

**CHRIS MAJKA**



**CITADEL COMMUNICATES**

HALIFAX - During the past few years the private production sector in the Atlantic region has expanded and diversified. There are many more productions seeing the light of day, from commercials to industrial films, and from documentaries to feature dramas. Since there's a larger pie, there are more slices to go around.

One company with a sweet tooth and a taste for meringue is Citadel Communications, which for the past five years has been producing increasingly enterprising projects. Producer **Terry Fulmar** was an experienced CBC production executive who saw his regional programming budget go from sparse to nonexistent and, rather than sitting on his laurels, bailed out into the private sector where he could make films. **Barry Cowling**, former NFB executive producer and head of production for the Atlantic Studio, still had money to make films but nowhere to show them. Together, the two men created Citadel.

Since then they have produced a stream of commercials, short documentaries, and sponsored films. Recently, their horizons expanded. Last summer, Citadel shot a half-hour variety special on the wildly successful Halifax International Buskers' Festival. The production, called *Buskers: The Art of the Street Performer*, was directed by **Phil Comeau** and is a delightful look at some of the most wonderful, entertaining and heartfelt group of people under the sun: street performers. The show was telecast nationally by the CBC.

At the moment Fulmar and Cowling are in production on a 90-minute special for the CBC about an international choir festival called *The Joy of Singing* (also the tentative title of the film), a coproduction with Toronto-based Gloucester Films. Director **Malca Gillson** took a crew to Europe last winter to film the Obretenov Choir of Bulgaria, the Boys Choir of Monserrat (outside Barcelona) and La Chapelle Royale, all on their home territory. Shooting continued at the International Choral festival held in Toronto in June.

**STUDIO TIME**

The blossoming film industry of the region has highlighted some of the shortcomings of the industrial infrastructure, one of the most prominent being the lack of an adequate film studio. Various companies shooting in the region have had to make do with empty schools and converted warehouses, but this clearly leaves much to be desired. In last month's column I mentioned that the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) funded Screen Star Entertainment to do a feasibility study. The study determined the need for a production facility and its economic feasibility, and they have applied to ACOA for funding to make it happen.

Citadel, equally interested in such an undertaking, commissioned its own study and plan, (which is also on ACOA's desk). Called the *Centre for Media Technology*, it envisions a full-scale sound stage, studio, computer animation lab, offices, dressing rooms, etc. and carries an estimated price tag of \$3.98 million. It would be a facility available to all the production companies currently working out of this region, and it is hoped that its presence would draw productions from elsewhere. The Citadel study projects a growth of the industry from the current \$12 million per year to over \$50 million with the addition of such a centre.

**DARTMOUTH CABLE**

I recently had occasion to note that Dartmouth Cable TV has won two awards for excellence in programming from the Canadian Cable TV Association. Accustomed to numbing mediocrity from the community channel's productions, and anxious to see for myself, I dropped over to take a look at *Bonjour Les Amis* by **Kate Miner** and *Italian Winemaking: A Living Tradition* by **Ricardo Marcelli**, **Luciano Bianchini**, and **Luigi Benigino**. I have fairly elastic standards when it comes to watching community TV productions, but even stretched to the limit, I still have to say that both of these productions were dreadful. Although there was no lack of potentially interesting content, I saw no effort to impart even the most rudimentary production and post-production values. Off microphone sound, unsteady camera work, mikes in the shots, poor lighting, inappropriate music, a lack of basic editing skills - the list could go on and on. If these were winners, I dread to imagine what the losers looked like.

No criticism of the production personnel here: they all approached the effort with enthusiasm. However, it is clear that despite the considerable profits that cable companies rake in, they are uninterested in returning more than the absolute minimum to community programming, or developing production skills.



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