

THE MARITIMES

Ron Foley Macdonald

The Atlantic Film Festival (AFF) will be showing off two new homegrown works by Halifax actor-writer-director Thom Fitzgerald. His Tennessee Williamesque first dramatic feature, *The Hanging Garden*, stars New Zealand actress Kerry Fox (*Angel at My Table*, *Shallow Grave*) and includes a cameo from Cape Breton fiddling sensation Ashley MacIsaac. Also on the bill is Fitzgerald's piffy video short *Canada Uncut*, a satire that sends up Canadian Customs' campaign against gay and lesbian bookstores. Last year AFF audiences got to see the entire six-episode season of William D. MacGillivray's comedy *Gullages*. The acclaimed series walked away with a clutch of awards. This year only a sneak preview of one or two episodes will grace the screens of the AFF; the rest will have to wait for broadcast in the fall. Some long-awaited documentary projects are finally surfacing at this year's festival. John Brett (*Sea of Slaughter*, *Where the Bay Meets the Sea*) has finally wrapped the postproduction of his personal take on the collapse of the East Coast fishery, *One Man's Paradise*. Chuck Lapp has also treated the subject from a wider point of view in his film, *Fishing on the Brink*. Newfoundland's Debbie McGee's *An Untidy Package* examines the plight of women in fishery's downturn. Nigel Markham's look at the changes looming due to the massive Voisey Bay development, *Eye of the Storm*, is also slated for the festival. Mike Clattenburg's extraordinary travel documentary, *Far From Home: India Kicked My Ass*, returns the Telefilm Award-winning director to his personal nonfiction roots. In the wake of the news that three Halifax soundstage projects have been green-lighted by the three levels of government and various private partners, there has been a rush of filmmaking activity across the entire region. Financing demands on the Nova Scotia Film Development Corporation have been so high that Chairwoman Bonnie Kirby had to request more money from her provincial masters. She succeeded in doubling NSFDC's budget, ensuring a continued film boom in Nova Scotia. Provincial film corporations in Newfoundland and New Brunswick are now firmly established and even tiny Prince Edward Island has a dedicated film commissioner. On the production front, Salter Street Films is working on two new comedy shows. One, written and featuring 22 Minutes star Greg Thomey, is a mock health-food-style magazine show entitled *Daily Tips for Modern Living*; the other is *Mondo Delundo*, which replaces audio tracks on trashy low-budget series, a la Woody Allen's *What's Up Tiger Lily?* In Newfoundland, several major projects are creeping closer to the green-light stage, including the massive American shoot based on E. Anne Proulx's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *The Shipping News*, directed by Lasse Hälstrom (*My Life as a Dog*), and an eight-hour adaption of Bernice Morgan's contemporary classic, *Random Passage*, being packaged by Montreal-based (but originally from Newfoundland) Barbara Doran. ■

John Brett's *One Man's Paradise*

MONTREAL

Claire Valade

The most controversial story coming out of the Quebec film scene these days is about a film that came very close to never getting made. Pierre Falardeau (the fiery Quebec nationalist who directed the controversial *Octobre*, a sympathetic look at the Quebec Crisis from the point of view of the FLQ) has been trying for two years to produce *15 février 1839*, a film about the execution of patriot Chevalier de Lorimier, one of the leaders in the 1837 rebellion. Facing a third refusal from Telefilm Canada (while SODEC had already agreed to finance half the film's budget), Falardeau and his supporters took it to the papers, accusing Telefilm of succumbing to federal pressures and exerting censorship. Of course, Telefilm denied this and was immediately slapped with another fiery response from Falardeau. But then something unique happened. A popular committee was formed to raise funds and devised a series of actions and events to reach the public — T-shirts, postcards, books, videos, etc. In addition to the many top Quebec actors who have been attached to the project since the beginning (Luc Picard, Sylvie Drapeau, Julien Poulin), many other names from the entertainment industry (among them Quebec's most popular poet, Gilles Vigneault, and rock star Éric Lapointe) soon joined the crusade, participating in benefit concerts and marching in the traditional Défilé de la St-Jean on June 24th. So far the committee has received donations totalling \$20,000; however, Falardeau needs another \$1.25 million to make his film. Be sure he will get it; simply put, the people are with him. On a sad note, Jean-Claude Lauzon, consider one the brightest lights in Quebec cinema, died in a plane crash while on a fishing trip in Northern Quebec in August. Only 43 years old, Lauzon was known in the French press as a rebel with a bright future. His reputation is based on only three films: a short, *Piwi*, his debut feature, *Un Zoo la nuit*, winner of 13 Genies in 1988 (the most ever by any film in the history of the awards), and the surreal *Léolo*, which screened in competition at Cannes in 1992 and was nominated for an Oscar. Lauzon's legend is that of a troubled dropout who transformed himself into an artist able to express semi-autobiographical down and dirty themes with elegant craftsmanship. Despite his success, Lauzon frequently expressed doubts about his profession, he turned down numerous offers to go to Hollywood, claiming that hunting and flying bush planes were more satisfying to him than moviemaking. Tragically, his love of flying has brought about his untimely death. Canadian cinema has lost one of its best. ■

