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FROM THE EDITOR

For English-Canadian cinema, 2002 is shaping up to be an exceptional year. Paul Gross's *Men with Brooms* got things off to a great start with decent box-office figures and has proven to be a genuine crowd-pleaser, justifying all the hype and promotional efforts heretofore unseen in our national cinema. Eric Till's *Red Green's Duct Tape Forever* is another comedy doing well. When is the last time anyone can remember two popular English-Canadian comedies being released back-to-back? Atom Egoyan's *Ararat* and David Cronenberg's *Spider* are set for their world pre-

mieres at Cannes, and Peter Mettler's long-anticipated epic *Gambling, Gods and LSD* will no doubt join the other two on the Canadian festival circuit in the fall. And that's only the tip of the iceberg. After last year's drought, it's an embarrassment of riches.

The business of making offshore films in Canada continues to be a big-news item. The unions adversely affected by the runaway productions phenomenon in California and New York are making headway in their lobbying efforts. SAG, the American actor's union, officially supports the idea of a countervailing duty on American productions made in Canada to offset the lower costs of filming here, and several of its members have become very vocal. More than once during the recent Oscars, presenters referred to losing production "up there," and Arnold Schwarzenegger insisted that the production of *Terminator 3* be moved from Vancouver, where it initially was to be shot, back to Los Angeles. He took a cut in his notoriously high salary demands to make it worthwhile for the producers to make the move. Runaway productions are becoming a major headache for the producer's association, the MPAA, and an ongoing irritant in Canada/U.S. relations. It won't be going away any time soon.

Offshore production has become big business in places like Halifax, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. The vast majority of it is made-for-American-cable fodder, produced by one of the big Canadian production companies like Alliance Atlantis or under a Canadian shell; although, recently the really big American films are eyeing Canada, *Terminator 3* being an obvious example. This trend has led to the announcement of not one but two "world-class" soundstages to be built on the eastern docklands of Toronto within the next two-to-three years, causing Mel Lastman, Toronto's notoriously publicity-seeking mayor, to make a courtesy call on Hollywood. He was there to bolster what has become a \$1.2-billion business in Toronto, employing 30,000 people. He also wanted to make sure that if and when it came to making *Terminator 4*, the producers will think of Toronto.

There's a certain irony to the fact that Lastman's travelling companion, outgoing Ontario premier, Mike Harris, was the one partially responsible for this sizable growth in Toronto production with his government's policy of tax incentives and rebates for producers. This is the same Mike Harris who cut all funding to indigenous feature production, and has made it all but impossible for a low-budget film to be shot in Toronto because the crews are working overtime on American pap and post-production facilities are booked into the middle of the next decade. Harris certainly will not be missed by Ontario filmmakers. Good riddance, Mike; it's back to the golf course and corporate-perk-heaven for you.

In this issue, *Take One* features some of the documentaries that were screened at Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival. Hot Docs was launched as a fundraising initiative of the Canadian Independent Film Caucus and struggled for a number of years to establish its identity, not sure whether to stress the market over the films or vice-versa. The market generally won out. In 2000, new management introduced a competitive pitch session modelled after the International Documentary Festival, Amsterdam, adopted a model of independent programmers not unlike the Toronto International Film Festival, and overhauled the phoney awards structure. Hot Docs has now positioned itself as the premier spring event for documentaries and an important stopover on the annual international film-festival circuit.

W. P. Wise