

VANCOUVER'S 5TH INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL Triumph of the will

by Kathryn Allison

It was as big as the Montreal and Toronto film festivals but only received about one tenth the funding of either, and had to fight Expo for audiences and media attention. But the Vancouver International Film Festival attracted 85,000 visits to a program described by Festival Director Hannah Fisher as "a cornucopia of riches."

The staff of seven (Fisher, Allan Franey, programmer; Janine Fraser, office manager; Brigitte Prochaska, publicist; Julie Warren, women's program coordinator; Julia Frittaion, Trade Forum co-ordinator and her assistant, Linda Kelly) and an army of volunteers worked around the clock for months to make the giant festival a hit. Dozens of special guests and gala events punctuated the five-week run of films, 60 of which were North American, world or Canadian premieres. In addition to acknowledging Leonard Schein (now heading the Festival of Festivals) as the moving force behind this year's festival, Fisher had high praise for the staff. "I came into Leonard's job six weeks before the opening, not knowing the organization or the people, and they carried me through it. I commend their loyalty and dedication and care for this festival..."

While the size of the festival was increased this year to accommodate the Expo spin-off business that the arts and small business sector of Vancouver anticipated this summer (the opposite was true - Expo sucked audiences away from the rest of the city's cultural and entertainment events), funding was minuscule. This year, the festival received \$50,000 from Telefilm (which gave \$325,000 to Toronto last year); \$30,000 from the DOC; \$15,000 from the B.C. government; \$5,000 from the Vancouver Foundation; and \$4,000

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from the City of Vancouver (an appeal for another \$6,000 is in the works). Corporate sponsors, notably CP Air and the Hotel Meridien, filled in the gaps.

But the funding difficulties, while putting pressure on the staff, didn't obscure the many triumphs, among was the tribute to Norman Jewison, the evening with Jeanne Moreau and Lillian Gish, the world premiere of Ann and Jeanette Petrie's documentary about Mother Teresa, and the Trade Forum. As well, many of the visiting directors and producers found the city worthy of serious consideration as a location. In one weekend alone, Margareta von Trotta, her husband Volker Schlöndorff, Eberhardt Junkersdorf (Bioscope Film), and Philippe de Chaisemartin (Gaumont) were seen scouting the Lower Mainland. Mary McMurray (*Assam Garden*) checked out Vancouver's Chinatown as a possible site for her next shoot about Hong Kong.

hit of the festival (about a young boy's wartime experiences on the Eastern front during WWII); and the Swiss film *Tosca's Kiss*. Asked his opinion on competitive booking techniques, he was terse: "Cinema is threatened by video and the anti-intellectual climate of the times. A spirit of co-operation would be in everyone's best interests."

Julie Warren, an independent filmmaker who chose an eclectic combination of mainstream and alternate films for the Festival women's program, said that she looked for "films with distinctive style; something definitive to say." She echoed Hannah Fisher's sentiments on the festival staffers: "They're incredible - they're the only reason the festival exists with such minuscule funding." Brigitte Prochaska says she never worked so hard in her life as doing publicity for the festival. The film that most impressed her was *Come and See*. "You see so many films about war, you get desensitized. But *Come and See* made you totally aware of the environment - aurally and visually. It tore all the objectivity away and made you feel totally unprotected, totally victimized. Generally, being exposed to such a variety of films made me aware of what a sheltered life I lead."

Planning is already underway for next year's festival, which will be concentrated in time span and location (Fisher hopes to set up a Festival Village using several theatres on Granville Mall in the heart of downtown) and a new category for competition. More funding will be solicited from government and the private sector because, as Fisher explains, "Vancouver audiences are fabulous. They are intelligent and enthusiastic about the festival. They deserve a festival of stature and we'll work to give them that."

Bill Forsyth (*Local Hero*) first saw Vancouver when he attended last year's festival, and is currently in pre-production here on his feature *Housekeeping*.

Festival programmer Allan Franey was concerned that the Vancouver media seemed to think only mainstream U.S. films were interesting, but noted that the festival audiences have consistently shown strong interest in alternate cinema. His personal favourites were Iran's *The Runner*, which despite its lack of English subtitles was met with enthusiasm by audiences; the U.S.S.R.'s *Come and See*, which was the artistic

The Trade Forum

There were eleven seminars, over sixty speakers, hundreds of attendees and plenty of lively exchanges. Topics of discussion were varied: the "Wait and See" variety included U.S./Canada free trade talks; the nonexistent B.C. film policy; Telefilm's new feature film fund; and cuts to the CBC and the NFB. The "irreconcilable differences" category included: "Do every project as if it's your last" vs. "It's only another half-hour of television"; film as culture vs. film as manufacturing, and Canadianness as something to be a) revelled in, b) covered up, or c) it doesn't matter because Canadianness doesn't exist anyway.

The "Run that by me again" award goes to the collective impression gleaned at the financing seminars that producers should defer their fees to show their commitment

to their projects, but must never mortgage their houses. The most tantalizing mystery was created by Douglas Leiterman who said that there are a group of producers in Canada who consistently return their investors' money, and then shied away from naming them.

TRADE FORUM QUOTES

Wendy Wacko: "I can't wait till I have enough money to waste on scripts."

André Picard: "We (Telefilm) certainly aren't more flexible than the CRTC. God forbid. You can't get more flexible."

Michael Levine: "This is a marketing business, not a production business. Are you the flavour of the week?"

Joy Pereths: "If the script is good, there's no need to disguise Canadian locations."

Paul Audley: "The Americans say our cultural tag is a con."

(Overheard during coffee-break): "Doesn't Paul Audley look like Martin Short?"

Wayne Clarkson: "My recommendation to B.C. is, Don't create a development corporation because I don't want competition. To creative people and crews move to Ontario."

Denis Nokony: "Coincidentally, I was asked to spend as much time introducing myself here today as Telefilm spends in Saskatchewan each year - less than five minutes."

Dan McMullan: "(Banks) can't invest without a completion guarantor because the stereotype is you're all

flakes."

Lee Seigel: "There's no sense bashing the reality of television from the outside - get inside and do some damage."

Peter Dixon: "The best protection for an idea is trying to sell it. If you're paranoid, don't be a writer."

Frank Jacobs: "I believe every industry has some kind of cost of entry to it. So the first couple of projects mean you're going to get hosed a bit..."

Tom Lightburn: "There's a misconception about accessibility of theatres in Canada. There are hundreds of theatres. If you're competing for a theatre, waiting a week doesn't kill a picture... unless it has a CBC broadcast date in two weeks."

Paul Saltzman: "Have a hot idea and then make people afraid to reject it. What if it's next year's hit?"

Jewison Tribute

Jay Scott moderated the first tribute to the man who "makes damn fine films that make money." The tribute sold out and Jewison got a standing ovation as did Rod Steiger, who joined Alan and Marilyn Bergman (who wrote the music for five of Jewison's films) to praise his competence and compassion.

Norman Jewison (About **The Thomas Crown Affair**) "It was a love story between two shits... style over content."

(On **The Russians Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming**) "As a Canadian I made the film for Americans and Russians. There are no villains, just confusion."

(On **F.I.S.T.**) "Nobody wanted to make the film - they were afraid of the Teamsters. To tell you the truth, so was I."

(On Sylvester Stallone, who played the Jimmy Hoffa character in **F.I.S.T.**) "He didn't like the ending - the didn't want his character to be shot. Maybe he thought we were killing Rocky. Maybe we should have."

(On Anne Bancroft, Jane Fonda and Meg Tilley in **Agnes of God**) "I loved working with those three women. It's nice when you can work with actors who are intelligent."

(On Americans) "Americans appreciate talent more than any other people ... Hollywood was built on Euro-

pean talent. If you exhibit anything exceptional, they'll want to get close to you - they'll want a piece of you. They're secure and they're generous... and they give green cards to people."

(On Canadians) "We're beginning to mature. We're a very reliable group of people who have carved out a country. Hopefully we'll get so that we won't be threatened by Americans. We have something special that belongs to us that's reflected in some of our books and our films... it's time to take our artists seriously. We have to use our imaginations and stun the world with our brilliance - and I want to be part of that."

Rod Steiger (On being fattened up for his role in **In the Heat of the Night**)

"Norman's attitude was... the more belly the better. Finally we got Sheriff Gillespie. Of course, I had a bypass four years later."

(Steiger on Jewison's directing techniques) "Norman trusts you once he has selected you, and gives you what you would have in a good marriage or relationship - freedom, and the human right to make a mistake. Norman gives you faith and courage. He has the respect and courage to say, 'I need help,' and the respect and courage to say, 'I can help you.' (Beat) That'll teach you to ask me a question."

Quotable Quotes



• Ann Petrie with Hannah Fisher

Hour of the Star (Brazil; Suzana Amaral) "I'm a typist, a virgin, and I like Coca-cola."

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The First Son (South Korea; Lee Doo-Yong) "Love of children is an eternal encumbrance."

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Bliss (Australia; Ray Lawrence) "The western world is based on things that cause cancer."

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28 Up (Great Britain; Michael Apted) Neil: "Trying to become a well-adjusted person was difficult for me."

John (7 years old): "I think it is good to pay for school, otherwise it would be nasty and crowded..."

Charles (also 7): "Yes, all the poor people would come rushing in..."

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Las Madres: The Women of Plaza de Mayo (U.S.; Susana Munoz and Lourdes Portillo) "What indifferent people we Argentinians are."

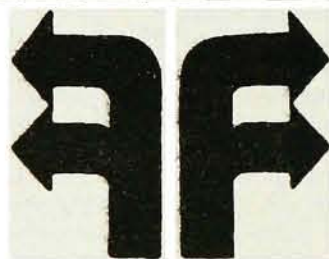
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Richard Cardinal - Diary of a Metis Child (Canada; Alanis Obomsawin) "Love is a very strange thing - I don't think I would be happy with it, but I am depressed and sad without it. I want to say to people involved in my life, don't take this personally. I just can't take it anymore."

Jacques et Novembre (Quebec; Jean Beaudry & François Bouvier) "There I was - alone, naked in an empty tub, surrounded by a herd of cows... that's what it is like when you're little - you don't even have a pair of pants to shit in."

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Desert Hearts (U.S.; Donna Deitch) "When I retire, I shall write a short story for my revenge about this place, these people."



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