

# SEA

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Margaret Perry

## East Coast Montreal

The official opening party for the massive, four-studio complex Electropolis on the Halifax waterfront, marked a new era for East Coast filmmaking. Almost 3,000 people packed themselves into the former electrical generation station. The

studio has already snagged several major bookings, including Thom Fitzgerald's *Beefcake*, the follow-up to his hugely successful *The Hanging Garden*, the musical variety *Celtic Electric*, and 20 more one-hour episodes of Salter Street's *The Lexx: Tales From the Dark Zone*. One of Electropolis's studios can actually be flooded, making it one of the few in North America that can be used for the expected rush of *Titanic* clones. The success of Cameron's epic, which was partially shot in Halifax, is expected to bring a bonanza of international production to the Atlantic region... Local filmmakers have been moving into drama lately, expecting new opportunities from Baton Broadcasting's commitment to more East Coast programming in the wake of its takeover of the CTV network. Former Atlantic Film Festival artistic director Johanna Montgomery has accepted the challenge of being Baton's Atlantic program development officer... Fredericton, N.B., witnessed the long-awaited premiere of Erroll Williams's documentary on the first black NHL player, Willie O'Ree. O'Ree, an East Coast sports legend now living in California, played for the Boston Bruins in the early 1960s. Another East Coast film dealing with cultural differences, the NFB-produced *Bronwen and Yaffa: Moving Towards Tolerance*, recently won the prestigious Japan Foundation President's Prize at the 24th International Educational Program Contest. Director Peter d'Entremont and producer Mike Mahoney, along with the two young women of the title, were filmed over a five-day period by a Japanese crew as they workshopped the film in local schools... Newfoundland finally got an indigenous feature underway this winter with John Doyle's *Extraordinary Visitor*. Revisiting a short of the same name from more than 10 years ago, the film tells the story of a religious figure dropped in the middle of contemporary St. John's. Mary Walsh and Andy Jones head the cast... As a new era begins in the booming East Coast scene, another just ended with the passing of pioneer filmmaker Margaret Perry. Perry, who made travelogues, industrials and promotional films from the 1930s up until the 1960s, shot, directed, wrote and edited almost 50 films virtually by herself, working out of Halifax for various government departments. One of the few women directors of her time (making her a contemporary of Ida Lupino and Maya Daren), Perry has a major prize named after her at the Atlantic Film Festival for Best Nova Scotia Film. Perry was 91.

**Ron Foley Macdonald**

Over the last few months, as Louis Saïa's *Les Boys* hit Quebec screens with a bang, Quebecers' overwhelming adoration for their national sport reached a truly unheard of magnitude. The film's premise is simple enough: every Monday night, 11 ordinary men leave their women and jobs behind to meet and play a mean game of pickup hockey. *Les Boys*, the feature debut from master sketch comedy writer Saïa, marks the birth of a new cultural phenomenon. Since its release in December 1997, the film has become a multiple record breaker. Some statistics? The film's premiere marked the opening of the Quartier Latin Cinemas in Montreal, Canada's largest movie complex, playing in 17 theatres simultaneously. An unprecedented 52 prints were launched in the province, from Hull to Labrador City, quickly increasing to 65 prints over the holiday season. At press time, box office had reached \$4.6 million in Quebec alone. *Les Boys* has become the highest grosser in Quebec film history, beating out the previous number one, Robert Ménard's *Cruising Bar*, which maxed out at \$3.4 million in 1989. Last but not least, *Les Boys* now ranks third in the very select club of top Quebec grossers among "French" films (original or dubbed versions), after *Le Titanic* and *Le Parc jurassique*. By the time you read this article, it is estimated that the film will have reached the \$5-million mark. *Les Boys* is already playing to very strong audiences in Moncton, N.B., and, if all goes well, should be released in the rest of the country in the coming months... Having said all that, Louis Saïa's saga is not the only film occupying the headlines, and 1998 will indeed be an interesting year for Quebec cinema. *La Déroute*, Paul Tana's latest Canadian-Italian chronicle, opened *Rendez-vous du cinéma Québécois* last year. The film stars Tony Nardi and Michèle-Barbara Pelletier as a father and his daughter caught in a love/hate relationship. As always, Tana's sensitive touch works wonders. Another director known for his sensitive portrayals of Quebec slice of life, famed cinematographer/director Michel Brault, is back at work on his latest, a historical drama called *Quand je serai parti...vous vivrez encore*, which tackles the same topic as Pierre Falardeau's troubled project *15 février 1839*, namely the Patriots and the 1837 Rebellion. Featuring a stellar cast headed by television star Francis Reddy, the film is also a true family affair, with Brault's son Sylvain at the helm as cinematographer and daughter Anouk producing with veteran producer Claudio Luca.

**Claire Valade**



Les Boys