

East Coast

As the smoke clears from the busiest year yet on the East Coast film scene, the writers, directors and crews that were tied up on outside productions have finally turned to their own projects. A rush of dramatic shorts and documentaries are now underway in various (mostly interior) locations during the dreaded seasonal lull. Nova Scotia's acclaimed playwright Michael Melski (*Hockey Mom*, *Hockey Dad*) is at work on his first film entitled *Serenade*. The down-and-dirty, half-hour drama is the story of an unlikely duo of ex-cons who fall in with a plucky waitress at a notorious dead-end diner. Melski, a graduate of the Canadian Film Centre, has amassed an enormous amount of good will for *Serenade*, bagging some of the top crew members in the province, all of whom are anxious to work with one of the East Coast's rising cinema stars.... Meanwhile, Iain MacLeod has finished principal photography on his fourth film, a drama called *A Celtic Ghost Story*. Having just completed his first season writing for the CBC's flagship kiddie consumer show, *Street Sense*, MacLeod can put his energies toward postproduction and, ultimately, his dream of completing Nova Scotia's first Gaelic-language feature. His *Street Sense* writing colleague, Ian Johnston, has just seen local actor Christian Murray wrap photography on his (Johnston's) wacky script *Kitty Killer*. Murray, a charter member of the popular *Jest* in Time physical comedy troupe, directed the half-hour comedy, issuing guarantees that no kittens were harmed during the shoot. Johnston has also just received word that the Comedy Network will pick up 13 episodes of his pseudo-biography TV series, *Liography*. Veteran deadpan artist Leslie Nielson has expressed interest in hosting. For Johnston, all this screen writing sure beats writing TV columns for the *Halifax Daily News*.... Two other *Daily News* staffers have also received the much-desired go-ahead for their spiffy satire, *The Daily Blade*. Brian Flinn and Susan Hiller saw their pilot, produced by David Coole, get a rapturous screening at last year's Atlantic Film Festival. Now it looks like they'll be ransacking their files for story ideas in order to fill up six more episodes.... From the Rock, word comes that one major feature has completed photography while another has lost its third director. Rosemary House (*Rain*, *Drizzle and Fog*) has wrapped production on her first feature, *Violet*; on the other hand, the much-delayed shoot of the film version of Annie Proulx's *The Shipping News* is off once again with the news that writer/director Billy Bob Thornton has fled for the greener pastures of Hollywood. He joins Fred Schepisi and Lasse Hallstrom in that not-so-exclusive club of directors scared off by the book's growing reputation as unfilmable.

Ron Foley Macdonald

FROM SEA 2 SEA



Pascale Bussi eres in *La Beaut e de Pandore*

Montreal

Screened at the opening of the 18th *Rendez-vous du cin ma qu b cois* (February, 2000), Charles Binam 's long-awaited latest opus, *La Beaut e de Pandore*, is a tale about solitude and redemption. Shot in his characteristic hand-held style, it is the director's third and final installment in his urban trilogy, which includes *Eldorado* and *Le Coeur au poing*. *Pandore* stars Binam 's regular Pascale Bussi eres as an emotionally broken woman in search of a man to bring with her in a downward spiral. She crosses paths with Vincent (Jean-Fran ois Casabonne, one of Quebec's finest stage actors), whose successful but passionless life will be shattered by Bussi eres's vengeful *Pandore*.... Also presented at the *Rendez-vous* was *Le Petit Ciel*, the much-anticipated feature film debut of Jean-S bastien Lord, son of popular Quebec director Jean-Claude Lord. Generally well-received by both the press and public, *Le Petit ciel*, a quirky comedy about God, Jesus, death and modern-day religion, shows a very personal style and vision, which demonstrates a marked difference between father and the son's approach to filmmaking, while opening up a promising career for the latter.... Lastly, a few words not about a film, but rather about the arrival of an interesting new event on the Canadian film-festival horizon. North America's only exclusively pan-American cinematography and multimedia event, Quebec City's *Images du Nouveau Monde* wishes to shake up the old capital's movie-going habits for five days in March every year, starting with this year. Headed by respected film critic Yves Rousseau, the Festival's first edition boasts, among others, a tribute to Fran ois Girard, a selection of new-media works and a competitive section, including 12 films from eight countries. Canada is well-represented with four films in competition: *Here Am I*, by first-time Montreal filmmakers Joshua Dorsey and Douglas Naimer; documentarian Sylvie Groulx's latest, *  l'ombre d'Hollywood*; Allan Moyle's Nova Scotia-based coming-of-age tale, *New Waterford Girl*; and another first film, *Un petit vent de panique*, by Pierre Greco, the first feature to be shot entirely in Quebec City in 10 years. An impressive jury composed of author Neil Bissoondath, filmmaker/actress Micheline Lanct t and critic Andr  Roy takes on the difficult task of choosing the most deserving films. Overall, a modest, realistic first year but one that shows a great deal of promise and a breath of fresh air for Quebec City's cinematic life.

Claire Valade