

SHOOT ALBERTA

by Linda Kupecek

AMPIA Festival '86, the 12th Annual Alberta Film and Television Awards held March 8 at the Chateau Lacombe in Edmonton, attracted 230 celebrants, an indication that the roughest part of the ride for the industry here may be over, as associates and newcomers wined, dined and applauded the 1986 crop.

Visiting juries frequently comment on the exceptional range of product churned out by Alberta filmmakers, and the 85 film and video entries this year illustrated that, with the two most frequent winners far apart both in experience and style. Anne Wheeler, with extensive credits and international awards behind her, won for Best Dramatic Director, Best Dramatic Script, and Best Drama Under Thirty Minutes, all for *To Set Our House in Order*, an NFB Northwest Studio-Atlantis production (and delivered the most polished and professional speeches of the evening, perhaps because she is a veteran of such honours). David Winning, 24, saw his first shoestring feature, *Storm*, collect favourable reviews earlier this season, and, on this evening, the plum award of Best Production of the Festival, Best Drama over Thirty Minutes, Best Actor (David Palfy), Best Music Score (synthesizer whiz Amin Bhatia, now off to Los Angeles to do an album with Toto) and Best Sound (Per Asplund, Bill Campbell and Amin Bhatia).

A delightful quirk in the competition this year was the inclusion of the Best Amateur Film category, awarded to 19-year-old Tjardus Greidanus, producer of *The Fire Within*, an outrageously ambitious 80 minute feature set in Renaissance Holland, and shot on 1/2-inch video for five hundred dollars on four months of weekends around Spirit River in northern Alberta.

Jury members David Scorgie (chairman), Doug MacKay (cinematographer), Michael Dorland (*Cinema Canada* associate editor) and Robin Jackson (senior film policy advisor for the department of Communications — and incidentally, one of the classier folk to be found at film fests) singled out several productions for Special Jury Awards. Nationally respected performance artist Marcella Bienvenue received a special jury prize for innovation for her unusual production, *The Heart Is a Lonely Monitor*, and

Francis Damberger received a special prize as a new producer for *On the Edge*.

The awards evening itself was a teeter-totter of ups and downs, from polished professionalism to amateur antics. Aired live on Alberta CBC, the

hour-long telecast (with craft awards handed out pre-broadcast) was crisp technically, thanks to CBC producer John McQuaker and director Maurice Aubin, quick-quipping and confident host Fred Keating (star of *Mail Bag*) and the superb performance of cow-punk chanteuse K.D. Lang and her group, the Reclines. But lamentably tasteless humour harking back to the redneck days of Alberta, amazing lapses in judgment by some presenters, and other bumbles and

bungles demonstrated a lack of sophistication. On the other hand, that same absence of experience and veneer also created some genuinely moving moments, as Best Actress winner, young Josephine Stebbings (for *To Set Our House in Order*) stammered her thanks to her director ("I'd like to thank Anne Wheeler...She's great!") and as David Winning sent his thanks to his mom and dad, the heads of his "fan club", in Calgary. The result was an evening that was sometimes

homey, sometimes hokey, and often heartwarming.

Genie Award-winning actor Tom Peacocke (*Hounds of Notre Dame*) in presenting the awards for Best Actor and Actress, noted astutely that "without pros like Anne Wheeler and newcomers like David Winning, there would be no best actor or best actress category", a sad reflection on the opportunities for Alberta actors in local production. Winning and Wheeler again

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represented far ends of the spectrum, the experienced and respected Wheeler committed to the professional acting community, and the praised beginner Winning working with non-union actors. (The Best Drama Over Thirty Minutes

Award was, ironically, sponsored by the ACTRA branches of Alberta.) For reviews of the award-winning films see *Best of the Fest*, p. 27.

Prior to the awards night, a series of meetings of western film producers, associations and unions were informally chaired by Allan Stein (follow-

ing in the footsteps of actress Jan Miller, who spearheaded past symposiums and Dramalabs). Representing Saskatchewan were Stephen Onda of the Saskatchewan Motion Picture Industry Association, and super-efficient Sheila Harris from the Yorkton Short Film and Video Festival. IATSE,

DGC, and ACTRA representatives were much in evidence and voice, as well as the film associations.

ACCESS Alberta has wrapped a two week shoot of *Walsh*, an hour-long adaptation of the

Sharon Pollock script. Douglas Riske played the title role, flanked by Calgary actors Margaret Bard, Brian Gromoff, Jack Ackroyd and Paul Jolicoeur. Gene Packwood produced and directed *Walsh*, which was taped at CFCN's Studio III. Peter Marshall was assistant director and Kate Pierpoint headed costumes.

Walsh examines the historical events which saw Sitting Bull lead his Sioux into Canada, and NWMP official Walsh struggle with his conscience while making a decision on action.

Calgarian Tom Dent-Cox has returned from Montreal, where he produced *Happy Birthday Hacker John*, a half-hour futuristic drama, originally under the Dramalab '85 umbrella, and now sold to Atlantis for Bell Canada Playhouse. Rick Therrien wrote the script, directed by Michael Keusch, with Andy Thomson as executive producer...Civil liberties groups are becoming involved in the legal battle over the injunction preventing the CBC from showing *Oakmount High* in Alberta. One character, played by Tom Peacocke, is said to resemble former Eckville school teacher Jim Keegstra, who was convicted last year for promoting hatred against an identifiable group, and is currently appealing that conviction. Civil liberties groups argue that the injunction preventing broadcast is an attempt to muzzle the media...Mark your calendars for May 25 to 31, the dates for the wheeling and dealing, playing and viewing, learning and listening, and fun and games of the Banff Television Festival.

Quebec awards cash prizes to best directors

cont. from p. 49

by Léa Pool, *Bayo* by Mort Ransen, *Le crime d'Ovide Plouffe* by Denys Arcand, *La dame en couleurs* by Claude Jutra, *Elvis Gratton — Le King des kings* by Pierre Falardeau et Julien Poulin, *La femme de l'hôtel* also by Léa Pool, *Hey Babe* by Rafal Zielinski, *Le Matou* by Jean Beaudin, *Mémoires* by Bachar Chbib, *Opération beurre de pinottes* by Michael Rubo, *Québec: Opération Lambda* by Marc Degryse, *Une sentence diabolique* by Claude Castravelli, and *Visage Pâle* by Claude Gagnon.

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