

irty years ago, December 23, 1964, Don Owen's *Nobody Waved Good-bye* opened in Toronto at the New Yorker cinema. It was "the beginning of a beginning," according to Canadian film scholar Peter Harcourt, the time when the history of Canadian feature filmmaking began to be written. In this issue, Geoff Pevere takes a look at that event and the reluctance we have as a culture to acknowledge or honour our cinematic heritage. Indeed, the argument still persists that we have no cinematic heritage, only a recording of events – each being more important than the last; each quickly forgotten.

Yet, a look back over thirty years reveals some remarkable evidence of a healthy, regionally based film industry. In 1964, only five Canadian features were released, three in English and two in French: *Nobody Waved Good-bye*, Gilles Groulx's *Le chat dans le sac*, Irvin

Kreshner's *The Luck of Ginger Coffey*, Jean-Paul Bernier's *La terre à boire*, and Larry Kent's *Sweet Substitute*. From November 1, 1993, to October 31, 1994, 27 feature films were released in Toronto alone, 21 in English, six in French. Of the 21 in English, half came from Ontario. Of the 27, three were feature-length documentaries. For someone who has grown up with Canadian cinema since the groundbreaking films of the sixties, this is a remarkable achievement, even more so considering how often the industry has been declared moribund or non-existent.

Of course, the past thirty years haven't been a through-line to our present "golden age." It's a path which has been marked more by forces beyond its control – namely foreign

domination of our distribution and exhibition sector – than by any lack of cinematic talent. However, the quality and quantity of the present crop of films give me reason to believe in the future of Canadian feature filmmaking. Indeed, there has developed over the years a domestic and foreign audience for the unusual, independent nature of Canadian feature films.

In Toronto, I call it the "two-weeks-at-the-Carlton" measure of success. The Carlton Cinemas, a Cineplex multiplex in the heart of downtown Toronto, plays more Canadian feature films than any other theatre in English-speaking Canada, and therefore by extension, the English-speaking world. Of course, Famous Players will occasionally play a Canadian film, and some films are released in other Cineplex or independent cinemas, so "two-weeks-at-the-Carlton" is only a metaphor for success in the Greater Toronto Area.

In 1994, *Thirty-two Short Films About Glenn Gould* was the hands-down winner, at 14 weeks. *Exotica* was coming on strong at six weeks up to the end of October, but will have to go beyond Christmas to match *Thirty-two Short Films*'s staying power. Certainly, *Exotica* has to be seen as Egoyan's breakthrough film and is the only film to go from an initial three-screen release to five screens (no passes), and then to six, unprecedented for any Canadian film in the Toronto market.

So, in descending order of popularity: François Girard's *Thirty-two Short Films About Glenn Gould*, John Greyson's *Zero Patience* (9 weeks), David Wellington's *I Love a Man in Uniform* (8), Denys Arcand's *Love and Human Remains* (7), Atom Egoyan's *Exotica*, Gerard Ciccoritti's *Paris, France*, George Mihalka's *La Florida* (6), Darrell Wasyk's *Mustard Bath* (5), and Léa Pool's *Mouvements du désir* (4). Eighteen films didn't make it beyond two weeks, including André Forcier's *Le vent du Wyoming*. This points to the continued lack of support quality Québécois films find in English-speaking Canada,

but that's a subject for another editorial at another time.

Now's the time for a critical listing of the best Canadian films each year. The bureaucrats have their say in choosing films for Cannes, the major Canadian festivals have their pre-selected programs of the "best," and the industry has its say in choosing the Genies. *Take One* fearlessly enters the fray and in the future will present an annual list of the best in Canadian cinema in response to a film industry whose time has finally come, thirty years after its beginning ●

WHAT WILL You Do when the film's OVER?!



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