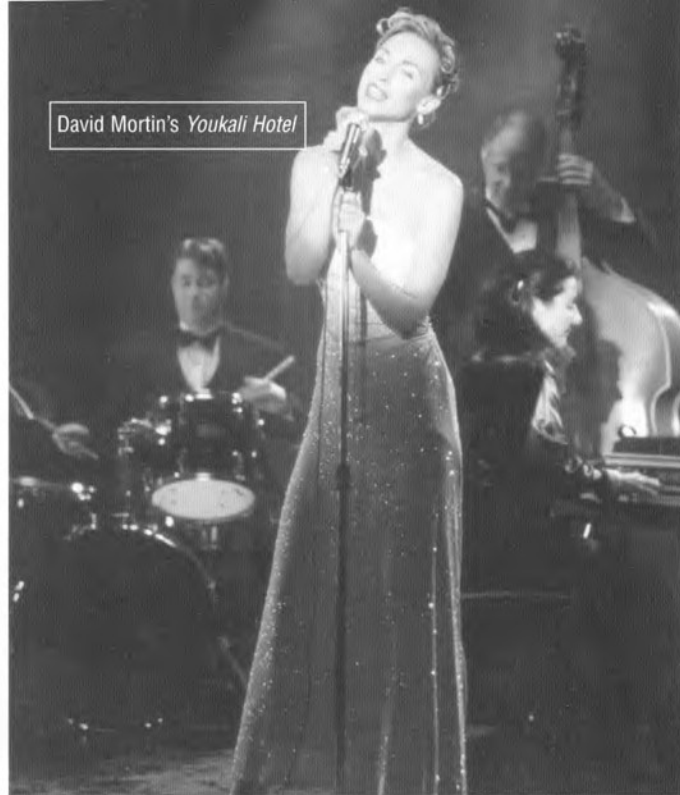


English, one of four films nominated in the Aboriginal category, says Native people have been icons in films from the earliest times, but usually the depictions “are negative stereotypes of Aboriginals.” Today that is changing because more Aboriginals are becoming involved in the industry, giving a fresh 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.

Haddock Entertainment's Laura Lightbown has been going to Banff for nearly a decade. From her office overlooking Vancouver's harbour she admits that, given all the negative publicity, she wasn't expecting much from this year's festival. She was pleasantly surprised. "The people that we wanted to meet with came," she says. "Some came at the last minute, but they showed up. And we did a flurry of 'Let's get together at 3:00, let's do 3:30, let's have a breakfast, let's have dinner.' Because there was less going on and fewer social events, we had an opportunity to focus on our meetings."

Like most television festivals, Banff is a veritable *Polka Dot Door* of pitches, panels and presentations. I overheard a number of delegates complain that the programs being pitched this time round weren't as good as in previous years. It's easy to say when you're not the one standing up in front of a ballroom of your peers trying desperately to sell your story or series and still hang on to your soul. The Banff Masters workshops were an opportunity to sit back and hear from those at the top of their game like *Sex*

and *the City* executive producers/writers Jenny Bicks and Cindy Chupack, who talked about mining one another's personal life for material for the show. A bad date, great sex, a family feud, just about everything was fair game. It was a funny, informative glimpse into the sitcom-writing process, and the moment the panel ended the mostly female audience swarmed the festival book table snapping up every remaining copy of Chupack's *The Between Boyfriends Book*.

The Masters directing workshop featured Canadian Don McBrearty who talked frankly about the debilitating fear that crept over him after winning an Academy Award in 1984 for his half-hour drama *Boys and Girls*. He lost the confidence to make decisions on-set and no longer trusted his instincts. Thanks to family and friends he eventually climbed out of his "black hole" and continues to direct award-winning programs. In an industry devoted to appearances, McBrearty's honesty was unexpected and refreshing.

Having survived its 25th birthday, the Banff Television Festival is now position-

ing itself for the next quarter century. The foundation has announced next year's dates (June 12th to 15th) and Robert Montgomery says the plans for 2005 include more of a focus on international co-productions. Whatever the agenda, there's a good chance that Laura Lightbown will be there. "Even when I lived in the east and worked out of Toronto, I always believed that the Banff festival was very important," she says. "It really gives you a couple of days of focused Canadian landscape. It's a beautiful place, it's confined and it's western. It's really effective because of that. It wouldn't happen in Toronto. And if it did, it wouldn't be the same festival."

For my part, I am returning to Alberta later this summer, the unlikely winner of a complementary new media course at the Banff Centre. Once again, I plan to drive, although this time I'll adjust my watch between Revelstoke and Golden, B.C., and ensure my shampoo is securely wrapped in a plastic bag.

Dale Drewery is a Vancouver-based journalist and television producer.



Rockie for Sports Programs:
Jari Osbourne's *Sleeping Tigers*:
The Asahi Baseball Story.

Image courtesy of NFB



Gordon Pinsent receiving
Banff's Award of Excellence.