



## Toronto

For years Toronto director Jerry Ciccoritti (*Paris, France*) had been wanting to make a movie based on his Italian-Canadian experiences. His dream came true when the script for *Boy Meets Girl* fell on his lap. Set in Toronto's Little Italy—the College Street one—*Boy Meets Girl* is a modern-day fairy tale about a spell cast on an Italian waitress (Emily Hampshire) and a cynical writer (Sean Astin), neither of whom speak the other's language. The film also stars Joe Mantegna and Kate Nelligan. "When I first got the script and I read it, I was charmed, but I thought it was very thin," says Ciccoritti from the set of the film. "Not shallow, but thin. I thought I'd like to do it and I started some notes for a rewrite, deepening the character conflicts and adding subplots. Then I realized that this was the wrong approach. Rather than digging below the surface, the script needed to be decorated. I accepted the simplicity and started to decorate it like a big, beautiful cake."... The Alliance of Canadian Cinema Television and Radio Artists welcomed Heritage Minister Sheila Copps's announcement that the federal government will review existing Canadian feature-film policy. Provincial funding for films has been reduced considerably, especially in Ontario where funding for the Ontario Film Development Corp. was cut sharply in 1996. Copps promised to pay special attention to the financial support for Canadian films and the lack of screen time that American-owned Canadian exhibitors give them once they're made... Six Ontario communities each received a \$5,000 donation from the province's film, television and commercial production industry recently as part of the Thank You Toronto/Ontario campaign. Each of the six areas had been featured in numerous film, television and commercial production shoots in 1997... Although the temperatures have dropped in T.O., the filming schedule hasn't. Currently shooting in and around the city are John Mackenzie's *Aldrich Ames: America Betrayed* starring Timothy Hutton; James Foley's *The Corruptor* starring Mark Wahlberg and Chow Yun-Fat; Peter Bogdanovich's *Naked City II* starring Scott Glenn and Courtney B. Vance; Christopher Menaul's *Passion of Ayn Rand* starring Helen Mirren and Eric Stoltz; Mike Newell's *Pushing Tin* starring John Cusack and Billy Bob Thornton; and Gail Harvey's *Striking Poses* starring Shannen Doherty and Colm Feore, based on a script by Michael Stokes.

Angela Baldassarre

## Winnipeg

Cheryl Ashton, former head of Manitoba Motion Pictures Industry Assoc. (MMPIA), is the new executive director of the Edmonton-based National Screen Institute (NSI). A very astute woman, with sharp fund-raising skills, she accomplished much in her three years at MMPIA—setting up a five-year strategic plan, crew and new media training programs, and a film-and-video production tax credit. Ashton worked hard to increase the profile of the industry in the province, crediting strong support from the provincial Conservative government. She was sought out by the board of the NSI after Jan Miller moved to Halifax. If all goes well, the NSI might be moving to Winnipeg. The MMPIA and other Winnipeg groups made a pitch to the board in January. The NSI will reach its decision in mid-March. Since Ralph Klein's government seems to be doing its best to eliminate all independent filmmaking from the province, will the last filmmaker to leave Alberta please turn out the lights... Local Heroes 98 has accepted two films from Winnipeg filmmakers—Gary Yates's satire of a small town tourist, *The Big Pickle*, and Carole O'Brien's *Picture When...* Jeff Erbach's new six-minute film *Under Chad Valley* (to be blown up to 35mm) promises to be as creepy as *Soft Like Me*, which recently played at the San Sebastian Horror and Fantasy Film Festival. During the shoot for *Under Chad Valley*, two kids in priest-like robes stood by two-and-a-half metre cow carcasses while butchers covered in blood walked in and out of the room... *Epiphany Rules*, a new half-hour directed by Paula Kelly and produced by Liz Jarvis of Buffalo Gal Pictures, was shot in early February. It's a dark coming-of-age story in which the fates of three people collide in a cloud of unrequited love... Two indie features are nearing completion: Caelum Vatnsdal's long-awaited 82-minute *Black as Hell, Strong as Death, Sweet as Love*, which is the story of dysfunctional relationships; and Adam Rodin's *Hand* is the story of three slackers who help out a sexually harassed ice-cream store clerk. According to insiders, Rodin has already set up screenings in New York and Los Angeles in a search for distributors.

Dave Barber

**Jerry Ciccoritti's *Boy Meets Girl* with Joe Mantegna and Kate Nelligan.**



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