

6th Annual Atlantic Film and Video Producers Conference

BY MIKE DINN

To a sleepy, little vacation resort on the north shore of Prince Edward Island they came, not in droves like lemmings, but in respectable numbers (about 100), for the Sixth Annual Atlantic Film and Video Producers conference held in Stanhope-by-the-Sea, June 22-25.

Conference organizer Peter Richards, a member of the host group, Island Media Arts Co-op (IMAC), was happy with the event, the biggest to date. He was particularly pleased with the types of sessions and seminars and with the calibre of resource people. "I think the delegates really enjoyed the cross-section from the very influential down to the fledgling co-op member," says Richards.

Conference delegates included filmmakers from New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. As well, there was healthy representation from the government agencies - Telefilm, the CBC and the NFB.

Apart from the Atlantic Festival Atlantique, held each year in Halifax, the conference provides the only forum where Eastern film folk can gather, renew acquaintances, and exchange ideas and ideals. "There's a lot of optimism in the region, and one can learn an enormous amount from each conference," says Richards.

Some of the delegates were "conferenced out," but they were pleasantly surprised when they reached the shores of P. E. I. This was partly due to the isolation of the site (a change from previous conferences held in the more urban surroundings of UPEI, at Charlottetown). Delegates literally ate, drank, and slept film as, for one early summer weekend, Stanhope became a commune for filmmakers.

The marketing seminar, which featured the increasingly popular market simulation experience, was aptly entitled "Taking Your Film to Market." The session provided filmmakers with an enlightening and, in some cases, intimidating view of the marketing process. No punches were pulled as finished scripts (by Bill Skerrett, Luciano Lisi, Neal Livingston, and Shandi Mitchell) were presented to the panel for evaluation and feasibility of budget. The panel, which included Telefilm's Ted East, Hugh Gauntlett of CBC-Halifax, New Line Cinema's Janet Grillo from NYC, First Choice's Jamie Wynn, Phyllis Yaffe of FUND, Jan Rofekamp from Films Transit, and Derek MacGillivray of Ironstar Communications in Toronto, told it like it is.

It was left to the scriptwriting seminar (moderated by Ken Pittman) to give heart to those shaken by the cold, cruel world of marketing. Resource people were Peg Campbell of Vancouver, CBC-TV's Jim Burt, Bill MacGillivray, newly elected IFVA prez Ed Riche, and Rick Schmidt.

Schmidt, in particular, went further than most in expounding the virtues of the small independent film. An independent filmmaker from California, and the author of the book *Feature Filmmaking at Used Car Prices*, Rick Schmidt enthralled and encouraged delegates with the idea that the low-budget (or no-budget, as he put it) feature was still a possibility. Schmidt is also the writer/director of *Morgan's Cake*, a feature which he made for \$15,000. He busied himself telling (and selling) his formula for writing, directing, producing, editing, and promoting a feature film for less than \$10,000. By the end of the conference, some delegates were even sporting copies of the fabled book tucked under their arms. And Newfoundland filmmaker Mike Jones at one point passionately declared, "Thank God for Rick Schmidt... He provides an anchor."

Providing an anchor for filmmaking activities in the Atlantic region is what an event like this is all about. "We're not trying to be the best or the biggest," says Peter Richards. "We're just trying to be useful." He adds, "It's nice to know you're not alone in the Atlantic region."

A look at INPUT '89

BY BILL ROBERTS

INPUT, more formally known as the annual International Public Television Screening Conference, is the world's most important venue for the informal exchange of ideas among producers, programmers, and executives dedicated to public television. INPUT is the only international screening conference, including the Banff Television Festival, organized by programmers, not by paid staff. There are no entry fees and no prizes or awards. Only intense debate and feuding esthetics complement the screenings.

This year's event took place in Stockholm, at the Berns café-style congress centre famous for a) its China Theatre (which was staging *West Side Story*, possibly with Swedish Puerto Ricans?), and b) as a haven for August Strindberg's marital escapes, after which *The Red Room* was written.

The Nordic setting was more than appropriate. Its mediascape has changed drastically



during the last few years because of commercial competition, and it reflects the challenges broadcasters encounter worldwide. In particular, the Swedish-owned commercial channel ScanSat/TV3 now reaches across Scandinavia. Broadcasters talk about extensive advertising; accelerating VCR penetration; increased U.S./U.K. access through CNN, MTV, Sky Channel, Super Channel, etc; more domestic private broadcasters; and pressures for pay-per-view.

Yet, the Scandinavians insist on a rather eclectic approach to these concerns. Iceland abandons all rules on maximum advertising time; the Faroe Islands bans TV two days a week (Monday and Wednesday); and Greenland finances TV with bingo! In Sweden, the effect has been the launch of a full investigation into the structure and financing of the Swedish

Broadcasting Corporation. A complete revamping of the broadcaster is expected in 1992.

SPARKS FLEW

INPUT '89 had the largest attendance in the conference's 12-year history, with more than 700 delegates from some 40 countries. Co-production and acquisition chatter abounded, as is usual for most markets and TV events, but from the common perspective of public broadcasting needs. The largest Canadian contingent was from the CBC, which sent 28 delegates, followed by Radio Quebec with six. Access Alberta/Input '90 and the NFB had four each, while CTV and TVOntario were represented by a lone delegate. Whereas two years ago in Grenada, Spain, the conference facilities actually caught fire, this year the sparks flew during some great