

In the previous issue of *Take One*, I printed the results of a survey I had conducted of Canadian movies released in Toronto in 1995. Well, it turns out I missed a few. Indeed, *Magic in the Water*, *Never Talk to Strangers*, *Highlander III: The Sorcerer* and *National Lampoon's Senior Trip* are all technically Canadian films. This oversight boosts the percentage of screen time for Canadian films in the Greater Toronto Area in 1995 from 2.4 per cent to 2.8 per cent.

Now, who would consider *Highlander III* or *National Lampoon's Senior Trip* Canadian films in any way, shape or form? Both represent American franchise filmmaking at its very worst. Indeed, if one was to ask even the most sophisticated and knowledgeable expert on Canadian cinema, they would not be able to identify the films as being Canadian. When *Magic in the Water* was nominated for five Genies, I phoned the Canadian distributor, Norstar, for more information and had to inform the head of the publicity department that the film was Canadian. She had no idea.

So how do these films qualify as Canadian and who decides? The answer is really quite simple. The Certification Office in Ottawa decides, based on a point system (a certain number of points are awarded to a film for having a Canadian director, actor, writer, etc.) and, of course, the film must be produced (or at least co-produced) by a Canadian-based company. The fact that the production company is Canadian makes it so.

So what? you might ask. Does anyone really care whether the wretched Rebecca DeMornay-Antonio Banderas potboiler *Never Talk to Strangers* (directed by Sir Peter Hall, no less!) is Canadian or not? Well, not really. But it does bring into focus this strange animal we call Canadian feature filmmaking. Look at *Magic in the Water*, for example. Here is a film that was nominated for five Genie Awards, including Best Film and the Claude Jutra Award for the best first-time director, American Rick Stevenson. However, *Magic* has precious little Canadian content or context. Shot in the interior of British Columbia, this all-too-cute variation on the "monster-in-the-lake" theme was marketed as family entertainment—"Disney-like." What makes it Canadian is the production company and the number of points it accumulated, not any identifiable Canadian cultural content. *Magic in the Water* is Disney, not Rozema, Egoyan, Shum, Binamé, or even Borsos.

Now look at Phillip Borsos's *Far From Home: The Adventures of Yellow Dog*. Shot in the very same interior of British Columbia (quite likely by the same or similar crew, depending on which union they used), produced by Canadians, directed by one of our foremost English-language directors (his final film before his tragic premature death from cancer last year), the film is not

considered Canadian because the production company was Twentieth Century Fox and the money not Canadian. As family entertainment, *Far From Home* is superior to the formulaic *Magic*, and performed much better at the box office. It is Borsos's best film since *The Grey Fox*, and a vindication for all the struggles he endured during the making of his failed epic, *Bethune: The Making of a Hero*. Certification Office rules and the colour of money make *Magic in the Water* Canadian and *Far From Home* American. *Far From Home: The Adventures of Yellow Dog* is as Canadian as its acclaimed director.

We at *Take One* are pleased to welcome 1996, our fifth year of publication, with a fresh new look and logo. Responsible for both is our new designer, Erick Querci, who brings more than a decade of experience to *Take One* as a designer at Toronto's Ryerson University, the Toronto International Film Festival and the Cinematheque Ontario. But with every arrival, there must be a departure. In this case, and by coincidence, there are two. Alison Vermeé, our West Coast correspondent, decided to depart the Canadian film scene for the greener shores of England. We wish her well over 'ome. And Peter Dudar, a founding Board member of *Take One*, has moved on to new challenges. Peter's dedication and innovative design work will be missed. Thank you, Peter, and the best of luck!

TAKE ONE

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*Far From Home:
 The Adventures
 of Yellow Dog.
 Canadian, eh?*



Photo courtesy of Twentieth Century Fox