

## TAKE ONE

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It's the 25th anniversary of the Toronto International Film Festival, née the Festival of Festivals, October 18, 1976. That first year I was a volunteer in the driver's pool. With all the revisionist history being written and recycled, the occasion gives me the opportunity to tell my own personal favourite festival anecdote.

As an aspiring filmmaker, I had managed to develop some properties and had made certain connections. I was working for Linda Beath at New Cinema, a small specialty distributor, under Martin Heath who was the film reviser. The festival was looking for help and I had driven cab. It was natural that I'd end up in the driver's pool and I was assigned a limousine. There was a lot of talk that first year of an invasion of Hollywood stars, but they failed to materialize. The local press was having a field day trashing the festival and some of the senior film critics had even left town. However, one luminous star of the first magnitude did slip into Toronto almost unnoticed to add lustre to that inaugural year—Jeanne Moreau.

The French star of *Jules et Jim*, *Via Maria!*, *Bay of Angels*, *Diary of a Chambermaid*, and one of the most beautiful women in cinema (in my humble opinion), was arriving the next day. She was at the festival to promote *Lumière*, a film she had written and directed. No one in the driver's pool seemed to know who she was. But I certainly did. *Jules et Jim* was considered one of the best of the French New Wave, and Moreau was the enigmatic object of desire. I had seen the film dozens of times and I was in love. I booked the pickup. The festival required the drivers to wear one of its jackets, a cheap red plastic thing with a logo. I would have none of it. I went home to get my best jacket and slacks and headed for the airport. I would know who she was and I brought the festival jacket along for identification.

When she came through the gate with her attendant she was looking for the red jacket. I approached. She was a bit weary, but I assured her with all the flattery in the world that I would take her to the hotel. I drove no more than the speed limit. Once at the hotel, I asked when to pick her up for the nightly gala party held down the road at Ontario Place and came back at the arranged time. I went up to the room, but she was not ready. She couldn't get a hand-held hair dryer, and the hotel staff could only offer the old-fashioned type down in the beauty shop. Moreau was furious that such a simple request was being thwarted; the staff were complaining that she was being "difficult." To diffuse the situation, I raced back home, which was in the downtown core, grabbed my hair dryer, and was back at the hotel in less than 15 minutes. I didn't drive at the speed limit.

I drove her to the party and picked her up the next day for a television appearance at the CTV studios, which are in the north end of the city. I waited until the taping was over and drove her back. Then two days later it was back to the airport where she returned the hair dryer and gave a swooning film fan a kiss on the cheek. Every time I tell this story, someone will inevitably say, "and you haven't washed that cheek since." Well, of course I did. And I still have the hair dryer but, unfortunately, the French beauty has not made another appearance at the festival.

For me, along with many others in the film business in Toronto, the festival has come to represent a natural and welcomed occurrence, the source of many warm memories. It has also become bloated, dominated by Hollywood and corporate interests. Its very success has caused its current alienation from the local film community, in stark contrast to the first few years which were loose, friendly and representative of the community. However, the Toronto new wave grew up with the festival, and its influence on development of English-Canadian cinema has been profound. It also provided me with a kiss I'll never forget. For such foolish things, I can forgive its more unpleasant trappings of success. Happy Birthday, TIFF. Thanks for the memories.

W. P. Wise