

Smith to top Famous post in QC

MONTREAL – The controversy surrounding Roland Smith's sale of the Outremont Theatre was temporarily forgotten at a recent press conference when Smith, in his new role as vice-president of Cinémas Unis/United Theatres, outlined extensive theatre renovation plans for Quebec.

As senior executive of the Quebec wing of the Famous Players theatre chain, 44-year-old Smith has been given *carte blanche* for all booking and operation policies. Joining Smith as assistant to the vice-president is Carole Boudreault, former director of distribution for Les Films René Malo.

Smith told his audience at Montreal Sheraton Centre that new management is fully conscious of the specific nature of English and French-language film audiences in Quebec.

In a renewed effort to win the patronage of both language groups Smith said Cinémas Unis promises: to strengthen relations with distributors of Québécois and foreign French-language films; to bring out dubbed or subtitled versions originally released in a lan-

guage other than French as quickly as possible; to play a more active role in promoting Quebec-made films, and to prepare an inventory of short films from Quebec for exposure through its network of theatres.

Smith also took apparent delight in assuring his audience that repertory and art cinema in Quebec was alive and well and will be showing at Cinémas Unis theatres.

Cinémas du Parc, with three screens on Park Ave., will become The Bogart art cinema with one French, one English and one subtitled screen. The Capitol Theatre on St. Catherine Street East will become the Nouveau Cinéma, and the Kent will become the chain's west end repertory theatre. (The Capitol is next door to the only rep theatre currently active in the east end, the Ouimetoscope; the Kent is a few blocks from the only rep theatre in the west end, Cinema V.)

A dozen new screens are planned with two major changes in the immediate future being a multi-screen addi-

tion to the Parisien Cinéma in Montreal and a redevelopment of the Palace Cinéma also on St. Catherine Street.

Over 20 more Cinémas Unis theatres will be equipped with Dolby stereo in 1987-1988 and six theatres will be equipped to show 70mm films.

Cinémas Unis will publish two 40-page magazines (French and English) twice yearly, including a calendar of films for the art and repertory cinémas.

David Lint, a vice-president of Famous Players who attended the Montreal press conference with Jack Bernstein, president, and Walter Senior, chairman and CEO, announced that Ron Emilio, formerly of Cineplex Odeon, has been appointed senior vice-president of Famous Players as of April 27.

Lint estimated the cost of renovations and additions in 1987 – including a total of 26 new screens in Montreal, Mississauga, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Calgary, Brampton – at close to \$14 million.

Fight for CKVU control

VANCOUVER – March 30 is the tentative trial date set to resolve the dispute between Daryl Duke and Izzy Asper over control of Vancouver Independent Television station CKVU.

On February 13, of this year, the CRTC approved transfer of control of the station from Western Approaches Ltd. whose principal shareholders are Daryl Duke, Norman Klenman and a company that was formed on March 1986 that is owned 50.01 per cent by Asper's Canwest Broadcasting Ltd and 49.9 per cent by Western Approaches.

The deal to transfer control to Canwest stems from a loan agreement which was made by the two parties when Canwest guaranteed a bank loan for \$4 million in 1979, and in 1982 forwarded the company another \$8 million. The agreement gave Canwest the option to buy out Western Approaches shares in the station, which Asper chose to do in 1984. The takeover has had a stormy protracted course, complicated by the presence of Charles Allard (owner of Super Channel and CITV in Edmonton) whose takeover bid

for the station in 1979 had apparently been the catalyst which caused Duke to go to Asper for financial assistance in the first place.

CRTC license approval was one of the conditions of the sale agreement but before the CRTC began its July 1986 hearings, the transfer of control was again being disputed by Duke and Klenman. An RCMP investigation into 38 allegedly forged letters of support for Canwest's ownership of the station put the CRTC hearing on hold for several months during the winter of 1986. By the time the CRTC approval of the sale to Canwest came through on February 13, 1987, Duke was claiming that it was a moot decision, as the agreement to sell had had an expiry date of Dec. 31, 1986. Asper contends that the deal stands, as the delay was caused by events beyond the control of either party.

While Canwest and Western Approaches have been cleared of any wrong-doing concerning the letters, an as yet unnamed individual is believed to be subject to charges of fabrication of evidence and obstruction of justice.

\$4.6M offering for *Lance et compte*

MONTREAL – While the brokerage firm Midland Doherty Ltd. continues to take orders, hand over fist, on a \$4,600,000 public offering for *Lance et Compte/He Shoots He Scores II*, initial efforts to sell the first series of episodes to U.S. independent television stations have not been as successful.

A record-breaking 2.7 million viewer rating for the final episode of the first 13-part series on Radio-Canada, and relative popularity in the English-language market (CBC), do not guarantee immediate acceptance in the U.S. market, says Gerald Ross, in charge of sales of the series for Communications Claude Héroux Inc.

Ross told *Cinema Canada* that the initial foray into the U.S. market was met with a "cool reception" and that the Montreal-based production company is, as a result, looking for a U.S. sub-distributor.

"To make sales in the United States you really need an American (sub-distributor) who knows the territory, says Ross.

Syndication, as opposed to U.S. network programming is the most appropriate distribution venue for *He Shoots He Scores* which will have a localized appeal, says Ross, in areas throughout the U.S. where hockey is a popular sport.

Part of the initial U.S. reluctance to purchase the first series, says Ross, was the lack of a pilot episode and the use of composite scenes from episodes one, two and three. (The dubbing of the French-language version for CBC created wide-spread criticism in English Canada. An English-language version, starting with episode nine, increased the ratings from 770,000 for episode eight to 1,200,000 for episode nine). The fourth episode of the first series is currently being re-shot for use as a pilot in the U.S. market and at MIP-TV.

He Shoots He Scores II is currently on location in Switzerland, Finland and France and will be aired in January, 1988 for 13 weeks.

This second series, budgeted at \$11,614,000 is the subject

of a 4,600 unit limited partnership in a total offering of \$4,600,000 at \$1,000 per unit (minimum of 5 units).

The offer, which closes April 15, 1987, is the first public offering on a Quebec-made television series since 1980.

Doménico Vitale, investment executive with Midland Doherty says orders totalling \$3 million were written during the first week of the offering.

He says the popular appeal of the first series combined with limited risk on invested capital is what makes the offering so attractive.

An aggregate total of \$4,224,000 in financial participation has been agreed to by Telefilm Canada, O'Keefe Brewing Company Ltd., Ultramar Canada Ltd. and Canada Trust.

As well, agreements for co-production of the series have been entered into between the producer, TF1 (France) and SFP (France). The French financial participation is \$2,790,000.

Société Radio-Canada and CBC will pay \$1,625,000 and \$1,950,000 for five and four year Canadian television rights, respectively.

Consternation in Ottawa

OTTAWA – Approval for a new Ottawa television station will have "serious consequences" for the CTV television network, one of the private network's affiliate companies has warned.

Standard Broadcasting president Alan Slaight said his company is considering an appeal of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications (CRTC) decision.

Standard owns CJOH-TV, CTV's Ottawa affiliate, a station that will be in competition with the new service.

The CRTC gave Toronto's Baton Broadcasting Inc. approval to operate a new English-language station, choosing it over four other applicants.

The new Ottawa service will not be affiliated with the CTV network even though Baton owns Toronto's CFTO station – the private network's flagship station. Instead, Nation's Capital Television Incorporated will be an independent station.

Slaight said the federal cabinet must consider an appeal within 60 days of a CRTC decision. The CRTC issued its

decision on the new Ottawa station March 2, 1987.

He said there are conflict of interest issues in the setting up of the new service.

"Unless the CRTC has a hidden agenda to destroy the CTV network I find their decision inconceivable," he said.

A press release from CJOH-TV states "It is a decision that has damaging implications for the structure of the CTV network..."

"The decision will have serious consequences, not only for CTV, but for all the local Ottawa television stations both English and French."

Spokesmen for Baton Broadcasting were not available for comment at press time.

Slaight said Standard Broadcasting outlined concerns at the CRTC hearing, insisting that it is the wrong time and wrong place to add a new television station. With the television industry under such economic stress, he said such a move would have been better left for a couple of years.

"No station should have been licensed, but if they were

Cont. on p. 59