

TAKE ONE has been tracking Canadian features released in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) since 1994 and published its first survey in issue #10, December 1995.* It seems appropriate to look back over the past 10 years and see if sense can be made out of this much-maligned—and much-loved—beast we call Canadian cinema.

The GTA is the largest market in the world for English-Canadian features, but has traditionally been weak on films from Quebec. A similar survey of Montreal releases would be radically different from this one. Of the 364 Canadian features released in the GTA during the past 10 years, 146 are listed here in descending order by the number of weeks they played in theatres, while a further 218 (representing 60 per cent of the total) didn't make it past the two-weeks-at-the-Carlton threshold and therefore are not listed due to lack of space. If a film only plays two weeks at the Carlton—an art-house/indie multiplex located in downtown Toronto—in all probability it means an accumulated audience of less than 100 lost souls.

FOR THE PURPOSES of focus and brevity, *Take One* zooms in on the dozen that surpassed the 16-week threshold. On first blush, what stands out is that five—*Les Invasions barbares*, *The Red Violin*, *Les Triplettes de Belleville*, *Sunshine* and *Margaret's Museum*—are co-productions. This is hardly surprising, since it has become the common method of getting Canadian movies made—at least the expensive ones with big-name stars—but it was not always so. When the original agreements were being signed in the 1970s, there was a great deal of hand-wringing about the watering-down effect on Canadian content. It turns out that Canada was ahead of the curve as the trend toward international co-productions became the standard practice with regard to financing film properties. The five co-productions break down into two with directors who are not Canadian citizens, Sylvain Chomet (*Les Triplettes de Belleville*) from France and István Szabó (*Sunshine*) from Hungary, and the other three being directed by bona fide Canucks: Denys Arcand, François Girard and Mort Ransen.

A closer examination reveals that of the top 12, only *Exotica* and *Margaret's Museum* were released before 1997. The past seven years has seen an exponential growth and maturing of Canadian cinema in both official languages. The films are glossier, the rewards more prestigious (the top two are Oscar® win-

ners: *Les Invasions barbares* for Best Foreign-Language Film and *The Red Violin* for Best Musical Score) and their popular appeal has never been greater. With the exception of *MVP: Most Valuable Primate*, all 12 films are superior art-house fare, a genre of filmmaking Canadians have come to specialize in. It's not that we are incapable of making generic, popcorn films that do well at the box office; it's just that when we do, these films are generally dismissed as co-productions, or worse, American knock-offs. A case in point: the Vancouver producers behind the 100-per-cent-Canadian *MVP/Air Bud* franchise arguably have the best box-office record over the past 10 years with *MVP* (18 weeks), *Air Bud* (12 weeks), *MVP2* (8 weeks) and *Air Bud: Golden Retriever* (7 weeks), yet the cognoscenti still ignore the fact that we make commercial films. Where is *Air Bud*, one of the most popular movies ever made in this country, in the Canadian film canon?

Alpha-producer Robert Lantos, with *The Sweet Hereafter* and *Sunshine*, confirms his ranking as Canada's most savvy and successful, while Denise Robert and Daniel Louis (*Les Invasions barbares*) and Niv Fichman (*The Red Violin*) have their Oscars. And not only has Atom Egoyan (*Exotica* and *The Sweet Hereafter*) established himself as English-Canada's foremost auteur over the past decade, but he has also

evolved into a successful producer in his own right; meanwhile, with the outstanding critical and popular success of *Les Invasions barbares*, Denys Arcand retains his ranking as Quebec's greatest living filmmaker.

In 2004, *Take One's* choice for the best Canadian feature is a tie between Mark Achbar's and Jennifer Abbott's *The Corporation* and Guy Maddin's *The Saddest Music in the World*. *The Corporation*, a rousing, old-fashioned left-wing agitprop of a film, was by far the most popular Canadian movie of the year with Toronto audiences, while *The Saddest Music in the World* demonstrated yet again that Maddin might not have large audience appeal, but he is certainly one of the most profoundly original and talented filmmakers this country has ever produced.

Note: In previous surveys, *Take One* listed Michael Moore's *Bowling for Columbine* as a Canadian film, and while it was co-produced by Michael Donovan and Charles Bishop of Salter Street Films, it was, in fact, never officially registered at the Canadian Audio-Visual Certification Office in Ottawa, which is the final arbitrator of what is and what is not a Canadian production.

*The first survey was conducted among Toronto film critics and led directly to the creation of the Toronto Film Critics Association in 1997. The Association began to give out its own awards in 1998.

- (15) *Felicia's Journey* (Canada/U.K.), Atom Egoyan, 99
- (15) *Such a Long Journey*, Sturla Gunnarsson, 99
- (14) *Thirty-Two Short Films about Glenn Gould*, François Girard, 94
- (13) *Le Confessionnal* (Canada/U.K./France), Robert Lepage, 96
- (13) *Owning Mahowny* (Canada/U.K.), Richard Kwietniowski, 03
- (12) *Air Bud*, Charles Martin Smith, 97
- (12) *Ararat*, Atom Egoyan, 02
- (12) *The Art of War*, Christian Duguay, 00
- (12) *Seducing Doctor Lewis*, François Pouliot, 04
- (11) *Being Julia* (Canada/Hungary/U.K.), István Szabó, 04
- (11) *Better than Chocolate*, Anne Wheeler, 99
- (11) *Crash*, David Cronenberg, 96
- (11) *The Gospel of John* (Canada/U.K.), Philip Saville, 03



The Corporation

- (10) *Double Happiness*, Mina Shum, 95
- (10) *The Hanging Garden* (Canada/U.K.), Thom Fitzgerald, 98
- (10) *Kissed*, Lynne Stopkewich, 97
- (10) *Last Wedding*, Bruce Sweeney, 01
- (10) *Mambo Italiano*, Émile Gaudreault, 03
- (10) *Resident Evil: Apocalypse* (Canada/U.K./France/Germany), Alexander Witt, 04
- (10) *When Night Is Falling*, Patricia Rozema, 95
- (9) *Bollywood/Hollywood*, Deepa Mehta, 02
- (9) *The Festival Express* (Canada/U.K./Netherlands), Bob Smeaton, 04
- (9) *Love, Sex and Eating the Bones*, Sudz Sutherland, 04
- (9) *Men with Brooms*, Paul Gross, 02
- (9) *Spider* (Canada/France/U.K.), David Cronenberg, 03
- (9) *Touch of Pink*, Ian Iqbal Rashid, 04
- (9) *Zero Patience*, John Greyson, 94
- (8) *Ginger Snaps*, John Fawcett, 01
- (8) *Lilies*, John Greyson, 96
- (8) *MVP2: Most Vertical Primate*, Robert Vince, 01
- (8) *The Saddest Music in the World*, Guy Maddin, 04

- (8) *The Statement* (Canada/U.S./France), Norman Jewison, 04
- (7) *Air Bud: Golden Retriever*, Richard Martin, 98
- (7) *Eclipse* (Canada/Germany), Jeremy Podeswa, 95
- (7) *Fire*, Deepa Mehta, 97
- (7) *Grizzly Falls* (Canada/U.S./U.K.), Stewart Raffill, 00
- (7) *The Highlander III: The Sorcerer* (Canada/France/U.K.), Andy Morahan, 95
- (7) *Kids in the Hall Brain Candy* (Canada/U.S.), Kelly Makin, 96
- (7) *Love and Human Remains*, Denys Arcand, 94
- (7) *The Take*, Avi Lewis, 04
- (6) *Beefcake* (Canada/France/U.K.), Thom Fitzgerald, 99
- (6) *Dance Me Outside*, Bruce McDonald, 95
- (6) *Dirty*, Bruce Sweeney, 98
- (6) *eXistenZ* (Canada/France/U.K.), David Cronenberg, 99
- (6) *La Florida*, George Mihalka, 94
- (6) *FUBAR*, Michael Dowse, 02
- (6) *Going the Distance*, Mark Griffiths, 04
- (6) *Hard Core Logo*, Bruce McDonald, 96
- (6) *Johnny Mnemonic* (Canada/U.S.), Robert Longo, 95
- (6) *Long Day's Journey into Night*, David Wellington, 96
- (6) *Love and Death on Long Island* (Canada/U.K./Italy), Richard Kwietniowski, 98
- (6) *Maelström*, Denis Villeneuve, 00
- (6) *Red Green's Duct Tape Forever*, Eric Till, 02
- (6) *Regeneration* (Canada/U.K.), Gilles MacKinnon, 99
- (6) *waydowntown*, Gary Burns, 00
- (5) *Camilla* (Canada/U.K.), Deepa Mehta, 95
- (5) *Five Senses*, Jeremy Podeswa, 99
- (5) *Formula 51* (Canada/U.S./U.K.), Ronny Yu, 02
- (5) *Jacob Two-Two Meets the Hooded Fang* (Canada/U.S.), George Bloomfield, 99
- (5) *Lost and Delirious*, Léa Pool, 01
- (5) *Magic in the Water* (Canada/U.S.), Rick Stevenson, 95
- (5) *Marion Bridge*, Wiebke von Carolsfeld, 03
- (5) *Mouvements du désir* (Canada/France/Switzerland), Léa Pool, 94
- (5) *Mustard Bath*, Darrell Wasyk, 94
- (5) *Never Talk to Strangers* (Canada/U.S./Germany), Peter Hall, 95
- (5) *The Pornographer* (Canada/France), Bertrand Bonello, 02
- (5) *The Snow Walker*, Charles Martin Smith, 04
- (5) *Sugar*, John Palmer, 04
- (5) *Un 32 août sur terre*, Denis Villeneuve, 99
- (5) *Whale Music*, Richard J. Lewis, 95
- (5) *The Widow of Saint Pierre* (Canada/France), Patrice Leconte, 01
- (5) *The Wild Dogs*, Thom Fitzgerald, 03
- (4) *The Assignment*, Christian Duguay, 97
- (4) *Blizzard* (Canada/U.S.), LeVar Burton, 03
- (4) *Century Hotel*, David Weaver, 01
- (4) *The Claim* (Canada/France/U.K.), Michael Winterbottom, 01
- (4) *Cube*, Vincent Natali, 98
- (4) *Curtis's Charm*, John L'Ecuyer, 96
- (4) *The Delicate Art of Parking*, Trent Carlson, 04
- (4) *Disturbing Behaviour* (Canada/U.S./Australia), David Nutter, 98
- (4) *Emporte-moi* (Canada/France/Switzerland), Léa Pool, 99
- (4) *Flower & Garnet*, Keith Behrman, 03

- (4) *Foolproof*, William Phillips, 03
- (4) *Grass*, Ron Mann, 00
- (4) *Grey Owl* (Canada/U.K.), Richard Attenborough, 99
- (4) *Hey, Happy!*, Noam Gonick, 01
- (4) *I, Claudia*, Kristen Thomson, 04
- (4) *Max* (Canada/Germany/Hungary/U.K.), Menno Meyjes, 03
- (4) *My Life without Me* (Canada/Spain), Isabel Coixet, 03
- (4) *Nô*, Robert Lepage, 98
- (4) *Project Grizzly*, Peter Lynch, 96
- (4) *Rare Birds*, Sturla Gunnarsson, 02
- (4) *Rude*, Clement Virgo, 95
- (4) *Stardom* (Canada/France), Denys Arcand, 00
- (4) *This Is My Father* (Canada/Ireland), Paul Quinn, 99
- (4) *Uncut*, John Greyson, 98
- (3) *The Art of Woo*, Helen Lee, 01
- (3) *Babar, King of the Elephants* (Canada/France/Germany), Raymond Jafelice, 99
- (3) *Babyface*, Jack Blum, 98
- (3) *Between Strangers* (Canada/U.S./Italy), Edoardo Ponti, 02
- (3) *Blood & Donuts*, Holly Dale, 96
- (3) *Boys Club*, John Fawcett, 97
- (3) *Café Olé*, Richard Roy, 01
- (3) *Un Crabe dans la tête*, André Turpin, 02
- (3) *Dracula: Pages from a Virgin's Diary*, Guy Maddin, 03
- (3) *Eldorado*, Charles Binamé, 95
- (3) *The Event* (Canada/U.S.), Thom Fitzgerald, 03
- (3) *The Falling*, Raul Sachez Inglis, 99
- (3) *The Fishing Trip*, Amnon Bachbinder, 98
- (3) *Gambling, Gods and LSD*, Peter Mettler, 03
- (3) *A Girl Is a Girl*, Reginald Harkema, 00
- (3) *Goin' down the Road,** Don Shebib, 99
- (3) *House*, Laurie Lynd, 96
- (3) *Inertia*, Sean Garrity, 02
- (3) *Kitchen Party*, Gary Burns, 98
- (3) *Liste noir*, Jean-Marc Vallée, 95
- (3) *Love Come Down*, Clement Virgo, 01
- (3) *Love That Boy*, Andrea Dorfman, 03
- (3) *Perfect Pie*, Barbara Willis Sweete, 02
- (3) *The Perfect Son*, Leonard Farlinger, 01
- (3) *Picture of Light* (Canada/Switzerland), Peter Mettler, 96
- (3) *Possible Worlds*, Robert Lepage, 01
- (3) *Post Mortem*, Louis Bélanger, 00
- (3) *Saint Monica*, Terrance Odette, 02
- (3) *Screamers* (Canada/U.S./Japan), Christian Duguay, 96
- (3) *Séraphin: Heart of Stone*, Charles Binamé, 03
- (3) *S.P.I.T.: Squeegee Punks in Traffic* (Canada/U.S./France), Daniel Cross, 03
- (3) *Suburbanators*, Gary Burns, 96
- (3) *Swann* (Canada/U.K.), Anna Benson Gyles, 97
- (3) *Tops & Bottoms*, Cristine Richey, 99
- (3) *Treed Murray*, William Phillips, 01
- (3) *The Uncles*, Jim Allodi, 01
- (3) *Varian's War* (Canada/U.S./U.K.), Lionel Chetwynd, 01
- (3) *Virginia's Run* (Canada/U.S.), Peter Markle, 02

*Indicates a re-release.

TAKE ONE PICKS FOR BEST FILMS OVER THE PAST 10 YEARS

- 1995 *Rude* (Clement Virgo)
- 1996 *Hard Core Logo* (Bruce McDonald)
- 1997 *The Sweet Hereafter* (Atom Egoyan)
- 1998 *Last Night* (Don McKellar); *The Red Violin* (François Girard)
- 1999 *Emporte-moi* (Léa Pool)
- 2000 *New Waterford Girl* (Allan Moyle)
- 2001 *Last Wedding* (Bruce Sweeney)
- 2002 *Atanarjuat* (Zacharias Kunuk)
- 2003 *Spider* (David Cronenberg)
- 2004 *The Corporation* (Mark Achbar and Jennifer Abbott);
The Saddest Music in the World (Guy Maddin)

TIFF'S TOP 10 FOR 2004

- (listed in alphabetical order)
- Childstar* (Don McKellar)
- Elles étaient cinq* (Ghyslaine Côté)
- I, Claudia* (Chris Abraham)
- It's All Gone Pete Tong* (Michael Dowse)
- La Peau blanche* (Daniel Roby)
- Ryan* (Chris Landreth)
- Saint Ralph* (Michael McGowan)
- Scared/Sacred* (Velcrow Ripper)
- Shake Hands with the Devil: The Journey of Roméo Dallaire* (Peter Raymont)
- What Remains of Us* (François Prévost and Hugo Latulippe)

TOP 10 CANADIAN FILMS AT THE DOMESTIC BOX OFFICE IN 2004

- (From December 12, 2003 to December 9, 2004, as listed in *Playback*, expressed in millions.)
- Resident Evil: Apocalypse* (\$6.20)
 - Camping sauvage* (\$4.36)
 - Dans une galaxie pres de chez vous* (\$2.86)
 - Elvis Gratton XXX* (\$2.33)
 - Elles étaient cinq* (\$2.13)
 - The Blue Butterfly* (\$2.01)
 - Le Dernier tunnel* (\$1.71)
 - Monica la mitraille* (\$1.67)
 - Nouvelle-France* (\$1.51)
 - The Corporation* (\$1.51)

Background images: *The Saddest in the World*; *The Red Violin*