

## McLaren's Child

# ANIMATION

WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT



The roots of animation in Canada lie, like so many things do, in Great Britain. John Grierson and Norman McLaren, both from Scotland, transformed filmmaking in Canada in the early 1940s. Grierson, the founder of the NFB, always claimed that his finest discovery was McLaren, whom he persuaded to come to Canada to make animated films. Arriving in Ottawa in 1941, McLaren was immediately put to work creating propaganda pieces for the war effort. Within a year, he was asked to create an animation unit for the Board. The crack team he assembled included Jim McKay, George Dunning and René Jodoin.

### THE SWEATER



McLaren's interest was in formal experiments, particularly drawing directly on celluloid. His animated works were not character or plot driven; in conscious opposition to Hollywood cartoons, they were abstract, operating on rhythmic, melodic and colour principles. His style and

philosophy influenced Canadian animation both at the Board and in the private sector, which began to grow with the establishment of Dunning's and McKay's Graphic Associates in Toronto in 1949.

It was with Colin Low's *The Romance of Transportation in Canada*, made in 1952, that a sense of character and incident entered animation at the NFB. McLaren's successor as head of the Animation Unit, Low helped foster a new generation of artists who entered the Board in the late 1950s; among them were Derek Lamb, Kaj Pindal, Arthur Lipsett and Gerald Potterton. McLaren gave informal animation classes to these youngsters, but the films they produced

were quite different from his stylized works. Shorts like Pindal's *What on Earth!* and Potterton's *My Financial Career* were humorous and told tales in a manner that communicated directly to Canadian and international audiences.

In the 1960s, Wolf Koenig replaced his collaborator Low as the head of the Animation Unit, and more importantly, René Jodoin was made executive producer of a new French animation department. Jodoin formed his unit into one that produced either abstract pieces or told simple stories with limited dialogue. Foreign talent such as Co Hoedeman and Bretislav Pojar were brought in to augment a talented crew that included québécois pin screen wizard Jacques Drouin and experimentalist Pierre Hébert. By contrast, the English unit, spearheaded by Derek Lamb, contributed well-plotted, often sardonic pieces, by such talents as Caroline Leaf, John Weldon and Eugene Fedorenko. Many of these films were multi-award winners (including two Oscars), as was the work of Frédéric Back (who also won two Oscars), the Belgian-born animator who spent his career in McLaren-like freedom at Radio-Canada.

### NEIGHBOURS



The 1970s saw the growth of private animation houses as commercial work in television became plentiful. Such companies as Nelvana in Toronto, Cinar in Montreal, International Rocketship in Vancouver, and Crawley Films and Lacewood Productions in Ottawa became important players in the North American market place. Community colleges established credit courses and graduates, especially from Sheridan College in Oakville, continued the high standards set by the NFB. More recently, Canadian animators have infiltrated Disney and Industrial Light and Magic, contributing to the success of such mega-hits as *Aladdin*, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, *Jurassic Park*, *The Mask*, *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* and many others, often with the use of ground-breaking software programs created by Alias, Corel and SoftImage.

With the NFB winning its 10th Oscar, for *Bob's Birthday* in 1994, and Alias being nominated for an Academy award for its experimental short *The End* this year, Canadian animators continue a proud tradition of producing some of the best work in the world.

■ Marc Glassman



YELLOW SUBMARINE

# TimeLines

## DISTINCTLY CANADIAN 100

### FILMS

*L'amour blessé* (Jean Pierre Lefebvre)  
*L'ange et la femme* (Gilles Carle)  
*The Bead Game* (Ishu Patel)  
*Dreamspeaker* (Claude Jutra)  
*J.A. Martin photographe* (Jean Beaudin)  
*Outrageous!* (Richard Benner)  
*Rabid* (David Cronenberg)  
*La vieux pays où Rimbaud est mort* (Jean Pierre Lefebvre)  
*Who Has Seen the Wind* (Allan King)  
*Why Shoot the Teacher* (Silvio Narizzano)

### 1978 Events:

- The Ontario Board of Censors bans *Pretty Baby*, Louis Malle's controversial film about prostitution in turn-of-the-century New Orleans. The popular backlash to this ban marks the beginning of the fight for Canada's longest running Board of Censors.
- Garth Drabinsky joins forces with Nat Taylor to form Pan Canadian Film Distributors.
- The Calgary Society of Independent Filmmakers is founded.
- Ivan Reitman shoots the low-budget teen comedy *Meatballs*, with Bill Murray, in Haliburton, north of Toronto.
- The NFB wins two Academy Awards, for Co Hoedeman's *Le château de sable* (Short Animation) and Beverley Shaffer's *I'll Find a Way* (Live Action Short), its first Oscars in 25 years.

### FILMS

*Le château de sable* (Co Hoedeman)  
*I'll Find a Way* (Beverly Shaffer)  
*In Praise of Older Women* (George Kaczender)  
*The Silent Partner* (Daryl Duke)  
*Skip Tracer* (Zale Dalen)  
*Viollette Noziere* (Claude Chabrol)

### 1979 Events:

- *Meatballs* is released and becomes a huge box office hit in the U.S. Its success demonstrates that investment in Canadian films is viable and lucrative. "Tax shelter" production peaks and more feature films are made in Canada than at any other time. Many are never released.
- Nat Taylor and Garth Drabinsky open Cineplex, an 18-movie complex in

Toronto's Eaton Centre. The theatres are small and play 16mm specialty films, European art films and Hollywood second-runs.

- Denis Héroux and John Kemeny establish International Cinema Corporation (ICC) in Montreal. Their first film is Louis Malle's *Atlantic City*.
- The Academy of Canadian Cinema is incorporated and takes over from the Canadian Film Awards, which are now called the Genies.
- The New Brunswick Filmmakers Co-op is founded in Fredericton.
- The first issue of *24 Images* is published.
- Mary Pickford dies at 87.
- The NFB's *Special Delivery* wins an Oscar for Best Animated Short.

### FILMS

*The Brood* (David Cronenberg)  
*Meatballs* (Ivan Reitman)  
*Mourir à tue-tête* (Anne Claire Poirier)  
*Murder By Decree* (Bob Clark)  
*Nails* (Phillip Borsos)  
*Special Delivery* (John Weldon and Eunice Macauley)

### 1980 Events:

- The Ontario Board of Censors attempts to ban Volker Schlöndorff's *The Tin Drum*, but has to back down in the face of a huge public outcry and it agrees to let the film be shown with only minor cuts.
- Montreal producer Rock Demers establishes Les Productions la Fête to make *Tales For All*, feature films for children.
- Cineworks opens in Vancouver, and the Liaison of Independent Filmmakers (LIFT) in Toronto.
- *The Changeling* wins the Best Film and *Meatballs* the Golden Reel Award at the first Genies.
- *Every Child* wins an Oscar for Best Animated Short, the fourth Academy Award won by the NFB in three years.

### FILMS

*Atlantic City* (Louis Malle)  
*Les bons débarras* (Francis Mankiewicz)  
*The Changeling* (Peter Medak)  
*Every Child* (Eugene Fedorenko)  
*L'homme à tout faire* (Micheline Lancôt)  
*Prom Night* (Paul Lynch)  
*The Sweater* (Sheldon Cohen)

### Yves Simoneau

Director. Born, Quebec City, 1955. Simoneau is the prodigal son of the Quebec film milieu. After directing several critically acclaimed québécois pictures including *Les yeux rouges*, *Pouvoir intime*, *Les fous de bassan* and *Dans le ventre du dragon*, Simoneau directed *Perfectly Normal* (90) one of the most successful English-Canadian comedies ever made, and then took off for a career in Hollywood. Fond of genre plots and eye-popping style, Simoneau defined his approach in *Pouvoir intime*, a taut crime drama that spills over into existential anxiety, featuring bravura camera moves and *trompe l'oeil* effects. In the U.S., he has made films for TV and theatrical release, including the 1994 thriller, *Mother's Boys*, starring Jamie Lee Curtis.

**Robbie Coltrane in Yves Simoneau's *Perfectly Normal*, one of the most successful English-Canadian comedies ever made.**





The Boys of St. Vincent

## John N. Smith

Director. Born, Montreal, 1943. When Smith switched from documentary to drama at the NFB, he turned out a string of movies in the 1980s that earnestly probed issues like male sexuality (*The Masculine Mystique*), racism (*Train of Dreams*) and immigration (*Welcome to Canada*). Along with collaborators like Giles Walker and Sam Grana, Smith made economic use of non-professional actors and documentary techniques. In 1993, he filmed *The Boys of St. Vincent*, a powerful and controversial TV miniseries depicting the sexual violation of children in a Catholic orphanage. Excellent reviews and ratings in the U.S. led to a Hollywood assignment directing Michelle Pfeiffer in *Dangerous Minds*, which became one of the top grossing films of 1995.

## Michael Snow

Artist and filmmaker. Born, Toronto, 1929. Snow began his remarkable career in Toronto in the early 1950s as a designer, animator, painter and jazz musician. By 1963, he had moved to New York City and was working with a community of American experimental filmmakers expanding the definitions of cinema through their forays into graphic and structuralist films. Snow's provocative works from this era, *New York Eye and Ear Control*, *Wavelength* and *Back and Forth*, offer remarkably unique viewing experiences, delving into the relationship between the spectator and the image, and qualifying Snow as the undisputed dean of structuralist cinema. His more recent films, *So Is This* (82) and *Seated Figures* (88), are equally intelligent and compelling explorations of the nature of communication and signification.

# TimeLines

## 1981 Events:

- The "tax shelter" boom goes bust.
- The Alberta Motion Picture Development Corporation is created.
- The first Atlantic Film Festival is held in St. John's.
- Bonnie Sherr Klein's controversial *Not a Love Story* becomes one of the most popular feature-length documentaries ever produced by the NFB.
- Bob Clark's *Porky's*, produced by Astral, is released in the U.S. and goes on to become the most successful Canadian feature at the box office.
- *Les bons débarras* wins the Best Film and *The Changling* the Golden Reel Award at the Genies.

## FILMS

*Alligator Shoes* (Clay Borris)  
*Heartaches* (Don Shebib)  
*Heavy Metal* (Gerald Potterton)  
*Not A Love Story* (Bonnie Sherr Klein)  
*Les Plouffe* (Gilles Carle)  
*Porky's* (Bob Clark)  
*P4W: Prison for Women* (Holly Dale and Janis Cole)  
*Scanners* (David Cronenberg)  
*Ticket to Heaven* (Ralph Thomas)

## 1982 Events:

- The first Rendez-vous du cinéma québécois is held.
- The Vancouver International Film Festival begins.
- Lefebvre's *Les fleurs sauvages* wins the International Film Critics' Prize at Cannes.
- *Ticket to Heaven* wins the Best Film and *Heavy Metal*, produced by Ivan Reitman, the Golden Reel Award at the Genies.
- Frédéric Back's *Craci*, produced by Radio-Canada, wins an Oscar for Best Animated Short.

## FILMS

*La bête lumineuse* (Pierre Perrault)  
*By Design* (Claude Jutra)  
*Craci* (Frédéric Back)  
*Les fleurs sauvages* (Jean Pierre Lefebvre)  
*Poetry in Motion* (Ron Mann)  
*Scissère* (Peter Mettler)  
*Quest For Fire* (Jean-Jacques Annaud)

## 1983 Events:

- Drabinsky receives a hearing before the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission, but hours before the proceedings begin six of the major American distributors issue a joint statement saying they would change their practices and ensure competition in the distribution and exhibition of films in Canada.
- The Société générale du cinéma is created under Quebec's new Cinema Act to provide funding for Quebec films.
- The Supreme Court of Ontario rules that the Board of Censors is operating in violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
- *The Grey Fox* wins the Best Film and *Porky's* the Golden Reel Award at the Genies.
- The NFB wins its seventh Oscar for Terre Nash's *If You Love this Planet*, and John Zaritsky wins the Best Feature Documentary for the CBC-produced, *Just Another Missing Kid*.

## FILMS

*The Grey Fox* (Phillip Borsos)  
*If You Love This Planet* (Terre Nash)  
*Maria Chapdelaine* (Gilles Carle)  
*Stations* (William MacGillivray)  
*Strange Brew* (Dave Thomas and Rick Moranis)  
*Videodrome* (David Cronenberg)

## 1984 Events:

- Cineplex buys Odeon and once again the competition for first-run Hollywood movies is effectively reduced to the two major chains. Drabinsky launches, with the backing of Bronfman money, a major buying spree in the U.S., leading Cineplex to become the second largest theatrical chain in North America.
- Francis Fox, the Federal Minister of Communications, issues his National Film and Video Policy. The CFDC is transformed into Telefilm Canada and a \$35-million Broadcast Fund is created.
- The Toronto Festival of Festivals programs the largest retrospective of Canadian films ever held in Canada, and Claude Jutra's *Mon oncle Antoine* is proclaimed the best Canadian film of all time. This launches *Perspective*