

THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA



designed to distance itself from the political heat of Ottawa, the NFB opened its new headquarters in suburban Montreal in 1956, building the largest sound studios and most complete production facilities outside of Hollywood.

The NFB hit its stride during the late 1950s and 1960s, producing important and stylistically revolutionary documentaries, shorts, animation and feature films. Animator Norman McLaren led the way with the Oscar-winning *Neighbours*, and his protégés, Colin Low, Wolf Koenig, Roman Kroitor and others, combined to produce innovative and award-winning documentaries like *City of Gold*, *Corral* and *Universe* for Tom Daly's Unit B. The new headquarters provided a focal point for a new generation of talented québécois filmmakers—Pierre Perrault, Michel Brault, Gilles Groulx, Bernard Gosselin, Claude Jutra, Denys Arcand—who created many of their early works in the *cinéma vérité* style. Jutra's *Mon oncle Antoine*, produced by the Board in 1971, is still considered the finest feature ever shot in this country.

JOHN GRIERSON ON THE RIGHT



show Canada to Canadians while stirring them into action to support British efforts to end the Nazi threat in Europe. Grierson established partnerships with Famous Players theatres in Canada and *March of Time* in the U.S., to distribute the Board's films, a strategy that paid immediate dividends when the Board won its first of 10 Oscars for Stuart Legg's *Churchill's Island* in 1941.

LONELY BOY



the task was given to CBC Radio and not the NFB. In a move

The creation of the National Film Board in 1939 is the central event in the history of Canadian cinema. Set up by Mackenzie King's Liberal government in the months just prior to the start of WWII, the Board almost immediately became an important tool in mobilizing the nation for the war effort. Canada's first Film Commissioner, John Grierson, a self-styled propagandist who had spearheaded the documentary movement in Britain, directed his filmmaking team to

Expo 67 provided an opportunity for the Board to become involved in multi-screen productions and the projection of ultra-wide films which led directly to the creation of the IMAX format by two NFB alumni, Roman Kroitor and Graeme Ferguson. The 1970s saw the flowering of two remarkable producers: Kathleen Shannon, who was chosen to head the Board's first unit for women filmmakers, Studio D, and Derek Lamb who was brought back to head the animation department. These units excelled and brought more glory to the Board with films like Terre Nash's *If You Love this Planet*,



CORRAL

Beverly Shaffer's *I'll Find a Way*, Weldon and Macaulay's *Special Delivery* and Eugene Fedorenko's *Every Child*—Oscar winners all.

Many of the Board's most successful films of the past few years have been co-productions with the private sector, or in conjunction with CBC-TV—*The Boys of St. Vincent*, *The Valour and the Horror*, *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media*. Recent cuts in staff and the closing of the Montreal lab have put the Board on notice that it cannot continue to rely on the level of public support it has enjoyed in the past. Despite its central role in the creation of a film culture in Canada, the NFB is having to rely increasingly on creating challenging and distinctly Canadian work for the global television market in the "500-channel" universe.

■ Marc Glassman

Above, Jean Pierre Lefebvre's *Les fleurs sauvages*.
Middle, Colin Low. Below, Carole Laure in *La mort d'un bûcheron*.

at Expo 67; and, now in the 1990s, he is working on 3D IMAX films. A veteran of the NFB, Kroitor was one of the leading members of the direct cinema movement, contributing to the *Candid Eye* series and directing *Lonely Boy* with Wolf Koenig. A co-founder of IMAX, Kroitor directed *Tiger Child* with Donald Brittain, the first film shot in this revolutionary process.

Derek Lamb

Producer and animator. Born, London, U.K., 1936. Lamb developed his animation skills at the NFB in the late 1950s, and scored a major success with *I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly* in 1964. From 1966 through 1971, he taught animation at Harvard, then returned to the Board in 1976 as head of the Animation Unit. During his five years there, he produced two Oscar-winners, *Special Delivery* and *Every Child*, as well as such lauded shorts as *The Sweater* and *Afterlife*. Lamb's exceptional talents as a script editor and a teacher inspired such animators as John Weldon, Caroline Leaf, Ishu Patel and Eugene Fedorenko to produce mature, often challenging work while maintaining a focused narrative line. While at the Board, he scripted and co-directed *Why Me?*, a black comic look at death and dying.

Micheline Lanctôt

Actor and director. Born, Montreal, 1947. Lanctôt made an indelible impression as the restless, questing heroine of Gilles Carle's masterpiece, *La vraie nature de Bernadette*. Soon after, she created another memorable character, Richard Dreyfuss's beguiling, long-suffering girlfriend in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* in 1974. Following an unhappy sojourn in L.A. with director Ted Kotcheff, Lanctôt returned to Quebec and built her present career as a moviemaker with a reputation for unsentimental, unconventional, probing films. Her directorial debut, *L'homme à tout faire*, was a critical success as was her 1993 release, *Deux actrices*. *Sonatine*, which probes a suicidal bond between two

alienated teen-age girls, was the first Canadian feature to win the Golden Lion Award at the Venice Film Festival.

Robert Lantos

Producer and distributor. Born, Budapest, Hungary, 1949. Lantos became involved in film at McGill University and formed his first company, Vivafilm, in 1972. He quickly moved into production during the "tax shelter" years with Gilles Carle's *L'ange et la femme*, George Kaczender's *In Praise of Older Women* and Ted Kotcheff's *Joshua Then and Now*. In 1985, he formed Alliance Entertainment with Stephen Roth, Denis Héroux and John Kemeny. Since then Alliance has become Canada's largest production/distribution company with a succession of hit TV shows—*Night Heat*, *E.N.G.*, *Due South*. Lantos continues to produce features, including Bruce Beresford's *Black Robe*, Atom Egoyan's *Exotica*, Patricia Rozema's *When Night is Falling* and in 1996, David Cronenberg's *Crash*.

Carole Laure

Actor. Born, Shawinigan, Quebec, 1950. Following a troubled childhood, Laure embarked on a career in music. Her charismatic beauty attracted director Gilles Carle who cast her in *La fête de Normand St. Onge* in 1975 and in the sensuous and controversial *L'ange et la femme* in 1977. During the filming of the latter, the sultry actress became romantically involved with musician-filmmaker Lewis Furey, who eventually directed her in *Night Magic*, a fantasy film written by Leonard Cohen. In pictures such as Bertrand Blier's 1978 Oscar-winning *Get Out Your Handkerchiefs*, as well as in her singing career, Laure seems to be permanently eroticized—dark, sulky, lubricious—a post-Bardot actress who has reinvented the screen goddess.

Jean-Claude Lauzon

Director. Born, Montreal, 1953. If the wiry, intense Lauzon released a movie tomorrow, it would set off an instant buzz. Amazingly, his reputation is based on only three films: a

short, *Piwi*; his debut feature, *Un zoo, la nuit*; and the surreal *Léolo*, which screened in competition at Cannes in 1992. Lauzon's legend is that of a troubled dropout who transformed himself into an artist able to express down and dirty semi-autobiographical themes with elegant craftsmanship. Despite his success, Lauzon frequently expresses doubts about his profession, claiming that hunting and flying bush planes are more satisfying to him than moviemaking.

Jean Pierre Lefebvre

Director and writer. Born, Montreal, 1941. While other filmmakers of his generation attempted to access the mainstream, Lefebvre, once a movie critic, has never turned away from ultra-low-budget personal cinema. Film historian Peter Morris has called him "the best and brightest of Canadian cinema." *Les fleurs sauvages* (which won the International Critics' Prize at Cannes in 1982), *Jusqu'au coeur*, *Les dernières fiançailles*, *Le vieux pays ou Rimbaud est mort*, and many other films (20 features from 1964-84) approach human frailty and uncertainty with an eccentric, self-referential mix of wit, surreal contrast and reverie. Respected for his integrity, Lefebvre is also a skillful teacher of screen writing, directing and the use of democratizing technology like Hi-8 video. In 1995, he won Quebec's prestigious Prix Albert-Tessier, an annual tribute to artists and intellectuals.

Colin Low

Director and animator. Born, Cardston, Alberta, 1926. Like his mentor, Norman McLaren, Low has worked in animation and documentary with his eyes clearly fixed on the experimental in form and the socially relevant in content. He directed *Romance of Transportation in Canada*, a key advance for the NFB in character-driven animation and *Corral*, a lyrical celebration of the Canadian cowboy. Low also co-directed the multi-award winning *City of Gold*, a film which made historical photos of the Klondike gold rush come alive. For Expo 67



**DISTINCTLY
CANADIAN
100**

TimeLines

DISTINCTLY CANADIAN 100

Francis Mankiewicz

Director. Born, Shanghai, China, 1944. Died, 1993. Of the same clan as writer-director Joe (*All About Eve*), and writer Herman (*Citizen Kane*), Mankiewicz directed one of the most moving of all Canadian films. *Les bons débarras*, shot in 1980, concerns a loving, but destructive relationship between a manipulative young girl and her tempestuous mother. Winner of eight Genies, the picture was followed by more québécois features and provocative English-language dramas like *Love and Hate* in 1989, the first Canadian drama to be shown on U.S. primetime TV. Mankiewicz had a gift for exploring intricate, even dysfunctional relationships with compassion, finesse and minimal sentimentality.

Ron Mann

Director and producer. Born, Toronto, 1959. A wunderkind, Mann directed his first documentary feature, *Imagine the Sound*, at the age of 21. This won an award at the Chicago Film Festival as did his follow-up, *Poetry in Motion*. Mann is currently winning converts for the CD-ROM format which he popularized for independent filmmakers by adapting several of his films, notably *Comic Book Confidential*. Whether through investigations of comics or, currently, marijuana, Mann has made it his project to make marginal cultures accessible to larger audiences.

1943

Events:

■ The release of the first dramatic sound feature shot in Quebec. *à la croisée des chemins* is narrated by future Quebec Premier, René Lévesque.

FILMS

à la croisée des chemins
(Jean-Marie Poitevin)

1944

Events:

■ The establishment of Renaissance Films in Montreal marks the beginning of commercial feature film production in Quebec. Its first production is *Le Père Chopin*.

1945

Events:

■ Grierson resigns his position as Canada's Film Commissioner.
■ Paul Nathanson and the J. Arthur Rank organization of England open the Queensway studios outside of Toronto.

FILMS

Le Père Chopin (Fédor Ozep and Georges Freedland)

1946

Events:

■ John Grierson's name is mentioned in Igor Gouzenko's spy papers, and he is suspected of having communist sympathies. By association, the NFB is implicated in an atmosphere of suspicion leading to the Cold War.
■ Quebec Productions of Sainte-Hyacinthe, near Montreal, shoots the first Canadian feature in both English and French, *Whispering City/La forteresse*.
■ Budge and Judith Crawley incorporate Crawley Films in Ottawa.
■ Paul Nathanson retires from Odeon and sells his half to Rank of Great Britain. Both major exhibition chains are now foreign-owned.
■ The Ontario Board of Censors makes the first move to classify films

in North America and imposes an "Adult Entertainment" rating.

1947

Events:

■ Business in Canada booms as wartime industry converts to peace. But everything that's sold to Europe is sold on credit, while Canada is buying from the Americans with dollars. Liberal federal Finance Minister Doug Abbot meets with representatives from FPCC and the CMPDA, asking that some of their money be spent on Canadian production facilities.

FILMS

Bush Pilot (Sterling Campbell)
La forteresse (Fédor Ozep)

1948

Events:

■ Abbott meets with the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA, formerly MPPDAA), and agrees to the infamous Canadian Co-operation Project. FPCC's profits are not restricted and the idea of an exhibition quota is dropped. Hollywood promises to make films in Canada (which it doesn't), distribute some more NFB work stateside, export fewer "low-toned" gangster films to Canada, and make references to Canada in feature films. Jimmy Stewart speaks of "orioles from Canada," and a film called *Three Secrets* has a line about a "mountaineer from Winnipeg."
■ Nat Taylor opens North America's first twin cinema in Ottawa.
■ After a distinguished career in film since 1929, Toronto-born Walter Huston wins the Best Supporting Actor Oscar in a film for which his son, John, wins two awards (Best Screenplay and Director)—*The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*.

FILMS

The Loon's Necklace (Judith and Budge Crawley)
Whispering City (Fédor Ozep)

he created the extravagant *Labyrinth* project and from 1969 to 1971, he lived on the remote Fogo Island to document a community in economic and social crisis. He returned to the Board and became head of regional production in 1976.

Guy Maddin

Director. Born, Winnipeg, 1957. With two short films and three gloriously idiosyncratic features, Maddin has single-handedly invented an imaginary Canadian cinematic history, moving from 1920s prairie Expressionist and Surrealist movements, to that creaky era between silent and sound cinema, to the arrival of our own colour talkies. Originally a student of economics at the University of Manitoba, Maddin's prodigious imagination offers up murky sagas of diseased male rivalry, *Tales From the Gimli Hospital*; love and amnesia in the Great War, *Archangel*; lust and incest in a repressed alpine village, *Careful*: all rendered in luminous Canadian pastiches of Buñuel, Vigo, Cocteau, von Sternberg, Lang and Murnau.

Les bons débarras



Raymond Massey



Actor. Born, Toronto, 1896. Died, 1983. The brother of Vincent Massey, the first Canadian born Governor General. Massey was

being groomed for an illustrious career in the family business when, during WWI, an impromptu minstrel show led him into a post-war acting career on the British stage. He was typecast as the embodiment of authority at an early age because of his lanky taciturnity, and when he arrived in Hollywood in 1931, Massey was instantly cast as Sherlock Holmes and similar characters, turning in a succession of strong performances. He won an Oscar nomination for his portrayal of Abraham Lincoln in *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* and was exceptional as James Dean's father in *East of Eden*. In the 1960s, he created the memorable Dr. Gillespie in the *Dr. Kildare* television series.

Bruce McDonald

Director and writer. Born, Toronto, 1954. The self-styled rock 'n' roll director of Ontario's New Wave, McDonald has constructed an identity—scruffy, hip and funny—that is cannily in sync with his movies. A product of Ryerson's film department and the Toronto indie production scene of the 1980s, his funky low-budget feature debut *Roadkill* launched his career in 1990. Both it, and his follow-up, *Highway 61*, are contemporary road films featuring quirky characters, dollops of debauchery and hot music, strung together by an ironic comic tone. He co-scripted, with Don McKellar and John Frizzell, an adaptation of W.P. Kinsella's *Dance Me Outside* in 1994, and is slated to release a rockin' feature, *Hard Core Logo* soon.

Norman McLaren

Animator. Born, Stirling, Scotland, 1914. Died, 1987. When John Grierson offered the young Scottish animator "40 dollars a week and a chance to make films," McLaren accepted and

wound up staying at the NFB for the rest of his working life. He established the Animation Unit in 1942, and spent the majority of his career creating innovative animated and documentary films. His pixilated anti-war allegory *Neighbours* won an Oscar for Best Short Documentary in 1953 and *A Chairy Tale*, made with Claude Jutra, was nominated in 1958. Most of McLaren's animated work, like the jazzy *Begone Dull Care*, was drawn directly on to the film, but he also used "cut-outs" of shapes, traditional cartoon elements, and in the lyrical *Pas de Deux*, stroboscopic effects.

Monique Mercure



Actor. Born, Montreal, 1930. Exuding dignity, strength, and an alluring enigmatic quality, Mercure began her film career in numerous bit

parts and secondary roles. In 1970, this former music student with the no-nonsense gaze broke through to a wider audience in Denis Héroux's raunchy sex comedy, *Deux femmes en or*. The next year she played an aging village temptress in *Mon oncle Antoine*. Mercure's period role in *J.A. Martin photographe* in 1976 won her Best Actress at Cannes and the Canadian Film Awards. The Mercurian persona reached its apotheosis when she played a sinister dominatrix with extraordinary powers in Cronenberg's *Naked Lunch*.

Lorne Michaels

Producer and writer. Born Lorne Lipowitz, Toronto, 1945. In his early 20s, Michaels was already writing and producing comedy specials for CBC-TV, when he broke into U. S. TV as a writer for the ground-breaking *Laugh-In*. The original producer of *Saturday Night Live*, he won a parcel of Emmys and launched the film careers of John Belushi, Dan Aykroyd, Gilda Radner, Chevy Chase and many others. He wrote and produced *Gilda Live*, a film version of Radner's Broadway show directed by Mike Nichols, in

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1949 Events:

■ Crawley Films wins Film of the Year for *The Loon's Necklace* at the first annual Canadian Film Awards held in Ottawa.

FILMS

Begone Dull Care (Norman McLaren)
Le gros Bill (René Delacroix)

1950 Events:

- A new National Film Act replaces the 1939 Act, giving the NFB a mandate "to interpret Canada to Canadians and to other nations."
- The National Film Society becomes the Canadian Film Institute in Ottawa, and will create the first film archives in Canada.

1951 Events:

- The Massey Report is published and calls for the creation of the Canada Council.
- With Mary Pickford as host, Earnest Ouimet is given an award at the Third Annual Canadian Film Awards, as a pioneer in distribution, exhibition and production.

1952 Events:

- CBC-TV goes on air in Montreal September 6, and two days later in Toronto.
- Alfred Hitchcock shoots *I Confess* with Montgomery Clift and Anne Baxter in Quebec City.

FILMS

Neighbours (Norman McLaren)
Newfoundland Scene (Budge Crawley)
The Romance of Transportation in Canada (Colin Low)

1953 Events:

- *Ti-Coq* wins the Film of the Year at the Canadian Film Awards. This brings to an end the mini-boom in Quebec features, which saw 20 theatrical films produced in the province between 1944 and 1953.
- The Ontario Board of Censors introduces the first "X" rating in North America for people 18 years and older. Later it will change the classification to "Restricted."
- McLaren's *Neighbours* wins the NFB its second Oscar, and *The Romance of Transportation in Canada* wins the Palme d'or for animation at Cannes.

FILMS

Ti-Coq (René Delacroix and Gratien Gélinas)

1954 Events:

- The introduction of a 50-percent capital cost allowance (CCA) to encourage private investment in Canadian film companies.
- The Quebec government of Duplessis forbids the showing of "federalist" NFB films in Quebec schools.
- Colin Low's *Corral* wins first prize for documentary at the Venice Film Festival.

FILMS

Corral (Colin Low)
Paul Tomkowicz: Street-Railway Switchman (Roman Kroitor)

1955 Events:

- McLaren's *Blinkity Blank* wins the Palme d'or for animation at Cannes.

FILMS

Blinkity Blank (Norman McLaren)