

# a series of jump-cuts concerning ottawa 76

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It's a toss-up whether serving on a jury at a film festival is an honor or cruel and unusual punishment. Grant Munro has served on enough juries to have some opinions on the subject, and offers us some reflections on the International Animation Festival which was part of Ottawa 76.

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by Grant Munro

As one of five jurors for "Ottawa 76" International Animation Festival, I had seen the 465 films entered in competition three weeks before the festival began. There was no pre-selection jury. We were the judges from start to finish. At the beginning it was especially difficult and often bloody disheartening. A good film here, a so-so film there, but hours and hours of rubbish. Then very gradually, hope was on the way. The more we saw, the easier our task. Strange that certain films of previous days began surfacing while we continued our marathon projection. It seemed a kind of intricate comparative process going on in the subconscious. And after our final day, a very conscious sorting and sifting before final personal decisions. Then our endless group

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bickering began. Our final awards were decided just before the last evening of the festival. A haggard group – but, God, what integrity!

During our jury screenings we were often frustrated by the damned silly categories of films we were obliged to honor. Many films should clearly have been in categories other than the ones in which they were entered. For example: **The Street** – category VI, instructional films. *Instructional?* How to cope with a death in the family? We couldn't fathom that one. Obviously *another* NFB interoffice error, which should have read **The Street** – category I, films longer than 3 minutes.

The obstinate jurors did fight among themselves, of course. One member had been overexposed to too many pop-art, rotoscoped commercials. The others hadn't. So a gem of commercial lost a valuable vote. I was dazzled by a film from Iran, utterly new in style and presentation – at least for me. But an enraged fellow juror had seen "hundreds of the same" – so... Kerplunk!

We became more stubborn as our fevers rose. We were in disgrace; we broke rules. A first prize in one category and no second prize. And (Tsk!Tsk!) a first prize (category V, films for children) and the grand prize (best of festival) to films by the same filmmaker. We were advised that that was a serious no-no. What the hell! We were voting for the films, not the filmmaker.

As an employee of the National Film Board I tried to remain silent and expressionless when NFB films were screened. Only when my co-jurors reacted favorably to the undeniably excellent ones, did I share their voluble enthusiasm. One cool young juror wisely chided me for being too emotional. Perhaps. But I'm passionate about film and talent and that's that.

There were no awards to films for merely polite political "across-the-board" reasons.

The energy and enthusiasm of audience and participants generated by "Ottawa 76" were pretty unique and often downright overwhelming. I mean, who'll ever forget that warm thunderous one-big-familyish response on the Thursday and Saturday evenings?

The audiences discriminated more and more as the week went on. There were times, amidst all the wild hooting and stomping when the jury was convinced they'd be ketchuped. (At least we were get-at-able. Usually after juries have done their pre-selection and final work, they're tucked safely out of sight like so many sacred cows.)

Many of the audience told us that, prior to "Ottawa 76", their animation experience had been limited to the traditional theatrical shorts and occasional feature, but during the festival they became addicted "animaniacs". One eager young friend phoned to say that her routine return train trip to Toronto had now become a totally new experience. Familiar houses, barns, figures, animals, landscape were now a series of paper cut-outs, cels, plastiscenery. And sand all moving at 24 frames a second under sunny and pin-screened skies.

In future, perhaps even commercial and government agencies and sponsors will allow animators to produce promotional films and TV spots in sand or pin-screen or various other techniques instead of always settling for the sage little talky story or one-line gag. Things purely visual.

The ASIFA workshops held each morning produced some splendid results. Perhaps the reel of students' work will get some distribution. The workshop director deserves great credit for an enormous undertaking.

Considering that this was their first international festival and that preparation time was so short, the organizers of "Ottawa 76" did a most commendable job. Loud applause.

And that's the good news. Now for a random list of personal complaints and suggestions - some too obvious to mention. Nevertheless, here goes.

The preplanning and organizing should have started at least a year and a half ago. This would undoubtedly have resulted in a wider range of films and a more international type of festival. Ottawa and the National Arts Centre were pretty ideal locations. Perhaps the next festival (and there *must* be another held in Canada) might be shifted to the Maritimes, Prairies, or West Coast. Give all those animators, students and general audiences a chance.

More hospitality time must be planned, even if it means fewer or shorter film programs and retrospectives. One great meeting place for discussions and marinated post-mortems after film sessions is absolutely essential. The unemployed might find animated employment. Even co-productions might develop.

The "Ottawa 76" picnic in the gorgeous Gatineau couldn't possibly have been better, with one big exception. The budg-

# THE WINNERS

## Grand Prix

**The Street** by Caroline Leaf (Canada)

## Special Homage of the Jury

to Lotte Reiniger for her film **Aucassin et Nicolette** and for her outstanding contribution to the art of animation

## Special Jury Prize

**Le Paysagiste** (Mindscape) by Jacques Drouin (Canada)

## Category I: Longer Than 3 Minutes

1st prize: **Dedalo** (Labyrinth) by Manfredo Manfredi (Italy)

2nd prize: **Dezinfekcija** (Disinfection) by Ante Zaninovic (Yugoslavia)

## Category II: Shorter Than 3 Minutes

1st prize: **Symbiosis** by David Cox (Canada)

2nd prize: **Tekenfilm** (Cartoon) by Nick Reus (Holland)

## Category III: Promotional Films

1st prize: **Tic Tac Bellboy** by Richard Purdum (Great Britain)

2nd prize: **Dinosaur** by Kurte K. Friends (U.S.A.)

## Category IV: First Films

1st prize: **Toilette** by Joan Freeman (U.S.A.)

2nd prize: **The Muse** by Paul Demeyer (U.S.A.)

## Category V: Films for Children

1st prize: **Le mariage du hibou** (The Owl Who Married the Goose) by Caroline Leaf (Canada)

2nd prize: **Altato** (Lullaby) by Gyorgy Csonka (Hungary)

## Category VI: Instructional Films

1st prize: **Teacher Lester Bit Me** by Lynn Smith (U.S.A.) The jury felt that this film is the only one deserving a prize in this category.

et should have included so many who were excluded; i.e., all those workshop participants. (Again, foolish categories?) But the picnic was mad, animated, funny, succulent, misty, wozy, tappy - the lot!

What hospitality and presentations there were sorely lacked a certain style and responsibility. All very easy for us to criticize and I could rant on and on. However, those of us who have been guests at other festivals will never forget the unobtrusive TLC accorded us. In future, perhaps a small staff just to guide, advise and cater to the visitors. Surely all this could be easily managed within the budget.

And please - no generous papering of the house. The animators, students and general public should be given ticket preference. So many were denied seats night after night only to hear later that there were empty seats. I suppose the press, diplomatic and miscellaneous VIPs had just not bothered to use their comps.

Projection during the week was scarcely adequate but, by God - that final night when the projectionist almost ruined (and for some, did ruin) the entire evening! Unless the next festival has special dispensation to hire thoroughly experienced, reliable projectionists, the screenings should be held at other suitable locations.

A festival! An occasion! The audience wants and deserves all the gala possible. For instance - again that final night -

why weren't Reiniger, Alexeieff, Parker, McLaren on stage (with all the award winners) with bouquets *minus* cellophane wrappings? All just little things which are really very big things to be carefully considered in future.

And now that my personal quibbling is out of hand, let me get this off the jury's chest. Why was an animator given very special permission to show his film which was out of competition? A serious breach of festival regulations.

And that "Ottawa 76" poster. I hated it. The teeny type for essential information. The whole thing was so gloomy, it looked more like an ad for a "Day-Glo" Nazi rally to be held in Stanley Park. Egad, an *animation* festival – in beau-

tiful Ottawa – in mid-summer. The poster might have been bright and funny and animated with people queuing to take one home. The owl promo film was equally gloomy, clumsy and long. Whew!

Ah well, never mind. "Ottawa 76" was marvellous and memorable – yes, extraordinary. Or, to quote a letter from Claire Parker:

"The communion with the young generation of animators; the ateliers of the festival; the five or six great films we saw from around the world bear witness that the flame has caught."

What greater happiness can there be for us all? □

## excerpts from a draft

# Animation Workshop

by Co Hoedeman

Sometime in March, '76, it was suggested that ASIFA\*-Canada should take care of students and young filmmakers and make it possible for them to attend the Ottawa 76 Animation Film Festival. As usual on occasions like this, a lot of famous, well-known and not so well-known animators from all over the world would be coming to the festival. We thought it an ideal opportunity to bring all these people together, show and discuss each other's films, demonstrate and explain about different animation techniques. . . .

When the word spread about the workshop, people from various institutions offered their services, equipment, staff, ideas and a lot of advice. Carleton University, Algonquin College and its film department supplied us free of charge with 20 super 8 mm cameras, 6 projectors (16 mm and super 8 mm), screens, lights and editing equipment. From the University of Ottawa we rented some more equipment and Vic Adams Ass., also from Ottawa, helped us out with special requests. Overnight laboratory services were provided by Dominion Wide Laboratories. The N.F.B. Ottawa office offered to set up projectors with a representative and had almost all of its animation films on hand. That gave the participants two hundred films to choose from. Sheridan College from Oakville, Ontario, was represented by its animation department. They provided animation tables, a complete 16 mm animation camera stand, a puppet set and exhibition panels. Tom Haley, Jim Macaulay, Bill Matthews and Karl Hagan, all teachers from Sheridan College, took turns at the workshop to instruct and give advice to the participants. . . .

... The following day, Rick Mallet from Carleton University came along with some very sophisticated equipment. He gave a demonstration about computer animation. Using a telephone connected to a computer at the data center, participants became involved in doing some simple computer animation. Derek Lamb had an animated discussion with the participants about

their own work and other student animation from Harvard University. Lotte Reiniger, famous for her silhouette animated films, formed a small team of enthusiasts to prepare artwork for silhouette animation. Other pioneer filmmakers, this time from France, were Alexandre Alexeieff and Claire Parker. Alexeieff addressed the people in French and English about animation in the past and future. Together with Jacques Drouin from Montreal, the pinscreen technique was explained and the films **The Pinscreen** and **Trois exercices sur l'écran d'épingle** were shown. Jacques also installed a small pinscreen for the people to use. From Cal-Arts, California, came Jules Engel who showed some fabulous animation films made by his students. Scratching on film was introduced by Pierre Hebert, Canada. . . .

From Vancouver, we had Bill Maylone. Beside showing his puppet film about prehistoric animals, he demonstrated how to cast puppets out of foam rubber using plaster moulds. Bernard Queenan showed animated films from Concordia University, Montreal. Don Arioli climbed on a chair to address the people about his way of working and preparing storyboards. Bob Gardiner from the US displayed a hologram he made from a model set and also talked about the film **Closed Mondays**. Another guest from Boston was Mary Beams, who discussed and showed some really nice films from her art classes. A line test in cinemascope for the feature film **Raggedy Ann and Andy**, now in production, was shown and discussed before a lively audience by Tissa David. A pleasant surprise was the presence of Norman McLaren who, together with Grant Munro, has almost finished a new film on the subject of movement in animation. McLaren felt that a screening followed by an open discussion would help him to finish his film properly. . . .

We were extremely lucky to have had the help of Jacques Menard and Tom Shoebridge. Jacques knew all about the cameras and projectors. Tom was particularly keen in helping out whenever something odd would occur. Throughout the week we also had volunteer help from ASIFA members. The Canadian Film Institute gave us needed moral and financial support. Besides so many other individuals who came to help, we would also like to thank all our guests and participants for coming and devoting their time and energy to make this Ottawa 76 workshop what it turned out to be. A mighty successful event!

**ASIFA-Canada  
The Workshop Committee**

Co Hoedeman, co-ordinator; Huguette Baril, secretary;  
John Gaug, Joyce Borenstein, Inni Karine Melbye, members.

\* ASIFA is the Association internationale du film d'animation