

# FROM SEA TO SEA

## The East Coast

This year's Atlantic Film Festival was the biggest yet, nearly doubling last year's delegate's list while increasing both attendance and revenues. The big winners included John Doyle's end-of-the-millennium dramatic feature, *Extraordinary Visitor*, which copped awards for writing, direction, best actor and actress and art direction. Halifax documentarian Peter d'Entremont added three awards to his already crowded mantelpiece for his moving one-hour portrait of the life and art of Nova Scotia folk artist Maud Lewis. Coproduced with the National Film Board, *The Illuminated Life of Maud Lewis* won the Margaret Perry Award for the best Nova Scotia-made film. And Newfoundland actress and filmmaker Mary Lewis had a banner year with her marvellous half-hour memory film, *When Ponds Freeze Over*. Partially animated and completely charming, the film deservedly won her the major Telefilm Best Atlantic Short prize worth a cool \$10,000. It also won in Toronto and Vancouver. Monique LeBlanc won The Rex Tasker Best Atlantic Documentary Award for her witty and inquisitive NFB-produced documentary, *Cigarette*. The film looks into the imagery and allure of smoking. *Cigarette* is a supremely accomplished follow-up to her award-winning debut, *The Acadian Connection*.... Another major Atlantic NFB documentary will hit the small screen for Valentine's Day on the CTV network. Barbara Doran's portrait of Harlequin Romance writers and their beefy cover stars, all taking a Caribbean cruise, entitled *The Perfect Hero*, is one of the most hotly anticipated films on the horizon.... Meanwhile, New Brunswick has entered a period of film-industry instability with the resignation of New Brunswick film chief, Sam Grana. The "Picture Province" is still see-sawing between producing its own indigenous work and servicing outside producers hungering after the biggest tax credit in Canada (40 per cent).... Cape Breton is currently undergoing a filmmaking boom with Alan Moyle (*Pump Up the Volume*, *Empire Records*) at the helm of Canadian Film Centre grad Tricia Fish's first feature script, *New Waterford Girls*. Just around the corner, crews are hard at work filming sequences for the television version of the turn-of-the-century family drama, *Pit Pony*. Veteran director Eric Till is back for many of the 24 episodes.... Rick Mercer's Halifax-made series *Made in Canada* is a certified hit with ratings of around 700,000 per episode. An order of another 13 episodes has just landed on his desk. Looks like *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* will have to find another co-host.

**Ron Foley Macdonald**

## Montreal

It's blockbuster time in Quebec! Sure, there's Hollywood heavyweights hitting the streets of Montreal all the time. Bette Midler, Pierce Brosnan and Paul Newman were seen shooting around town all summer, and now Denzel Washington is here working on Phillip Noyce's new thriller, *The Bone Collector*. But I'm talking about a brand new concept: Quebec-made, French-speaking blockbusters! Following last year's *Les Boys*'s huge success, theatre director Denise Filiatrault's feature-film debut, the hilarious no-nonsense comedy *C'tà ton tour*, *Laura Cadieux*, the story of a group of overweight women who meet every week at a clinic to get a supposed miracle weight-loss treatment, has been earning megabucks since its mid-October release. By the time this column is published, box office should have reached the \$3-million mark, thanks to Filiatrault's great adaptation of Michel Tremblay's famous novel, as well as to her wonderful cast of character actresses, led by Quebec songstress Ginette Reno. Then again, *Les Boys II* is just around the corner, ready to break some more box-office records. Getting another Christmas-time release, Louis Saia's follow-up to his smash hit male-bonding flick features the same band of eclectic characters, but this time, they're headed to France for a mean game of hockey. Another big-budget production that's been getting a lot of attention is Filmline's 22-episode TV series *The Secret Adventures of Jules Verne*. This historical/sci-fi family series, featuring wicked state-of-the-art digital special effects, is shooting in Montreal until the end of April 1999.... There is also a lot of independent action brewing in the background these days. In fact, three very interesting indie documentaries have garnered a lot of attention over the past few months. *Oh Mother!*, directed by Sara Morley and Sandra Dametto, examines three generations of mothers who share their personal visions of motherhood, which inherently challenge prevailing cultural myths and ideals. *Tree Weeks*, a hilarious piece by Ezra Soiferman and Adam Steinman, takes an enlightening look at Quebec Christmas-tree vendors in New York City. *Tree Weeks* will be broadcast on Radio-Canada and CBC Newsworld. Finally, real-life couple Maureen Marovitch and David Finch check out the state of relationships at the end of the century in *When Two Won't Do*, an intimate look at what's out there for people who've decided to look beyond traditional monogamy—namely, polygamy, or the active and consensual quest for multiple partners. The film will be in production until March 1999 and a fall 1999 release is expected.

**Claire Valade**

Denise Filiatrault's *C'tà ton tour*, *Laura Cadieux*

