

John Juliani at the helm

SHAKING UP THE DGC

by Patricia Michael

Cinema Canada: How did you find yourself at the beginning of 1986 elected as the new president of the Director's Guild?

John Juliani: That's probably a good description. I was elected. I didn't expect to win. I stood because the incumbent had been there for two years and I thought that, on principle, he shouldn't be re-elected by acclamation. Instead, there should be an election and I also felt there should be a Western representative.

Although I was born in Montreal, I had been working in the West and so I was a Western candidate. I thought the organization was old enough, in other words, mature enough to have a president that wasn't from Ontario. So I'm the first Western president to be elected in the DGC.

The first question everyone asks is, 'So, When are you moving to Toronto?' I told them I wasn't. Everyone just assumed that I was moving here and I said, 'Not necessarily.' I mean, circumstances and my own domestic situation are such that I don't want to. I can't move, at least not for this year. What I've done is say, 'I have one year.' I've offered one year of my life to try and guide the Guild through some changes, and that's it. I'm not interested in being here forever and I don't have any illusions I'm going to have a lot of work as a director this year. It's a volunteer job and an extremely busy job.

Cinema Canada: As a representative of Western Canada, what are the particular kinds of concerns that you see yourself addressing?

John Juliani: I came to this position as the former chairman of the District Council of British Columbia (I was chairman for two years). My concerns were traditional concerns – that it was time for the Guild to be more aware that the regions had to be more autonomous. It was time to stop infantilizing the regions, and let them do their own thing.

British Columbia, for instance, has very quirky labour laws. You need to be able to deal with things on the spot and not always have to call up Mommy and Daddy and say, 'Am I allowed to do this?' But with the financial controls the union has in place now, it's still a central organization.

Essentially while I was in British Columbia, we did manage to develop a stronger identity there, and hired a business agent which began something in the Guild, but we had the right to do it because we had our own charter. And so we started to get our house in order.

I may have won the presidential election on the wave of whatever success we achieved (in B.C.). Certainly there was a perception that we were getting some things done. And I think that's what carried us through. I didn't expect to win.



• John Juliani in *Marie-Anne* (1979)

Directors' Guild of Canada president John Juliani's career might suggest the word 'checkered', if only by virtue of the multitude of media he has been involved in that run the gamut from radio to theatre to film.

Born in Montreal in 1942, he was educated at Loyola College and the National Theatre School before apprenticing at the Stratford Festival. After working for a brief period in Montreal, he taught theatre at Simon Fraser University before moving east to Toronto's York Uni-

*versity, although he was constantly involved in performance experimentation of the more radical kind. By the time he came to direct the feature *Latitude 55* (1985) his reputation had been established as both an eclectic and a visionary.*

"I've always believed the media are essentially the same, even though they're apparently different," reflects Juliani.

"But in whatever I do, try to extend the frontiers a little bit. I try to do as much Canadian work as possible and avoid preconceptions."

My concerns were that the Guild had grown into an organization that has one million dollars going through its coffers per year. For us that's a lot of money. It's tiny compared to the Directors Guild of America and other organizations, but for us it's a lot, and it's remarkable growth.

We wanted to make sure that our financial controls were in place, and that we had a more decentralized situation. We wanted to keep a centralized organization but on a decentralized mode, so that every regional council could function on their own.

What that involved, of course, was Ontario which has the most members. The Ontario District Council has always been so intermeshed with the national office that it was often impossible to tell them apart. So now even the Ontario District Council's coming in saying, 'We would like to separate too. We would like our separate identity so that when we look at our books, we don't get it all confused with the National, when we audit them. We want to know what we spend and what National (spends).'

That's very understandable.

Those are the main concerns – a set of strong financial guidelines, financial stability, and greater decentralization without losing the central office. The danger there is that you get strong regions and no central office. There is still a very strong national office and, beyond that, a thrust to try and change the image of the Guild a bit, while being just as militant in seeing whether we can become the agent for bringing a whole bunch of disparate people together.

There is so much fighting going on, so many factions, I find, particularly in Ontario. It's time we all talked. And that's my main thrust – to try and get everyone sitting around the same table and talk(ing).

Cinema Canada: How do you plan to facilitate that?

John Juliani: I've been talking with Immigration and Manpower. The model is one that began in B.C. with the liaison committee and was hosted by the Film Office. These people now meet once

every month and they get Teamsters, IATSE, the ACFC, Camera 81 – people in opposite camps – ACTRA, the Film office, the City film office. And everybody sits around and we discuss problems.

We discuss films coming in. We discuss problems that, say, the DGC is having with an AD (assistant director) permit. Somebody wants an AD permit and the DGC says, 'No, we will not permit for this reason'. Other people say, 'You're stopping a picture coming in, we have 50 people working' – all that is discussed.

Because we know that ultimately Immigration has the final clout. If Immigration says that for economic reasons, for the well-being of the Ontario economy we are letting this picture in, they can overrule anybody.

This is happening in Ontario and B.C. I have suggested in Quebec that the STCQ, the technician's union, start their own committee with the Immigration person, so that they get together with all of the various groups there and talk. I have also suggested that in Alberta, as a way of solving some of the disputes there. It's good to talk about things before they reach the crisis stage, and try and get some kind of solidarity.

Certainly I've taken the initiative wherever I've been able to. Within a week of taking office, I tried to get everyone around a table here. I met with everybody and I talked with everybody. Immigration was also concerned with finding a solution, and I have been in touch with Ottawa several times. So I don't know if I'm spearheading it or not, but it certainly didn't exist before. I exists now, and I was very active with it in B.C. But B.C. is B.C. and Ontario is Ontario, so we can't just lift something over.

Yet the principle of sitting there and talking, even though you're on opposite sides, works. Eventually, information comes across and you know who your so-called enemies are – and maybe they aren't enemies. You find common points. It's going to take time.

It was remarkable, in mid-June to get everyone in that room at 4900 Yonge St: NABET, Camera, ACFC, IATSE – both IATSEs, – the Film Office, DGC, ACTRA, and Immigration officers were there.

Cinema Canada: Were any real tangibles dealt with at that meeting?

John Juliani: I think at that first meeting everyone was surprised that everybody was at the meeting and everybody agreed that they should meet once a month. At the second one – normally I wouldn't be at these meetings, but I happened to be in town dealing with a picture where there was a dispute on at that moment – and we sat down and we dealt with the picture.

Cinema Canada: Did you come up with a solution?

John Juliani: Yes. Everybody agreed that something had to happen and we came up with a preliminary solution and there was action on it by that afternoon. It was a start, there's no question

about it. But people are going to have to work at it. They're going to have to want to do it.

Cinema Canada: *If you have regionally autonomous units that are sensitive to the concerns of each area, how fluid will the relationship of the DGC be to each of those provincial units?*

John Juliani: The national office will function in a way that will ideally provide international connections. In other words, it will provide some kind of policy, a vision for the future as well as coordinating. I mean there are a lot of areas that don't have district councils – New Brunswick, the Yukon. Both are handled by the national (office); they always have been. But where there are district councils, as in B.C., they look after their own affairs and, if they need help, they come to us. They retain enough money that they can function themselves – up to a certain point. Where there are excesses, it comes back to the National Council.

It's a little different from the way IATSE works: there is no head tax. It's a different system, but I think that it will take a while to set up. The important thing is that the regions are there but the centre is still strong. The centre is meant to hold.

Everything is in flux at the moment and it's going to take a while for everything to re-establish itself. Ontario being so close to the centre needs to really get a strong personality. It will take a while because it's all happening in the middle of a peak work-period.

Cinema Canada: *Will this redefinition*

mean more regulation, more rules?

John Juliani: We'll have procedures, but I don't think there will be a whole bunch of procedures. We'll finally have a national role-model contract – the national contract, collective agreement – but interpreted in each region according to the demands of the region. The National Board okays the contract, then it's interpreted in the various regions.

Obviously, there's a certain caveat. We don't want people in B.C. charging much less. There are certain things that you just can't do. Essentially the liberty is there for the individual region to make concessions and to vary from the actual role model.

There is also going to be a permit policy. That is a national policy about how we let in a permit, how people apply for permits on foreign-financed films.

It's important for people to know what our policy is and that there are not too many variations, so producers won't come into B.C. and say, 'Well, in Ontario, we did this! But we negotiate contract by contract. We don't have a national agreement with the producers. Each film is negotiated. In other words, we are very flexible, very fluid, not only in each region but even on a national basis. There is no other way of doing it as we haven't been able to get all the producers together.

Cinema Canada: *In what other areas will the regional councils have flexibility?*

John Juliani: The regional councils will have flexibility in everything. They negotiate the contract. They deal with

it, they collect the money, they police it.

They have an approved budget which the national executive approves, and, once they get that budget, they can do whatever they want. They can ask for more or less. The budget allows them two and a half months of leeway. We also had a computer set up and we're working on that too. That's one of the things I wanted to get – to handle membership information, financial records, etc.

We're looking at getting benefits for the members. So I'm hoping that the insurance will be in place by the end of the summer.

I'm hoping that by the time I leave, we'll be more or less on-track in terms of this new system, that Ontario will be secure with its new personnel, and that B.C. is secure.

The other thing that has happened is in Quebec. Quebec has had its charter revoked but there are still a fair number of members. When I was elected, we had our first board meeting; we met members and we hired a business agent part-time there. They're now going to have elections and have their own district council and try and set up an affiliation with the Quebec union which, because we didn't exist, took some of our members away.

I've told them I'm not interested in an expansion of the DGC. I'm not interested in raiding members from another group. Because I'm from Montreal, I'm hoping we can reach some kind of entente where we can work together, have greater clout and keep the

situation stable there.

Cinema Canada: *But you won't be able to avoid having some of your original members returning?*

John Juliani: You can't avoid it. This is one of the big problems that we're going to have to solve. We're not going after them. We want to make that clear. We're not proselytizing and that's very clear. The problem now is what kind of a technical arrangement we can work out.

But if we can find that arrangement whereby we can co-exist there; the will is there and STCQ president Michel LaVeaux and I are both elected members and we both know that if it doesn't happen within our tenures, it may not happen. I think we can make it work.

The Guild has often had an ostrich mentality. We must take a firmer position both nationally and internationally.

Besides, if we don't do it, Immigration is going to force us to. So we might as well, because we don't want to be run by the government.

There is so much energy expended and wasted in trying to keep apart. It's much more important that we try to come together, that we find a way. ●

Toronto-based freelancer Patricia Michael is a frequent contributor to Cinema Canada.

PEOPLE...

IDEAS...

ACTION!

FILMS 24 INC.

Charles Ohayon
Nicole Giroux

288-6475

CLEO 24 INC.

Arnie Gelbart

842-8336

**LES FILMS
VISION 4 INC.**

Claude Bonin
Suzanne Hénaut

844-2855

**LES
PRODUCTIONS
24 • 30 INC.**

Pierre Roy
Jacques Bonin
Johanne Laplante

282-9662

**TELEPRODUCTIONS
4-24 INC.**

Nardo Castillo
Claude Bonin

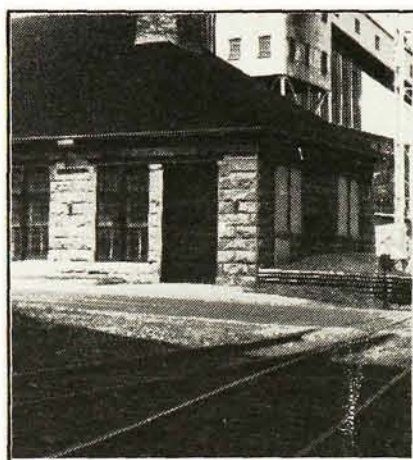
843-8337

402/406A, est rue Notre-Dame Montreal, Quebec H2Y 1C8 Telex 55-60074 Cinéquebec Mtl.

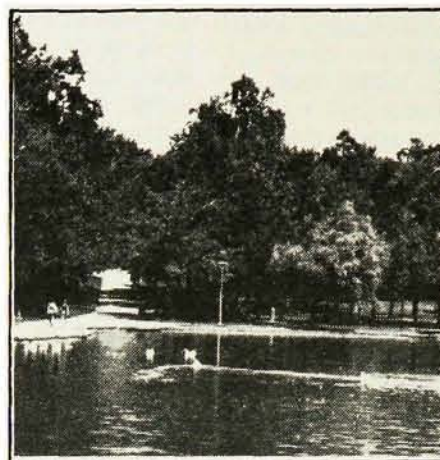
TO MAKE IT IN THE MOVIES YOU MUST BE VERSATILE



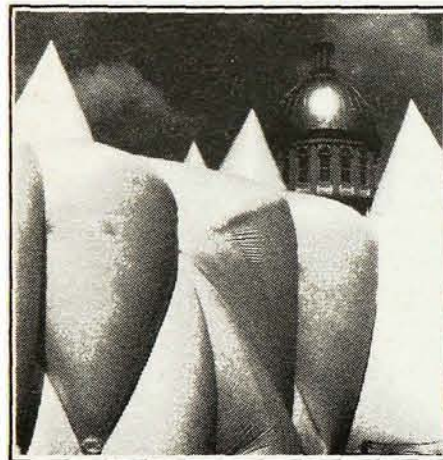
PICTURESQUE



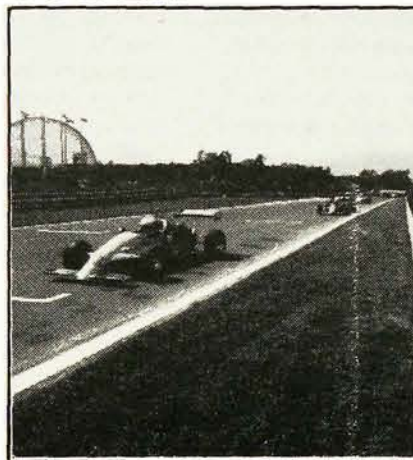
TOUGH



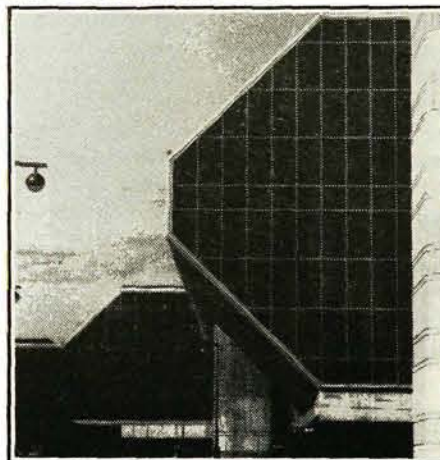
ROMANTIC



DAZZLING



DARING



SOPHISTICATED

Montréal offers one of the greatest varieties of urban sites and sets in North America. Founded 343 years ago by the French, the city has kept various architectural elements from most periods of its history. The St-Laurent river, Mont-Royal, the 21st-century downtown, are major components in its evolution.

Film producers will find everything they need on the spot: equipment, skilled technicians and specialists of all kinds, studios, workshops, laboratories, editing and cutting rooms, just name it. And you will be seduced by the cosmopolitan atmosphere, scores of gastronomic restaurants, efficient hotels and, above all, friendly and hospitable people.

The City's CIDEM-Cinéma was created specifically to handle production problems. Don't hesitate! Give yourself the leading role! Choose Montréal! For Information: (514) 872-2883

Rendez-vous

montréal