



John Paskievich's
My Mother's Village

Winnipeg

Several new exciting documentary projects are in the works by Winnipeg filmmakers. John Kozak (*Hellbent, Dory*) returned from a road trip across the United States doing research and interviews for *The World According to Comic Books*. He landed the last interview with veteran comic-book artist Gil Kane in Miami just before Kane's death in January. Kane drew *The Green Lantern*, *The Hulk* and *Captain Marvel* comics in the 1960s and 1970s. Kozak also hopes to interview Will Eisner

(creator of *The Spirit*) Julius Schwartz (DC comics editor from 1944 to 1986) and Sheldon Moldoff (creator of the *Hawkman* comics). The film is being shot in HDTV and traces the development of comic-book art from its roots in the pulps and newspaper strips of the 1920s and 1930s. A passionate collector, Kozak has over 35,000 comic books in his collection. He says, unlike Ron Mann's previous *Comic Book Confidential*, he wants to concentrate on the phenomena of comic-book collectors. "They don't think they're collecting trivia. They're collecting art".... John Paskievich (*The Gypsies of Svinia, Sedna*), a pioneer in creating original documentaries on the spiritual life of other cultures, is shooting a new film on digital video about the tragic history of post-Second World War Ukrainian immigrants and how memories of those events have impacted on them and their children. Paskievich says, "It's about what it means to grow up as the son or daughter of Ukrainian immigrants after the Second World War. It's about crossing borders from one culture to another." The working title is *My Mother's Village*.... Paula Kelly (*Personal Alarm, Epiphany Rules*) is researching and writing *The Notorious Mrs. Armstrong* about a key activist whose contributions to the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike have been overlooked. Helen Armstrong was the 11th strike leader of the original 10 ring leaders. "Her role has slipped off the history page because historians haven't been very interested in the role of women in the labour movement," Kelly says. Armstrong fought for a minimum wage law and had an impressive career as a union organizer.... Finally, Credo Entertainment Corp. is assembling *Head Over Wheels*, a 13-part series on women's recollections about growing up with the car. Executive producer Andrew Koster says the subject has really opened a nerve. "The car is the major household appliance," says Koster. In the research stage, series director Shereen Jerrett (*Kid Nerd, Dog Stories*) contacted over 300 women who told stories about pioneering women race-car drivers, women as long-haul truck drivers and women having babies in their cars.

Dave Barber

Toronto

During the 1990s, Telefilm Canada began to cutback its presence at major international film festivals such as Cannes and Berlin. Budgetary restraints made it impossible to keep up the wining and dining and festival schoomzing that typified the go-go 1980s. When aspiring Canadian actor/filmmaker Paris Roger attended Cannes in 1997 with his short *Joseph the Elephant Man*, essentially an extended promo for a proposed feature, he found no support whatsoever from the government agency. Discovering that he was not the only Canadian left stranded, he decided to do something about it. Returning home, he set up Film Canada, a nonprofit organization mandated to promote Canadian filmmakers and producers at Cannes. In 1998, he returned, this time with 14 films under his arm and his very own Canadian Pavilion located in International Village on the Croisette. Last year he went again, only this time with Kodak Canada as a major sponsor and 11 films to promote. In addition, as part of the deal with Kodak, Film Canada set up a cross-country promotional tour of colleges and universities to give the films exposure at home after the festival was over. This year Roger is at it again, with additional sponsors (he is working on Microsoft) and his own Internet company, filmon-line.com, which, for a small commission, will act as a source for filmmakers to display promotional clips to potential buyers on-line. On top of all this activity, the deal with Kodak Canada also includes a paid trip to Cannes for qualifying Canadian film students who are enrolled in a three-year program and have a letter of recommendation from their film professor. The students are given accommodation and a pass to the festival. Roger is proud to disclaim any government support for his activities and has provided a much-needed boost in an area where Canadian filmmakers have been traditionally weak—promoting their own products.... When *Film Canada Yearbook* publisher Pat Thompson died last year, she left behind a valuable archive of her activities with the Canadian Film Awards and the Film Societies of Canada. Typically, none of the institutions in Toronto which claim to support Canadian film, most notably the The Film Reference Library, was interested in the collection and it ended up at the National Archives in Ottawa, where it will remain inaccessible to all but the most determined researcher. The Film Reference Library became a part of the Toronto International Film Festival Group 10 years ago. It's claim to housing the the best collection of Canadiana this side of the Cinematheque Québécoise is seriously compromised by a lack of funding.

Paul Townend

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