

E A S T E R N W A V E

by Chris Majka

This month I thought I would focus on a few screenings and seminars which have taken place in the past little while, and the role of such events in the local production community.

A few days ago I dropped by the National Film Board of Canada for one of its regular Wednesday night screenings. The Film Board in Halifax has a sizeable theatre of its own which is used for screening rushes, films of visiting filmmakers, etc. It is also home of one part of the Wormwoods Dog & Monkey Cinema chain. Anyway, Wednesday nights the Board gets a chance to show some of its product, new and old. That night they hosted the premiere of Tanya Ballantyne Tree's **Courage to Change**.

I was still a young fellow back in 1966 when its forerunner **The Things I Cannot Change**, was released. Being then naïve to the lore of the cinema, I don't remember the controversy which surrounded it — in the Canada of the late '60s, it had an impact which made it the precursor of the NFB's *Challenge for Change* program. At the time many felt that the film was exploitative, had over-stepped its bounds in terms of showing the life of the family and took too deep a look at their circumstances. Both films were shown in sequence and Tree was there to answer questions to an astonishing standing-room only (well, actually sitting-room-on-the-floor-only) audience.

Far less interesting was another recent evening of screenings also involving a premiere. This was at the opening of an exhibition, at the Centre for Art Tapes, of works by the Halifax video producer David Askevold. An instructor at the

**The Gate take**

TORONTO — After its second week of release **The Gate** continues to roll up impressive box office returns with a total of more than \$1 million in Canada.

The Alliance Entertainment Corporation feature film about three kids who accidentally open the gate to hell grossed more than \$8.7 million (U.S.) across North America after its first two weeks.

**The Gate**, which was filmed in Toronto, opened May 15 in 82 theatres across Canada and has played in about 1,100 theatres across North America.

The \$6.2 million (Cdn.) production totalled box offices of \$630,000 across Canada after its first five days of release.

**The Gate** is distributed in Canada by Alliance Releasing,

Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Askevold along with co-director Norma Ready recently completed a kind of vague drama called **How Long Have you Known Barbara?** The evening involved the screening of **Rhea** (1982), **Jumped Out** (1985), **1/4 Moon** (1986) as well as the aforementioned tape. Of the four only **Rhea** was of some interest. An experimental tape, its shots move rapidly over a variety of people engaged in various minimal actions and these short sequences draw one into the characters of these people, so sparsely revealed. The others suffered from rambling and at times incoherent structure. **Jumped Out** and **1/4 Moon** although experimental in form have little to recommend them in terms of content, form or style. They are simply ideas too meagre and too thinly sketched out.

One of the most upbeat, sharp and funny characters on the Atlantic media scene during the past several years has been Brian Hanington who, up to a few weeks ago, was the director of the Atlantic Festival Atlantique, our indigenous film and video festival. Now Hanington, who is a freelance publicist and writer, has left that post to more actively pursue his interests in screenwriting and, in particular, to shuttle between Halifax and Ottawa where he and his family are relocating. His extensive experience in film-related media publicity is going to good use, however. Under the sponsorship of the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Atlantic (CFDA) and with the assistance of the Atlantic Project Fund of the Canada Council, Hanington has written a booklet entitled *Film and Video Publicity Guide*. It encapsulates Hanington's clear, concise, and effective approach to getting your story out and into the media in a powerful, honest and representative way. More than this, Hanington has gone on tour giving successive seminars in Fredericton, Charlottetown, Halifax and St. John's on "Publicity for Film and Video Producers." I managed to catch part of his Halifax presentation and it was a first-rate song and dance with experienced vaudevillian Hanington juggling slides, overheads, movies and advertising brochures to the tune of his own witty and incisive views on the history of advertising straight through to how to write an effective news release (according to Hanington the modern media now turn up

their electronic noses at a press release even though they all recognize '— 30 —' at the bottom of a page as the old teletype code for end of transmission. Is there a non sequitur lurking here?).

I also managed to chat briefly with Bonnie Baker, managing

director of the CFDA about their interest and involvement in such educational seminars for filmmakers above and beyond their role as a distributor of regional productions. More on this in a future issue, I promise. Baker also conducted the second half of this

seminar, which took place on the following day, and which was structured around distribution issues.

So, don't spend all your days in screening rooms or bent over Steenbeck's — take in some of that sun and look out for blue jays in your backyard!

SHOWCASE AND FORUM '87

The Ontario Centre for the Advancement of Cinema Graduates is proud to announce the winners of this year's awards event held June 15-16 in Toronto

- Grand Prize, Academic Writing: Deborah Knight *Exquisite Nostalgia*
- Grand Prize, Screenwriting: Steve Wheeler *A Time To Choose*
- Best Animation: David Lee Andrews *Trouble With Joe*
- Best Documentary: Timothy Garrett *Thaddeus*
- Best Drama, and Grand Prize, Film/Video Production: Stephen Roscoe *Thanatos*
- Best Experimental: Theresa Simons *Conceiving Through a Dead Language*
- B.H. Yael *My Mother Is a Dangerous Woman*
- Best Music Video: Ed Douglas *Chain Reaction*
- Medallion Award for Excellence in Cinematography: Parth Jadon *The Human Day*

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