

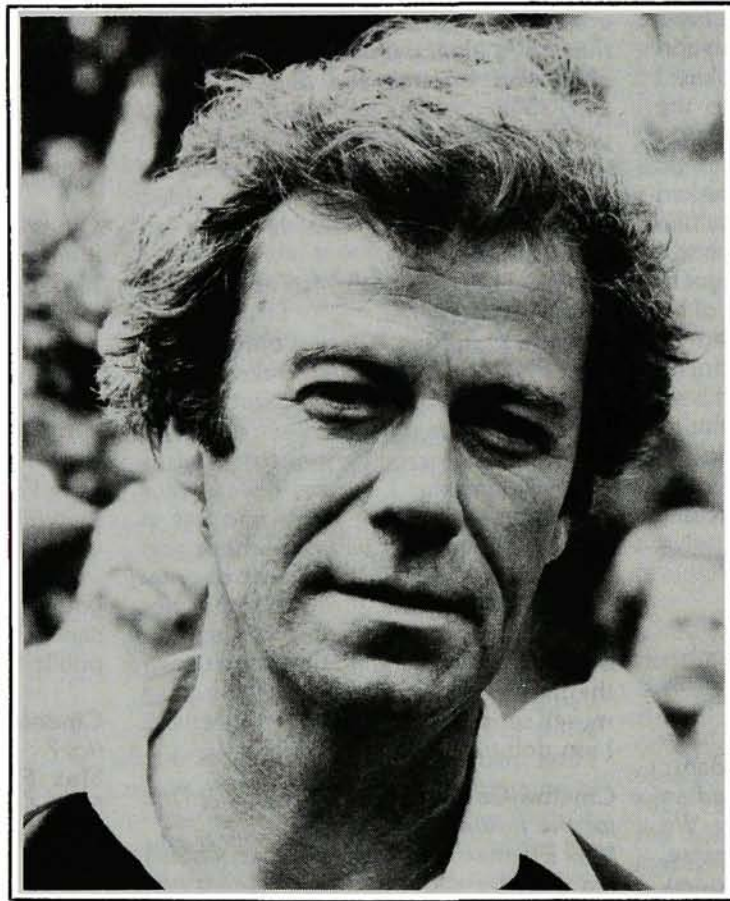
---

---

# 100% pure wool

or

**nobody's going to ravel  
this porky pig's  
maple leaf sweater**



by charles lazer

Gordon Pinsent thinks it's high time to rescue the Canadian film industry from the carpet-baggers. For all the ballyhoo and rustle of bucks, he's convinced that the rug is being 'yanked' out from under us.



Gordon Pinsent came to national prominence in the mid-sixties as our television MP, *Quentin Durgens*. A few years later he showed us he was as good a writer as he was an actor by writing and starring in *The Rowdyman* and recently, in *A Gift to Last*. But he is not only acclaimed as a screenwriter and an actor; he has made his presence felt in the industry as a man of integrity and intelligence — a performer committed to the development of Canadian film and theatre.

On the occasion of his most recent award, a *Genie* for his performance in *Klondike Fever*, *Cinema Canada* took the opportunity to talk to him. Pinsent considered the once and future Canadian film industry and his place in it.

"I feel that I've made a very big commitment here, and happily so. It took very little thought, really, because it's nice to be part of something big. It's bigger than ever, and it looks as though it's going to be a fact.

"But I'm no longer interested in just putting time into a way of life that does not have something at the other end of the tunnel.

"Speaking for myself as a performer, when I face an opportunity, I ask myself, 'Is it going to benefit me? Can I improve? Can I learn? Are we going to make it work for us? And am I going to be part of it all? Or am I simply going to grab mine off the top?'

"I want to be part of a viable industry, but I don't want us to bog ourselves down doing only a kind of material that will not work for us — that will not prepare us for something else."

The capital cost allowance, and the resulting boom in "tax shelter films" has not been an unmixed blessing. Too many producers are concerned only with the tax advantages to be found in film, and not at all with the quality of the movies that they turn out.

"We still have the problem of producing as opposed to producing! We need those private sector type people who are interested in making good films — telling our stories — instead of just hiding money. In my own life, I have been approached by people who, I have every reason to believe, in my closeted writer's scope, are only interested in hiding money.

"Well, I know how much work, and you know how much work goes into writing a screenplay, and attempting to get something off the ground. It's a great strain and a lot of worry.

"But isn't it funny, if you are in the creative end, that they can see you coming — these people that can't create worth a damn themselves — they can see you coming and they think, 'How can we best use that man's integrity? How best to take that late innocent from Newfoundland and his precious time? Wonder if it's worth anything? Let's go get that Porky Pig! Give him a good shake, and see how we can use him!'

"I'm feeling extra paranoid these days because I'm doing good stuff, and here it will sit, unless I get out and sell it. We don't have those people in the middle that say, 'Give me that! Let me run with it!'

*Charles Lazer is a free-lance screenwriter and producer currently working in Toronto and Montreal.*

"Nobody says it's easy to get things produced. But some things should be easy, and one of them should be access to people who can produce. And I don't just mean send it to a producer because I happen to know one and you don't. There should be a 'gimme' attitude here, so that we as factory workers can get our work done and ship it out, get it back, work on it again — so that we have some sort of feeling that we're all part of it.

"I've got three or four scripts, right now, and I know if I were to go down and spend a couple of sleazy weeks on Sunset Boulevard, I could make a deal. And this is what people are going to do, because we don't have creative producers here who are going to help us get things going. I can't possibly go around thinking my stuff is not worth doing, so I have to find ways to do it. It's as simple as that.

"Right now I'm working on a three-pronged project: a stage play, a film, and maybe a book. It's not *Jaws*, but it will make a wonderful play for someone. Oddly enough, it's set in California, about a Canadian who goes down there to work in this industry. The theme being, 'Is there life after ambition?' I'm working desperately to get that ready for the Toronto Theatre Festival.

"I won't produce. In a way, I'm insulted if I have to produce. That's putting together some muscle that doesn't come naturally to me. It's one thing for me to say I'm happy with the day's work that I did — I'm happy with the finished script. But I'd like a phone call that says, 'So are we. Let's go out and do it!'



Custom House Brokers and Forwarding Agents

**Get the Picture?  
You will  
if We Handle it**

**We Know Your Problems**

**AIRSPPEED BROKERS (1962) LIMITED**

40 University Ave.  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5W 1L2  
(416) 977-3344

Members of Canadian Film And Television Association



"I'm not eager to sell my work outright. I want to participate. I want to direct film — to extend myself by directing. I have no intention of giving up performing. My writing was originally supposed to fill the bill when I wasn't acting. Now I use the writing for some good reasons, not the least of which is staying sane. Now I want to extend that thread by directing."

*These desires notwithstanding, Pinsent has cut back on his other activities to concentrate on his writing. He stopped **A Gift to Last** and has turned down other work in order not to repeat himself and go back to the old patterns. He is a dedicated, disciplined writer.*

*But he worries that the artists — and performers — have no control over the industry they give so much to; that quality is all too often determined by producers and accountants who have little interest in the quality of a film.*

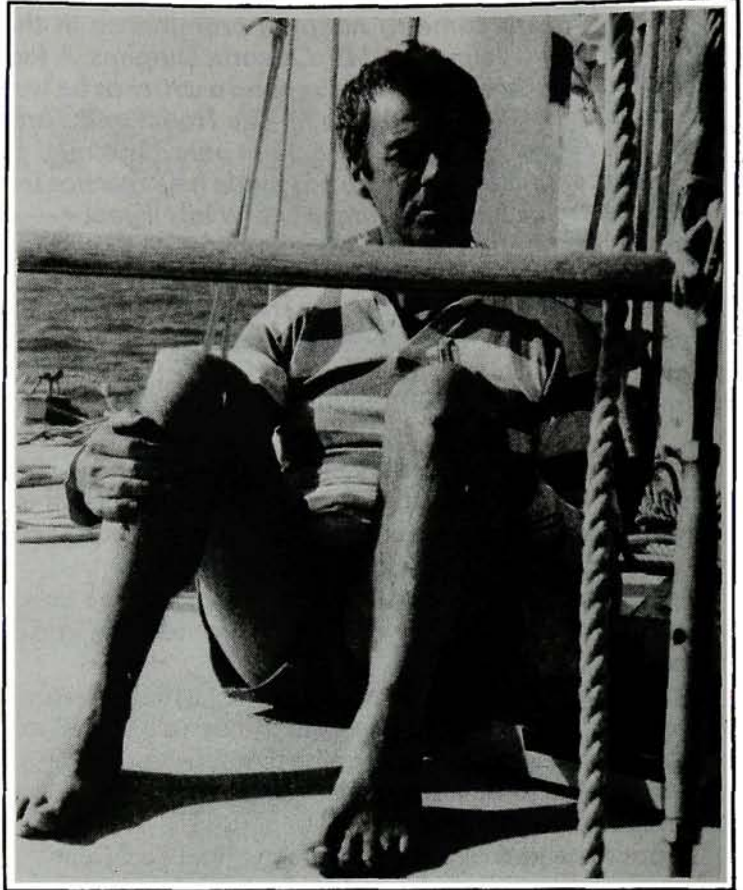
---

### *They're avoiding the material.*

---

"It frightens me that it's completely out of our control. In this country, you can be wildly congratulated for things that you've done, and turn right around the following morning and you can't get arrested! You've got to go out and do it all again yourself!

"The producers who say there's a lack of material in this country are avoiding the issue. They're avoiding the material. There's a whole raft of producers out there who



His solo voyage around the world turns into a hellish journey into himself. There is no exit from the **Horse Latitudes**

### **Why cross the border?**

## **Proparms Ltd.**

**isn't just a weaponry house anymore.**

**It's special effects.**

**Machinists.**

**Divers**

**Props. custom-builders.**

**Multilingual.**

**Budget conscious.**

**and**

**wholly Canadian.**

**Call us at**

**(514) 658-5207**

**or write:**

**Proparms Ltd.**

**2932 St. Therese Road,**

**Chambly, Que. J3L 2B2**

don't need to find good material. If they do, fine...But in the meantime, I have the spookiest idea that if you were one hell of a screenwriter, and you had great ideas, they could avoid you — go around you — and get on with their plans, which don't include you or your good writing.

"The sad thing will be when we round up all our films and we won't have said anything about ourselves. We don't try *our* best. Americans expect a lot of themselves, they demand a lot of themselves, and they try their best. Well, we also try *their* best.

"The things that are happening in this country are not getting us a satisfying image for film. We don't even have a good name in Hollywood right now.

"But we can be as good as anyone anywhere. The crews, the technicians, are wonderful! They're ready, they're interested — these guys are working!

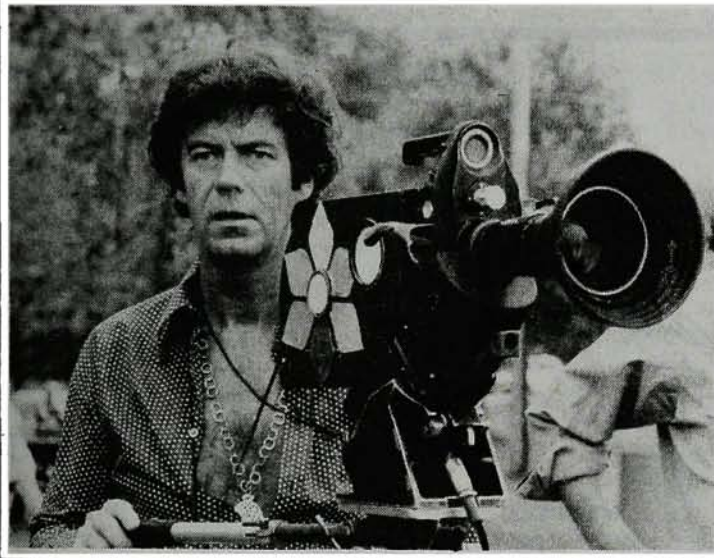
"Our talent has been doing the same thing, but in more of an underground, a commando way. They haven't been getting the same kind of opportunities the crews have been getting.

"Performers in this country, performers anywhere, have a very tough job. A character actor becomes more interesting with age, but a leading man between jobs just waits. And those jobs are not coming too quickly in this country.

"So not only do they lose the continuity of experience, but by the time they do work again they'll probably be too old to learn lines, and they'll have to go to the bathroom a lot, and you know that'll play hell with the budget!

"If our performers get good roles, they'll get the recogni-





Above: Linda Goranson and Pinsent in *The Rowdyman*. Below: *The Heat Wave Lasted Four Days* — but what perfect weather for shooting!

tion. But we've got to work for that — to keep the continuity. But Canadians have always been slow to hold up their hands in class.

### *I feel like the Plastic Man...*

"The solution for the writer is to use the technique that I'm using now. It's called doing it; finishing it. Send out your scripts. When you get your rejections you go into a dark room and you get on with it. If your rejections have anything useful in them, use it. Use it all. Get it down to a point where no one can reject it — no one with a conscience."

*Gordon Pinsent's career in film has been notable for its growth and development. He prides himself on being able to formulate and execute a plan whereby he can maintain his independence. He sustains the feeling that he is a very special person.*

*This same sense of purpose can be applied to the Canadian film industry. Pinsent is not content to be merely a part of the industry, he wants to have a say, along*

*with the rest of us, in directing its development. And that direction should be back to telling our own stories.*

"I feel like the Plastic Man of the comic books. I can change shape — our whole industry is going to be changing shape for awhile. But we've got to be the landlords, not the tenants. We've got to decide what kind of industry we want to have, and then we can get on with the business of becoming part of it.

"I think we'll end up telling good stories again. We started out telling good stories, with *The Rowdyman*, *Goin' Down the Road*, *Wedding in White*, *Who Has Seen the Wind*.

"If we go back and pick up some of those values and get on with it again, that won't be such a bad thing. And I think even the quick thinkers, the flash-in-the-panners, are aware that this is going to have to happen again, right around their funny toes.

"I get the feeling that I've been walking around here an awfully long time, with a wonderfully expensive knitted sweater with a maple leaf on it. But it's being ravelled! Somebody's got the goddamn string and it's being ravelled and I can't save it! It's still an expensive sweater, but it's being ravelled, and some other cat at the other end is knitting an American sweater, with the Stars and Stripes! Sometimes I don't know whether to pull it back or let it go. But in the end, I've got to pull it back and wind it all up again.

"We've got to roll that ball up and start knitting that sweater again — or otherwise, we're going to be pretty damn cold up here!" □



## KEY TO QUALITY

### KEY TO CANADA'S FINEST OPTICALS

FILM OPTICALS OF CANADA LTD.

410 ADELAIDE STREET WEST  
TORONTO (416) 363-4987

MONTREAL (514) 937-2336  
VANCOUVER (604) 687-4491