

Making Impolite

BY DEBBIE NIGHTINGALE

PRODUCER Raymond Massey describes his second feature as, "a story set firmly in Vancouver and steeped in myth, a quest for truth and redemption of one Jack Yeates, a washed-up journalist relegated to obits at the Vancouver Gazette."

Director David Hauka and writer Michael McKinley began with dozens of ideas for a feature film. They seized on a concept which evolved into *Impolite*, and eight days later McKinley delivered the first draft of the script. Following two "overnight" rewrites and with Massey now lined up as producer, the script was submitted to and subsequently won B.C. Film's second New Views competition. The program is limited to first-time feature film directors. The New Views budget was \$550,000 with no deferrals and no additional equity cash permitted. B.C. Film has created a separate arm, B.C. Pictures, to administer the films it produces, and owns the negative and copyright.

Unlike other film agency investments, B.C. Film did not require a distributor or broadcaster to be attached to the project. The rationale is that the filmmakers will have a freer creative rein to produce the film they envisioned, unencumbered by commercial interests. Massey incorporated Well Mannered Films to deliver a fully mixed 35mm master with five release prints, a one-inch broadcast master, poster, and press kits, all within the designated \$550,000.

There was some preliminary positive word-of-mouth on the film, and Massey wanted to take advantage of this. Toronto's Festival of Festivals invited

Impolite to be part of the Perspective Canada program. There were also invitations from Independent Feature Film Market in New York and Vancouver's International Film Festival.

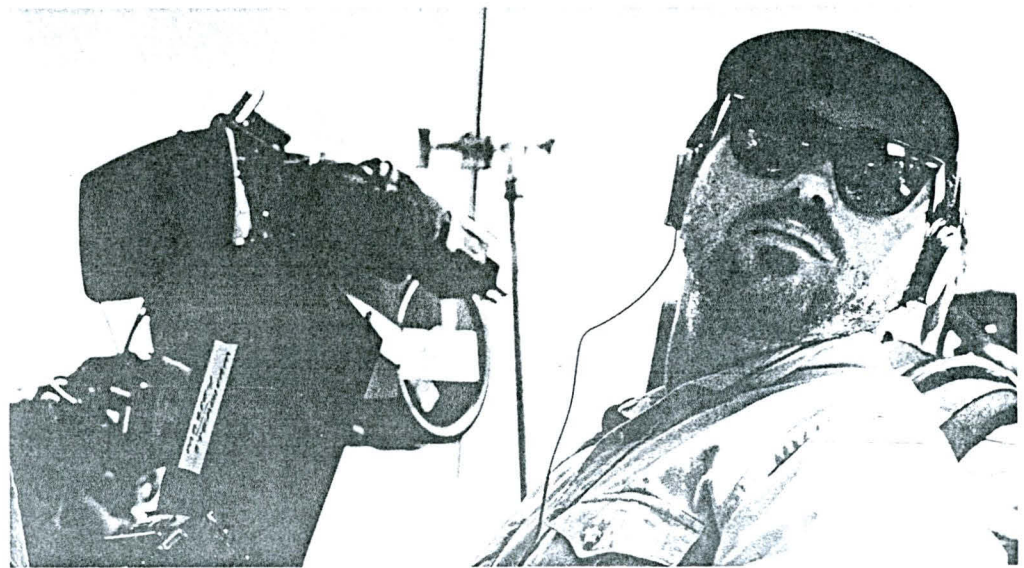
However, B.C. Film had other ideas. Agency head Wayne Sterloff wanted to start the film in Europe then bring it back to be sold in the North American market. Massey felt instinctively that the festival route would pay off, and Sterloff ultimately agreed. Furthermore, a precedent was set when the production contract was amended to include an additional \$25,000 for promotion.

Buoyed by great reviews, such as Bruce Kirkland's review in the *Toronto*

division of Central Television, expressed great interest in *Impolite*. They proposed a deal based on commission for the U.S. market. Additionally, they would act as agent for the rest of the world on any television rights, excluding Canada. Massey leaned towards this deal, which promised no up-front guarantees, but had the chance of delivering much more down the road. Central also represents a certain kind of quality product, and although there is no guaranteed sale to Central's television arm, its reputation in the world marketplace is well-respected. (At the time of this writing, no firm deal has been concluded, but Massey is optimistic.)

In Canada, there was interest from Cineplex Odeon Films for theatrical rights and CBC-TV made an offer for national broadcast. Neither of these offers, however, were what Massey was looking for, so he is working on syndicating the film himself country-wide.

"What strikes me the most," says Massey, "about this experience is the almost total hands-off attitude of B.C. Film. The budget was a straitjacket but



▲ **David Hauka** Sun calling *Impolite*, "one of the smartest, funniest, oddest Canadian movies ever," Massey believed his instincts were correct. At the Toronto festival, he talked about to about 50 distributors and agents about territories outside of Canada. Although several were keen on the film, they were small outfits and Massey decided to hold out for a better deal.

To Massey's delight, Britain's Central Television Enterprises, a sales

nary a peep was heard from our sole financier and executive producer during the process. Instead of juggling five or 10 sources of money and as many sets of approvals, we could simply focus on the job." This is a luxury that few Canadian films, indeed few films at all, enjoy. [E]

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