

WINNIPEG

The Winnipeg Local Heroes has assembled an impressive guest list for its debut festival, which took place in mid-March. Panelists included directors Bruce Sweeney (*Dirty*) from British Columbia and Manon Briand (*2 secondes*) from Quebec, Toronto critic and former Perspective Canada programmer David McIntosh, and Jim Powers, director of development for the innovative U.S. independent production company The Shooting Gallery. Other key figures included writer and critic Geoff Pevere, Alliance Atlantis's Charlotte Mickie, *Kitchen Party* producer John Hazlett, (*bp*) *Pushing the Boundaries* producer Liz Yake, director John Greyson, Showcase TV's Laura Michalchyshyn, Credo producer Kim Todd and Winnipeg filmmakers Noam Gonick and Gary Yates. Premieres included Kiefer Sutherland's *Woman Wanted*, Paula Kelly's *Epiphany Rules* and *The Pill* from directors Elise Swerhone and Erma Buffie. Producer Merit Jensen said *The Pill* is a history of the birth control pill including the side effects and how it galvanized the women's health movement. The film, which took the filmmakers to New York, London and Puerto Rico, includes interviews with feminist pioneer Gloria Steinem, Carl Djerassi, regarded as one of the scientific fathers of the pill, and Barbara Seaman, who first broke the story about the pill's side effects. The Winnipeg version of Local Heroes concluded with The Blizzards, an annual awards/schmooze fest for Manitoba productions. There were over 300 (up from 200 two years ago) applications in 34 award categories. According to MMPIA executive director, Richard Horne, film production in Winnipeg has jumped from \$17 million last year to over \$50 million this year.... Winnipeg Film Group distributor Marlene James is off to the New York Underground Film Festival to represent Jeff Erbach's new film *Under Chad Valley* and Paul Suderman's *Brothers*. Both screened at Local Heroes in Edmonton.... The Lenny Breau doc, *The*



The Genius of Lenny Breau

Genius of Lenny Breau, has finished shooting. The crew travelled from New York to Los Angeles, Nashville, Maine and Winnipeg to interview guitarists Randy Bachman (The Guess Who, BTO), George Benson, Chet Atkins, Pat Metheny, Andy Summers (The Police), Winnipeg country legend Ray St. Germain and Canadian actor Don Francks, who used to play in a band with Breau called Three. Director John Martin says they also snagged an interview with Leonard Cohen, who Breau once accompanied on guitar at a poetry gig in Edmonton (although no tape exists of the performance). Martin and his crew did unearth, however, some never-before-seen footage of Lenny playing with jazz guitar legend Tal Farlow. Produced by Sleeping Giant Productions and Buffalo Gal Productions, *The Genius of Lenny Breau* screened on Bravo! on March 23rd. **Dave Barber**

TORONTO

Domestic feature film production seems to have gone into the doldrums in Ontario with very little happening. Of course, all eyes are on David Cronenberg's *eXistenZ*, which premiered in Berlin in February and will open across the nation April 23. Budgeted at \$31 million, it is unquestionably one of the most expensive Canadian films ever made and one of the most eagerly awaited. Atom Egoyan returned home from Ireland and England with his next feature, *Felicia's Journey* starring Bob Hoskins, to do the post in Toronto raising the possibility that this Canada/U.K. coproduction will have enough points to qualify as an "official" Canadian film. If this is so, the delicious promise of Cronenberg vs. Egoyan at next year's Genies is a distinct possibility.... Other films in the works are *Apartment Hunting* directed by Bill Robertson, who hasn't been heard of since his quirky *Events Leading Up To My Death*, the controversial *American Psycho*, directed by Mary Harron (*I Shot Andy Warhol*), and Norman Jewison has completed principal photography on *Lazarus and the Hurricane* starring Denzel Washington. On the TV front, another six episodes of *Twitch City* are going before the cameras with the Genie-winning golden boy Don McKellar writing and starring and again directed by his buddy, Bruce McDonald. Susan Cavan

produces for Accent Entertainment.... Toronto-based producer, Camelia Frieberg, was honoured by the Vancouver chapter of Women in Film and Television as "Woman of the Year" in February. Not to be outdone, the Toronto branch of the same organization announced that she will be given its annual Excellence in Production award in April. Frieberg, who has long laboured under the shadow of her more famous producing partner Atom Egoyan (*The Adjuster*, *Exotica*, *The Sweet Hereafter*), is coming into her own, last year acting as executive producer on Amnon Buchbinder's critically praised *The Fishing Trip* and now producer on Jeremy Podeswa's latest, *The Five Senses*, which should surface in time for the fall festival season.... Rhombus Media is coming off a spectacular year which included 11 Genies for *The Red Violin* and *Last Night*, prizes at the Cannes and Toronto festivals for *Last Night*, an Emmy and five Geminis for the six-part mini-series, *Yo-Yo Ma: Inspired By Bach*, and many other awards for its internationally renowned arts programming. The company has also announced that it is developing even more movie deals, including one about the infamous Boyd gang which terrorized Toronto and Montreal during the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Paul Townend