

S e a

from Vancouver

Telefilm Canada, the NFB's Pacific Centre and B.C. Film are again collaborating on the Premiere program (formerly New Views), providing production financing for a first feature. This year's winning project should begin shooting some time soon. Telefilm has also launched Horizon, a new competition for the Prairie provinces offering financial assistance in script development. The program is in its early stages, but future developments could include inter-agency cooperation and production assistance. Vancouver rock star, poet and cultural entrepreneur Mike Turner is currently mining his writing talents, working with Bruce McDonald on a film adaptation of Turner's novel, *Hard Core Logo*, which recounts the history of the eponymous and fictitious (but plausible) Vancouver punk band. Callum Rennie has been signed to play Billy Talent. Producer Brian Dennis says that a tie-in "tribute" album is also in the works. The NFB's Pacific Centre marks its 30th anniversary this year under rather adverse financial circumstances but production levels are healthy. Among the slate of new drama, documentary and animated shorts is an educational CD-ROM, *Making History: Louis Riel and the Rebellion of 1885*. Vancouver writer Linda Svendsen (*Marine Life*) is currently busy on a number of new projects. She is adapting Margaret Laurence's *Stone Angel*, which will be produced by Atlantis and Credo. An MOW script is in progress on the Sue Rodriguez story.

from Edmonton

Malcolm Parker and Phil Hawse are hard at work on their futuristic feature, *Chronotope*, producing on a shoe-string budget. Toronto filmmaker John Greyson (*Zero Patience*), in Edmonton for a FAVA script-writing workshop, described the piece as "*Pulp Fiction* meets *Johnny Mnemonic* meets Godard." Shooting without a script, Parker explains the structure as being "process not plot." Also percolating on Alberta's independent scene is *Be Fabulous or Die*, the film adaptation of Brad Fraser's play *Prom Night of the Living Dead*. Producers Kate Holowach and Norm Fassbender hope to be shooting this summer with director Ken Berry. Also in post-production is *Seven Bullets*, by Bill Sorochan, who, by the way, is developing a musical feature about Canada's national pastime—curling.

from Regina

The independent scene has more than a few things in the pot. The Saskatchewan Filmpool Coop premiered Brent Bell's *Strike Me Silly* and Spryo Egarhos's *Bed and Breakfast*, two half-hour comedies, at the Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery. Other pending releases include *In the Land of Cain* by Mark Wihak, *Fading Away* by Elaine Paine and *Sons & Daughters* by Robin Schlaht (which was a big winner at the Saskatchewan Film Awards and has been invited to the Toronto International Film Festival). At present, three features are nearing completion: Richard Kerr's *Gun Control*, a post-modern mystery taking place on a train between Washington and Regina; Petros Danabassis's *The Private Dance*, a b&w low-budget feature concerning a prostitute trying to get her life straight; and Gerald Saul's *Life is Like Lint*, an experimental exploration of the director and his own world. Awaiting word on funding is Brian Stockton's *Zombie Sonata*, concerning a group of zombies who like to hang around Moosejaw.

from Winnipeg

From the NFB, Norma Bailey is completing a feature documentary, *The True Story of Linda M*, about Linda Migwans, an ex-prostitute and drug addict, while Donnie Dickie is filming *Restorative Justice*, an inquiry into aboriginal alternative justice. To be released this year is John Paskievich's *If Only I Were an Indian*, a candid look at a group of Czechoslovakians trying to form their own Indian tribe. On the independent scene, John Kozak's *Hellbent* was premiered to the Winnipeg public and has been picked for Canadian distribution by Cinema Esperance and by Panorama Entertainment in the U.S. Lorne Bailey is shopping for a distributor for *Green Peril*, while Caleum Vatnsdal is completing editing on his first feature *Black as Hell, Strong as Death, Sweet as Life*, a b&w drama about "dysfunctional relationships fuelled by mass quantities of caffeine." And for those who are wondering what local hero Guy Maddin has been up to, he's currently directing a half-hour TV drama for CKND's Prairie Wave Project, *The Hands of Ida*, concerning a women's vigilante group out to avenge a victim of male violence. He's also in development with two features, *Triumph of the Ice Nymphs* and *Sissy Boy Slap Party*.

from Toronto

The Canadian Film Centre (CFC) has brought on board a new crew of up and coming filmmakers at its North York estate, Windfields. A full complement of 16 *cinéastes* has been accepted into the Centre's residence program for the school year 1995-96. Past resident graduates include John Greyson, Clement Virgo (*Rude*) and Annette Mangaard (*Fish Tail Soup*), so these students could well be on the fast track towards success in feature films. Six script writers, Jenifer Kierans, Aaron Bushkowsky, Karen Walton, Graeme Manson, Margaret Webb and Toinette Terry, already have credits in drama, radio, film and television. Placed in the directors program are Andrew Ainsworth, Carol Clusiau, Oscar Fenoglio, Arlene Hazzan Green, Kris Lefcoe, Vincenzo Natali, Scott Smith, David Strupp, Brenda Terning and Mark Wihak. Their credits are as diverse as the terrain of the country. They include being a Genie winner (Green), a Crash Test Dummy mockumentarian (Lefcoe), to working with the Kids in the Hall (Strupp) and *Johnny Mnemonic* (Natali). Festival watchers who will see *Rude*, Holly Dale's *Blood & Donuts and House* by Laurie Lynd this fall should be on the lookout for the next film centre features. Green-lighted for three more movies over the next two years is the CFC's Feature Film Project, a unique program that allows young filmmakers to make full-length feature fiction films. If non-fiction is more attractive to a neophyte director, the National Film Board has its own "school" in place. Fast Forward '95 has just completed its nation-wide search for new applicants to a documentary internship program that already includes four working filmmakers: Wendy Rowland, Shereen Jerrett, Daniel Prouty and Eisha Marjara. Terms are, if anything, even more favourable for these young documentarians than their colleagues at the Film Centre. Successful applicants are employed for three years at the Film Board and given complete access to the Board's technical crew. The NFB takes on all costs for any film produced under the Fast Forward program.

from Montreal

Going to Cannes is a strange experience. On the one hand, it is a film festival just like any other, where a regular day's schedule



Daniel MacIvor appraises the town of Hope Springs in *House*, directed by Canadian Film Centre graduate Laurie Lynd

consists of running from one theatre to the next, trying to catch as many films as possible, checking for messages at the Telefilm pavilion, and grabbing lunch at four p.m. But on the other hand, when you do step out of the dark rooms into the sunshine, everything—the Mediterranean Sea, the grandiose palaces, the Croisette, the yachts in the bay, the huge billboards everywhere—reminds you that you are indeed in Cannes. The festival is a maelstrom of joys and frustrations, glamour and marketing strategies, but, above all, of emotions and images. What constitutes a moment worth crossing the Atlantic for? Watching Kusturica win his second *Palme d'or* for *Underground*, or the wonderful montages commemorating the centenary of cinema that accompanied each screening of the Official Competition, listening to Madredeus's music in Wenders' *Lisbon Story*, or Peter Williams's Jamaican drawl in *Soul Survivor*, and in the middle of all the brouhaha, enjoying Quebec's success on the Riviera, marked by Robert Lepage's debut at the opening night of *Quinzaine des réalisateurs*, and by the thunder of applause that followed the screening of Charles Binamé's *Eldorado*.

from Halifax

In Nova Scotia, the now-well-established Nova Scotia Film Development Corporation has cemented its reputation as the region's major provincial funding agency. Mind you, it's also the region's only provincial funding agency. It has made a difference, however, contributing to Halifax's mini-boom as a major production centre. Witness, for example, the enormous consortium chasing the provincial government's offer of \$500,000 for a sound stage project. Three of the region's major private producers, including Paul and Michael Donovan's Salter Street Productions, are hankering for this permanent facility. It would anchor an indigenous industry that seems ready to explode in the next two years, with Paul Donovan's feature sci-fi series *The Dark Zone* already pre-sold around the world and several other series lining up for access. *The Dark Zone* has been described as a punky, ironic little brother to *Star Trek*, a series that would cement Donovan's move from theatrical motion pictures to television where his company has already been successful with *Codco* and *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*. Meanwhile, feature filmmaking continues unabated as American and Toronto producers have dis-

covered the charms of lobster suppers, abundant undeveloped seaside landscapes and cooperative crews. *Saltwater Moose* and *Songspinner*, TV movies both, were down for exteriors while a Sandra Bullock/Dennis Leary feature and two British co-productions are slated for the summer. And just as things were looking cloudy, a promising project like *Symphony # 3* and *The Horned Prophets of Doom* pops up. It's a wonderful script by Kelly and Bruce Lyons, the producer/actor team that powered New Zealander Vincent Ward's masterpiece, *The Navigator*. It's an engrossing story of an eccentric composer and his withdrawn son on an isolated island as he tries to finish his third symphony while being interrupted by domestic disasters and the occasional herd of household cattle. Ken Pittman's science fiction feature for young audiences, *Anchor Zone*, enjoyed a successful two-week run in its hometown of St. John's, Newfoundland, proving that audiences really do want to see local films out here on the east coast.

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