

FEATURE FILM IS A LAWYERS' MEDIUM OR MR. DRABINSKY LETS THE PUBLIC INSIDE

Motion Pictures and the Arts in Canada: The Business and The Law by Garth H. Drabinsky, McGraw Hill Ryerson - \$14.95, 201 pages.

In this compact volume are found all the legal and business elements involved in making and selling a feature film in Canada. It is concisely written, well indexed, legally sound and best of all, readable. The stated purpose of the book is to assist "those engaged in the feature film industry, and those who aspire to be so engaged, to understand the workings of the business and their rights and obligations... (and) to help the reader to recognize problems about which expert advice should be sought". Mr. Drabinsky succeeds in his purpose.

The book moves through the legal fundamentals into their application in the negotiation of agreements that, when reduced to writing, will fill the drawer in a filing cabinet. These agreements, together with the out-takes, are the unseen elements of a feature film. The author reveals the complexities while communicating the challenge and excitement of the business side of feature films in Canada. It is a business in which the negotiation and preparation of a distribution agreement or completion bond can cost as much as the acquisition of the property and its development into a shooting script, involve as many printed pages, be more intricately plotted and use up as much creative energy. It is not surprising that feature film has been described as a lawyers' medium, having its own parallel hierarchy of legal stars known only to those on the inside. Mr. Drabinsky lets the public inside.

The temptation existed to fault the book for its failure to go deeper into the elements of the agreements, the

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Garth Drabinsky

uncertainties of income tax law, the quicksands of film funding, the shell game of attempted recoupment and the confusion inherent in government policy on such matters as quotas. Had the author done so, he would have been forced to double the size of the work and to evangelize his own solutions, all of which would have been detrimental to his purpose in describing the business as it is. On balance one can assume the decision was conscious and, in the reviewer's opinion, correct. A comprehensive bibliography has been included for those who wish to go deeper.

The book is a cold shower to the "let's make a movie" school of producers, but provides a good introduction to the business for the serious or curious and with the bibliography is an excellent tool for the professional. **Motion Pictures and the Arts in Canada**, or as it is more accurately subtitled, **The Business and The Law**, is the first and only book of its kind published in Canada and should be welcomed to the library shelf.

George Campbell Miller

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