



Rick Mercer in *Made in Canada*

MONTREAL

A while ago, a group of professional associations of artists and producers banded together under the evocative name La Grande nuit du cinéma and dreamed it was about time for Quebec to get its very own movie-award show. And thus the Jutra Awards were born, an award show aimed at Quebec films and their makers with no steep admission fee for producers to submit their films (unlike the Genies). Ten extremely different features competed for top honours in 12 categories in the Jutras' first edition, held in Montreal March 7th. François Girard's spellbinding *The Red Violin*, already a big winner at this year's Genies, led the pack with a whopping 11 nominations, including Best Film, Best Director, Best Actress for Sylvia Chang and Best Screenplay for Girard and Don McKellar. Following closely were Denis Villeneuve's and Manon Briand's refreshing first features, *Un 32 août sur terre* and *2 secondes*, each nominated for 7 Jutras, including Best Film and Best Director. Strangely, ever present Pascale Bussières, the star of *32 août*, was absent from the Best Actress category, leaving the spotlight to shine on Chang, *2 secondes*'s Charlotte Laurier, *Le Coeur au poing*'s Pascale Montpetit or *C'À ton tour*, Laura Cadieux's Ginette Reno. The Best Actor spot was an even more eclectic group, with *32 août*'s nuanced actor Alexis Martin, *Les Boys II*'s funny man Marc Messier, iconoclast Jean Pierre Lefebvre's little-seen film *Aujourd'hui ou jamais*'s veteran actor Marcel Sabourin, and *2 secondes*'s stubborn Italian Dino Tavarone. Apart from Girard, Villeneuve and Briand, the fourth nominee in the Best Director category was Robert Lepage, for his wickedly hilarious look at the October Crisis, *Nô...* Other films and events making the news this Spring? Léa Pool's very personal *Emporte-moi*, opened the 17th annual Rendez-vous du cinéma québécois in February. Highly autobiographical, *Emporte-moi* tells the bittersweet story of a young girl, played by newcomer Karine Vanasse, who comes of age in 1963 Montreal, facing her difficult heritage passed on to her by her father, an exiled Jewish poet, played by Emir Kusturica's favourite actor, Miki Monojlovic. And that's just the beginning, for 1999 should be another big year for Quebec movies, with the releases of such diverse films as Michel Brault's *Quand je serai parti...vous vivrez encore*, Richard Ciupka's labyrinthian police thriller *Le Dernier souffle*, starring popular actor Luc Picard, and Johanne Prigent's *Fugue*, her eagerly awaited follow-up to *Les Amoureuses*.

Claire Valade

FROM SEA TO SEA

THE EAST COAST

The cancellation of Nova Scotia's first hour-long dramatic series, *Black Harbour*, was the big news on the East Coast this winter. In its third season, the finely crafted show suffered increasingly from disappointing ratings due to poor scripting and increasingly hard-to-follow story lines. The crew, however, have already migrated to the new series which are popping up all around the region. In Moncton, former Nova Scotia Film Development Corp. head Roman Bittman and former Atlantic NFB chief Marilyn Belec are furiously working on *Daring and Grace*, a teen detective show which was formerly known as *Dick and Tracey*. Shooting in Moncton's industrial park with a 13-episode commitment from the CBC and a second window from YTV, *Daring and Grace* is New Brunswick's first continuing drama series, undoubtedly benefiting from that province's generous 40 per cent tax credit.... Production for younger audiences in the region comes from a strong tradition that boasts successful programs such as the CBC's still-going strong *Street Sense*, Cochrane Entertainment's *Theodore Tugboat* and *Pit Pony*, and Salter Street's popular *Emily of New Moon*. Salter Street's latest effort is *Pirates*, a spiffy puppet-and-live-action entry that is currently in production at Electropolis Studios until April. Forty 15-minute episodes are planned with *Fraggle Rock* veteran Wayne Moss directing from Jeff Rosen's inventive scripts. This all dovetails nicely, schedule-wise, with plans for the next instalment of Rick Mercer's *Made in Canada* and, of course, the next round of the science-fiction extravaganza, *Lexx: The Dark Zone Stories*. Rumour has it that soon enough we'll all be working for Salter Street.... Just before Brian Tobin called a rare winter election in Newfoundland, he announced a mixed bag of goodies, which included a 40 per cent tax credit to match New Brunswick's. It might have been designed to entice back the Hollywood megaproject, *The Shipping News*. The troubled production, estimated at \$60 to \$80 million U.S., has gotten cold feet about a daunting mid-winter shoot on the Rock. While author E. Annie Proulx has been pushing for an authentic Newfoundland setting, producers have been tilting toward an easier shoot in Nova Scotia, while the star, John Travolta, wants to shoot in Maine where he has a permanent residence. What's at stake is the possibility of landing an *English Patient*-style serious literary project with plenty of popular crossover appeal. It's a big fish. Let's just hope it's not the one that gets away.

Ron Foley Macdonald