BOOKSHELF

A Pictorial History of the Canadian Film Awards

by Maria Topalovich,
co-published by the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Stoddart Publishing, Toronto, 192 pp.,
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A Pictorial History of the Canadian Film Awards by Maria Topalovich, with the assistance of Andra Sheffer, is a thoroughly researched, well-illustrated piece of layout and authorship. The photographic record is always vivid and sometimes quite amusing.

Among the many leading actors, actresses and celebrities a reader encounters in these pages are Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, Mary Pickford, Dorothy Lamour, Donald Sutherland, Lloyd Bochner, Douglas Rain, Paul Anka, Genevieve Bujold, Robert Shaw, Mary Ure, Buster Keaton, Jackie Burroughs, Bill Murray, Margot Kidder, Gratien Gelinas, John Colicos, Chief Dan George, Yousuf Karsh, John Wayne, Frank Shuster, Pierre Berton, Tyrone Guthrie, Camilien Houde, Fred Davis, Roland Michener, and Louis St-Laurent.

This pictorial history records the nature and much of the impact of the work of Canadian filmmakers over the 37-year period between 1949 and 1984, including the name-change in 1980 that resulted in the Genie Awards.

To be reminded of the rewards and risks over almost 40 years of one's career is a pleasure indeed – and all the more interesting because it includes facts of which I was not aware.

Two factors that impinge on the size of the audience which Canadian filmmakers may reach are the 49th parallel and the English language because, without access to the film distributors of the United States, a worldwide audience is difficult, nay, almost impossible, to reach.

While I am not privy to the distribution figures of many of the films recorded in this pictorial history, I do think that much of the information about theatrical and television productions recorded in it is relevent to a better understanding of the shark-infested sea into which Canadian producers seeking a worldwide audience must plunge.

In 1938 when John Grierson took the first steps which resulted in the creation of the National Film Board, he created a base for a film industry which is widely recognized throughout the world for the variety and excellence of its work. So it is right that filmmakers from the NFB are prominent among those honored in this book, including Norman McLaren, Colin Low, Tom Daly, Grant Munroe, Paul Ladouceur, David Bairstow, Gudrun Parker, Ronald Dick, Roger Blais, Donald Brittain and many others.

Other award-winning producers whose names should be mentioned include Gordon Sparling, Leon Shelly, Arthur Chetwynd, Claude Jutra, Christopher Chapman, Rog Tash, Beryl Fox, Allan King, Peter Pearson, Don Shebib, Peter Cork, James Turpie, Thomas Clynn and Rene Bonniere.

A Pictorial History of the Canadian Film Awards presents a record interesting indeed to both filmmaker and layman, a record to be proud of.

My hearty congratulations go to Topalovich, Sheffer and their collaborators !

Budge Crawley ●

The Film Companion

by Peter Morris
Irwin Publishing, Toronto,
in conjunction with the Festival of Festivals,
335 pp., ISBN 0-7725-1505-0

Only Peter Morris could have written this book. And so logically only Peter Morris could review it. But fans too rush in where angels...

This is the single most useful reference book we have on Canadian film, supplanting but sustaining the groundbreaking quality of Eleanor Beattie's 1970 ***Handbook***. Morris has compiled a dictionary listing over 300 Canadian filmmakers (directors, writers, composers, etc.) and over 300 significant films. This rich mine of facts is supported by concise, shrewd, critical judgements, which reward the casual browse as well as the hungry date-searcher.

The range of items included is impressive by itself. To wit : he opens with Jean-Marie Poitevin's *À La Croisée des chemins* (1943), with a summary of the Catholic propaganda films of the '30s-'50's, of which it is representative. He closes with *Zikkaron*, Laurent Coderre's 1971 linoleum animation film that won an award at Cannes. The body of the book overs virtually everything in between. It's frankly hard to think of an important film not covered, or a significant filmmaker not mentioned.

In addition there are several brief but packed entries on related subjects, such as cinematography, Genies, Grey Owl (films on), cooperatives, and the like. Separate entries detail important series, such as the NFB's 1947-50 ***Mental Mechanisms*** and the first years of ***For the Record***. The film entries dip to ***Meatballs*** and run as late as ***Empire Inc.*** The artists include Jack Chambers, Don Arioli, Laura Sky, Robert Verrall, Tanya Tree, just to pick names at random to denote the range. If David Acomba is not included, his over-prized ***Slipstream*** is. Morris has the courage and taste to use superlatives where they are justified (e.g., Michael Snow), and to counter currents (e.g., ***The Far Shore***).

Indeed the only cavil one can raise about this book is related to its instant indispensibility. The book is so rewarding that one regrets the fact that it is necessarily a year behind the times. One craves the updating that would include Paul Donovan, William MacGillivray, Micheline Lanctôt, and perhaps analytic entries on established performers. In other words, this is the rare reference work that not only covers its chosen range of subject fully and wisely, but is so vital that one immediately craves its second edition.

And literally, the number of people who could have not just compiled but written this book can be counted on the hands of one finger.

Maurice Yacowar ●

LETTERS

Not for sale

On page 54 of your March issue (Cinema Canada No. 116), in an article on Kinetic Films, you quote Kinetic president Frances Broome as stating her interest in purchasing Churchill Films, and then go on to say "Discussions are still in the very early stages."

I would say they are in their "very early stages" since such discussions ***have never been held with us !*** Ms. Broome was either misquoted or indulging in a bit of fantasy.

The facts are that we are not for sale and are very happy with our longstanding Canadian distribution relationship with Gordon Watt Films. No one in this organization to my knowledge has ever met Ms. Broome or had any acquisition discussion with her.

George McQuilkin,
president,
Churchill Films,
Los Angeles

Missed opportunity

I was pleased to see your retrospective article (Cinema Canada, No. 117) on the CBC's For The Record drama series, a tribute that is long overdue for a program that for 10 years has often been our only hope for intelligent, relevant drama on Canadian television.

But I was disappointed that your writer Gail Henley presented such a superficial and oddly skewed look at the process by which For The Record has been and still is produced. The fundamental fact the she overlooked (or worse still, never learned) is that the *producers* of the shows are primarily the ones responsible for originating the ideas for the programs, taking these ideas to the executive producer, and occasionally fighting to have them accepted. The producer then goes on to choose the writer and work closely with them for many months to produce a script, and hires the director they feel is best suited to the story. If, as the article states, "John Kennedy and Sam Levene were responsible for improving work opportunities for the women in For The Record", it is also because the producers under them hired women, recognizing that they were the best people available for the kinds of complex, socially-oriented dramas to which they were committed.

Henley gives only brief mention to what is the pre-eminent fact of the series, and that is the enormous contribution made by women, either as producers or writers. The great majority of the programs over the 10 years were either originated and produced by women such as Vivienne Leebosh, Anne Frank, Maryke McEwan and Bonnie Siegel, or written by women working with excellent producers such as Ralph Thomas and Bill Gough. It set quite a precedent at the Corporation, certainly not known for its revolutionary hiring practices.

And to do a piece on the series without interviewing producer Anne Frank, who has worked with For The Record since the early days of Ralph Thomas, and who has produced more programs for it than any other single producer, is an amazing oversight. Despite the best of intentions, I feel that Cinema Canada and Henley missed the chance for a really insightful study of a unique phenomenon.

Penelope Hynam
Toronto

Henley's piece on For The Record *was never meant to be an examination of the sexual politics of the drama series, but an overview of its 10-year history and the types of stories produced. As part of that, she recognized at some length the contribution of women producers, writers and their stories. That, in addition, she also gave due credit to those men who helped* For The Record *shift from an entirely male-dominated series to one where the ratio between the sexes is about 50-50, hardly seems out of place. In the sense too that 'executive' means a person who bears the responsibility for an action, Henley respected that usage.*

Finally, Anne Frank was in Japan when this story was researched and so unavailable to be interviewed. – ed.

A timely reminder

Despite André Guérin's statement in "Going It Alone : Quebec's Cinema Act, André Guérin and the Régie du cinéma" (Cinema Canada, March 1985), that "this is the first time that a government intervenes in such a precise manner in the North American cinema market," past events here in British Columbia distinguish our provincial government's legislation in ***1920*** with being the first to regulate the exhibition and distribution of motion-picture film.

Some time prior to March 13, 1920, the Attorney-General John Wallace deBeque Farris handwrote a memo to Premier John Oliver proposing that as "Complaints were made... that our ***movies*** are too much subject to ***Americanism***, this can best be countered by Canadian & B.C. pictures. Then too we should educate our people as to our own resources and *government* activities. I would suggest that in granting moving picture licenses our act provide the right of government to exhibit not more than 15 minutes of their films *every* night." The premier approved this in a reply dated March 13, 1920.

The "Moving Pictures Act Amendment Act, 1920" (assented to on April 17, 1920) created a British Columbia Patriotic and Educational Picture Service under the Department of the Attorney-General which was responsible for the "taking, making, procuring, acquiring, and public exhibition of films and slides of a patriotic, instructional, educative, or entertaining nature... furnish, without charge, for public exhibition in moving-picture theatres films and slides of a nature mentioned in this section." The director of this picture service was also empowered to set the times and method of exhibition of any films or slides provided by the service ; no other films could be shown without the patriotic films having been shown first. Enforcement of the act was through cancellation of a moving-picture theatre license.

The picture service was effectively dismantled within a few years, probably through the government's embarrassment at having the director of the service investigated by a provincial royal commission.

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