

# FROM SEA TO SEA

## Toronto

During the hustle and bustle of the Toronto film fest, Alexandra Raffé announced that she would be returning to the private sector after a four-year stint as the head of the Ontario Film Development Corp.(OFDC). The announcement slipped by almost without notice, and knowing Raffé's modest style, this was probably deliberate. *The Toronto Star* picked up on the story in November, accrediting dark motives to the departure, but still no acknowledgment of Raffé's considerable accomplishments while head of the OFDC. As the producer of such contemporary Canadian classics as *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing* and *Zero Patience*, she accepted the position out of an old-fashioned notion of public service and was immediately handed the logistical nightmare of implementing the brutal 1995 cuts imposed by Ontario Premier Mike Harris. Almost overnight, the most successful equity-investment film-production program this country has ever seen was gone. But not, surprisingly, was Raffé. She stayed on tenaciously to meet, whenever she got the chance, Queen's Park bureaucrats to hold onto whatever she could for the corporation. In the end, film production became a dead issue but the OFDC stayed alive administering an impressive array of film-tax credits and implementing its Calling Card Programme, a program for entry-level shorts cosponsored with the private sector. The first Calling Card screening was held in the fall. Raffé was in large part responsible for saving the OFDC from the same fate as the AMPDC and she is to be thanked for hanging in when the going got rough and doing the right thing.... On the production front, Jeremy Podeswa has just finished work on his second feature, *The Five Senses*, with Daniel MacIvor, Gabrielle Rose, Pascale Brassières and Molly Parker. Camelia Frieberg is producing. Ron Mann is completing work on the feature documentary, *Grass*, an examination of marijuana prohibition. Mann also served as executive producer on *Brakhage*, Jim Shedden's tribute to American avant-garde film icon, Stan Brakhage. Post has begun on *Lost Aviators* (working title), David Wellington's latest feature with a script by Semi Chellas and a cast that includes Marsha Mason and Lothaire Bluteau. Susan Caven is producing for Accent Entertainment.... In early 1999, the Toronto International Film Festival's film circuit will release a brand new print of Don Shebib's classic *Goin' Down the Road*. Recently restruck by TMN, The National Archives of Canada and Famous Players, the film will be distributed across the country.

**Paul Townend**

## Winnipeg

The 35 per cent provincial tax credit has helped fuel an explosion of film production in Winnipeg in the last year. More film crews have been trained through MMPIA's training workshop program than ever before. Although the films are largely commercial and MOW's, they have been providing much needed work so local filmmakers can stay in the province. With all this increased film activity there are now two serious proposals to build a new production studio. Hopefully, with all this activity, Winnipeg filmmakers will still find time for their own ideas and retain the spirit of independent filmmaking.... The Walker Art Centre in Minneapolis and Video Pool in Winnipeg are developing an exciting touring package to reflect the explosion of new experimental video in Canada, including artists such as Steve Reinke, Doug Melnyk, Dennis Day, Robert Morin and Lorraine Dufour. Organized by curator Jenny Lion, the programs will open at the Walker centre in January 2000 and tour the United States and Canada.... Matt Holm is finishing up the picture cut for *The Lost Bundejjord Expedition*, about the turn-of-the-century survivors of the first all-Scandinavian expedition across Lake Winnipeg.... Guy Maddin is doing pick-up shots and hopes to complete two shorts, *The Cock Crew* and *The Maldorer Tygers*. Maddin is currently teaching a film production course at the University of Manitoba. He recently travelled to New York to introduce a screening of *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* to honour the anniversary of his U.S.-based distributor, Zeitgeist Distribution.... Gene Walz's new book *Cartoon Charlie: The Life and Times of Charlie Thorson* sold out at the launch at The Ottawa International Animation Festival. Thorson was an Icelandic-Canadian artist and illustrator from Winnipeg who moved to L.A. and worked for Disney and Warner Bros. and MGM.... Shooting and editing is finished on the comedy *The Top of the Food Chain*. Director John Paizs says it was a thrill working with high-calibre Canadian and American actors including Peter Donaldson, Campbell Scott and Tom Everett Scott. Paizs is just one of several people involved with this project which is cowritten by Phil Bedard and Larry Lalonde. *Top of the Food Chain* is to be distributed in Canada by Red Sky.... Shot in digital video, John Paskievich's *The Gypsies of Svinia* premiered in early December. With the assistance of CIDA, Paskievich is getting a 16mm print struck which he hopes to take back to Svinia and screen for the gypsy community.

**Dave Barber**

*The Five Senses* director Jeremy Podeswa.

