

FRONTS WEST

by Kathryn Allison

Vancouver's International Film Festival has wrapped after a month of over 200 film screenings, its first trade forum, and numerous special events. Festival Director Hannah Fisher accounted for the decline in attendance from last year to the presence this year of EXPO 86. "It's a formidable opponent," she explained. "We're working triple time to offset that, but it is difficult on a limited budget."

The sheer volume of films intimidated many theatregoers, and Fisher has stated that she will use a more thematic approach next year and cut the number of films to be shown. The festival programming was set by former director Leonard Schein, whose dealmaking with the Seattle Film Festival for titles caused a stir in the press when it was discovered last May.

But as Fisher recently commented, "I don't know why there's a big story about it. It's a non-event as far as I'm concerned. (Seattle fest co-director) Danny (Ireland) and I have become good friends and

are looking forward to working together next year - we have different areas of expertise to offer one another. Neither of us has had a minute to think about it (Schein's previous commitment to the Seattle Festival), but if a financial thing is needed to clear it up, then so be it. I feel fine about it."

The Trade Forum, however, was a great success, with well-attended seminars often veering from prepared presentations by panellists to impromptu exchanges with audience members. In one seminar, Vancouver producer Paul Saltzman and Cathy Johnson from the Disney Channel got into a discussion about accessing more Disney funding for Saltzman's series *Danger Bay* now that Telefilm has decreased its participation. In another exchange, audience member Dieter Nachtigal (CBC Special Projects) cornered panellist Telefilm's André Picard about that agency's lack of recognition of CBC's regional arms' below-the-line contributions to independent production in the

form of services. Perhaps most significant was John Juliani's expression of disappointment that the panel on provincial government film policy was not graced by anyone from the B.C. government, a complaint that met with applause from the audience. Telefilm's Peter Pearson gave an entertaining speech at the opening day's luncheon, which addressed Toronto's stereotyping B.C.'s film industry as "below the neck production." He hinted that a provincial film development agency would help the local industry and cited the NFB's indication that it will become a major partner in feature films made outside Toronto and Montreal, the new opportunities with the CBC for independent filmmakers, and, in federal broadcasting agencies' interest in financing B.C. films not regionally but nationally as reasons for cautious optimism. Best performance by a producer went to Wendy Wacko, who spoke entertainingly about her successes and failures as a producer, and actually managed to make a contact with an American buyer (Steve Bickel who had spoken on another panel) while giving her presentation which emphasized "contacts as assets."

Wacko gave her failure to contact Bickel after his seminar as an example of a missed opportunity on her part, whereupon Bickel called out from the audience that he was still available, and they arranged to meet after her responsibilities as a panellist were completed. The film that was most mentioned as an artistic success story was Denys Arcand's *The Decline of the American Empire*, which recently won international recognition at Cannes.

Despite hosting three television movies (*Spot Marks the X*, Catalina Productions for the Disney Channel; *Strangers*, Edgar J. Sherick and Assocs., and *Backfire*, an ITC Production) and a feature, *Roxanne*, to star Steve Martin, B.C.'s role as the darling of locations for U.S. productions has been recently adversely affected by two factors - EXPO 86 and the California Motion Picture Council. Diane Neufeld of the B.C. Film Promotion Office points out that the successful marketing of the world's fair has had its downside: fewer productions coming into the province. She points out that Ontario and Alberta's film promotion offices are making sure that people in L.A. know about EXPO and its impact on

hotel accommodation and traffic patterns in Vancouver, but laughs it off as "friendly competition", which she will repay in kind when they have world's fairs. More worrisome is the California Motion Picture Council which aims to keep productions in California. Although the organization has existed for several years, it has had to take time to get politically organized and has been no threat to the number of productions that B.C. attracts each year.

This year, however, they have finally become effective. At least one major television series that was scheduled to be shot in B.C. was drawn (after pre-production had begun) because the CMPC was successful at putting pressure on various players. Reportedly, more money was released from the network to keep the project at home. Neufeld calls the organization's efforts, "definitely a consideration of serious proportion."

Many local producers are spending the summer marketing their projects and watching them make the festival circuit. Recently, Steven De Nure's *Ranch* won a Red Ribbon at the American Film Festival.

CASTING CALL

AGENCY

Talent Showcase

9 BLOOR STREET EAST
TORONTO M4W 1A9
TELEPHONE (416) 960-6088

Kathy Werner



Sylvia Uicich



Michael Hutchings



Nadine Clarke



Natalie Ptasiuk



Yolanda Gorzkowski



SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

We are now capable of booking up to 1000 extras in a two-hour notice through Computer Casting. Available to members only.

Sue Young



Beate Gautsch



Natalie Olhovsky



Dyan Bowie



Cheryl Thackery



Christopher Thackery



Audition space available with Video Equipment. Videos available on our Principle people.