

East Coast

As the smoke cleared from the 17th Atlantic Film Festival, where, as expected home-town hero Thom Fitzgerald walked away with most of the awards for his masterpiece, *The Hanging Garden*, a clearer picture of the booming East Coast film, television and video scene emerged. It's a rising tide right across the region, with particular strength in New Brunswick. Major features that landed in the province include Charles Jarrott's (*Anne of the Thousand Days*) wicked black comedy, *The Secret Life of Algernon*, filmed in Moncton and Saint John, and Richard P. Rogers fascinating PBS costume docudrama, *A Midwives Tale*, shot in King's Landing outside of Fredericton. From the northeast of the province comes Tony Larder with *Unspoken*, a completely unexpected indie 16mm feature that sees the emergence of an important new writer/director. Larder shot *Unspoken* mostly in and around the small mining community of Bathurst using a cast of young actors from a local theatre troupe he worked with over a couple of years. He shot some additional footage and edited in Charlottetown, P.E.I. Using three interlinked stories, which explore Raymond Carveresque territory of lush landscapes and lost souls, *Unspoken* achieves a convincingly poetic tone and is a tough, gutsy first feature that achieves a real sense of universality. The aimless and drifting young men and women characterized in the film could come from almost any small town in North America. Lulu Keating's *Romancing the Odds*, made under the guise of a gambling-recovery video for the province of Nova Scotia, is an imaginative and playful experiment with the "industrial" form. Keating's next project is for the History Channel and is about the notorious Halifax madam, Ada MacAllum. The History Channel will also broadcast a documentary of the Springhill mining disaster from *The Acadian Connection* director Monique LeBlanc. P.E.I.'s Donna Davies has just wrapped shooting on her NFB portrait of female psychics entitled *Kitchen Goddess*, and Halifax's Meredith Ralston is posting her examination of the battle between Liberal Mary Clancy and NDP leader Alexa MacDonough filmed during the most recent federal election. Ralston is also filming the progress of newly elected Dartmouth MP political neophyte Wendy Lill, Canada's first playwright member of Parliament. And finally, Newfoundland's Rosemary House has been commuting between St. John's and Halifax for her *Rain, Drizzle and Fog* project. Editing in Nova Scotia and shooting in Newfoundland, it's a film about the experience of living on the extreme northeastern tip of North America in the continent's oldest city in the wake of the 500th anniversary of Giovanni Caboto's famous voyage.

Ron Foley Macdonald



Quebec

Big-budget American extravaganzas, major co-productions and *films d'auteurs* are what seem to constitute the fabric of Quebec production these days. Kick-starting one of the most impressive seasons in recent memory was the biggest film shoot in North America this year, Brian De Palma's *Snake Eyes*, starring Nicolas Cage, which invaded the old Montreal Forum for three months from July to October, giving jobs to over 200 Québécois technicians. The same period also marked the return of Quebec prodigal son, Yves Simoneau, "lured" back home by Filmline's Nicolas Clermont to direct *Free Money*, an American-style thriller with Charlie Sheen, Mira Sorvino and Marlon Brando. Also in town in October was French filmmaker Claude Lelouch, who had nothing but praises for Quebec crews while shooting his latest, *Après tout...et même plus*, co-produced by Montreal-based SDA Productions. Another international co-production, François Girard's *The Red Violin*, probably is the most eagerly awaited Canadian film of 1998. With Toronto's Rhombus Media at the helm once again, the film follows the journey through four centuries and five countries of a 17th-century Italian violin, as it finds its way to modern-day Montreal. Girard, along with his impressive all-star cast (including Samuel L. Jackson, Colm Feore, Monique Mercure and Greta Scacchi) are clearly headed for Cannes. Certainly, all this big-time action is proving to be very stimulating for our film industry. So far, rumour says, the 1998 vintage will be exceptionally good. First in line for release early next year is Paul Tana's latest Italian-Canadian chronicle, *Le Rêve de Joe*, starring Tana regular Tony Nardi. Veteran filmmaker Jacques Leduc is currently in postproduction on *L'Âge de brasse*, a Canada-France co-production starring renowned French actress Annie Girardot as an aging humanitarian revisiting her past. Set for a spring 1998 release, *Vivre!*, the latest urban tale from *Eldorado's* acclaimed director Charles Binamé, combines the work of many top Quebec talents, including celebrated author/screenwriter Monique Proulx, up-and-coming singing sensation Lhasa de Sela and especially award-winning actresses Pascale Montpetit and Anne-Marie Cadieux. Cadieux also appears in Robert Lepage's latest, *Nô*, a low-budget comedy set in 1970 in Osaka at the time of its World Fair and in a Quebec torn apart by the October crisis. As usual, Lepage shot in relative secrecy and the film should be ready in the spring, in time for the festival rounds.

Claire Valade