applause as the show rolls on. Smile, the cameras are back.

And we're back with the first piece of falsifying history to accommodate the internationalist ideology established before the commercial. The monitor shows a clip from a 1905 Edison phonograph recording session somewhere. A professional *chanteuse* identified as "a Miss Bennett of Toronto" sings into the phonograph. The clip suggests that already in 1905 Torontonians were singing for their supper to their masters' voice, thus that the same thing continues today is historically legitimate. Keane announces that Miss Bennett might have won a Genie for her singing back then, except, adds Waxman, that the "talking picture" didn't come till 20 or so years later, and, quips Keane, the Genies didn't arrive until a half-century after that. The Genie is thus legitimized

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against a non-existent past, while the real – and perennially controversial – history of the Genies themselves is neatly stepped over and one dispenses with the entire problem. A further gross caricature of the history of the Genies will later be delivered by a U.S. news network heavyweight, Morley Safer, who by Canadian birthright is entitled to add his contribution to this celebration of national self-parody.

From archival distortion, our hosts fearlessly drag us to falsifying the history of another industry, Canadian country music now. The first nominated original song, "A Little Piece of Forever" is to be sung by C&W crooner Ronnie Hawkins who, Keane breathlessly tells us, is "the guy who wrote the book on original" and is furthermore "a Canadian country music legend." Now Hawkins is only original in the uniquely Canadian sense of being American and he's as much a Canadian music legend as Johnny Cash is.⁸ To further boost his star, Keane tells us that he's been in "several motion pictures", Scorsese's *The Last Waltz* (a U.S. film about an American band led by a Canadian) and Cimino's *Heaven's Gate*, a pricey U.S. western.

Moving right along, Keane delivers another of her smiling putdowns, reminding everyone that "back in 1980" Ivan Reitman and Bruno Gerussi had big plans for meatballs. "But Bruno Gerussi's meatballs went bad in the *Celebrity Cooks* refrigerator and ended up as an episode of *The Nature of Things*." This cracked up the house. Keane, wide-eyed: "They laughed!" As the American born-and-raised Canadian

actor Louis Del Grande recently remarked in another context, "There seems to be something in the atmosphere, where you hate yourself if you're Canadian."

Waxman drives the point home: "Reitman's movie *Meatballs* scored big at the box office and launched the career of our next presenter", introducing Torontonian actor Chris Makepeace accompanied by Mary Catherine Stewart who fortunately managed to compensate for coming from Edmonton by being on such impeccably international stuff as *My Bodyguard*, *The Last Starfighter* and *Hollywood Wives*.

But like any successfully fixed prizefight, it wasn't only Canadian bantams disguised as international heavyweights pounding the national inferiority complex. Like a good police interrogation, it wasn't just meanies; there were also some homegrown nice types brought in from time-to-time to ease up on the drubbing. Thus, you'd get token "outstanding Canadian performers who've been a favorite with Canadian audiences for years": for instance, Lally Cadeau of CBC series *Hangin' In*. Or Gordon Pinsent who offered the mocking line that coming down the plastic stairs in the company of Helen Shaver was "like walking in actor's heaven." Or comedian Harvey Atkin who vaulted from baking-soda commercials and *Meatballs* to "the hit series" *Cagney & Lacey*. In an interesting insight into the loneliness of Canadians on international shoots, Waxman said of himself and Atkin that on-set "We're the two guys fighting over the *Globe & Mail* sports section."

An odd nostalgia for home would somehow creep into the proceedings. Special award winner Paul Leblanc, whose lifetime devotion to Hollywood hair would five days later earn him an Oscar, confessed that "I never really left Canada," adding that there would always be other Canadians on "the international films I've worked on" – "I was never alone as a Canadian." Likewise Daniel Petrie, another Hollywood lifer, upon getting his Genie (and a \$5000 Telefilm cheque) for best screenplay – *The Bay Boy*, a script reportedly turned down by every Hollywood studio – felt that this made him "a Canadian to other Canadians." Because there is a deadly price to pay for internationalization, as, towards the end of the ceremony, Petrie, on the verge of tears, would recognize. Kerrie Keane inadvertently gave it away in mispronouncing the title of "L'amour aura pris son temps", one of the nominated original songs. As she put it: "*La mort aura pris son temps*."

And on it went, Keane citing that impeccably Canadian publication *TV Guide*, owned by a Philadelphia media mogul who was Nixon's ambassador to England, for listing her as one of international TV land's 10 worst dressed women, and Waxman quoting a Boston newspaper that cited him as one of U.S. TV land's 10 sexiest men.

Hollywood Canadian starlet Helen Shaver, introduced as "recently starring in a new production for Steven Spielberg and a production for Martin Scorsese," added her bit to the conflation of national identities in presenting a Genie special award, along with Gordon Pin-

sent, to New Brunswick-born Hollywood hair stylist Paul Leblanc.

"Paul Leblanc has earned a reputation in our industry as one of the foremost hairdesigners working in the world today. This year movie-goers could not help notice his wonderful contribution to Milos Forman's *Amadeus*."

Against an assortment of clips from products of 'our' industry such as *Amadeus*, *Places In the Heart* and *Return of the Jedi*, Shaver and Pinsent listed the stars of 'our' industry with whom Leblanc has worked: Sally Field, Bette Davis, Diane Keaton, Jane Fonda, Albert Finney, and Harrison Ford.

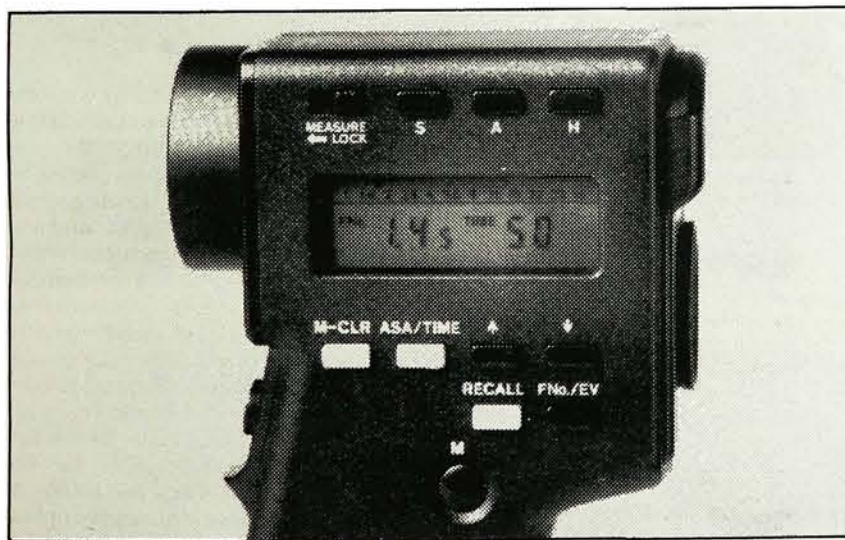
In the Genie program's biographical notes on Leblanc, one is hard-pressed to find a single truly Canadian credit for the productions he's worked on. The closest to it, Allan King's *Silence of the North* (1980), was Universal (Canada)'s first and only production in this country.

Pinsent referred to Leblanc's spending "a year at the CBC." Shaver spoke of "numerous Canadian and international productions" mentioning *Places In the Heart*, *Amadeus*, and *Birdie* "in the last year alone."

For his part, Leblanc revealed that "International recognition seems important and I'd be lying if I said it's not important to me." But, he would add, "being honored and recognized here in Canada is something special," and he would acknowledge his "training at CBC."

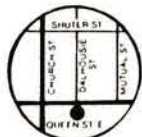
Both special award winners Leblanc and Reitman would make a distinction between the "importance" of international recognition and the lesser impor-

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tance of recognition in Canada. For Leblanc, the latter "is something special;" for Reitman it would be "very meaningful to me." At best, something subjective and personal; the truly important being reserved for where it belongs: Elsewhere.

Yet Leblanc would thank an all-Canadian cast: Allan King, "the first Canadian director who gave me artistic license," publicist Pru Emery, script supervisor Penny Hynam and Canadian hairdresser James Brown. And add a *de rigueur* sentence in rusty French.

Just before the second commercial break, a clip from Québécois director Lea Pool's *La femme de l'hôtel* would flash by with the following words in English subtitle: "I wish too I could experience despair as the only hope left."

After a commercial (among others) for a commercial: the simply awful, made-in-Toronto, piece of animated marketing *Care Bears Movie* ("What happens when the world stops caring?"), it's back again with Toronto-born Morley Safer on videoclip from the international HQ of network television in a 60-second attempt to tell the confused history of how the Genie Awards got its name. Something to do with Etrogs, Sirloins, the fact that no one took the awards seriously, and that after "agonizing debate," and "deadlocked committees", the Genie name came from putting Scrabble letters in a blender. So that's how a name was chosen for this "superlative award" that would be "catching, meaningful, bilingual and marketable." After muttering the token phrase that "as a Canadian, I'm proud to be associated," Safer signed off, looking greatly relieved the ordeal was over.

Waxman then breezed back with a smarmy "All of us can revel a little bit in the success of one of our fellow Canadians when they score big," then he and Keane, in introducing the next presenters for best achievement in cinematography, showed us how this works.

Keane: "She came to Toronto from Winnipeg to get into showbiz."

Toronto was obviously no big deal, since all Mimi Kuzyk found there was "a bit part, some commercials."

Waxman leaps in with: "And now the jump cut. She got hot and was a guest star on *Remington Steele* and is currently a regular on *Hill Street Blues*." Thus did Mimi Kuzyk become a star.

Accompanying her was actor Graham Jarvis from such "memorable" international TV fare as *Mary Hartman* (set in New Jersey) and features *Silkwood*, *Mr. Mom* "and this year's wacky western *Draw!*", a U.S.-Canadian pay-cable film in which Alberta is passed off as the U.S.

The award went to Canadian d.o.p. Pierre Mignot who wasn't there.

Fully in keeping with the prevailing spirit, indeed almost its incarnation, there next appeared Academy of Canadian Cinema chairman Robert Lantos with a highly political message.

Reminding the audience that "this is the first year in which the federal government's Broadcast Fund has funded films eligible for competition," he showed what could be done with the money (some \$250 million by 1989.)

"An impressive number of Canadians - actors, writers, directors, producers and technicians - began their careers in Canada and have since gone on to international recognition. They're making some of the most successful movies in

Hollywood and Europe, starring in Broadway shows and on network television.

"The Canadian film industry has spawned talented individuals whose contribution to the world of film goes well beyond our own borders. And as a number of ambitious projects now in production indicate, the best is yet to come."

On that inspiring note, Lantos announced that the Academy of Canadian Cinema would soon become "the Academy for Film & Television", inviting the television community to join its membership "so that by next year we can celebrate excellence in both film and television in Canada."

When one knows that one of the sticky points in the ongoing negotiations between the Academy of Canadian Cinema and the members of the Canadian television community represented by ACTRA concerns the Academy's desire to re-include American actors in its celebration of excellence in both film and television in Canada, it is fortunate that the next presenters included talented American actress Sharon Gless, co-star of the hit series *Cagney & Lacey*, to give us a foretaste of what that might be like.

Joined by "one of Canada's most distinguished actors", Lloyd Bochner, who "was in the original cast of *Dynasty*," Gless and Bochner reminded us that "next to wheat and hockey players, Canada's most successful exports have been documentaries and short films."

"Just three years after its inception," said Bochner, "our National Film Board was already winning international acclaim." That this was incidental to the more important matter of a world-war is, of course, neither here nor there in the universe of international recognition.

Against clips from the 1941 NFB documentary *Churchill's Island*, Gless, almost misreading the title, reminded one and all that this would be "Canada's first Oscar Award" for a 1985 NFB grand total of 13 Oscars and "hundreds of citations from around the world." That, in the last year alone, in addition to one Oscar, the Board bagged 93 other awards is also neither here nor there in an Oscar-centred universe.

And the tradition continues," reminded Bochner against present-day clips that didn't include anything from the NFB.

Reading the nominee's name, Gless ran into trouble: "Jean-Pierre... Lef... I'm sorry I can't read it." As Bochner prompted her, Gless apologized "to Mr. L..." but she still couldn't pronounce the name of one of Canada's most illustrious filmmakers.

As Québécois actor Marcel Sabourin had remarked in the previous presentation: "*Et le gagnant...* What's this? That's French. *Et le gagnant est* - and the winner is - *et le gagnant est, ET LE GAGNANT EST!*"

Luckily a commercial break soon occurred before things got embarrassing.

"The keystone of a Canadian nation is the French fact... the real danger to nationalism lay in the incipient continentalism of English-speaking society, rather than in any Quebec separatism."

- **George Grant**, Lament For A Nation
Of course the Quebec question surfaced at the '85 Genies - it does every year. And each it's more embarrassing than the year before. This year, when Quebec-



● Presenter Allan King, Air Canada award-winner Don Haig, and Air Canada vice-president Guy Chiasson



● Presenters Michael Sarrazin (*Joshua Then And Now*) and Quebec actress Monique Mercure with best actress Louise Marleau



● Presenters Chris Makespeace (*Meatballs*) and Mary Catherine Stewart (*Hollywood Wives*) with best supporting actor Allan Scarfe (*The Bay Boy*)

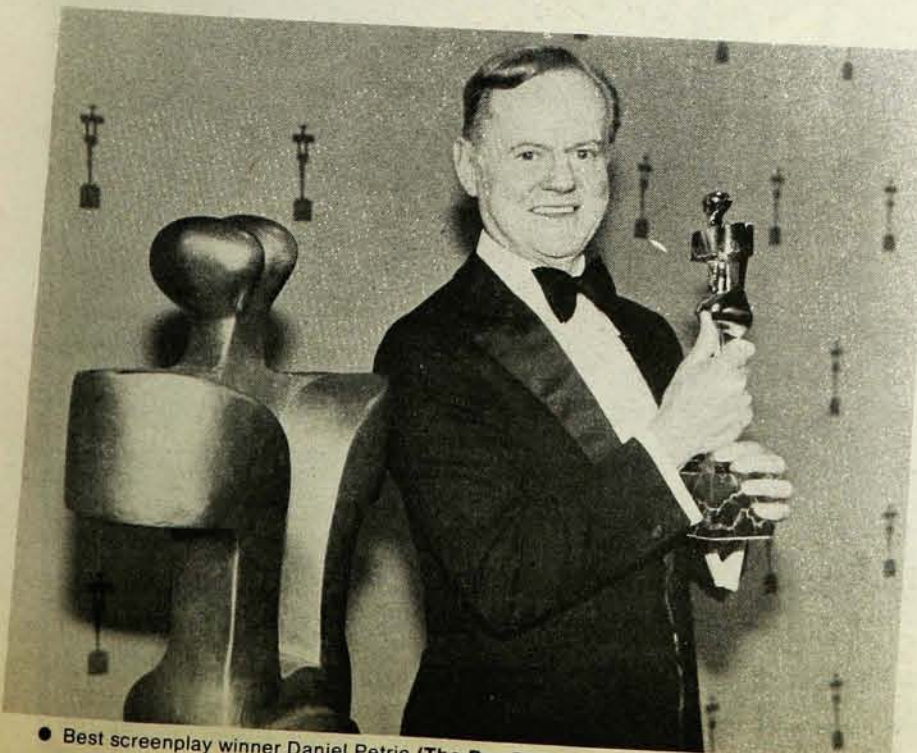
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● Best supporting actress Linda Sorenson (*Draw!*)



● Best theatrical documentary winners for Raoul Wallenberg: *Buried Alive*, producers David Harel and Wayne Arron



● Best screenplay winner Daniel Petrie (*The Bay Boy*)

made films" took every award (14 out of 17 categories), except for best supporting actress, best documentary and best short, was also the year when Québécois alienation from the so-called Canadian industry was uncomfortably visible for all to see.¹⁰ (This provides an interesting reflection on the relations between product and those who produce it: namely that it is possible to serve up a product totally alienated from its context, the Genies telecast being itself a fascinating example.)

Significantly none of the Québécois recipients of the major craft categories (e.g., best cinematography, set design, costume design) were present to accept their awards, and in the major artistic categories, the unhappiness of the principal recipients was all too painfully evident. Micheline Lanctôt (best director) *Sonatine* seemed glued to her seat by gravity. When she did make it to the podium, she appeared speechless with indignation, finally delivering two remarks, the first that her sound crew had been slighted in that category, the second that "I should be witty and funny and gay, but I'm not." If it is in any sense an honor to win a Genie for best director, Lanctôt was not showing it. As she put it later: "I've never been enthusiastic at the Genies awards. That's my problem. The worst thing that can happen to me is to win one of these. I don't believe in it. I think it's a joke. I understand the value of it, I respect the people who strive to promote the industry, I understand, but... At the gala last year, it was just lamentable, it was so much let's laugh at ourselves that it was embarrassing. This year, it's exactly the opposite: *Cagney & Lacey*, our greatest achievement? Ooh, boy."

Louise Marleau (best actress, *La Femme de l'hôtel*), quintessential theatrical *grande dame*, was more gracious, though she too spoke of an inner reluctance to go on-stage and have to make a speech. If Marleau felt that her Genie was "one acknowledgment among others," that "if they recognize your work here, it's possible that others will," she was also ready to concede that "the problem is that these are films nobody sees."

But surely the strangest moment of all was Gabriel Arcand's acceptance of the Genie for best actor (*Le crime d'Ovide Plouffe*). Arcand looked physically sick (he attributed it later to "metabolic malfunction"; this from a professional actor). After what seemed like an interminable silence, he managed to stammer out an industrial thank you to "Gilles (Carle) and Denis (Heroux) who let me work."

Something is seriously wrong with an industry whose highest awards produce so little enthusiasm from those who are ostensibly its leading artists. Fortunately two workers from the international industry were on-hand to show our artists how to cope as the following best actor presentation dialogue between Malcolm McDowell (*O Lucky Man*, *Blue Thunder*) and Oscar-winner Mary Steen-bergen illustrates.

She: "Hello, nice to work with you."
 He: "I didn't know you were in Canada."
 She: "Neither did I."
 He: "Tonight we're here to do more work."
 She: "Nice working with you."
 He: "Yes, very nice working with you."

"Look at us, we're looking good. Look at us, we're looking lean and lean

cuisine looks good. Canada is getting lean and getting lean is good for you, hey, hey, Canada."

— commercial during Genies telecast

"You wouldn't think someone would be proud of being nerd of the year," commented Waxman introducing Rick Moranis who in turn, in an impassioned speech, complete with giant gilded Genie, introduced special award winner Ivan Reitman whose films have, in addition to making large amounts of money for Columbia and Universal, made nerds into the latest heroic figures of North American popular culture.

After a standing ovation, Reitman, a nice-seeming, toothy man, listed the reasons why he felt this special award was "an important honor for me."

"It's Canada that welcomed my parents and I when we arrived here as refugees 23 years ago.

"It's Canada where I went to school. "It's here that I met and married a very special lady.

"It's also in Canada where I saw my first movie and where I made my first movie.

"It's Canada where I had my first success and my first failure."

Yet again this in Canada as a good place for training, a good place to start from, but a place you just have to leave if you want to "make it big." Or at best, to return to for visits, scouting for talent, once you have made it.

Towards the end of the Genies, after *The Bay Boy* was awarded best motion picture, producer Denis Héroux invited writer/director Dan Petrie to join him on-stage. On the verge of tears, Petrie, who has spent his working life in Hollywood cranking out such memorable motion pictures as *The Betsy* or *Fort Apache The Bronx*, described what it meant to come home to Glace Bay, to see the set recreated by designer Wolf Kroeger, the grocery store of his childhood as though frozen in time.

In that vision, Petrie finally understood what Canadian cinema can be, the intangible thing called "home," the intangible thing that tells you where you come from and so in some way who you are. Not a nerd awash in an exploded universe of giant marshmallow men, but someone specific, and in this case, specifically Canadian.

What Daniel Petrie discovered was what Canadian filmmakers like Jean Pierre L... and other pioneers of a genuinely national cinema had discovered 15 years ago. Before the industry, which wasn't one, proclaimed its internationalist avocation.

It's fine that this is now being understood by people like Petrie. But it's not exactly new, and has managed to live on year-after-year in Quebec film-after-Quebec film. But "What's this? — it's French!"

Were 15 years of internationalization and millions in public money necessary for one Canadian film to come back to a point where our films already were at long ago?

Kerrie Keane reminded the Genies' audience that "Most of the films if not all nominated tonight were in one way or another produced with the financial assistance of our provincial or federal government. We as an industry appreciate *this important and impartial participation...*" She then introduced Canada's minister of Communications, Marcel Masse, appearing on videoclip from Ottawa.

What the television audience at home did not hear were the boos and hoots

with which this industry welcomed Masse. For an industry that couldn't survive without the financial support of the Canadian government, this was an interesting reminder that certainly in this country it's not the Canadian pipers who call the tune.

Fully in the spirit of the evening - its grotesque finale - as the names of presenters, CBC program hosts, federal government bureaucrats and the like were called out, all joined around a dancing figure of Mickey Mouse to sing a rousing chorus from the American musical *South Pacific* and thus crowned a simply perfect evening in celebration of Canadian film.

The hurt in Quebec film producer Pierre Lamy's eyes said it all as, among the departing crowd, he asked: "But why did they have to dance around Mickey Mouse?"

The answer is simple. The 'Canadian' film industry has at last found for itself the appropriate 'international' totem: not just a mouse, but an American caricature.

O Canada, the eternal hinterland, the ever-giving supplier of raw materials and natural resources for the industrial machine south of the border. O Canada, perpetually dependent, its manufacturing sector, of which the film industry is a part, chronically, structurally remaining a service outlet for the distribution of the finished American product. O Canada, ever-eager victim and participant in its own annihilation, its culture (such as it is) strip-mined beneath the open sky. O Canada, whose film industry stands on guard for thee in self-recognition and celebration.

Notes

1/ The reach this year was some 1.9 million English Canadians.

2/ Unlike previous years when the Genies broadcast was somewhat resentfully produced by the CBC, this year was a first-time private-sector/public-sector coproduction with CBC handling the technical end and the Academy of Canadian Cinema contracting out the creative end under the stewardship of executive producer Jon Slan, coproducer Rob Iscove and CBC coproducer Garry Blye. The production background of all three Canadians sheds some light on the international style of the '85 Genies. Slan, past chairman of pay-TV licensee Superchannel Ontario, lists Canadian feature film credits *Highballin*, *Fish Hawk*, *Improper Channels*, and *Threshold*, as well as a couple of made-for-U.S.-TV movies. Iscove choreographed the 50th Academy Awards, and films like *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *The Duchess and the Dirtwater Fox*, *Silent Movie*. His director credits range from a Mary Tyler Moore variety series for CBS, CBC's *Chautauqua Girl*, upcoming CBC drama *Love and Larceny*, and *Dorothy Hamill and Toller Cranston* for CBS. Blye has worked extensively for CBS, HBO, NBC and more recently with Canadian networks CTV and Global.

3/ For the record, Micheline Lanctôt's *Sonatine* was the only Canadian feature officially honored at a major international festival last year, winning the Silver Lion at Venice. In 1983 at Moscow, *Bonheur d'occasion*/*The Tin Flute* received what Telefilm Canada Festivals Bureau head Jean Lefebvre calls "a peripheral prize", that is, one outside the official selection. Lefebvre notes that at Moscow, for instance, all entered films receive some sort of prize. At Cannes one has to go back to 1977 for the last time a Canadian feature was awarded

a jury prize, and that was Jean Beaudin's *J.A. Martin photographe* for which Quebec's Monique Mercure split the award for best performance by an actress in a leading role with U.S. thespian Shelley Duvall.

4/ The '85 Genies program suggests this is indeed the case when it notes (p. 95) that "Hollywood, California is the 5th largest Canadian city." In the same sense, no doubt, that Florida is actually part of Quebec, and the U.S. as a whole is part of the Canadian domestic market.

5/ Of the \$72 million injected into Ontario's economy by film and television production in 1984, \$46.9 million were spent by foreign producers, while Canadians spent \$25.3 million.

6/ Describing Keane as "one of Canada's fastest rising stars," a Genie press release divides her "long and impressive" credits into three distinct parts: beginning in Atlantic Canada regional theatre in plays like *Anne of Green Gables* and *The Rowdyman*; a middle period in Canadian television, hosting Jerry Lewis Telethons and appearing in productions like *Shock Trauma*, *Cold Storage* and for the CBC, *Hangin' In* and *Slim Obsession* (For The Record); and more recently "a principal role on CBS' *Trapper John* and leading roles in NBC's *Yellow Rose*, NBC's *Hot Pursuit* and the NBC Movie-of-the-Week *Flight 90*."

7/ All the more so when the Genie program via a message from City of Toronto mayor Arthur Eggleton, pronounces that city "the capital of the Film Industry in Canada" (p. 17).

8/ This strategy of misrepresentation and evasion which is so much a part of the Ronnie Hawkins "legend" also applies pertinently to the '85 Genies telecast, as Maurice Yacowar has noted, particularly with respect to "the issue of American domination of Canadian culture. Given its prime-time... slot on CBC, this issue is of paramount importance. The film on CBC assumes an entirely different meaning than it would have on an

American... network. On the CBC, the show is an exercise in Canadian culture, an assertion of Canadian character, a celebration of a Canadian success. But this pretense is only exposed by the structure of the film itself." See Maurice Yacowar, *Ronnie Hawkins - The Hawk & Friends: Implicit and Explicit Structures in a Canadian Television Documentary*, in William C. Wees & Michael Dorland, eds. *Words & Moving Images*, Mediatexte Publications: Montreal, 1984, pp. 185-186.

9/ Admittedly the distinction here is polemical, for neither is Quebec cinema spared from the homogenizing tendencies of 'internationalist' production. If *The Bay Boy* is a Quebec film, it is so only to the artificial extent that its producers and a good portion of the crew were. Heroux and Kemeny are, after all, Quebec's leading film internationalists, equally at ease with producing fanciful renditions of the literary output of three countries: the U.S. (*Louisiana*), France (*The Blood of Others*) or Canada (*Les Plouffe*). Like international corporations, they are 'nationalist' when it suits them, and *The Bay Boy* is a case in point.

10/ Quebec alienation from the Genies (and before 1980 the Canadian Film Awards) reached its most vociferous expression in 1973 when the Awards were cancelled as a result of the angry dissension of a group of Quebec filmmakers. Today, the discontent, if less vocal, is simply one of the Genies' permanent fixtures. The awards today, in terms of Quebec recognition are, as Micheline Lanctôt puts it, "fair, but, you know, we're embarrassed by them. They're suspect. I have great difficulty evaluating it. A Genie gives me nothing: it's absolutely worthless. I don't feel I'm recognized by my peers; it won't get me any box-office; it won't make more people come out to see my films or talk about them more. That's what it's worth." An even harsher judgement comes from a leading Quebec film personality who just shrugs the Genies off, saying: "What do you expect? These people aren't even Canadian."



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