



*The Bay of Love and Sorrows*, adapted from and co-scripted with the acclaimed Miramichi novelist David Adams Richards, was a powerful and deeply moving film about how class can ultimately trump loyalty in the rural Maritimes. By far the most effective screen adaptation of any Richards work, *The Bay of Love and Sorrows* ranks with the finest naturalistic dramas of this or any year.

Ultimately, however, it was Thom Fitzgerald's and Daniel MacIvor's year. Fitzgerald's *The Wild Dogs*, shot in Bucharest, Romania, draped in the relentless beige tones of a still-decaying Eastern Europe, was perhaps the most purely cinematic of all the films at the festival. With Fitzgerald himself playing the lead as a Canadian porn merchant in search of new, cheap talent as the city effects a cull of the wild dogs of the title, the film takes some astonishing risks with subject matter and approach, particularly when dealing with issues of sex and commerce.

MacIvor, who won Best Actor for his appearance in his own film *Past Perfect* while picking up another award for writing the adaptation of his play *Marion Bridge* for the screen for director Weibke von Carolsfeld, expressed a longing to return to Nova Scotia permanently. Having presented two plays here this year (*Cul De Sac* and *In on It*) and armed with another script to be shot here next year, MacIvor might just get his wish. Meanwhile Fitzgerald's latest film, *The Event*, is in post-production, raising the possibility that the acting/writing/directing duo may well be in contention for the very same prizes at next year's Atlantic Film Festival.

# SUDBURY

## CINÉFEST SUDBURY 2002

9/16-22/02

By Christopher Heard

For the past 14 years every late September, hot on the heels of the Montreal World Film Festival and the Toronto International Film Festival, there is another film festival that is growing in stature, is just as much fun as the aforementioned bigger ones, and should be checked out at least once by every fan or supporter of Canadian cinema. Run by executive director Tammy Frick and held together by a legion of dedicated volunteers, this little festival is rapidly approaching that place where it can no longer be called little. Cinéfest Sudbury, Ontario, focusing on Canadian films and filmmakers, is well organized, well sponsored and features an impressive array of very diverse titles from all over the world.

Sudbury, known more for its mining trade than anything else, would not be the first place you would think of to host a film festival; however, this remarkable little festival has enormous civic support and is a place that filmmakers take seriously. The gala presentations at the 2002 edition included *Bollywood/Hollywood* from Deepa Mehta, from France, Francoise Ozon's *8 femmes* (this festival also featured a retrospective of the films of Ozon); Michael Moore's *Bowling for Columbine*, Atom Egoyan's *Ararat*, and David Cronenberg's *Spider*. Each gala was shown at Cine Plus, a comfortable old theatre, while all other films were screened at the ultramodern Silver City.

The festival programs included called It's All True featuring documentaries, World Cinema featuring films from all corners of the globe, and Features Canada showing Canadian films. There was a children's film component and a Cinema Classics feature where I caught Norman Jewison's *Rollerball* and Roger Vadim's *Barbarella*. And a favourite of mine was *Yamakasi*, an action-packed film from France about seven young children who invent a new sport to be played amid the high-rise apartment complex they live in. The film was produced and written by Luc Besson and directed by Ariel Zeitoun.

Of the 82 films screened (including shorts) one of the more interesting ones was *It All Happens Incredibly Fast* from first-time Toronto filmmaker Jai Dixit. This taut psychological drama set in a bar on an

Roger Vadim's *Barbarella*.



# FESTIVAL wraps

incredibly tense evening stars Maurice Dean Wint. It's also interesting that the filmmakers decided that their film should make its debut at Cinéfest Sudbury because the likelihood of it being seen and appreciated by an audience of real moviegoers would be greater than if it got lost in the hundreds of films screened in Toronto. The ploy worked; the screening was held on a Friday afternoon and it was jammed to the rafters. Later, at the closing night party I conducted an informal poll of filmgoers as to what they thought of this film. The response was unanimously positive. "Bringing the film to Cinéfest Sudbury was a way of test screening it. No pressure to sell the film or have the film evaluated," said Jai Dixit in the Sudbury Ramada Inn the day after his successful screening. "I didn't screen it with the expectation that Harvey Weinstein would be sitting there with cheque book in hand—it was just to feel the audiences' reaction to the film."

Cinéfest Sudbury also has the Forum Series, well-supported seminars where discussions on the practical side of filmmaking in this country take place. These seminars are hosted and conducted by professionals who have films in the festival or have had films in the festival in the past—an example being Vancouver filmmaker Dwayne Beaver who attended Cinéfest Sudbury last year with his film *The Rhino Brothers* and returned this year to conduct a seminar on directing actors on film. This year's seminars included Show Me the Money: Funding Your Film; Lights, Camera, Action: Directing Actors on Film; The Underscore: Placing Music into Film; The Score: The Role of the Composer; and Date with a Tape: The Demo Tape Critique.

Prizes are given out at the closing night gala celebration: winners this year included first-time filmmaker Wiebke von Carolsfeld for his film *Marion Bridge* with Molly Parker, and Soo Lyu for her film *Rub & Tug*. Both filmmakers were on hand to enjoy their victories. One thing that makes this festival fun is the relaxed atmosphere. The Toronto International Film Festival has become huge in size and stature and with that comes pressure. Cinéfest Sudbury is about filmmakers getting together to share their films with film fans who aren't exposed to these types of films. I watched Peter Mettler wandering around one of the parties—he was in Sudbury with his sprawling documentary *Gambling, Gods and LSD*—being approached by other filmmakers and Sudbury residents alike to talk about the film and their reactions to it. No publicists, no agents, no nothing; just a bunch of moviemakers and movie lovers hanging out together in a place where there really is little else to do but screen movies and commune with the filmmakers.

## 21<sup>ST</sup> VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

9/26–10/11/02

By Dale Drewery

Come on, admit it! You know the feeling. The one you get when you're sitting in a darkened theatre watching a movie and wondering whether you're the only one who completely perplexed. Your eyes dart furtively from side to side looking for any indication that someone else thinks the film is as tedious as you do. But on this particular day, my fellow filmgoers are no help at all. The man to my left is busy eating his lunch, and the one to the right is asleep. Welcome to a

media screening at the 21st annual Vancouver International Film Festival.

The movie in question is *Shanghai Panic*, a contender for the Dragons & Tigers Award for Young Cinema. The Award carries a prize of \$5,000, and it's presented to a new director from Pacific Asia for the most creative and innovative first or second feature-length film. I had already seen quite a few of this year's contenders and, having loathed many of them, I am desperate to like *Shanghai Panic*. And it is truly amazing the excuses one can dream up in the interests of being open-minded, verging on politically correct: the subtitle translations are probably poor; I clearly don't understand the culture; and, am I getting too old to watch films about young people? Director/cinematographer Andrew Cheng follows a group of confused kids through the dance clubs, night streets and anonymous apartments of Shanghai tackling some tough subjects along the way, including HIV/AIDS, sexual identity and suicide. The film, however, never seems to rise above its indulgences, and I can't seem to develop a shred of interest in the characters. I leave early, stumbling over my comrade's lunch bag on the way.



Mina Sham's *Long Life, Happiness and Prosperity*.

Besides, I am already a few minutes late for *Punch*, which is in the running for the Citytv Western Canada Screenwriters Award. Established this year, it carries the not-too-shabby prize of \$12,000 awarded to the top screenwriter of a film from Western Canada, which, apparently, includes Manitoba. Splitting the country down its geographic middle is bound to enrage Newfoundlanders, since they must now officially include Ontario in "the East"! *Punch* is a first feature for Vancouver writer-director Guy Bennett and it explores the unusual relationship between a single dad and his troubled 18-year-old daughter. What feels stilted off the top reveals itself as a profound discomfort they feel