



NATIONAL

The Fast and the Furious

The headline pretty well sums up a busy week for **Jefferson Mappin**, ACTRA's National Vice-President, and **Don Dudar**, National Organizer, ACTRA's two delegates attending the **Canadian Labour Congress's (CLC) 23rd Convention**, held in early June. Jefferson and Don went to hear, discuss and vote on issues affecting working families across Canada, and to launch phase two of ACTRA's national awareness campaign aimed at Canadian unions. They distributed an ACTRA bulletin titled **Make sure you're Going Union with Your Advertising and Videos** to 3,300 delegates representing unions from across Canada.

Don also attended the **Union Labels Conference** to raise ACTRA's concerns for inclusion in the Union Label's report to convention. These efforts will create more work opportunities for ACTRA members within the labour community.

The Union Labels Conference encourages unions to support union-manufactured products. The 8,000 affiliated unions of the CLC produce TV and radio ads, public service announcements and videos. In monitoring the production activity of Alberta unions over the past year, ACTRA's **Organizing Dept.** has found that some unions were inadvertently producing non-union, simply because these unions didn't know about ACTRA's jurisdiction and our collective agreements – a price we pay for having a low profile within the labour movement.

This problem is not isolated to Alberta, so ACTRA has committed to create greater awareness within the Canadian labour community to generate more work for our members. We're pleased to announce that the unions in Alberta that were contacted about producing non-union have apologized and pledged their commitment to use ACTRA performers in future productions.

In fact, ACTRA Calgary and Edmonton have already benefited from phase one of the campaign, which was directed at Alberta unions in April 2002. Several local union productions – including TV and radio ads, public service announcements and internet – have been produced under ACTRA's jurisdiction. The value of increasing ACTRA's profile within the labour community is more than just about networking; it's about jobs!

– *Don Dudar*
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Shame On Mattel

Mattel, the world's largest toy maker, had sales of \$4.8 billion last year but they can't afford to pay child performers industry standard rates. This is becoming a disturbing trend in our commercial industry, as companies such as **Mattel, Hasbro, Fisher Price** and others, who target children with their products, don't want to pay child performers according to Canadian commercial industry standards. **Footnote Belding** of Chicago, the ad agency for Mattel on a recent **Barbie** commercial shoot in Toronto,

told ACTRA that they needed "flexibility" making the commercial and did not like how our residuals worked.

The information ACTRA received on the Barbie shoot indicated that the children would receive \$2,500 for the shoot and a three year buyout. Under an ACTRA contract the same commercial for the

U.S. market would pay the performers over \$20,000. Parents should keep in mind that the exposure for their child on a big U.S. commercial can make the performer undesirable for any other toy or child-oriented product shoots.

Children should not be treated as second-class performers. They deserve the same terms and conditions of the **National Commercial Agreement (NCA)** that are available to the majority of performers. The NCA sets commercial industry standards for wages and working conditions and is negotiated between ACTRA and the **Institute of Communications and Advertising (ICA)** and the **Association of Canadian Advertisers (ACA)**.

ACTRA will not stand by and see children exploited by advertisers, ad agencies, producers, casting directors or agents. ACTRA is determined to protect child performers, and in the recently renegotiated NCA, 10 of the 22 new pages cover provisions for children. This is an area where ACTRA will take whatever actions it deems necessary, including potentially lobbying government for tough legislation to protect children on sets not covered by ACTRA agreements.

Shame on Mattel and any other advertisers who don't treat children fairly.

– *Dan Mackenzie*
ACTRA National Organizer
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MONTREAL

90 Minutes of Organizing Creates 35 Jobs for Members

A tip from a talent agent and a lucky bus trip resulted in 35 jobs for ACTRA members in Montreal. The agent heard that a commercial – originally a union shoot – was going non-union and hiring background performers for cash. The production company, which happens to be signatory to the **National Commercial Agreement**, insisted that all was correct. They informed ACTRA that the commercial was union. They even hired a member to provide a voice-over. The company claimed, however, that a second spot for the same sponsor had been cancelled.



Don Dudar, ACTRA National Organizer; Ken Georgetti, President of the Canadian Labour Congress; and Jefferson Mappin, National Vice-President of ACTRA at the CLC's June Convention in Vancouver.

ACTRA Montreal was certainly suspicious, but without additional information the union would have difficulty pursuing the matter. On the bus ride into the office the next morning, I was considering how I could further investigate the commercial. To my surprise, the bus passed a yellow production sign with the name of the commercial spot. **Daintry Dalton**, Assistant Branch Rep – Commercials, and I showed up on set. Only one performer was present; a musician on a legitimate **AF of M** contract. However, we were able to confirm the location of a larger shoot the next day. The producer assured us that any performers, except the musicians on guild contracts, would be engaged under the ACTRA collective agreement.

This was definitely the easiest organizing effort so far. Converting non-union to union production usually takes weeks or months of investigation and pressure. This time we showed up on set with a smile and a few questions.

An hour-and-a-half of ACTRA staff time resulted in 35 members being hired as background performers on the commercial. That's about \$12,000 in the hands of our members.

SAG's Global Rule One Helps ACTRA Organize a Non-Union Film

In January 2002, industry contacts informed ACTRA Montreal about a non-union horror film called **Samhain**. A Montreal-based company is producing this project, which features several SAG members. Originally, the film was to be shot on location in Lithuania.

After I dropped by one of the Montreal auditions, production decided to audition in Toronto. Both ACTRA Montreal and ACTRA Toronto Performers sent notices to talent agents warning them about the film. The notices informed agents that ACTRA members will be disciplined if they work on the film. A warning to members also appeared in the ACTRA Montreal newsletter, **The Grapevine**.

By mid-March, 2002, we found out that **Samhain** was again slated for the Montreal area. I approached the producer about signing on to the **IPA**. After several fruitless conversations, no agreement was reached. At about that time, we also found out the names of the six U.S. performers hired for the film. After researching these performers and discovering that four of them were **SAG**

members, I called SAG's **Global Rule One** department.

The SAG staff was very cooperative in helping us bring this non-union film under ACTRA's jurisdiction. They contacted the agents of their members to solicit support. The agent of one of the SAG members sent a letter to the production demanding a confirmation that the project was ACTRA-signatory. On the same day that we received a copy of that letter, the producer called to say that he wanted to produce *Samhain* under the IPA. Our condition was that he cast most of the roles with ACTRA members, who all get paid as Principal Performers, regardless of the size of their role.



– Gary Saxe
ACTRA National Organizer
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Thirteen ACTRA members were hired to work on *Samhain*.

DIGITAL MEDIA

Digital Performers: aisforapple

Digital media provides great creative opportunities, work and revenue for performers. So, what are ACTRA members up to in digital media? *InterACTRA* provides an opportunity to highlight digital media projects that are made by and/or with ACTRA members.

A Is For Apple is an interactive digital installation at www.aisforapple.net by Halifax-based web artist **David Clark**. The installation explores what he calls “a hermeneutics or cryptography of the apple.” The site includes extensive flash animation exploring different anecdotes

and links between apple-related images. From Adam and Eve and the Beatles, to Apple computers and Isaac Newton, David has built a digital collage of the apple using animation, images and sound.

The voice behind the project is by ACTRA member **Neil Thompson**.

“I enjoyed it very much – it was the first voice-only work that I’ve done. I found it intriguing,” Neil said. “And it fit with my own fascination with delivery of auditory information,” he added. Neil says he has received recognition from [aisforapple](http://aisforapple.net). “People have said to me ‘you did the voice for that? That was a good match.’”

The site has done well for David who has since attended a web conference in England and has been invited to a festival in Brazil later this summer. Perhaps this success is due to David’s commitment to use professional talent in an environment where amateurish performances currently prevail.

Next issue, we’ll take a look at **The Seen**, a hilarious interactive flash animation feature produced by Toronto-based **Smiley Guys Studios** and starring **Don McKellar**.

If you have a cool project (big or small) to be considered for this space, contact me at tmaple@actra.ca.



– Thom Tapley
ACTRA National Policy
Advisor, Digital Media



ACTRA member
Neil Thompson –
the voice behind
aisforapple.net.



One of the interfaces from www.aisforapple.net by artist David Clark. The site’s voiceover is performed by ACTRA member Neil Thompson.