

Language parity legislated in QC

MONTREAL – Modifications to the Cinema Act in Quebec do not discriminate against English-speakers film-viewer, say Quebec government officials.

A recent declaration by Lise Bacon, Quebec's Cultural Affairs minister, saying that Article 83 in the Quebec Cinema Act is a "veritable sieve", coupled with subsequent modifications legislated on Dec. 17, have caused the distributors of English-language film to, once again, sit up and take notice of the province's Cinema Act (Bill 109).

Lise Bacon has modified Bill 109 (article 83). Now, in order to obtain a distribution visa from the Régie du cinéma, (Quebec's regulatory agency for film), all English-language films released in Quebec must be dubbed in French. Furthermore, the theatrical releases, in English and French, must occur on the same day with an equal number of copies available in both languages.

Bill 109 was first introduced by the Parti Québécois in 1983 and modified by the Liberal government in 1986 in an attempt to temper the influence of the U.S. major studios.

As it stood, prior to the recent modifications, Article 83 specified that subtitled or dubbed versions must be released 60 days after the release of the

English-language film.

This eight-week period, historically, has allowed distributors to decide whether to dub the film or withdraw it.

Because of an overall preference in the marketplace for dubbed versions rather than subtitled versions, modifications to Article 83 now require that distributors show dubbing contracts and agree to use an equal number of French-language venues.

Ann Label, assistant press secretary to Lise Bacon, told *Cinema Canada* that in the past distributors "respected the law without respecting the spirit of the law."

She explained that, too often, dubbed or subtitled versions were made but rarely exhibited after the 60 day (8 week) period. Thus, she says, the overriding intent of the modifications is to ensure that the French-language version gets to the screen sooner.

In 1986-1987, 43.7 per cent of all films shown in Quebec were French-language films.

In on-going talks with the minister of Cultural Affairs, distributors have argued against the prohibitive cost of dubbing a major commercial film (between \$40,000 to \$100,000) which might prove, upon release, to be an unpopular film.

They also argue that even a short delay for dubbing pur-

poses could mean that the English version will miss the National Release Date for major cities in Canada and the U.S.

Protectionist measures in France that prohibit Quebec-dubbed films in the domestic market also render dubbing cost ineffective, they say.

Label maintains, however, that the modifications to Bill 109 (article 83) which will be enforced by proclamation in the spring, will be flexible.

"In framing this law, we respect the marketplace and the choice of the people to see a film in French or English. We will also be able to make exceptions when needed," says Label.

The legislation of Bill 59 which contains the modifications to Bill 109 (article 83) forced the National Film Board (NFB) to withdraw from circulation in Quebec all English-language films having no French-dubbed version.

It has been estimated that dubbing at the NFB will cost close to \$1 million and take one year with the required approval of the Régie du cinéma.

NFB Film Commissioner François Macerola has gone on record saying that although he approves of the intent of Bill 109, he feels that the letter of the law has been too rigorously applied in the case of the NFB.

Macerola was not available for comment at press time.

Cannell builds set for Hollywood North

VANCOUVER – After months of uncertainty, Cannell Productions has begun work on a \$20 million state-of-the-art film and tape production complex in North Vancouver, B.C. Demolition of existing buildings is now underway with construction scheduled to begin in May. Cannell plans to be operating out of the new North Shore Studios a year later.

The uncertainty involved negotiations with a number of West Coast labour unions including IATSE and the Teamsters. Cannell had put off committing to the new complex pending contract concessions from the unions. Although the talks are still not completed, real estate options on the so-called Park and Tilford property were about to expire. So, Cannell decided to proceed without a signed agreement. However Cannell Films of Canada vice-president and general manager Steve Sasson says the decision indicates "a degree of optimism" that the unions will agree to terms that will keep the new studios busy.

The 14.5 acre site will include seven sound stages (four at close to 15,000 square feet), a Production Support Building (complete with helicopter landing pad on the roof), a Ven-

dor building for companies supplying support services to the industry and even a gymnasium for employees.

Cannell says North Shore will be the biggest studio complex in Canada. It will also be the most flexible.

Anyone who has ever toured the old movie lots in Hollywood will experience a certain sense of *déjà vu* at North Shore. The entire complex is a movie set in progress. The exterior walls of nearly every building will be constructed as sets-in-the-rough. One wall will look like an all-American highway motel. Another, a row of urban brownstone houses. Yet a third will be a multi purpose classic facade that can dress up as a courthouse, city hall, library or high school. There'll even be a traditional movie theatre facade complete with marquee. These are all generic sets that can be easily adapted to specific needs by adding or subtracting "plugs".

Behind all of these facades are studio offices, workshops and storage areas.

North Shore Studios is the design of Dall-Lana/Griffins Architects of Vancouver. All of the engineering has been contracted to British Columbia firms.

Dubbing war with France heats up

MONTREAL – Union des Artistes, the large French-language actors' union in Quebec, remains adamant that protectionist measures must be imposed against programs dubbed in France and exported to Quebec if the Quebec dubbing industry is to prosper.

"We have asked the CRTC (Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission) that just as it imposes Canadian content on television it should impose quotas on the percentage of foreign programs that should be dubbed here," says a UDA spokesperson.

The Quebec dubbing industry has asked both the federal and Quebec governments to pursue a free-market arrangement with France in television and film dubbing, respectively.

According to the Association québécoise des industries techniques du cinéma et de la télévision, while France does close to \$200 million annually

in dubbing of foreign-language television and film, Quebec does \$3 million annually.

About 94 per cent of dubbed programming used in Quebec is American product dubbed in France.

This imbalance for the Quebec industry stems from a French government decree in 1961 which closed the domestic market to all films dubbed outside France. This has not changed in spite of repeated overtures to the French government by Lise Bacon, Quebec minister of Culture, the existence of bilateral trade agreements and a tripartite agreement signed in January 1987 between France, Canada and Quebec to find more equitable trade arrangements in film and television.

In early November, a strike was settled between public and private French broadcasters and the Syndicat française des acteurs (SFA) with assurances for the actors, who reap a

healthy percentage of dubbing fees, that protectionist measures are watertight.

A small concession was won for the Quebec industry in French television where a permissible 42 hours of foreign-dubbed programming has been increased to 140 hours in 1988, 112 hours in 1989 and 84 hours in 1990 when the tripartite agreement is reopened. French private broadcasters say this is the best they could do without prolonging the SFA strike.

This concession was delivered to the Quebec industry, recently, during a meeting in Paris between private broadcasters (France/Quebec), Telefilm Canada and the federal department of Communications.

It was also agreed, says Paul Racine, director-general of federal-provincial relations, department of Communications, that both markets would be

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ACTRA settles half

TORONTO – The Writers Guild of the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA) has agreed to a contract with independent producers but the Performers Guild continues to negotiate for a better deal.

The agreement, called the IPA for Independent Producers Agreement, will bind producers from the Association of Canadian Film and Television Producers, the Canadian Film and Television Association, Quebec's Association des producteurs de films et de vidéo du Québec, and the National Film Board of Canada.

Talks are "still in the preliminary stages," according to Doug Coupar, director of Communications and Research at ACTRA.

ACTRA Performers' Guild executive director Ray Stringer admitted to "making some

progress, but not a great deal at this point."

There are two rounds of negotiations set to take place in February. Although Stringer said he expects a "successful resolution by the end of February," he noted that negotiations could be drawn out because the IPA has no full-time negotiator. "We've only had four full days of actual face-to-face with the Independent Producers."

Stringer declined to give details of the issues under negotiation, saying only that "we're asking for more."

One of the sticking points appears to be the share of the new lucrative video cassette market which will go back to the performers. Sales of material after the initial broadcast or theatrical release often involve

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Praxis participants

VANCOUVER - Seven of eight writers selected for this month's Praxis Film Development Workshop are from the Vancouver area. Praxis spokeswoman Cath Moody says, while applications were received from every province except Manitoba, 70% were from B.C. Selection of participants is done through a blind reading.

Avril and Tom Simpson (and their script *Point No Point*), Gary Fisher (*Terminal City*), Jancis Andrews (*A Clean Slate*), Glenda Leznoff and Sylvie Fefer (*Star Crust*) and Sharon Gibbon (*Teta Teta Boju*) are the Vancouver writers.

Howie Wiseman from Winnipeg via New York is also coming with his *Year of the Flood*.

As of our deadline two visiting accomplished writers had been confirmed: L.M. Kit Carson (*Paris, Texas*) and Sharon Riis (*Loyalties*).

The Praxis workshop takes place in two stages. Later this month, the writers and guest professionals spend six days working together on scripts. They meet again in May along with guest directors, producers and others. At that time some scenes from each script should be ready to be shot on video.

Papineau closes doors

MONTREAL - An inadequate selection of films and sparse audiences have resulted in the closure of the Papineau Theatre less than five months after it opened in downtown Montreal.

Germain Cadieux, principal investor in a \$250,000 renovation/restoration project to bring the theatre, built in 1921, back to its former elegance, says he now concedes that independent repertory cinema in Quebec is dying.

"They were right," says Cadieux of his critics who said last summer that the Papineau Theatre would not fly.

"It didn't work. There is not

much else that I can say. I couldn't get the films I wanted for December and there has not been enough people in the theatre at this point," he comments.

The theatre, which opened to large crowds during Montreal's Festival international du nouveau cinéma et de la vidéo, is presently for sale. It contains two Dolby-equipped theatres with 450 and 590 seats.

Cadieux is the founder of the Towne Cinema in Ottawa, which became a popular repertory cinema in the 1970s. He opened Le Phoenix, the first French-language art cinema in Ottawa, in 1980.

Dubbing war with France

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studied to determine the volume of Quebec programming exported to France and what measures should be taken to improve the Quebec market at home.

"No one seems to know how much Quebec-dubbed material was exported to France last year," says Racine.

Racine agrees that the SFA settlement is far from satisfactory for the Quebec dubbing industry. He says that although a more positive approach is preferable, the federal government has not ruled out the idea of using the multi-million dollar Canada/France co-production treaty as a negotiating lever to force the French government and the SFA to agree to broader concessions to Quebec.

"You know how Canada has been arguing with the United States in the past year that culture is a special sector where we must exercise protection? When Europeans do the same

thing we may not like it but we have to understand their position," says Racine.

Louise Beaudoin, deputy director of Telefilm Canada who attended the Paris meetings with the broadcasters, says the federal government must now determine what action it will take. It is unlikely, she says, that any changes will be made prior to the French presidential election in May.

"It is up to the federal government to decide what it is going to do. It can either wait until after the election and prepare itself for the new government or do something within the next three months."

The election is also a pivotal factor where film is concerned. In order to repeal the decree which prohibits foreign-dubbed films, a second decree is necessary in a high court.

Says Beaudoin, "Because of the presidential election, I don't think the government wants to take the risk of causing a new strike."

Kenny grosses \$1.2M in four

MONTREAL - *Kenny*, the French-language version of *The Kid Brother* directed by Claude Gagnon, has earned \$1.2 million at the box office after four weeks in theatres throughout Quebec.

Distributed by Aska Films, *Kenny* was released December 18 on 21 screens. Its world premiere was held in August at the Montreal World Film Festival where the English-language version won the Grand Prize of the Americas (Best Film).

The Kid Brother has been selected for the Children's Films category at the Berlin International Film Festival (Feb. 12-23).

Banff honours Dave Billington

BANFF - Television writing seminars at the Banff Television Festival (June 5-11) have been renamed in honour of the late David Billington, an Edmonton-based journalist and member of the festival selection committee who died last summer.

The Dave Billington Writing Seminars are a regular week-long feature of the eight-year-old festival. The seminars, in which select applicants study under established filmmakers, are presented by the festival and the Foundation to Underwrite New Drama for Pay Television (FUND) which is sponsored by the First Choice Canadian Communications Corporation.

A tribute to Dave Billington will be prepared for the festival's 1988 program guide.

Spectra promotes Slaughter to v.p.

TORONTO - W.R. Randy Slaughter has been named to the newly created post of vice-president and general sales manager of Spectrafilm.

Slaughter will replace Nick Perrott who has left the company to pursue other interests. He will also oversee Spectrafilm's Toronto-based Canadian office with Eddie White as national sales manager in Canada. The announcement was made by Alan Belkin, executive vice-president of distribution.

Slaughter has been vice-president of sales - western region since May 1987 when Spectrafilm acquired American Distribution Group where he served as sales manager since 1986.

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Telephone: (514) 288-2544
Telex: 055-61159