

# Yorkton Short Film & Video Festival

(5/27-30/04)

BY Calvin Daniels

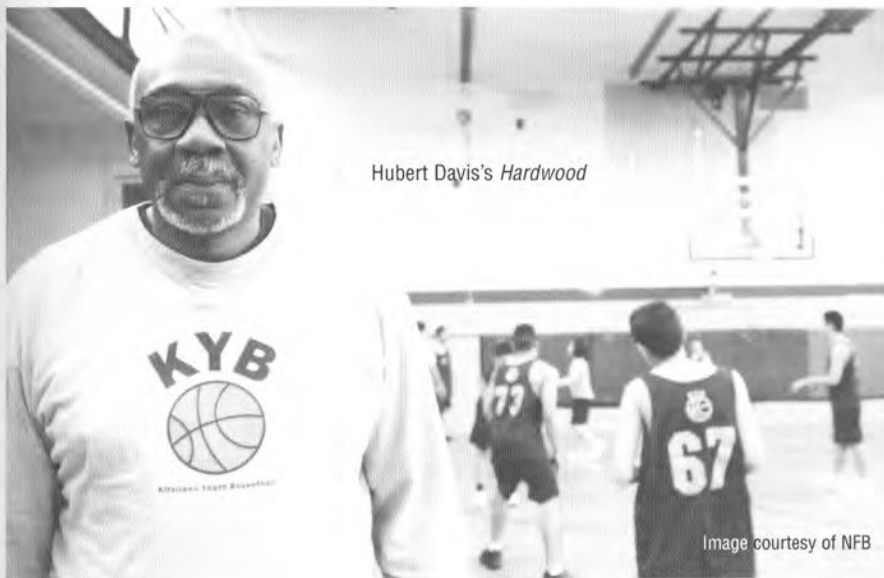
A STORY OF FAMILY AGAINST THE backdrop of a career as a Harlem Globetrotter was the big winner at this year's Yorkton Short Film and Video Festival. *Hardwood*, the first film from Hubert Davis, walked away with four awards, including the coveted Golden

documentary about his father, Mel Davis, a former Harlem Globetrotter. "My dad's pretty involved with youth in Vancouver. He's not just teaching basketball, but teaching life lessons too," he says. "I always thought he was an interesting character and a local hero." At the same time, though, Davis said his father had flaws too, including "mistakes made in life with his own family." The fact his

entitled *Karaoke Night at the Plains*. It took the honours over other Saskatchewan productions as *Youkali Hotel*, which won three festival awards and the highly popular CTV comedy *Corner Gas*, which was nominated for five awards, but took home only the Best Comedy Golden Sheaf. *Karaoke Night at the Plains* producer Lori Kuffner says the award "was great to win" against such strong competition, adding the depth of quality among the nominees suggests the province's film industry is strong. "We've got a wonderful crew here. We've got SaskFilm which supports this industry. We've got SCN, which is a big help." Kuffner's film also took the Golden Sheaf for Best Location Sound.

*Corner Gas* is the hottest Canadian comedy show to come along in years. Created by a Saskatchewan native Brent Butt, and filmed in Rouleau, Saskatchewan, the show has a definite small-town Saskatchewan feel. It's garnering a close look by the film industry too, with five Golden Sheaf nominations at this year's festival. The show won for Best Comedy, while also nominated for Best of Saskatchewan, Best Script, Best Actor for Eric Peterson (who plays Brent's father Oscar) and Best Actress for Janet Wright who plays Brent's mother, Emma. Both Peterson and Wright are Saskatchewan natives.

The Aboriginal Golden Sheaf Award category was new this year, helping spotlight a segment of the film industry that has long been overlooked. At least that's the feeling among several of those up for the award at this year's festival. Jeff Barnaby, director of *From Cherry*



Hubert Davis's *Hardwood*

Image courtesy of NFB

Sheaf of Excellence as the festival's top film. The film also earned Davis a Golden Sheaf for best direction in a non-dramatic film, as well as for editing and documentary short subject.

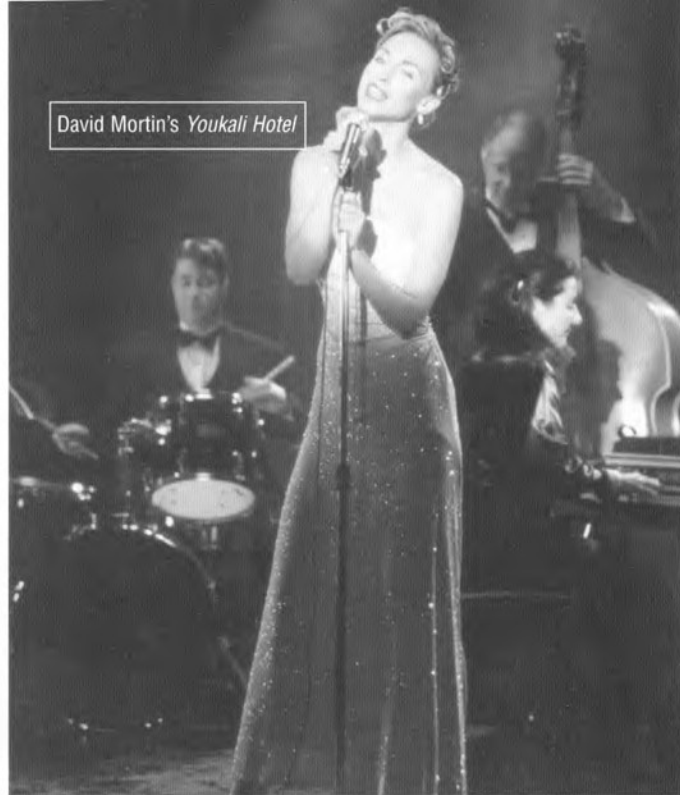
"It was a rewarding thing for all the hard work. It all paid off," said Davis moments after accepting the festival's main award. "Awards aren't why one chooses to tell a particular story, but they are certainly a welcome result just the same." In the case of *Hardwood*, the story is a deeply personal one for Davis, starting out as a

father was a Globetrotter sparked interest in the film. "That was the hook," says Davis. However, as documentaries often do, *Hardwood* evolved, becoming a film much more about family relationships. Davis realized as the process began that he had to tell all his father's relationship stories: his own, his mother's and that of his first wife and son as well. "It's a story of what families go through, for better or worse."

The Best of Saskatchewan Golden Sheaf went to a film shot on location in Regina

*English*, one of four films nominated in the Aboriginal category, says Native people have been icons in films from the earliest times, but usually the depictions “are negative stereotypes of Aboriginals.” Today that is changing because more Aboriginals are becoming involved in the industry, giving a fresh new voice on film, says Barnaby. “I don’t want to make a good Aboriginal film, or a good Spanish film, or a good French film. I just want to make a good film. That’s what I was trying to do.”

*Calvin Daniels is the assistant editor and senior reporter with Yorkton This Week.*



David Martin's *Youkali Hotel*

# Banff Television Festival

(6/13–17/04)

BY Dale Drewery

THERE'S NOTHING QUITE LIKE ARRIVING at your hotel after two days on the road and very much in need of a shower (so who bathes when driving alone?) only to discover that the room is not ready, a shampoo bottle has exploded in your luggage and somewhere along the way you've lost an hour. That means the opening ceremonies for the event you've come to cover begin in a few minutes. It's an auspicious introduction to the 2004 Banff Television Festival.

This is, after all, the famed 25-year-old festival that almost didn't take place this year after the cash-strapped and debt-ridden Banff Television Foundation was forced to file for bankruptcy protection. In an interview in the Banff Springs

posh Rundle Lounge, the festival's new CEO, Robert Montgomery, says his mandate this year was a very practical one. “Listen, learn and not lose so much money.”

Apparently that requires not spending so much. This year's festival was a pared down event—no entertainment, no boozy barbecue. Even the delegate bag was light on swag with the exception of a condom celebrating CTV's made-for-television movie, *Prom Queen*, about gay teen Marc Hall, and a folding clothes brush (always useful after a roll in the hay) courtesy of Radio-Canada. Festival attendance was also down this year—1,300 compared to last year's 1,600 and a record high two years ago of over 1,800.

Businessman Robert Montgomery puts

a very unbusiness-like spin on the numbers. “There is a feeling that the festival has returned to its roots,” he says, “with a solid core of people and a relaxed pace, as opposed to NATPE (National Association of Television Program Executives) or MIP (Marché International des Films et des Programmes pour la TV, Video) where it's more frenetic. [Here] people were getting all the meetings that they needed to get. And, business was being done.” At least it was for Insight Film & Video Productions. The West Coast-based company completed a development deal at the festival with Global Network for *Vanity Insanity*, a four-part program that investigates the sometimes nasty consequences of cosmetic surgery. The hour-long, high-definition series is expected to cost \$1.2 million.