

FROM SEA TO SEA

Winnipeg

An invitation-only screening of Guy Maddin's eagerly awaited *Twilight of the Ice Nymphs* was one of the hot tickets for the 10th anniversary celebrations of the Manitoba Motion Picture Industry Association (MMPIA). The celebrations included the



La Salla photo courtesy of the NFB

Betty Baker. In conjunction with the MMPIA celebrations, Winnipeg's first international children's film festival, aptly called Freeze Frame, paid homage to Radio-Canada's Oscar-winning animator, Frédéric Back, and included the premiere of Richard Condie's 1997 Oscar-nominated *La Salla*. Québécoise director Léa Pool was in Manitoba in February to shoot a docudrama about the internationally renowned Manitoban author, Gabrielle Roy. A joint production of Buffalo Gal Pictures and the Montreal company, Les productions de l'impatient, the film will pay tribute to the author's work and life with archival material, interviews, and a re-enactment of Roy's life by actress Sylvie Malo. Marble Island Pictures and Alberta filmmaker Don Scott are co-producing the feature, *See Bob Run*, a story of "first love, incest and murder" based on the play by Daniel MacIvor. *Soft Like Me* director Jeff Erbach is rewriting the script to be shot in the late summer. John Aaron Productions has several projects in development after the success of *The Arrow* mini-series. Director Aaron Kim Johnston and producer Jack Clements could serve as a model for self-distribution in the U.S. with their aggressive promotion of their earlier features, *The Last Winter* and *For the Moment*. After a lukewarm response from American distributors, the duo decided to do it themselves by faxing and phoning key theatres with publicity material. *For the Moment* opened in Chicago, New York and Los Angeles, and landed a home video release with Fox Video. Although he wouldn't recommend it to everybody, Johnston said, "We discovered screens are accessible if you have the right movie."

Dave Barber

The Prairies

This year's very cold winter across the prairies has proven the harbinger of a relatively barren spring in the production community—at least that's the way things look for now. Hope springs eternal out West though, and for good reason it seems. In Alberta, *North of 60's* funding reprieve meant a short Christmas hiatus for cast and crew, and a return to work in late January on 13 new episodes for the show's sixth season. In

Edmonton, no decisions have made regarding the future for *Jake and the Kid*. Will the production move to Saskatchewan? It's possible, as CanWest continues to seek what it hopes are greener pastures after losing its recent CRTC request for Alberta stations. Across the border, those looking for their first big break are finding it in Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan Motion Picture Association's Debut Program brings together writers and directors to work on their first half-hour dramas. SaskFILM has contributed \$75,000 each to two projects already up and running. *The Rink* wrapped principal photography at the end of January, and *Dirty Money* will begin shooting in March. The budget shortfall for these productions was made up from a variety of sources, including the production companies themselves, Telefilm Canada and the Federal JobStart program.

Fran Humphreys and Andrea Kingwell

Vancouver

A major project on the go from the West Coast is *Dirty*—a sort of *Husbands & Wives* meets *Secrets & Lies* in East Vancouver—directed by Canada's answer to Mike Leigh, Bruce Sweeney (*Live Bait*). *Dirty* is a darkly comedic slice-of-life ensemble film that takes us on a journey through the emotionally charged mine fields of bankruptcy, bulimia and sexual addiction. It showcases the range and talents of some of Vancouver's finest actors—Babz Chula, Tom Scholte, Benjamin Ratner and Nancy Sivak. Principle photography is set for the end of March. Gary Burns (*The Suburbanators*) has recently completed his second feature, *Kitchen Party*. Set in the "burbs" around Vancouver, the film revisits one of teen-hood's most anxious moments—when the party at your parent's house goes seriously off the rails. Are you interested in cannibalism, madness and cross-dressing in the High Arctic? Director Erick Whittaker and producer Dave Bouck have recently received Telefilm Canada development assistance for their second feature, *Franklinstein*, which follows the mysterious disappearance of the ill-fated 1845 Franklin expedition. Nettie Wild (*Blockade and A Rustling of Leaves: Inside the Phillipine Revolution*) has returned from seven months of filming the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas province, Mexico, and will spend the next seven months editing *A Place Called Chiapas*. Shot in super-16, the film should be ready for this year's festival circuit, and CBC-TV's *Witness* has already set an air date for November. Raymond Massey, whose feature production credits include *Whale Music* and *Impolite*, has joined forces with Mort Ransen and Ranfilm, the company that was behind the success of *Margaret's Museum*. Currently Ranfilm has several projects in development, including *Shegalla*, set in the interior of B.C., and written by Joan Hopper and Mort Ransen. And for something completely different, Walt Disney's long-delayed live-action *Mr. Magoo* with Canadian mega-goof Leslie Nielsen as the famous cartoon character is finally set to go this spring in Vancouver. *Finis*.

John Dippong

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