

TORONTO



Atom Egoyan's *The Sweet Hereafter*

Angela Baldassarre

Although the Cannes Film Festival had to swivel its magic stick in order to find some quality flicks this year, The 22nd Toronto International Film Festival seems to have fared better with its Gala selection. Opening the festival is hometown favourite Atom Egoyan's *The Sweet Hereafter*, the movie that walked away with the Grand Prix and International Critics' Prize at Cannes. Based on the book by Russell Banks, the film focuses on a small town emotionally devastated following a school-bus crash. Making its World Premiere is *Mrs.*

Dalloway by Antonia's *Line* director Marleen Gorris, based on Virginia Woolf's novel of the same name. Vanessa Redgrave stars as the woman preparing for an important soiree, and remembers her youth through flashbacks. Another book adaptation making its Gala premiere is Gillies MacKinnon's *Regeneration*, based on the Booker Prize-winning novel by Pat Barker, starring Jonathan Pryce as the psychiatrist who treats four shell-shocked First World War soldiers. And you can't have a film festival without a period Gala, and this year it's Vera Belmont's *Marquise* starring the gorgeous Sophie Marceau (*Braveheart*) as the most infamous courtesan of Louis XIV's reign. Also making its North American premiere is what most critics at Cannes called the best film of the year, Curtis Hanson's *L.A. Confidential*. Again based on a novel (James Ellroy's crime epic), the movie stars Kevin Spacey, Kim Basinger, Danny De Vito, Russell Crowe and Guy Pearce in a tale about three police officers working the beat in 1950s Los Angeles. The Feature Film Project, a training initiative of the Canadian Film Centre, has been renewed for two more years, it was announced in August. With an approximate budget of \$1.8 million, The Feature Film Project will provide the necessary financing to develop, produce and market three low-budget feature films by first-time feature filmmakers over the next two years. It's a busy time for production this fall in Toronto with John Landis's *The Blues Brothers 2000* (with John Goodman and Dan Aykroyd) and Toronto-based PNA's *Shepherd* (with C. Thomas Howell and David Carradine) just wrapping up, Mira Nair's *My Own Country* with Marisa Tomei and Nareen Andrews halfway done, and Tamra Davis' *Half Baked* making waves with her hot young cast (Mark Wahlberg, Rachel True and Dave Chappelle). Meanwhile Saul Rubinek's *Tom & Jerry*, starring Sarah Polley and Joe Mantegna, just tore down its tents and moved out of town. Veteran Toronto-based producer Ralph Ellis, founder of Ellis Enterprises and KEG Productions (producer of hundreds of films and TV specials about Canada's wildlife since 1964), was awarded the Order of Ontario earlier this year and will be inducted into the Order of Canada for his contribution to mass media. ■

WINNIPEG

Dave Barber

Bedtime stories take on a new meaning in director Jeff McKay's documentary about the role of the bed in human culture. Traditionally associated with "promiscuity, slothfulness and lazy people," McKay says there are a lot of high-achieving people who worked out of their beds, including Marcel Proust, Mark Twain, John Milton, Sibelius, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and a woman in Beverly Hills who is owner of the patent for the push-up bra. Kent Martin is producing for the NFB. Buffalo Gal Pictures is co-producing a new feature-length documentary about the life of the late Winnipeg-born jazz guitarist Lenny Breau. Shooting will begin in the late summer in Nashville, New York, Los Angeles and Winnipeg. Winnipeg writer Larry Krotz travelled to Africa to document an exciting discovery by a group of Winnipeg doctors who have discovered a small group of prostitutes working out of a slum in Nairobi who have seemingly developed an immunity to the HIV virus. The Winnipeg Film Group recently premiered one of the strongest collection of shorts in recent memory. Three of the films have been invited to the Montreal World Film Festival—Patrick Lowe's *Gerald the Genie*, Gord Wilding's *Rapture* and Kathryn Martin's *Through My Eyes*. Other titles include Barry Gibson's hilarious portrait of UFO and psychic researchers, *A Question of Reality*; Noam Gonick's gay steamboat interpretation of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike entitled *1919*; and Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan's naughty take on a 1950s housewife led astray, *Good Citizen: Betty Baker*. During the recent shooting of a new Guy Maddin short in the Winnipeg Film Group studio, the office staff were greeted every morning by a rooster crowing every 10 minutes. Entitled *The Cock Crew*, the eight-minute short is based on two Herman Melville short stories, "I and My Chimney" and "Cock-A-Doodle-Do." Winnipeg filmmaker Carole O'Brien has been invited to the Director's Lab program at the Canadian Film Centre. O'Brien is the first Manitoban to be invited to attend the program. Her films include *The Piano Lesson* and *Motus Maestro*. *Crime Wave*'s director John Paizs has been signed on as production designer for Marble Island Pictures' *Push*. Tanya Allen (*The Newsroom*) and Matthew Ferguson (*Lilies and Love and Human Remains*) have been signed as the principal cast in this story of a young woman whose everyday life takes second place to a compulsive need to find her abusive father. *Push* will be directed by Jeff Erbach (*Soft Like Me*). And finally, animator-extraordinaire Richard Cordell (*The Cat Came Back*) is halfway through a new film, *Strange Invaders*, about the effect newborn children have on the lives of their parents. ■

Jean-Claude Lauzon 1953 - 1997

