

by Cheryl Binning

# 101 Years of Kodak in Canada

Spying untapped opportunities in the Canadian marketplace, U.S.-based parent company Eastman Kodak set up shop in a downtown Toronto building in 1899 where a mere 15 employees cut and packaged film, fitted lenses to cameras and mixed photographic chemicals.

Today, 101 years later, Kodak Canada occupies more than 12 buildings at its headquarters in northwest Toronto and operates Canada-wide branches with a staff of over 1,600 employees. To cinematographers, directors and producers across the country, the Kodak name has become synonymous with film and filmmaking in Canada. Looking back, the company has played an integral role in shaping the evolution of film technologies and developing the creative talent pool through sponsorship of a long list of training efforts.

Kodak Canada places considerable emphasis on its research and development activities, which, according to its sales and marketing manager Colin Davis, are guided by filmmakers themselves, by testing prototypes among various DOPs and modifying its product based on suggestions provided by professionals working in the field. According to Fred Goodall, director of cinema operations, Kodak's most important R&D efforts over the past years are the introduction of T-grain technology with Kodak's EXP family of colour negative films and the launch of Vision print film with non-remjet polyester support. Breakthroughs in emulsion design undertaken by Kodak led to the development of the Vision line of film which shattered what was considered an unbreakable speed/sharpness/grain paradigm, resulting in films that raised the bar in sharpness and grain structure without compromising film speed or altering contrast and colour rendition.

In 1998, Kodak unveiled a new 800-speed negative film, the world's fastest colour-camera negative film designed for shooting in low-light situations, and in response to cinematographer requests for intensified black in their films and a darker look, it also launched Kodak Vision Colour Print Films 2383, specifically for filmmakers looking to project images with deeper black tones, brighter highlights and very saturated colours. Other recent developments include Kodak's hybrid imaging system—the Kodak Preview System—a simulation tool for experimenting with different looks, film stocks, filter packages and laboratory processing, which allows cinematographers to pre-visualize various creative options.

Recognizing that technology is only as good as the skill set of the people who use it, Kodak has a long history of supporting training organizations. These efforts target a range of levels, from students learning the craft to emerging filmmakers to professional development programs that upgrade the skills of industry members. Strongly rooted in its Ontario origins, Kodak is actively involved in a wide range of programs aimed at increasing the talent pool in the province and has, in fact, helped many of these training institutions get off the ground. For example, Kodak was one of the founding partners of the Canadian Film



Centre (CFC) and continues to provide film stock and expertise to CFC productions. It was an initial supporter of Women In Film and Television—Toronto, sponsoring an award that provides emerging filmmakers with stock for their next production. Kodak is also on board the Ontario Film Development Corp.'s Calling Card program which helps filmmakers produce their first half-hour film.

Kodak lends a guiding hand to the filmmakers of tomorrow through its support of Ryerson's Film Program and sponsoring Telefest, TVOntario's annual awards gala that honours post-secondary student filmmakers throughout Ontario. Kodak is involved in a long list of sponsorship activities throughout the rest of Canada, including The National Institute of Image and Sound in Montreal, the National Screen Institute's flagship Drama Prize program, which annually selects six teams of filmmakers from across Canada and provides them with cash and services to produce a short film, as well as supporting numerous events put on by producers associations across the country.

Raising the awareness of film and television production in Canada and recognizing the achievements of its talent is another crucial activity in the development of an indigenous industry. The company has contributed to this effort as a founding sponsor of the Academy of Cinema and Television and its National Apprenticeship Training Program; the Banff Television Festival; the film festivals in Vancouver and Toronto; the Bessies (the annual commercial awards); and for the past 10 years has sponsored the Canadian Society of Cinematographers Kodak New Century Award, which honours outstanding contributions to the art of cinematography.

The upcoming challenge for Kodak and filmmakers alike is found in the world of digital technology. Bridging the gap between the film and digital realm is where Kodak is currently focusing its efforts, says Goodall, specifically by developing convergent technologies and providing filmmakers with the tools to help them take advantage of the digital revolution. In this vein, Kodak has introduced a new type of hybrid film, the Kodak SFX200T Colour Negative Film, designed to intercut seamlessly with other Kodak colour-negative film used to record live-action footage for scenes adjacent to an effects shot. Kodak is also working on a digital cinema project to develop a high-quality digital universal cinema system. The changeover to digital cinema—the transmission and projections of images on the cinema screen using digital technology—will take time and considerable investment and require new systems to be created that make sense for filmmakers, distributors and exhibitors. The issues—creative, technical, financial—are numerous, and Kodak says it plans to leverage its knowledge base in the digital arena to develop and commercialize digital solutions to these problems.