

INDUSTRY: TIFF TURNS 30

Jeanne Moreau



The Toronto International Film Festival, affectionately known as TIFF, turns 30 this year. To celebrate the occasion, Toronto's Media Monkey Productions, in association with the Toronto International Film Festival Group and Rogers Television, is producing *Postcards from TIFF*. Produced by Jeff Halligan and Micol Marotti, the project highlights some of the best moments from the past 30 years through a series of one-minute vignettes that feature anecdotes from many of Canada's top entertainment celebrities, combined with archival footage and never-before-seen photos. The vignettes will be shown in theatres during the festival and on Rogers Television as part of its 24-hour festival coverage. The *Postcards from TIFF* project includes a collector's limited-edition commemorative DVD and a book of postcards, which will be available at festival box-office locations.

TIFF has grown exponentially over the years to become North America's premiere film festival, and second only to Cannes in terms of worldwide screening prestige. When it turned 25, it produced, in association with Rhombus Media, a series of 10 short films in a package called *Preludes*. This time, with *Postcards*, it decided on something less ambitious but perhaps a bit more fun. Directors such as Norman Jewison, David Cronenberg, Atom Egoyan, Patricia Rozema, Don McKellar, Deepa Mehta and Denys Arcand, actors such as Graham Greene, Sheila McCarthy and Pascale Bussières, producers such as Robert Lantos, Denise Robert and Roger Frappier, former director Wayne Clarkson and festival co-founders Bill Marshall, Henk Van de Kolk and Dusty Cohl all add their two-cents worth, bons mots and amusing anecdotes.

As a long-time festival attendee—I can truthfully claim to have been at all 29—I'm in a unique position to comment on its growth and history; however, never from the inside, except once, the first year when I volunteered as a driver and had the privilege and undeniable pleasure of driving the fabulous French star Jeanne Moreau around town for the three days she attended. Those first years were extravagant and wholly different from the well-oiled machine it is today. Each night, down at Ontario Place on the lake, there was a themed party with an overabundance of exotic food and a completely complimentary bar, not just the limited selection of beer and wine now served up by a corporate sponsor. Of course, this extravagance couldn't—and didn't—last, but it got the ball rolling and gave the festival its reputation for being the best around if you wanted a good time along a selection of great movies.

Wisely the festival courted the press and provided a hotel suite for the thirsty and hungry scribes to indulge themselves from the early hours of the morning to late at night. Accordingly, it received rave reviews and a loyal following among the press corps. During the mid-to-late 1990s, things changed, however. The rave reviews attracted the attention of Hollywood heavyweights, who saw the festival as a perfect place—and perfect time, coming as it does at the end of summer—to launch their fall and winter products while benefiting from the attendant world press. Ironically, it was about this time that the festival cancelled its press hospitality suite. I suppose it had served its purpose and was no longer necessary.

Then came the velvet ropes separating the “stars” from the gawkers, the red-carpet vanity walks and overbearing paparazzi. It had become, in other words, “world class” and very corporate, losing the charm of its earlier, more relaxed years. However unfortunate, this is the natural evolution of the beast, and those who complain that it is now no more than a showcase for the next Hollywood blockbuster miss the point. While Serge Losique's Montreal World Film Festival, which started-up at the same time as TIFF, has atrophied and is no longer relevant, TIFF continues to grow and evolve and respond to the changes in the marketplace. The extravagant parties, hospitality suite and free booze might be long gone, but the festival lives on. So viva TIFF! And happy 30th birthday from a loyal, if slightly disgruntled, fan.

BY WYNDHAM WISE