

North Shore digs in with Bronfman

VANCOUVER - After months of speculation about whether it would in fact go ahead, the North Shore Studio project in North Vancouver is under construction with a Canadian partner now in place. The official sod-turning was held July 29 with Stephen J. Cannell manning a bright red shovel. Absent was Canadian partner Paul Bronfman of Toronto (his wife that day delivering a project at least as important, a child).

Bronfman's new company, Comweb Corporation, has acquired an undisclosed minority share in the new \$20,000,000+ facility. Comweb has been set up to "specialize in the production, distribution and marketing of film, TV and video products." Bronfman has a background in pay-TV and is vice-president of Business Development for Astral Bellevue Pathé.

According to Cannell, whose L. A. -based television production operation is British Columbia's biggest film employer, the new North Shore Studios, when opened in mid-1989, will be the biggest single facility in all of Canada. Cannell plans to use the seven sound stages and 100,000 square feet of support space for both its own shows (*21 Jump Street* and others for the Fox network, *Wiseguy* for CBS) and as rental facilities available to other production companies.

Many industry observers had been concerned that the ever-changing levels of competitiveness that affect American production here might dissuade Cannell from actually building the studio. But Cannell, accompanied by his entire family (including brother-in-law and studio architect Bill Neel), says his company is firmly committed to making TV shows in B.C. In its eight-year history Cannell has produced 13 successful TV series and has achieved more than \$700 million in production outlays.

The North Shore Studios are being built next to a major new shopping centre in North Vancouver, just west of the Second Narrows Bridge. The soundstages and other buildings are designed for both indoor and outdoor use. Virtually every exterior wall in the complex can serve as a set. Portable 'pods' will plug in to these basic facades to allow for an infinite variety of city or townscapes.

B.C. Minister of State for the Mainland Southwest Elwood Veitch was on hand, or foot, to help with the shovel. He says the provincial government expects the electronic and communications industries to be the second biggest in the province within the next seven years. The Social Credit government has lent about \$4 million to North Shore Studios.

Van fest features 8 early films

VANCOUVER - Alan Franey wasn't expecting to be director of the 7th Annual Vancouver International Film Festival. However, his experience with the VIFF in 1987 and at the Olympic Festival in Calgary have come in useful after taking over the job vacated by Hannah Fisher earlier this year. The 1988 VIFF will not be as big as '87 but early indications are it will be no less varied.

A series called *Cinema of the Pacific Rim* will attempt to build on the foundation cast by Fisher last year. The highlight will be a retrospective/contribute to Taiwanese director Hou Hsiao-Hsien which will include his latest, *Daughter of the Nile*. Franey is hoping for three features from the People's Republic including *Red Sorghum*, the winner at the Berlin Festival.

One of the prizes paid when the VIFF was moved from a spring to a fall run last year was the lost opportunity for world, or even Canadian, premieres. As of late July the only film likely to be a first is Nettie Wild's as yet untitled NFB documentary made in and about the Philippines.

The *Canadian Images* series is being programmed by Martin Delisle and Gerard Peary. What it may lack in virginity will likely be compensated for by a mini-series tentatively titled *B. C. Noir*. Peary is searching out as many as eight Hollywood features from the '30s, '40s and '50s that were actually made by British Columbians in residence.

Franey is also expecting Forrest Ceisol's *Cinema of the Soviet Union* to provide some surprises and is pleased to have landed Ken Russell's *Lair of the White Worm* as part of *The Best of Britain*.

This year's Festival is being scaled down to just four theatres: Pacific Cinematheque (the only downtown location), the Vancouver East Cinema, the Ridge and the Hollywood. The VIFF runs from Sept. 30 - Oct. 16.

During the middle weekend the B.C. Motion Picture Association is presenting its Third Annual Trade Forum and Trade Show under the umbrella theme "Investing in Our Future". The company which packed altogether too many people into the year-end "It's A Wrap" party in December, has been engaged to organize the three-day event (Oct. 5-7) which will be held at British Columbia Enterprise Centre on the Expo 86 site. For information contact Sharole Tylor of the Famous Events Group at 604-689-3448.

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