



François Girard's *The Red Violin*

Winnipeg

Winnipeg filmmakers have been racking up prizes at Canadian festivals. Noam Gonick's subversive take on the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, *1919*, won Best Canadian Short at last June's Toronto Worldwide Short Film Festival. Gary Yates's *The Big Pickle* won a special jury prize at the Yorkton Festival, while his half-hour TV drama, *Harlan and Fiona*, won Best Drama Under 30 Minutes. Lea Pool's beautifully shot documentary *Gabrielle Roy*, a coproduction between Winnipeg's Buffalo Gal Pictures and Les Productions de L'Impatiente of Montreal, won the Best History and Biography Program at the Banff Television Festival.... This past summer, in scorching July heat, Kiefer Sutherland shot *Woman Wanted* in Winnipeg. Scripted by Joanna Glass, the film features Sutherland, Holly Hunter, Michael Moriarity and Sutherland's mother, Shirley Douglas, in a story about a man and his son who fall for the same woman who responds to a help-wanted newspaper ad. Word on the street is that Sutherland was exceptionally nice to the film crew.... Getting back to his B movie roots, *Crime Wave* director John Paizs has been in Toronto shooting *Top of the Food Chain* co-written by Phil Bedard and Larry Lalonde.... A record number of people have been taking basic filmmaking workshops at the Winnipeg Film Group and learning crew-training skills through the MMPIA training program. The Winnipeg Film Group saw an almost 30 per cent increase in membership this past year and increased funding from the Canada Council for distribution.... *Guitar Visionary: The Lenny Breau Story* is finally underway. Lenny Breau's life story—he was acknowledged as one of the premier jazz guitarists of his generation who died tragically from a heroin overdose—makes an incredible subject for a documentary with all the elements of Bruce Weber's *Let's Get Lost*. The director is John Martin, a man with a rich background in CBC television current affairs programming and music production at MuchMusic.... Frustrated by a lack of financial support to complete his last independent project tentatively titled *The Funeral*, John Kozak (*Hell Bent*, *Dory*) is considering moving to Vancouver or the United States. It would be a loss to independent filmmaking in Winnipeg if Kozak packed his bags.... The National Screen Institute has finally opened up its Winnipeg office which will be used as a development centre for new programs. The Winnipeg version of Local Heroes will happen in early March, culminating in the Blizzard awards.

Dave Barber

Toronto

One of the most expensive Canadian films ever made is to open this year's Toronto International Film Festival. *The Red Violin*, directed by François Girard and based on a screenplay by Girard and Don McKellar, is budgeted at \$15 million and has a cast of thousands. "It's an epic," says producer Niv Fichman. "We needed to set the film in a prominent place in the festival and we hoped for opening night." A Canada/Italy coproduction, *The Red Violin*—which features an international cast that includes Samuel L. Jackson, Colm Feore, Sylvia Chang and Greta Scacchi—is set over four centuries and five countries and chronicles the journey of a violin that is mysteriously possessed by an immortal soul and passed from one owner to the next. "It's a commercial film, very romantic and uplifting," says Fichman. "It leaves a positive feeling." Also featured at this year's festival are Don McKellar's directorial debut, *Last Night*, starring McKellar and Sandra Oh as individuals contemplating how to spend their last night on Earth; Denis Villeneuve's *Un 32 août sur terre*, about a woman's (Pascale Bussières) reawakening following a car accident; and Jerry Ciccoritti's urban love story set in Toronto's Little Italy, *Boy Meets Girl*, with Kate Nelligan and Joe Mantegna.... The newly formed Alliance Atlantis is venturing out into international coproductions with *The Taste of Sunshine*, currently shooting in Budapest. Starring Ralph Fiennes, and written and directed by Istvan Szabo, the film details three generations of a family's economic rise and fall. "I have been hoping to work with Istvan Szabo since the beginning of my producing career, and with Ralph Fiennes since I first saw him on screen," says Robert Lantos who's coproducing with Andras Hamori. "I am particularly delighted that we have all embarked together on a project that is close to my heart".... Features that are wrapping up shoots in Toronto include: Robert Greenwald's *Abbie!* starring Vincent D'Onofrio and Janeane Garofalo; Troy Duffy's *The Boondock Saints* starring Willem Dafoe and Billy Connolly; and Charles Winkler's *Marciano*, starring Jon Favreau and George C. Scott.

Angela Baldassarre