

# THE TORONTO FILM CRITICS' POLL OF THE BEST CANADIAN FILMS OF

*Take One* has initiated an annual poll of Toronto film critics for the best Canadian feature film released in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA)

from November 1 until October 31. We want to provide critical response to Canadian feature filmmaking, an alternative voice to the members of the Academy (the Genies), the cultural bureaucrats (Berlin and Cannes) and programming committees (Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver festivals) who now judge what is best in Canadian cinema. The time has come for the Toronto film critics to have their say in the matter.

The GTA has more screens and plays more Canadian feature films than anywhere else in English-speaking Canada, and 30 films were in release in 1995. Atom Egoyan's *Exotica*, the film which came to dominate 1995, was released in 1994, so was not included in the poll; neither was Léa Pool's *Mouvements du désir*, which was initially released in the summer of 1994 and brought back for one week in December to coincide with the Genies. There are 284 screens in the GTA (based on the film guides published in the *Globe and Mail* and *Toronto Star*), which means there are 14,768 screens in total available for commercial film product annually. Unbelievably, Canadian films occupied only 2.4 per cent of that screen time (well below the three or four per cent of screen time that is usually quoted by "official" sources), and this was in a good year, when such "Canadian" films as *Johnny Mnemonic* and *Magic in the Water* received wide, multi-screen releases. On the up side, Canadian feature films played 50 of the 52 weeks, which is a record. Combine this with the numerous weekly screenings of shorts, experimental cinema, and the Perspective Canada program at the Toronto International Film Festival, and Canadian films could be seen in record numbers in the GTA in 1995.

In descending order of length of run, here are the Canadian feature films that were playing last year. (The screen total represents the total number of screens over the length of the run.) *Exotica* (Atom Egoyan): 19 weeks, 33 screens (including one week on the IMAX screen); *Double Happiness* (Mina Shum): 10 weeks, 16 screens; *When Night is Falling* (Patricia Rozema): 10 weeks, 15 screens; *Eclipse* (Jeremy Podeswa): 7 weeks, 7 screens; *Dance Me Outside* (Bruce McDonald): 6 weeks, 20

screens; *Johnny Mnemonic* (Robert Longo): 6 weeks, 105 screens; *Magic in the Water* (Rick Stevenson): 5 weeks, 61 screens; *Whale Music* (Richard J. Lewis): 5 weeks, 5 screens; *Camilla* (Deepa Mehta): 5 weeks, 11 screens; *Eldorado* (Charles Binamé): 3 weeks, 3 screens; *Rude* (Clement Virgo): 3 weeks, 13 screens; *For the Moment* (Aaron Kim Johnson): 2 weeks, 6 screens; *Henry & Verlin* (Gary Ledbetter): 2 weeks, 2 screens; *Black List* (Jean-Marc Vallée): 2 weeks, 6 screens; *Never Talk to Strangers* (Peter Hall): 2 weeks, 32 screens; *Louis 19th, King of the Airwaves* (Michel Poulette): 2 weeks, 2 screens. The following, apart from *Max* which played on four screens, played for a week or less on one screen: *The Circle Game* (Brigitte Berman), *Road to Saddle River* (Francis Damberger), *Mouvements du désir* (Léa Pool), *Max* (Charles Wilkinson), *Spike of Love* (Steve DiMarco), *Doctors with Heart* (Tahani Rached), *Wasaga* (Judith Doyle), *Silent Witness* (Harriet Wichin), *Pocahontas: The Legend* (Daniele J. Suisia), *Power of Attorney* (Howard Hamelstein), *Soul Survivor* (Stephen Williams), *Who's Counting? Marilyn Waring, on Sex, Lies and Global Economics* (Terre Nash), *The Champagne Safari* (George Ungar), and *The Acadian Connection* (Monique LeBlanc).

*Take One* wishes to thank all those who responded to our poll. Based on the strength of the response, the Toronto Film Critics' Poll will be repeated on an annual basis in future Winter issues of *Take One*. Wyndham Wise, Editor in Chief

Take One polled 20 of Toronto's top film critics and asked them to choose their four favourites in the categories of best film, director, screenplay and actors. Each choice was assigned a numerical value: four for the first choice, three for the second, two for the third, and one for the fourth. The following are the results from Take One's First Annual Toronto Film Critics' Poll of the best Canadian feature films of 1995:

# FILM ROLL 1995



## BEST FILM

1. **RUDE**, produced by Damon D'Oliveira and Karen King
2. **DOUBLE HAPPINESS**, produced by Steve Hegyes and Rose Lam Waddell
3. **WHEN NIGHT IS FALLING**, produced by Barbara Tranter
4. **LOUIS 19TH, KING OF THE AIRWAVES**, produced by Richard Sadler and Jacques Dorfmann



## BEST DIRECTOR

1. **CLEMENT VIRGO** for *Rude*
2. **MINA SHUM** for *Double Happiness*
3. **CHARLES BINAMÉ** for *Eldorado*
4. **PATRICIA ROZEMA** for *When Night is Falling*

Clement Virgo's *Rude* and Mina Shum's *Double Happiness* clearly dominated the critics' choice in 1995, which dramatically reflects the changing face of Canadian cinema. *Double Happiness* was well written, smartly marketed, with a stellar performance from Sandra Oh. *Rude* was less successful at the box office but displayed a prodigious directing talent, a willingness to take risks, and two outstanding performances from Maurice Dean Wint and Clark Johnson. Maury Chaykin's oversized performance as a burnt out rock musician in *Whale Music*, a film that fared poorly after a promising launch, still remains the critics' favourite in 1995, while Sandra Oh dominated all other actresses with her remarkably subtle performance as an aspiring actress at odds with her strict Chinese parents in *Double Happiness*.

From the slick commercial export vehicles like *Magic in the Water*, *Johnny Mnemonic* and *Never Talk to Strangers*, to the ultra low-budget films like *Wasaga*; from the mid-range commercial successes of Canadian cultural cinema as best represented by *Double Happiness*, *When Night is Falling*, and *Louis 19th, King of the Airwaves*, to the feature-length documentaries such as *The Champagne Safari* and *Silent Witness*, Canadian cinema is in remarkably good shape ●

## BEST SCREENPLAY

1. **MINA SHUM** for *Double Happiness*
2. **CLEMENT VIRGO** for *Rude*
3. **ÉMILE GAUDREAU, SYLVIE BOUCHARD** and **MICHEL MICHAUD** for *Louis 19th, King of the Airwaves*
4. **BRUCE MCDONALD, DON MCKELLAR** and **JOHN FRIZZELL** for *Dance Me Outside*



## BEST ACTRESS (FEMALE)

1. **SANDRA OH** in *Double Happiness*
2. **PASCALE MONTPETIT** in *Eldorado*
3. **PASCALE BRUSSIÈRES** in *Eldorado*
4. **TRACY WRIGHT** in *Wasaga*



## BEST ACTOR (MALE)

1. **MAURY CHAYKIN** in *Whale Music*
2. **CLARK JOHNSON** in *Rude*
3. **MAURICE DEAN WINT** in *Rude*
4. **PETER WILLIAMS** in *Soul Survivor*

