

# MAKING IT

The preface to **Making It: The Business of Film and Television Production in Canada** promises that its authors, experienced producers and experts in the Canadian film industry, will reveal their secrets while giving the budding or inexperienced producer a walk-through of the business of filmmaking. The rear jacket of the book assures us that all film professionals will want to read it. Well, readers will find neither secrets nor revelations. They will find an uneven and at times superficial book, more useful to filmmakers in general than producers in particular, but nevertheless a useful text for the beginner, novice or amateur producer or the student of filmmaking.

**Making It** is a compendium of chapters on different topics from properties to budgets, financing to production, markets to legal affairs, each written by a well-known player in the field and edited by Barbara Hehner. The book, a project of the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television funded by a grant from several governments, contains a useful glossary and bibliography. The presentation of the material is attractive, logical, in sequence, comfortable to the eye and easy reading. The editor is to be applauded for what surely must have been the difficult task of making the different styles of penmanship of the individual chapter authors jibe together to form a smooth flowing whole. The problems with the book are neither ones of

editing nor compilation, but rather depth of content.

There is very little television in the book, its title notwithstanding. What discussion of television there is must be understood in the context of made-for-TV movies and independent television programs made outside of the network or local station context. This is not a book for TV producers. **Making It** is about feature filmmaking. It is at its best when describing the functions of everybody except the producer. This is not because, as the first chapter correctly tells us, the producer's role defies definition. The problem is that the book provides very little in the way of detailed description or guidance in the mechanics and methods of producer decision-making and financial and business analysis, the understanding of which makes a good producer.

Although the chapters on domestic and international markets provide a fair description of their subject matter, there amazingly exists nowhere in the book the statement well known to all experienced filmmakers that a film must earn many times over its budget before the Producer or investors receive any revenue, not to mention profit. No attempt is made to analyse the overall effect of exhibitor, distributor, publicity, sales and other costs on what the Producer actually receives. It would have been useful to have Tables or Charts detailing the division of every dollar spent by a theatregoer on all these costs. In fact, there is very little analysis of money-making or how to make money as a producer. How a producer should determine his own fees is nowhere discussed and as for the Producer's share of revenue, we are simply assured that there are innumerable permutations and combinations.

In a book that is really more about the making of a film than the making of money, the above, although sadly lacking, is not necessarily detrimental; a more important flaw is the superficial discussion of film financing. Evidently the authors have given up on any possibility of obtaining private institutional financing in Canada or any significant investor interest amongst the private business community unless it is by lawyers and dentists looking for tax shelters. The authors advocate maximum use of what is in effect a government subsidy through government film funding agencies and tax shelter devices. This wouldn't be so bad had they instead of constantly applauding, however deserved, Telefilm's efforts, provided the reader with a step-by-step guide describing how to access these funds, from details to filling out the forms to government criteria to the methodology used in granting funds to the means and timing of its payment.

**Making It** is about filmmaking in Canada. As such it reflects both what's right and what's wrong with Canadian filmmaking, something the reader should bear in mind before calling the book gospel. Its authors make no pretense of analysis or criticism.

Of necessity there is some overlap between the several chapters of the book. Quite often when one chapter describes a theme contained in another chapter, there is a reference back to that principal chapter. Unfortunately the chapter referred to quite often provides little extra knowledge over and above that contained in the chapter from which the reader was referred.

The book does contain some errors although infrequent. For example, we are told that the Directors Guild of Canada represents accountants and writers, that the Quebec Société des techniciens et techniciennes de cinéma du Québec (STCQ) is management dominated because it represents location managers, that (ACTRA) is not a union and has never been certified and that production designers are a precisely defined category of film personnel, none of which are correct.

All of this notwithstanding, **Making It** does have redeeming qualities. Its chapters on domestic markets, international markets and the law are informative. The chapter on publicity is a useful reminder of an often forgotten important element of filmmaking. Harbury's and Wertheimer's chapter on pre-production, production and post-production is particularly solid.

**Making It** is an important book because it is the first of its kind in Canada, an attempt to describe the totality of the Canadian commercial filmmaking process from start to finish. One hopes that it will be followed by sequels more detailed and analytical, designed for the experienced Canadian producing and filmmaking professional. Regardless of whether the budding producer will make a return on his \$16 investment to purchase **Making It**, he will certainly not lose by it.

**Michael N. Bergman** •

*Making It. The Business of Film and Television Production in Canada.* Edited by Barbara Hehner. The Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television and Doubleday Canada. \$15.95

# IMAGES IN ACTION

Ferne Cristall and Barbara Emmanuel have produced a book which should interest many individuals using film for various purposes including education, entertainment and fund-raising: **Image in Action** is a primer, a concise guide on how to use women's films and videos. During the past 20 years a large body of work has been made by women who are influenced or directly involved in the women's movement. A sense of immediacy or vibrancy can be felt in many of these works due to both the issues addressed and the aesthetic developed. **Images in Action** shares the same sense of urgency.

The book, written by two women working at DEC, a Canadian distribution network that deals specifically with social issue films and videos, grew out of very concrete needs. Cristall and Emmanuel explain in the book's introduction how their daily contact with film users brings them requests for help on how to find the right film or video for a particular audience, how to organize film showings, how to plan and program festivals and film series. The book attempts to answer these specific requests in a thorough and attentive way. The bulk of the book is devoted to a highly structured and very detailed look at preparing small group screenings and large public showings.

What might seem mundane in these discussions becomes lively as the authors use plenty of real examples that concretize their suggestions, making the text full and accessible. For example, two Quebec videos, **La Grande remue-ménage** (**The Clean Sweep**) and **You Might Think You're Superior, But I Think I'm Equal** are used in a section on creative programming to point out how linking issues (here, sexism and racism) is a possibility, among others, for a programming strategy.

Besides drawing from a wealth of films and videos to illustrate their points, the authors have drawn from their own experiences in discussing the many aspects of planning a film event. They seem to have covered it all. They caution, for example about when to hold the screening: if it is to take place in a farm community, harvest time might not be appropriate. They are numerous useful checklists which include all kinds of nitty-gritty details like remembering extension cords with three-prong plug adaptors.

Sample budgets point out the differences between holding a public showing in a small town and a large city. The budgets are included in a complete treatment of how to plan a public showing of one or more films, beginning with assessing one's goals, continuing with choosing and booking the films and videos, finding the most appropriate locale, establishing a working group, inviting the filmmaker, promoting the event, and finally doing a post-event evaluation and follow-up. Once again, the attention to detail in all these areas is remarkable.

