

## Canwest will spend \$10 million on drama

VANCOUVER - Donald C. Brinton, president and CEO of the CanWest Television Group, announced the establishment of an annual drama fund of \$2 million for each of the next five years. This total allocation of \$10 million will be expended primarily on equity investments in high-quality productions that provide a significant benefit to western Canada.

This new fund will be facilitated through CanWest Productions, a division of CanWest Broadcasting Ltd. Stan Thomas has recently been named General Manager of this division in addition to his continuing responsibilities as V.P. of Programming for CanWest. CanWest Productions operates out of CKVU in Vancouver.

## CFPL-TV denied permission to buy CHCH-TV

LONDON - While ruling in favour of the biggest takeover in Canadian broadcasting history by allowing Maclean Hunter of Toronto to buy Selkirk Communications, also of Toronto, the CRTC denied Maclean's application to re-sell the ailing CHCH-TV of Hamilton to CFPL-TV of London for \$68.5 million. The Commission concluded in its decision, handed down Sept. 28, that the takeover was not in the public interest and said that "CFPL failed to convince the Commission that it had developed a strategy or an effective business plan."

CFPL President Bob Elsdon told *Cinema Canada* that he was "extremely disappointed" with the decision and he thought "we had put together a good plan." Last year CFPL, and its sister station in Wingham, Ont., disaffiliated from the CBC to go independent. Since then they have tried to fend off penetration into their market from the larger Toronto independents such as Global and CityTV. "Our survival depends on access to the Toronto market, or getting access to someone who has access," said a bitter Elsdon. It is unclear yet whether the Blackburn Group, which owns CFPL and the London Free Press newspaper, will put together another bid for CHCH, the oldest independent broadcaster in the country.

Maclean Hunter moved to buy Selkirk at the end of last year for a reported \$600 million. It then proceeded to sell off its assets to WIC Communications of Vancouver, Rogers

Communications of Toronto, and the Blackburn Group. The CRTC concluded that the transfer of control did not result in any undue concentration of ownership and resulting quick flip of the assets did not represent "trafficking in licences", which is disallowed by the Commission. However, it did order the company to invest the \$21.2 million it made as a result of the resale of Selkirk's assets in a capital fund for the improvement of the broadcasting system in the country.

MH now have to decide whether it wants to keep the financially troubled CHCH-TV or try to sell it to a third party again. It did keep the key Selkirk properties in Canada that it wanted: Brampton's FM radio station, CFNY-FM, and Ottawa's Cablevision Ltd. Selkirk's single most valuable asset, a Florida cable system, is outside the CRTC's jurisdiction, and MH plans to keep it as well.

## The Global Network up for auction

TORONTO - Ownership of the Global television network will be decided by auction after a Manitoba judge's ruling that the company should go to the highest bidder. Global's three partners have been warring over ownership for years, and the judge's decision should clear the way for a resolution, possibly by the end of the year.

Izzy Asper of Winnipeg owns 100 per cent of CanWest Communications, which in turn owns 60 per cent of the Toronto-based Global Network. Global is the third largest private network in Canada and in a position to go national once this dispute is resolved. Global president Paul Morton and chairman of the board of directors Seymour Epstein own 38 per cent of the network, but through an earlier arrangement, the parties have a 50-50 controlling share of the company. Morton and Epstein sued Asper because they claimed he backed out of a deal to sell them controlling interest, and Asper countersued, claiming Morton was guilty of "managerial misconduct."

The dispute got nasty as Asper tried unsuccessfully to remove Morton as president, and has been the subject of a great deal of media speculation. The stakes are high and the bidding should be intense. The former partners bought the struggling network for \$11.2 million in the mid-seventies and the company is now valued at close to \$300 million. Asper has a history of success in these sorts of dealings. Last year he won control of CKVU-TV in B.C. after a long-running dispute with former partner Daryl Duke.

### WENDY DUDLEY



CALGARY - Film editor Rick Benwick, owner of Cine Edit Ltd., is in England working on Philip Ridley's *Reflecting Skin*, a \$1.5-million Fugitive Features Ltd. production that recently wrapped a six-week shoot north of Calgary.

Benwick worked on *Reflecting Skin* as an assistant film editor but because of his editing skills (*Primo Baby*, *Wild Pony*, *The Ranch*, *Dead Bang*), he was asked to travel to England to help further edit and mix sound on the film about a young boy growing up in Iowa during the 1950s.

Excited about the overseas opportunity, Benwick said, "It's a great experience to work with English editors. They cut their films more loosely than the Canadians and Americans. We're a lot more aggressive."

As a freelance editor, Benwick, 41, has in 12 years edited more than 260 television commercials and 70 documentaries on Calgary industries. His wife, Pamela, has accompanied him to London. She's ready for a breather, having just finished wardrobe work on Haruki Kadokawa's \$50-million *Heaven and Earth*.

### BLONDHEIM'S BLUES

The soundtrack of Anne Wheeler's *Bye bye blues* was recently released in Canada on the WEA label. Edmonton's George Blondheim acted as the film's music producer and is president of that city's Beta Sound studio, where some of the cuts were re-recorded. The soundtrack includes such warhorses as *Who's Sorry Now*, *Sweet Georgia Brown* and *I'll Be Home For Christmas*. Wheeler and Lou Natale won a Genie for the title song.

### AND SHE'S OFF...

Eda Lishman's *Primo Baby* premiered at the Atlantic Film Festival in Halifax in late September. The \$3-million feature film, about a sight-impaired racehorse and street-wise teenager, filmed in and around Calgary last fall by The Producers Limited, Lishman's local production company. The all-Canadian cast includes Janet-Laine Green (*Beachcombers*, *Seeing Things*), Duncan Regehr (*The Blue and The Gray*), Tim Battle (*Danger Bay*, *21 Jump Street*) and Calgarian Esther Purves-Smith in her first role. The film is scheduled for a spring Calgary premiere and theatrical release.

### GREAT PLANS AT GREAT NORTH

Edmonton's Great North Productions Inc. plans to shoot a feature film next summer based on Alberta author Robert Kroetsch's book *Badlands*, about a scientist who hunts for dinosaurs. Allan Kroeker (*Tramp At The Door*, *Heaven On Earth*) will direct. Great North also recently acquired the rights to Alberta author Ross Annett's *Especially Babe*, a collection of short stories published in the *Saturday Evening Post* between 1938 and 1962. The tales focus on a widower farmer raising his children during the Depression. "They're so Alberta," says producer Andy Thomson who hopes to begin shooting the stories next summer.

The company also has completed photography on *In Search Of The Dragon*, a two-hour television documentary on the China-Canada Dinosaur Project. While still in post-production, the program has been sold to PBS for its *Nova* science series, a telecast date set.

### HEAVYWEIGHTS BEHIND FILM CELEBRATION

Canadian film Celebration '90, which runs in Calgary, March 28 - April 1, 1990, is beginning to take shape. The event, which will feature Canadian features, shorts, documentaries, student films, workshops and a behind-the-scenes demonstration of a location shoot, includes the Hon. Flora MacDonald, filmmaker Norman Jewison, and performer Kate Reid among its patrons. Publicist Ed Oliverio says that actors Michael J. Fox and John Candy may also make an appearance.

### MOUNTAIN FILMS

The Banff Festival of Mountain Films ran Nov. 3-5 in the resort town. The opening presentation was given by renowned British mountaineer Chris Bonington. Bonington has written books about many of his worldwide ascents; one of them, *Everest Years*, was made into a documentary that captured top prizes at the 1988 New York Film and TV Festival.