



Some of the buzz at last year's Toronto International Film Festival hovered around claims that, in its 20th year, the Festival of Festivals was finally living up to its name by cracking into the top three on the list of the biggest and most important film festivals worldwide. For film professionals of every description, the Toronto festival now inhabits a significant, and almost crucial slot on the festival circuit calendar. However, unlike Cannes and Berlin, Toronto has earned its glory atop the list by emerging as the best place for industry deals, distribution agreements, pre-sales pitches and formative rendezvous, rather than through the prestige of its prizes.

This year, instead of resting on the laurels of this achievement, things are expanding in Toronto. Reed Exhibition Companies (REC) is launching ShowBiz Expo Canada, presented by *Variety*. This event will be the Toronto version of the mushrooming European and Asian "MIP" festivals and the ShowBiz Expos in New York and L.A. The focus of the event is definitely wide-angle, drawing in the feature film and video industries, television broadcast and cable, commercial and corporate video and interactive production companies. REC and *Variety* are staging a proactive assessment of both the broad and the specific trends in the international entertainment industry.

A crowded trade show presenting all the latest technological and service innovations from pre- to post-production will be matched by a two-day conference program for the leaders in the production community. REC's research shows that Canada is home to a \$1.2-billion film and television industry and has become the second largest supplier of television in

the international programming market, so the arrival of their high-profile international production conference at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre for the first weekend of the Toronto festival, September 7 and 8, is long overdue.

Of course, the Toronto festival secured its top-three ranking without REC, and this year, running parallel with *Variety's* ShowBiz Expo is the launch of the home-grown Rogers Industry Centre which has emerged out of the annual industry Symposium organized by Nightingale and Associates. Symposium '96 opens with its workshops and keynote addresses the day after ShowBiz Expo packs up its displays, and offers less of a trade show/production conference and more of an opportunity for the industry's boardroom types to get down to business. The Industry Centre will be running for the duration of the festival at the Sheraton Centre and offers the festival's prime forum for deal making and pitch sessions. Reed and Rogers have designed these two major industry complements to the festival's main screening programs to appeal to slightly different sectors of the industry crowd. With the new influx of funding sources for the festival events, they haven't had to compete for sponsors either. In partnership with both promoters, the festival stands to benefit from the increased activity and the brighter spotlight on Toronto that both conferences will generate.

Reed's relationship with the Toronto festival is diversifying rapidly since they came on as corporate sponsors and key supporters of the 20th anniversary last year. Their partnership with the festival organizers might even nudge Toronto further up that top-ten list. Reed will share 50 per cent of the conference revenue which will be generated at ShowBiz with the Film Festival Group. REC promotes a whole family of shows internationally and has invited companies and organizations from all over North America to promote their products and services during the ShowBiz Expo trade exhibition. Almost all the major Canadian television and cinema unions and associations will be represented. Several major camera companies like Aaton, Arri and Cinema Products will be showing off their innovations, alongside lighting and grip equipment rental houses, cutting edge animation technologies, special effects and location specialists as well as such big names in digital editing systems as Avid and D-Vision. ShowBiz Expo, with its focus on the nuts and bolts (read: lenses and splicers) of the entertainment industry, will be the first event of its kind in Canada.

The two-day conference will include sessions on pioneering Canadian work in computer animation and graphics, the converging aesthetics and image quality in the film/video debate and an exploration of the impact of digital interactive and multimedia/online on everything from story structure to distribution and production techniques. A highlight of the weekend's events is the keynote address by Paula Wagner, coproducer with Tom Cruise of this summer's hit *Mission: Impossible*, which will be jointly sponsored by *Variety* and the Toronto Festival Group. All these initiatives by REC may mean that at the Toronto festival, actors and directors will have to share the limelight with cinematographers, animators, lab technicians, gaffers and computer whizzes. Hosting a world class ShowBiz Expo should deepen the marks that both the Toronto International Film Festival and Canadian Cinema are making on the international film community. ■