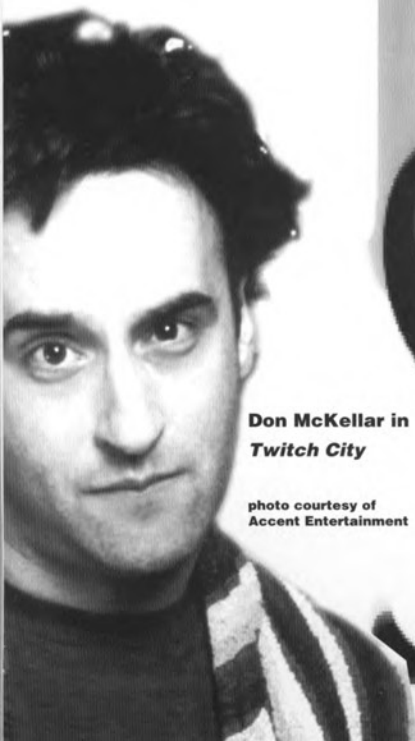


# FROM SEA TO SEA



## Halifax

The East Coast film and television scene took another giant step forward with the formal announcement of the launch of the Newfoundland Film Development Corporation. Taking a cue from the success of the Nova Scotia provincial agency, the Newfoundland version will begin with a \$1-million initial budget. A special capital expenditure of \$300,000 has been allocated to the legendary Newfoundland Independent Film Co-op for new equipment—digital and otherwise. Now Newfoundland can keep that important post-production work in the province. When John Walker shot his documentary about Davis Inlet, *Utshimassits—Place of the Boss* (twice Gemini-nominated in 1997: for Best Documentary and Best Direction), he had to go to Halifax for post. The announcement comes as two major productions gather steam. The second stream of Bill MacGillivray's *Gullage's* is in the can, while Mary Sexton is proceeding with a pilot for a Mary Walsh-vehicle entitled *Dooley Gardens*. It's a twisted situation comedy set in a rundown community rink. Meanwhile, back in Halifax, CBC-TV has confirmed its order for a second season of Barbara Samuels' and Wayne Girsby's *Black Harbour* dramatic series. Likewise with the Salter Street-produced Lucy Maud Montgomery saga, *Emily of the New Moon*, even though it has yet to go to broadcast. On the other hand, technical delays have held back *Lexx: Tales from the Dark Zone* by about six months. Salter Street is also in pre-production on a four-part mini-series entitled *Major Crime*, to be shot in Halifax and Toronto. Andrew Cochrane and Associates are going ahead with an Eric Till-directed feature costume drama entitled, *Pit Pony*. It's a turn-of-the-century tale of youngsters and horses pressed into service in the coal mines of Cape Breton, New Glasgow and Springhill. What's obvious about all this activity is that the Atlantic Region's rapidly expanding industry is being producer-driven. Chris Zimmer's Imagex Production house, for example, recently announced a 10-picture co-production deal with the British. A few days later, Imagex went public with plans for its own sound stage project to be operational in the spring. The Electropolis waterfront studio complex is also creeping towards reality, having cleared some key environmental hurdles set out by



Don McKellar in  
*Twitch City*

photo courtesy of  
Accent Entertainment



John Walker's Utshimassits—Place of the Boss

the Public Utilities Board. There is apparently going to be enough production activity to keep the sound stages operating over the next two years with features and series. On a final note, legendary actor, screenwriter and NFB producer Sam Grana (*90 Days, The Masculine Mystique*) has been appointed the first Director and CEO of Film New Brunswick.

### Ron Foley Macdonald

## Montreal

1996 was Quebec's best moviemaking year in ages, with 54 Canadian and foreign feature film and TV movie productions bringing in more than \$100-million to the province's economy. So 1997 is getting ready for the harvest. Pursuing a trend that seems to become more and more popular these days in the film industry, many big-budget Canadian action movies with international star appeal are scheduled for release in the coming year. Among these, are Filmline's latest thriller, *The Peacekeeper*, directed by Frédéric Forestier and starring Dolph Lundgren and our own Michael Sarrazin; Jim Donovan's *Provocateur*, a spy movie, starring Jane March (who's all grown up since *The Lover*) and Canadian expatriate Nick Mancuso; Alain Zaloum's *Suspicious Minds*, starring Patrick Bergin, Gary Busey and Canadians Jayne Heithmeyer and Daniel Pilon, set for release sometime in the fall by Cinepix; and finally, Kingsborough Greenlight's two American co-productions, Jean Pellerin's *For Hire*, with Rob Lowe, Joe Mantegna and local up-and-comer Bronwen Booth, and Peter Svatek's *Hemoglobin*, with Rutger Hauer and Quebec superstar, Roy Dupuis. On a somewhat smaller scale, another long-awaited "thriller" of a different kind is set to hit theatres this spring: *La vengeance de la femme en noir* is Roger Cantin's much anticipated follow-up to his 1991 smash comedy hit *L'assassin jouait du trombone*. Germain Houde and Anaïs Goulet-Robitaille return in the starring roles as two would-be detectives caught against their will in a convoluted and hilarious revenge-assassination plot. Caught with them in this crazy adventure are Raymond Bouchard, Julie St-Pierre, France Castel and super baddie, Marc Labrèche. Next in line for Cantin? A sequel to his other huge Québécois success, *Mathusalem*, a pirate movie entitled *Mathusalem II: Le dernier des beauchesne* which began shooting in February. Finally, this past February, the annual Rendez-vous du cinéma québécois celebrated the Cinémathèque québécoise's grand reopening after two years of renovations. Anne-Claire Poirier's, *Tu as crié Let Me Go* opened the festival. The film is a documentary about heroin-addiction, life on the street, loss, death and, ultimately, acceptance. Above all though, it is

Poirier's tribute to her daughter, Yanne, who was murdered a few years ago in a drugs-related affair. Although unquestionably crude at times, the film is a highly moving and personal journey towards understanding and deeper meaning in life.

### Claire Valade

## Toronto

Strange things are happening on the streets of Toronto these days. Local journalist/broadcaster David Giammarco has turned our avenues into those of American murder landmarks, specifically the John F. Kennedy assassination. In a bold attempt to parody Oliver Stone's *JFK*, Giammarco has written, produced, directed and stars in *DMG*, his first feature film starring a slew of celebrity walk-ons. "It's an exact parody of Stone's *JFK*," says Giammarco who's financing the project himself. "There's, of course, the big conspiracy. There's the second gunman, the third gunman, there's the lone patsy that gets killed, every sort of aspect of *JFK* is parodied in this. We've been shooting in 16mm, super-8, and all the different film stock, basically what Oliver Stone used in *JFK*. We're also doing all the quick-cutting, quick-editing, black and white, colour, camcorder news footage, everything." Celebrity walk-ons include Don Rickles, Dan Aykroyd, Leslie Nielsen, Nicholas Campbell, Denny Doherty and Stone himself. "He laughed, he thought it was funny," says Giammarco of Stone's reaction to the movie. "I told him that my Director of Photography was duplicating the lighting from *JFK* exactly, with strong overhead bright lighting. He laughed and said, 'You guys better be careful with that lighting. We burned Tommy Lee Jones' hair three times.' He's got a good sense of humour." Giammarco hopes to complete *DMG* by the summer. The quirky duo that brought us *Roadkill* and *Highway 61* have turned their attention to television these days. Bruce McDonald is directing *Twitch City*, a six-part half-hour series created by and starring Don McKellar for the CBC. This comedy about a loner who only watches television, and which also stars Molly Parker, Daniel MacIvor, Callum Keith Rennie and Bruce McCulloch, is produced by Susan Cavan's Accent Entertainment and Shadows Shows, in association with the CBC, and with financial support by Telefilm Canada. The Ontario Film Development Corporation has announced the appointment of Sara Morton to run the Ontario Film and Television Tax Credit program. Morton, who has several years experience in entertainment law specializing in production financing for independent producers, will oversee the refundable tax credit that is available to eligible Ontario based production companies, based upon qualifying Ontario labour costs. PS Production Services, one of Toronto's oldest production rental facilities run by Doug Dales has just announced a merger with Partners, Toronto's largest TV commercial house, and one of the largest in North America.

### Angela Baldassarre



photo: Jean-Pierre Joly  
Director Anne-Claire Poirier