

Cinémas Plus strikes 3-year deal in QC Vivafilm expands west

MONTREAL — A three year, 14-film distribution agreement between five of Quebec's better known film producers and Cinémas Plus Inc. is the envy of a number of Quebec-based distributors.

Representing three production companies, the producers are Rock Demers of Les Productions La Fête Inc.; Roger Frappier and Pierre Gendron of Productions Oz Ltd.; Claude Bonin and Suzanne Hénault of Les Film Vision + Inc.

The agreement, signed in July and announced at the Montreal World Film Festival in September gives Cinémas Plus Inc. exclusive 35mm, 16mm, video and pay-TV rights as well as certain TV rights to an estimated 14 films to be produced over the next three years.

Richard Goudreau, co-owner of Cinéma Plus with Yves Bohemier, says the deal will facilitate easier term planning for each film project. Cinéma Plus Inc. regularly books its films with the Cinéplex-Odeon theatre chain.

"What we have formed here is a sort of informal family. We meet on a regular basis and this allows us to become involved

in a project at the very beginning," says Goudreau.

To his critics who say that Cinéma Plus has taken too large a piece of a limited market Goudreau argues that "business is business" and that the agreement does not stand without certain expense and risk.

"We are committed to an expenditure of, at the very least, \$1 million explains Goudreau who adds that the Telefilm Canada Feature Film Fund will sufficiently strengthen the more aggressive small distributors who will, in turn, be able to open up the market for Quebec-made films in French and English Canada and overseas.

Regardless of what the winds of fortune may be bringing Quebec-based distributors, André Link, president of the Association québécoise des distributeurs et exportateurs de film de TV et de vidéo, says that distributors who criticise the Cinéma Plus agreement must realize that alliances (producer/distributor) come and go.

"I don't think the association will have anything to say about this deal," says Link.

Demers, whose award winning feature film *La Guerre des tuques/The Dog Who Stopped the War* (box office: \$1 million in Quebec and \$250,000 in English Canada) was the first of his films to be distributed exclusively by Cinémas Plus, says the trend in producer/distributor relations is away from "project by project" deals and towards longer term agreements with several producers. The most recent example, says Demers, occurred in September when Vivafilm International became a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Alliance Entertainment Corporation.

"A producer is much better off if the distributor is stronger in terms of a greater volume of films, screen access, more money with which to negotiate rights and more cash available for minimum guarantees," says Demers.

With the success of his relationship with Cinéma Plus, it was Demers who enticed Bonin and Frappier to enter the three-year agreement.

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Demers says he plans to release six films under the agreement including *Bach et Bot-tine* scheduled for a November release in French Canada and a February release in English Canada. *The Young Magician* will be released in both French and English in March and *The Great Land of Small* is currently shooting with a French/English release set for August 1987.

Claude Bonin's *Henri* will be released by Cinémas Plus in January and plans are in the works for a Cannes Film Festival debut of *Un Zoo la nuit*, currently in the shooting stages, produced by Frappier and Gendron.

Goudreau, who plans to open a Toronto office no later than Christmas, says the producers' agreement has resulted in a doubling of his staff to 10 full-time employees.

MONTREAL — Victor Loewy, who has a solid reputation in Quebec as an independent distributor of European films, is jumping into the distribution of commercial American films in a major way.

The Montreal based Vivafilm International, which has recently become a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Alliance Entertainment Corporation, is opening offices in Toronto and western Canada from where Loewy will handle the Alliance product as well as 10 to 12 commercial American films per year.

Loewy told *Cinema Canada* at presstime that he would be signing a Canada-wide franchise agreement with a major U.S. independent distributor by mid-October.

Vivafilm has recently acquired a package of four feature films from Cinecom (U.S.) which includes *Matewan*, the most recent film by John Sales.

"Natural expansion for me is towards English Canada with more heavily commercial sales than I have carried in the past," says Loewy.

Foreign film distribution in

English Canada, says Loewy, is less of a going concern although he will continue to serve the small market that does exist.

"Foreign films don't seem to mean anything in Toronto unless they have critical success in New York and even then it is questionable."

On the European front, Vivafilm International has recently opened an office in Paris staffed by Alexandre Heylen, formerly of Roissy Films. Loewy is currently working on the financing for a world launch of *Les Fous de bassan* a Cinévidéo/Les Films Ariane co-production directed by Yves Simoneau.

MONTREAL — Gilles Vigneault, the popular Quebec poet, is back on the screen in director Jean-Guy Noël's latest feature film entitled *Tinamer*.

Tinamer is a \$1.9 million co-production between the l'Association coopérative de production audio-visuelle (ACPAV) and Corporation M&M Ltée in association with the National Film Board of Canada.



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