



I N T E R

Spring 2005

ACTRA

The Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists



CANADIAN FEATURE FILMS
The race to get ahead

— page 8



INSIDE:
**2005
Genie
Awards**



Thor Bishopric

Reflections on a dream role

Back in 1984, I spent the whole summer working on a feature film shot at an amusement park in Montreal. It was a great summer job. And it was an exciting time to be an actor as there was a fair amount of capital flowing into our industry. It seemed Canadian movies were destined to break out.

One afternoon on set, I mentioned to my co-star, (to this day one of Canada's most successful performers) that there was an ACTRA meeting that night and did he want to check it out with me. He didn't miss a beat. "Thor, ACTRA meetings aren't cool," he said. That comment stuck with me until I attended my first Montreal Council meeting 10 years later and realized I'd been misinformed. Not only was the experience of brainstorming with fellow working performers cool, but the creativity and the level of discourse were inspiring. I'd been an ACTRA member since I was four years old, but I never quite understood how it all worked. And when I found myself representing my branch at the national table a few months later, my wonderment about our union and the dedicated people who led it only grew.

I'm in a reflective mood about my relationship with ACTRA these days. At the

end of May, I will preside over my last National Council meeting as ACTRA President. I have served for six years – believe it or not, the longest period in office of a National President in ACTRA's history. The experience of leading this

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organization has been exhilarating and deeply rewarding. It's the kind of dream role one might like to play indefinitely. But I'm anxious to devote more time to my work as a performer and writer, and to spend less time away from my family. Also, I have tremendous confidence in the remarkable cadre of performers who make up ACTRA's National Council – the experienced leaders from whose ranks my successor will be elected.

I'm also extremely confident about the talented professional staff working at our national office and in our branches across

the country. Many of them feel more like family members than employees. I have studied the operations of all of ACTRA's large, sister-organizations and I can assure you without qualification, that we have the finest complement of staff of any performer

union anywhere in the world. I don't say this because I wish it were so – it is so.

ACTRA has always felt like a family: my father was a member, my sister is a member, my wife is a member and most of my friends are members. My time as president has only reinforced this bond, as many of the relationships that I've made with performers and union-folk across the country and around the world will always be very dear to me. A producer friend once told me, all that really counts in this business is relationships. By this yardstick, my time with ACTRA has been well spent.

It's been 21 years since I made that teen comedy and unfortunately, our movie industry still hasn't taken off (nor did that movie, by the way). Indeed our television drama business is in big trouble as well. But I'm optimistic. ACTRA is the most articulate, the most passionate and the savviest organization engaging in Canadian cultural policy issues. In our 62-year history, we've never been better positioned to get results.

But remember, ACTRA's strength is its members. So if any of you are considering attending an ACTRA meeting and maybe standing for office, I encourage you to do so. See for yourself – ACTRA is 'cool'. You have my word.

In solidarity,



Thor Bishopric
ACTRA National President

Thor is joined by some members of his ACTRA family at the ACTRA Maritimes AGM in May. (Back row) **Jamie Bradley**, National Councillor, **Nigel Bennett**, ACTRA Maritimes President, **Thor**, **Jeannine Huczel**, ACTRA Maritimes staff, **Jill Rosenberg**, National Organizer, Digital Media. (Front row) **Gary Vermeir**, ACTRA Maritimes Branch Rep, **Stephen Waddell**, National Executive Director and **Gary Levert**, ACTRA Maritimes Branch Councillor.



Jeremy Webb

The Stage Mom Survival Guide

for parents of young performers in the Canadian film and television industry, by **Robyne Ropell-Baruchel**, published by ACTRA.

The guide is free to ACTRA members (under 18), or \$15 (incl. GST) for adult members and non-members.



The **Stage Mom Survival Guide** is available at ACTRA branches across Canada or call **1-800-387-3516** for more info.



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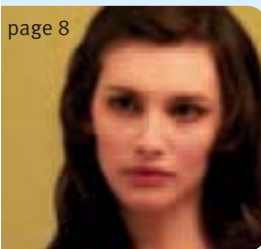
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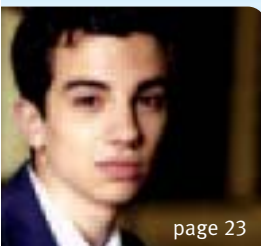
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Calling all scribes!

Interested in never-ending glory? Want to contribute content to *InterACTRA*? Please contact interactra@actra.ca.

Letters *InterACTRA* welcomes letters and feedback. Submissions should be no longer than 200 words, and may be edited for length. Please send submissions to: interactra@actra.ca.

Want to receive *InterACTRA* by email? If you'd like *InterACTRA* in your e-mailbox instead of by mail, email us at interactra@actra.ca with your membership number.

ACTRA National welcomes new director of research

Marit Stiles has joined ACTRA National as the new Director of Research. Marit will be responsible for directing all aspects of ACTRA's Research Department including overseeing the compilation of statistical research to support ACTRA's collective bargaining and public policy objectives. She will also provide information and counsel to ACTRA's lead negotiators and negotiating committees during collective bargaining.

Marit brings extensive experience in social and economic policy, legislative research and development, having spent the past six years as a Researcher for the Ontario New Democratic Party caucus. Previously, she worked as Coordinator of Public Dialogue for Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc. engaging Canadians in a national dialogue on social values.

Mercedes Watson moves to UBCP

With much sadness, I have accepted the resignation of **Mercedes Watson** as Director of ACTRA Performers' Rights Society.

During the past eight years that Mercedes has been with us, she has built ACTRA PRS and Neighbouring Rights into the pre-eminent collection agency for performers in Canada. With her energy, determination skill and patience, Mercedes has rebuilt ACTRA PRS from the ground up. She has created systems, engaged and nurtured excellent staff, and increased collections for performers by \$1 million each year. With Neighbouring Rights, Mercedes started from scratch and created the best run and most efficient collection society for Canadian performers. I will miss Mercedes greatly, as will her staff who are devoted to her.

That's the bad news. The good news is that Mercedes has accepted the position of Chief Executive Officer of UBCP – a wonderful opportunity for Mercedes, and for the leadership and membership of UBCP for whom I am confident Mercedes will perform an excellent job.



Mercedes Watson

Mercedes, on behalf of everyone at ACTRA and ACTRA PRS, I give you my heartfelt thanks for everything you've done for the members of ACTRA over the past eight years; and best wishes for much success in your new position at UBCP. It's not 'goodbye'. Just 'see you later'.

– *Stephen Waddell,*
ACTRA National Executive Director

Paul Falzone takes the helm

Paul Falzone is the new Director of ACTRA PRS following Mercedes' departure. Paul has very significant experience that will be valuable to members, since he has been ACTRA's outside legal counsel since 1982.

THE ACTORS' FUND OF CANADA

THE ACTORS' FUND OF CANADA provides short-term financial aid to help performers, creators, technical personnel and other entertainment industry workers maintain their health, housing and ability to work after an economic setback. The Actors' Fund is a registered charity sustained by members of the entertainment industry professions. A small amount of money can make a difference. Your support can help to turn someone's life around after an injury, illness or sudden unemployment.

"In August of 2003 I was diagnosed with breast cancer and what followed was months of sheer physical, mental and financial hell. The illness took its toll on my body and my savings. I needed extensive surgery and time to recover and I



turned to the Actors' Fund. The Fund was there for me with help and an understanding that I could not have hoped for from anywhere else.

Now I'm back and ready to do my best work ever. I thank the Actors' Fund for the gift of time to heal."

— Sandi Ross, ACTRA member

- A FRESH START
- A BRIGHTER FUTURE
- A CREATIVE VISION
- A VIBRANT CULTURE
- A BETTER CANADA

"For All Entertainment Professionals"



"My first experience with the Fund was almost 30 years ago. I was a young actor living in my first apartment in Toronto and a gig I had fell through at the last moment.

I was flat broke. I called the Actors' Fund and got the help I needed. As important as the financial help I got was the awareness I gained of our extended family of fellow artists and craftspeople and how vulnerable we can be.

I'm lucky to have been treated well by the precarious business we work in — and it's a point of pride with me that members of our profession, many of whom are struggling themselves, can still care so much about their colleagues in the business that the Fund continues through good and tough times.

Give once a year for thirty years, and your investment will be repaid a thousand times by the satisfaction you'll get from knowing you've helped to make a difference in the life of a fellow artist in need."

— David Ferry, ACTRA member

Call 1-877-399-8392 or visit www.actorsfund.ca for details or to donate online.



CFTPA Prime Time in Ottawa

If it's winter in Ottawa it must be Prime Time, Canada's biggest schmooze fest for film and TV folks. ACTRA was there among the more than 600 industry players attending the panels on the state of our industry and connecting with numerous players and decision makers including politicians, producers as well as our colleagues in other unions and guilds.

Prime Time 2005: ACTRA Executive Director **Stephen Waddell** introduces NDP Leader **Jack Layton** to producer **Ira Levy**.

ACTRA denounces budget's silence on drama crisis

ACTRA was quick to respond to February's federal budget. While we welcomed enhanced commitments to the CBC and the *Tomorrow Starts Today* program, we are concerned about the budget's silence on a number of critical issues – including the Canadian Television Fund (CTF).

"We're very anxious about the lack of mention of film tax credits and the Canadian Television Fund," said **Stephen Waddell**, ACTRA's National Executive Director. The government's ongoing inaction on the crisis in Canadian TV drama is jeopardizing our culture. By denying the CTF enhanced long-term, stable funding the Liberal government is making it near impossible for Canadians to see their own stories on their TVs."

The federal government's failure to provide the CTF and CBC with stability in recent years has threatened our industry, which is already struggling under the effects of the CRTC's 1999 Television Policy that let private broadcasters off the hook by allowing them to satisfy weakened Canadian content requirements by airing cheap reality-style programming instead of Canadian drama. As a result, the number of indigenous one-hour dramatic series has plummeted from 12 in 1999, to just four in 2004 – two of those air on CBC.

ACTRA is particularly concerned about the announcement of a review of the telecommunications framework.

"We believe that this is a process intended to lead towards a relaxation of the restrictions of foreign ownership of telecommunications and subsequently, broadcasting," said Waddell.

"We don't need to open Pandora's box to fix our system, we just need the cabinet to make the CRTC do its job. It needs to issue an Order in Council directing the CRTC to impose strict spending and content requirements on private broadcasters and require them to invest the profits they are making from simulcasting U.S. programming into producing Canadian drama," he added.

Important reminder for members! Working on off-shore productions

If you are approached to work on productions shooting in part or entirely outside of Canada, you must remember to check with ACTRA to make sure that the producers are offering you an ACTRA contract, terms and conditions in accordance with the ACTRA *Independent Production Agreement* (IPA). Make sure your agent is also aware of the membership rules before accepting an engagement.

Depending on the producers' status, there are different rules that must be followed – here are the four most common scenarios:

1 Producers signatory to the IPA who have a production that is shooting in Canada with an offshore location shoot component.

The ACTRA member must be offered and sign an ACTRA contract covering the entire engagement.

2 Producers not signatory to the IPA who have a production shooting in Canada with an offshore location shoot component.

The Producer must become signatory to the IPA, and the ACTRA member must be offered and sign an

ACTRA contract covering the entire engagement.

3 Producers signatory to the IPA who have a production that is shooting entirely in an offshore location(s).

As a signatory to the IPA, the producer is obligated to engage ACTRA members under the terms and conditions of the IPA for the entire engagement offshore.

4 Producers not signatory to the IPA who have a production that is shooting entirely in an offshore location(s).

Remember – in accordance with ACTRA's Bylaws – ACTRA members must be engaged on an ACTRA contract except in cases where there is a sister union affiliated with the International Federation of Actors (FIA). In those cases, ACTRA members must be engaged on an ACTRA contract or a contract of the union where the engagement is taking place. Where there is no union in the location, ACTRA members must work on ACTRA contracts for an ACTRA signatory producer pursuant to Article 404 of the ACTRA Constitution and Bylaw 9 of the ACTRA By-Laws.



Boycott Blue Man Group!

ACTRA is giving full support to the boycott of the non-union production of the **Blue Man Group** in Toronto. Producers have ignored attempts to negotiate contracts specifying base pay, benefits and defined working conditions with Canadian Actors' Equity Association (Equity), the Toronto Musicians' Association (TMA) and IATSE. The public is being urged to boycott the production and write to the producers to demand that negotiations commence immediately.

ACTRA and Equity share a reciprocal agreement – ACTRA members are reminded not to audition or accept work on Blue Man Group or any other production until producers adhere to the applicable Equity contract or you will be subject to disciplinary proceedings under the Constitution and By-Laws of ACTRA.

Join the boycott and spread the word – tell friends and family not to buy tickets to this non-union production!

For updates go to www.bluelmanboycott.com.

Disclosure sought on UBCP contract concessions

ACTRA's Constitution and Bylaws require its branches to avoid undermining the pay and benefits of performers. Specifically, competitive rate and benefit cuts, which significantly undermine our collective agreements, are not permitted within ACTRA.

At its January meeting, ACTRA's National Council heard detailed reports from branches across Canada on this matter. These reports detailed all contract 'variances' in every branch of the union but one. There was a lot of good news in these reports – because there was little to report. Our branches are doing a solid job defending our union's rates and terms.

However, one branch (our branch in British Columbia – UBCP) chose not to disclose its activities. Some reports from members working in B.C. give cause for concern. Asked about this, B.C. representatives confirmed they are providing producers with concessions, but they refused to disclose the terms of these concessions.

A prolonged controversy on this issue will not serve anyone. ACTRA's National Council therefore referred our B.C. branch's refusal to disclose its variances to a neutral third party for arbitration. ACTRA will be asking for an order in these proceedings, directing B.C.'s executive board to disclose any and all of its contract variances. UBCP's membership and ACTRA members as a whole will then be in a position to assess whether any of these variances raise issues under the Constitution and Bylaws of our union.

Government response to Lincoln Report falls short

ACTRA and our colleagues in the CCAU (Coalition of Canadian Audio-visual Unions) accused the federal government's response to the Lincoln Report, *Our Cultural Sovereignty*, of falling short by not calling for an overhaul of the CRTC's 1999 Television Policy. ACTRA and the CCAU had urged the government to address the crisis in English-Canadian TV drama by implementing the Lincoln Report on Canadian broadcasting's recommendation to revise the CRTC's disastrous 1999 Television Policy.

The all-party committee on Canadian Heritage had asked the government to respond to its report, first released in May of 2003. The Lincoln Report made 97 recommendations to improve the state of Canadian broadcasting including urging the government to order the CRTC to fix its 1999 Television Policy – the root of the decline of English-language TV drama.

"In its disastrous 1999 TV Policy, the CRTC allowed Canada's private broadcasters to flout their obligations under the *Broadcasting Act*. By not acting on the Lincoln Report's recommendation that the CRTC revise its 1999 TV Policy, this government is clearly not listening to the all-party Standing Committee, and is dragging its feet on taking meaningful steps to address this critical issue," said **Stephen Waddell**, ACTRA National Executive Director.

Cheers

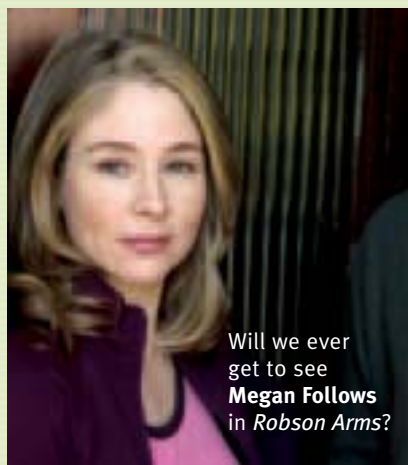
Can it be...? **Richard Stursberg** 'Telefilm-CAA Deal' seems to be hailing in a new era of championing Canadian drama in his new post as CBC's programming honcho:

"By 2008, CBC's primetime schedule will, we hope, look completely different from what it is now. Ultimately, our goal is to double the amount of primetime Canadian dramatic programming on the CBC."

We'll be watching...

Jeers

Meanwhile at CTV... Last June the network lauded its brand new half-hour drama series *Robson Arms* as "Fresh, inspired and comedic." Ten months later it still hasn't found space for it on its simulcast-driven schedule. The network claims we'll see it on next years' sked – let's hope we get to see it while it's still 'fresh'. On a related note, CTV also announced that the critically acclaimed *The Eleventh Hour* wouldn't be coming back, citing poor ratings. In its not-so prime Saturday night timeslot, is it any wonder?



Will we ever get to see **Megan Follows** in *Robson Arms*?

National council meeting

Your elected representatives from across the country huddled together for two days of decision-making in January at the semi-annual National Council meeting.

Member reps shared their regional experiences and tackled a wide range of important challenges facing all ACTRA members. With the fifth

year of ACTRA's Five-Year Plan on the horizon, Councillors also took time out to brainstorm a new ambitious agenda for the union's future.



Tyrone Benskin, Montreal National Councillor



Linda Kupecsek, Calgary National Councillor



Barry Blake, Ottawa National Councillor



ACTRA Maritimes President **Nigel Bennett** and Maritimes National Councillor **Jamie Bradley**

Sixth Annual Canadian Comedy Awards

The Canadian Comedy Awards will be back in London, Ontario, bigger and better than ever. Last year's event was a tremendous success and we plan to build on that success. The Comedy Awards and Festival is a celebration of Canadian achievements in comedy in three areas – live, film and television.

Nominations in all three categories open April 1 and close May 31, 2005. After that the nominees are sent to committees to select the final five nominees that will appear on the final ballot. To find out how to become a committee member please e-mail us at the address below. All nominees are invited to London for the festivities and if you ask anyone who has been nominated – it's a great event! This year's program will feature the awards, the closing gala, showcase performances of the top stand-up, sketch and improv performers in the country as well as special shows – including a mini film festival and a "state of the Canadian Comedy industry" show.

–*Tim Progosh, Founder*

Go to the CCA's website for nomination forms and event details:
www.canadiancomedyawards.ca or
 email info@canadiancomedyawards.ca.

Research team works for more jobs and better conditions

by Marit Stiles, Director of Research

ACTRA members will get a 6% increase over three years with the new **Vision TV** agreement. The agreement, which also includes an additional 1% engager contribution to insurance and retirement, went into effect April 18 and will expire on April 18, 2008.

Negotiations with **CBC** kicked off in May and will continue through until mid-June. Recently, branches consulted with some of the 1,200 ACTRA members who have worked under the current CBC TV and Radio Agreements since they came into effect in July 1, 2003. Their comments are informing ACTRA's demands, and the research and collective bargaining team is pulling together the data to back them up.

Digital media will be central in these negotiations and ACTRA's Digital Media Organizer, **Jill Rosenberg**, is developing her own version of the CBC's '10 year business plan' to map out directions that CBC may take in the future so we can be prepared to help protect members' interests along the way.

Although negotiations on the **Independent Production Agreement (IPA)** are not set to begin until March 2006, ACTRA's chief negotiator National

Executive Director **Stephen Waddell** and the research and collective bargaining department have already started working on laying out our priorities. We are doing comparative and statistical analysis, industry research, and costing out proposals and will be working with branches to coordinate canvassing members to identify bargaining priorities. The negotiating team needs to hear from members about what their experiences have been with this agreement and where they want to see improvements.

In addition to preparing for negotiations, your national research and collective bargaining team (myself, **Sharon Davidson** Collective Bargaining Researcher/Coordinator, **Jill Rosenberg** and Administrative Assistant **Erin Hazzan**) is also participating in committees – such as the Fact-Based/Lifestyle Committee with the APFTQ/CFTPA – to analyze emerging production opportunities in this area. We are also working to increase ACTRA's marketing power across the industry by refining our economic analysis of the advantages of shooting in Canada under ACTRA agreements, and actively pursuing opportunities for performers in digital games and other forms of digital media production. We also continue to provide ongoing interpretation services for our branches: Sharon Davidson is the point person for information requests, questions on interpretation and analysis of all of ACTRA's collective agreements.

CANADIAN FEATURES

Making it to the finish line

by Joanne Deer

The recent Canadian film *Saint Ralph* features a boy who believes he can perform a miracle and bring his mother out of a coma by winning the Boston Marathon. Against all odds – he trains, competes, and well, doesn't come in first, but nevertheless finds success. But most important of all, he challenges everyone around him to believe in him.

In many ways, this is also the story of English-Canadian films. On the face of it, producing a successful feature in Canada seems about as likely as a 12-year old winning an international marathon (let alone waking his mother out of a coma by doing so). We too are competing with the best and most monied in the world. Unfortunately, all too often we don't succeed. Even if you can get in the race, very few make it to the finish line.

Say you pull off the miracle – you starve for three years while self-financing the script's development, quilt a patchwork of funding for production, get the film on theatre screens, and then, oops, no money left for promotion so too bad, no one shows up. Like Ralph, finding people who will believe and support your cinematic miracle takes a leap of faith, dedication and whole lot of luck.

Clearly, it's time to make a miracle of our own. The future of Canadian film is dependent on three factors – quality, accessibility and promotion. We need to make good movies, Canadians have to be able to see them in their theatres and on their TVs and we have to know about them – they must be promoted and we must be enticed by the building of a star system that lures us in. The eternal struggle is in getting all three of these elements in place. Too often, too much emphasis has been placed on one element, with ignorance to the others. *Foolproof?* Alliance promoted the heck out of it. No one wanted to see it. *Childstar?* Critics loved it – the few Canadians who knew it existed couldn't find it in their theatres.

One ray of hope has appeared in the form of **Wayne Clarkson's** appointment as Executive Director of Telefilm. After 15 years heading the Canadian Film Centre, Clarkson is well schooled in the business of low-budget independent filmmaking. More important, it is believed that he has a strong appreciation and respect for the creative aspects of filmmaking – something his predecessor, **Richard Stursberg** seemed to lack.

Another opportunity for getting Canadian films on track is the new attention being paid by the policymakers in Ottawa. The House Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage is conducting an in-depth review of Telefilm's four and a half-year old Feature Film Policy (FFP). Committee members are looking at how the government funds features films with an aim to enhance policies that work, and – hopefully – fill in the holes where support is inadequate or non-existent. ACTRA is an active player in the review – submitting a written brief as well as appearing before the committee in Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Vancouver and Halifax.

The policy, announced in 2000 by **Sheila Copps** then-Minister of Heritage, doubled the government's annual investment in the film industry to \$100 million including \$2.5 million earmarked for script development, and \$85 million to development, production and marketing. The biggest change, however, came in the policy's

controversial focus on audience building, stating as its goal, that Canadian features would capture 5% of the country's box office revenues by 2006. Telefilm committed to earmarking 50% of its money to previously 'successful' filmmakers, with the other half going through the 'traditional' process, (i.e. those chosen on the



Adam Butcher, Jennifer Tilley and Claire Collins in *Saint Ralph*.

Oleon Films



Gordon Pinsent in *Saint Ralph*.

Oleon Films

basis of creative merit). That is, the potential for wide-appeal stifled original and creative thinking. While few argued with the objective of the '5%' goal, many accused Telefilm of fuelling a drive towards 'commercial' films at the expense of creativity.

For the most part, ACTRA supported the overall aims of the Feature Film Policy, save for one glaring omission: its failure to tackle one of the biggest hurdles for Canadian films – distribution and exhibition. How can Canadian films succeed at the box office if they can't even find screen time at the local multiplex?

ACTRA has long argued for the need to make films that Canadian audiences will be willing to shell out \$12 to see – films that tell unique, interesting Canadian stories, written by Canadians, directed by Canadians, and starring Canadian performers. Of course, to do this, we also need consistent, enhanced funding at every stage – development, production and promotion. And what the heck, let's also take back the foreign-dominated exhibition and get access to our own theatres. From development, to production, to distribution and exhibition, it's clear that its time to get serious and create a truly Canadian film culture if our movies are

Quality on the page is the first step; quality on the screen is the second

going to make it to the finish line. This is a chance to get it right.

The foundation of a great film is a great script. Period. Performers bring a script to life – but even the best performance can't disguise a nonsensical plotline that audiences can't relate to. If the script is weak, the film will crumble. Canada has no shortage of talented writers. However, unlike Hollywood, we lack the infrastructure that encourages experienced professional screenwriters to make a living writing feature films. Stats from the Writers Guild of Canada show that professional screenwriters are increasingly reluctant to put their time into writing features – new projects developed by writers with at least 60 minutes of produced film or television credits decreased by 29% from 53 in 2002 to 38 in 2003.

The FFP introduced a novel concept to the Canadian feature industry: script development. The Screenwriting Assistance Program (SAP) put \$2.3 million a year directly into screenwriters' hands, allowing them to explore and develop their ideas freely. While it is too soon to tell whether the SAP has helped develop marketable scripts – the early indicators point to yes. A January 2005 Telefilm survey of 256 SAP-supported projects shows that at least 17 English-language projects were optioned with three produced. This means that about 6.5% of funded projects piqued the interest of a producer – a huge success by our curious industry's standards. To put this into perspective, in Hollywood the number optioned is closer to 1% – it is not uncommon for a single studio to receive 10,000 film proposals a year, with about 100 going into development and only 12 being produced. ACTRA has asked that funding to the SAP be increased. Encouraging more professional writers to turn their creative hands to the big screen can only be good for the quality of Canadian features.

So now we have a fantastic script. Well, it's not going to move many people sitting in a drawer. It needs to get made. This is where we need more money for production. Quality on the page is the first step; quality on the screen is the second. Since 2000, the Canadian Feature Film Fund has provided roughly \$100 million annually to support the production of 154 high-quality Canadian feature films, compared to only 90 in the four years previous to the policy.

Since the FFP came into effect, average production budgets for Telefilm-supported Canadian features increased to an average of \$6.9 million in 2003/2004. This is a huge improvement – in the two decades preceding the adoption of the FFP, average production budgets fell from \$3 million to \$2.7 million for English-language feature films. However, this is still miniscule compared to our competitors from the south – the publicity budgets on a U.S. studio film are seven times the entire budget of a Canadian film. In order to stay in the race, average budgets for Canadian features cannot be allowed to fall under \$5 million. The Canadian Feature Film Fund must be maintained for the long term and at least at its current level – if not increased.

– continued on next page

Script development: investing in a film's foundation

Investing in script development is the single best way to increase a film's chances of success at the box office. In Hollywood, the ratio of scripts developed is about 10 scripts for each film produced, while most studios strive to operate at twice this level to increase their odds of making a hit. Developing a script is akin to research and development for our industry and can take years to complete before production begins. In development, the screenwriter starts with the germ of an idea, working it into a script with a full story structure and fleshed-out characters. Development allows screenwriters to find the right balance between plot and character and to create a story that will move audiences.

Under Telefilm's Screenwriting Assistance Program, producers engage a screenwriter to write the feature film script in various stages – treatment, drafts, polishes. This program funds development through the producer, to a maximum amount of \$150,000 per project, for scriptwriting and related expenses including rights option or acquisition, a story editor and research fees, budget preparation, market analysis and producer's fees. Under the WGC's collective agreement, the minimum script fee for a feature film is \$47,286 dollars and according to WGC stats, in Canada the average length of time a script is in development is three years. If we divide \$47,286 over three years, a screenwriter receives \$15,762 for each year the script is in development. This is less than the \$19,656 annual minimum wage based on an hourly wage of \$7.45, and clearly not much money for a professional.

The problem is obvious – there is not enough money available at this crucial stage of development. The WGC is calling for the continuation of the SAP and recommends that program funding be increased to ensure higher levels of script and concept development.

– Writers Guild of Canada

CANADIAN FEATURES

Making it to the finish line

– continued from page 9

So, the money's there, what do we spend it on? During Stursberg's reign, Telefilm put added emphasis on funding films with that elusive 'commercial appeal'. Not only is it infamously unpredictable, creators argue that too much emphasis on reaching a wide audience dilutes the product to the point – by trying to please everyone, you interest no one. Of course we want to make films that people want to see – but wide commercial appeal should not be the chief criteria for funding a film. With quality on the screen, variety and access, the box office will come. It's a complete myth to think that Hollywood holds the magical wand to creating films with box office success. The fact is that less than 1% of Hollywood films recoup their costs in the domestic market.

Telefilm can best achieve its objective of attracting larger audiences by supporting many genres of films and putting additional resources into script development and supporting creative freedom and vision – i.e. making good films. Telefilm should also support a broad range of films – drama and comedy, and long and short films. The wider range and volumes of stories told means more talent development and increased chances of every Canadian finding a home-grown film they love. Oh, and the films need to actually be shown in theatres – it's hard to score big box office return when there's only one box office in the country selling tickets to your film.

And here we come to the oft-cited biggest challenge for Canadian film: distribution. Canada's distribution and exhibition systems are controlled by U.S. interests and integrated into their system of promoting and marketing of Hollywood movies. Canadian movies regularly get shunted out of the theatres to

It's hard to score big box office returns when there's only one box office in the country selling tickets to your film

make room for pushy U.S. distributors. Theatre owners claim they can't sell enough tickets to make screening Canadian films worthwhile. But it's a bit presumptuous to say Canadians don't want to see Canadian movies if they never have the option.

While domestic films account for 22% of Sweden's box office sales and in the U.K. 17%, Germany 24%, Italy 20%, Spain 13%.



Odeon Films

Canada? A sad 4.2% of the box office comes from our films – and only 1.6% was from Canadian English-language films. Remember Richard Stursberg's 5% box office goal? Well Wayne Clarkson is upping the ante and aiming for a rich 10%. While Clarkson is pushing more flexible and expanded distribution systems – including more broadcast windows, DVD releases and digital distribution, the problem of getting Canadian films into the theatres remains.

The Canadian film *Seven Times Lucky* was released on March 25 in three theatres across the country. **Three**. That same weekend, the **Ashton Kutcher** vehicle *Guess Who* opened to 229 screens. *The Ring 2* played on 289. Interestingly, *Seven Times Lucky* pulled in a respectable per screen average of \$3,843 – compare that to \$4,341 for *Be Cool*. French-language Canadian films are yet another matter. *La Vie avec mon père* opened to 32 screens with an average box office of \$8,324. That's more than the animated *Robots*.

One solution is to implement quotas to force theatres to dedicate a portion of their screens to Canadian films. Content quotas work. Canada's experience in music and TV, and Korea's experience in movies are all the proof needed. When you create space and an "artificial" need for cultural productions, their value is inflated and this becomes a powerful incentive for the private sector to make better products. While the U.S. major motion picture studios would loudly oppose quotas – they are perfectly legal under current trade rules. Another idea – offer tax incentives to theatre owners, such as permitting the ticket sales on Canadian movies to be tax-free.

When they do make it to the screen, Canadian features generally come and go without a sound. All you need to do is tune into *Letterman* or check out who's gracing the cover of *Vanity Fair* to see who's got a new Hollywood blockbuster to plug. Without the free-publicity machine of talk shows and entertainment media, our stars have nowhere to go to push their product. The few venues we do have for publicity tend to hop on the bandwagon ignoring Canadian features in favour of the U.S. blockbusters.

Without the benefit of the free publicity machines at Hollywood's disposal, we need to buy exposure. The Feature Film Policy

We have the talent right here; we don't need to import performers

increased marketing budgets for Telefilm supported feature films to an average of \$421,000 per production. Prior to the adoption of the Feature Film Policy, two thirds of Canadian features had marketing budgets of less than \$150,000, compare that to the \$37 million budgets of Hollywood-based studio productions – that's more than five times the *entire* budget of a Canadian film. In order for Canadian films to find their audiences in a market where there is a plethora of foreign films available, marketing and promotional support are essential. Of course, Hollywood films and the free publicity machine feed off each other – gossip magazines sell stars, stars sell movies, and movies reinforce stars.

Unfortunately, in English Canada, our performers too often work in anonymity. The phrase 'Canadian Star' is a source of punch lines. It's funny, because it's true. Some say it's 'un-Canadian'; to have stars – we're too polite to honk our own horns and make a fuss. Maybe we're too polite to accost actors in a grocery store, but it's never bad manners to celebrate another's achievement and admire their work.

Our drive to build a star system has had some recent setbacks. Telefilm's drive to increase box office sales is reflected in the fact that in 2002 it loosened restrictions on the use of foreign actors in Canadian movies in a deal reached last year to pay a substantial retainer to the Creative Artists Agency, so that this Hollywood firm could "help develop and package Canadian movies." ACTRA was publicly opposed to the Creative Arts Agency arrangement – and thankfully, one of Wayne Clarkson's first acts as the head of Telefilm was to tear up the agreement. To add insult to injury, with rare exception, these so-called U.S. stars are no more recognizable than their equally – and let's be frank, often more – talented Canadian counterparts. We have the talent right here; we don't need to import performers. In fact, our biggest problem seems to be keeping our talent in Canada. Why not give them a start by offering them starring roles in Canadian films or TV?

Quebec has proven that a star-system starts with TV drama; performers who become household names from their TV work



Barbarian Invasions stayed in Toronto theatres for 29 weeks, the longest run of any Canadian film in the past 10 years.

Oleum Films



Camping Sauvage was the second highest grossing Canadian film in 2004 (behind *Resident Evil*) pulling in \$4.36 million.

Oleum Films

can then draw their audiences into a theatre. With the current state of Canadian drama, it's hard to see where our next round of Sarah Polleys, and Paul Grosses are going to hone their crafts and establish a fan base.

– continued on page 15

In for the long run: The most popular Canadian films

Released in the GTA between 1994 and 2004 – by number of weeks in theatres

- | | |
|--|--|
| (29) <i>Les Invasions barbares</i> | (16) <i>Margaret's Museum</i> |
| (27) <i>The Red Violin</i> | (15) <i>Felicia's Journey</i> |
| (25) <i>The Corporation</i> | (15) <i>Such a Long Journey</i> |
| (25) <i>Exotica</i> | (14) <i>Thirty-Two Short Films about Glenn Gould</i> |
| (22) <i>The Sweet Hereafter</i> | (13) <i>Le Confessionnal</i> |
| (18) <i>MVP: Most Valuable Primate</i> | (13) <i>Owning Mahowny</i> |
| (18) <i>New Waterford Girl</i> | (12) <i>Air Bud</i> |
| (18) <i>les Triplettes de Belleville</i> | (12) <i>Ararat</i> |
| (17) <i>Atanarjuat</i> | (12) <i>The Art of War</i> |
| (17) <i>Sunshine</i> | (12) <i>Seducing Doctor Lewis</i> |
| (16) <i>Last Night</i> | |

SOURCE: TAKE ONE

Race results: Canadian films at the Box Office in 2004

- Resident Evil: Apocalypse* \$6.20 million
Camping sauvage \$4.36 million
Dans une galaxie près de chez vous \$2.86 million
Elvis Gratton XXX \$2.33 million
Elles étaient cinq \$2.13 million
The Blue Butterfly \$2.01 million
Le dernier tunnel \$1.71 million
Monica la mitraille \$1.67 million
Nouvelle-France \$1.51 million
The Corporation \$1.51 million

SOURCE: PLAYBACK

FILM POLICY According to ACTRA



ACTRA National President **Thor Bishopric**,
Wendy Crewson, NDP Heritage critic
Charlie Angus, and ACTRA National
Councillor (Ottawa) **Barry Blake**.

Australia, from New Zealand, they're not huge blockbuster films that are attempting to cater to the American market. They are stories that are special to the people who are telling those stories. They ring true. When those films make it to America and make it to foreign territories, they are picked up by a distributor and they're sold because they're great stories and money can be made.



Don McKellar

The reason we stay in Canada is not the money. We remain here because we want to live in Canada, because perhaps these are our people and these are our stories, but also because we believe there's a vibrant community – at least, there was a vibrant community that was making movies – and because our movies were being made, and because we generally had creative control. In other words, we are staying here for cultural reasons.



Claude Dorge, ACTRA Manitoba Councillor

We are performers. We want to work. We would like to work in our hometowns. We want to work on Canadian productions. We want to see Manitoba talent developed to its fullest capacity and contribute to the culture of this great country. You saw last night at the Junos an incredibly vibrant music industry shown bright. We saw Canadian stars loved and supported by the Canadian public. We must aim to duplicate all that enthusiasm and success in the film and television industry.

No matter how much they travel, the members of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage can't escape ACTRA. Members are appearing at every stop the committee makes to offer their passionate views on the future of Canadian feature films.

First up, **Wendy Crewson** and ACTRA's National President **Thor Bishopric** testified in Ottawa. They were well received by the committee who told them it was the most valuable intervention they'd seen so far.

On April 4 the Saskatchewan and Manitoba ACTRA contingents succeeded in ruffling a few feathers on the Standing Committee during its stop in Winnipeg. **Claude Dorge**, ACTRA Manitoba Councillor and **Wendy Anderson**, National Councillor (Saskatchewan) led off their appearance with a deeply personal bid for the preservation of Canadian culture, arguing that the protection of our culture should be the number one priority – not just of Canadian Heritage, but of each and every department of government.

Two days later, in Toronto, members **Sarah Polley** and **Don McKellar** treated the committee to an impassioned presentation that called for measures to make and promote more quality Canadian films; provide stable, long-term support for film bodies such as Telefilm, the NFB, the Feature Film Fund, the CTF and the CBC; and to force movie theatres and broadcasters to air more Canadian films.

Barring an election, the Committee will hear from ACTRA Calgary President **Brian Gromoff** and UBCP/ACTRA President **Howard Storey** in Vancouver, and ACTRA Maritimes President **Nigel Bennett** in Halifax. Thanks to the generous contributions of members across the country, by the end of this process, ACTRA will have spoken for performers from sea to sea.

Here are some excerpts from members' testimony:

Wendy Crewson

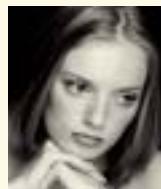
When a performer works, what they are doing is holding a mirror up to our society. This is how a society understands who they are. This is how we see ourselves.

What do we see when we go to the movie theatre? What do we see when we turn on the television? Not ourselves. We see our neighbour. What does that mean to the cultural health of this country eventually, down the line? It will be devastating.



Wendy Anderson, ACTRA National Councillor (Saskatchewan)

We need to hear the wily gumboot chatter of our buddies along the east coast. We need to hear it as it flies across the provincial borders and becomes the passionate, well-heeled banter of our counterparts in Quebec, or the clipped granite of Ontario. We want to listen as it widens out into the cracked grin, wide-open side drawl of the prairies. We want to listen in wonder as it seeps into that mysteriously innate throaty rhythm of our aboriginal people. When we can no longer hear our voice, then we can no longer look in the mirror of a story and see reflections that resemble us, and we've lost our identity.



Sarah Polley

I would just like to bring up my favourite example of what's wrong with accessing Canadian films in Canada. There is a simultaneous release of *Dawn of the Dead*, a giant American Universal film that I was in, and at the same time the release of a film called *Luck*, a Canadian film. Not necessarily an uncommercial film, it was mostly a comedy. It is about hockey. They came out the same weekend, and I did the same amount of press for both films. *Dawn of the Dead* opened in over 200 theatres alone in (Toronto). *Luck* was at Canada Square for one week on one screen. I think that's a pretty unfair playing ground.

Thor Bishopric, ACTRA National President

If you look at some of the breakout films that have come from Ireland, from

FIRST WEEKEND CLUB

See it first. Make it last.

First Weekend Club is a cross-Canada grassroots initiative dedicated to promoting the critical first weekend release of Canadian films. The bottom line counts – theatres will only extend a film's release if the first weekend box office is strong. Currently, less than 3% of films shown in theatres throughout Canada are Canadian. FWC is fighting to change that by working with distributors, exhibitors, filmmakers and publicists using word of mouth and special star-studded premieres to get more 'bums in seats'.

In less than two years, the FWC has attracted a membership of more than 4,000 in Vancouver, Victoria, Edmonton, Calgary, and Toronto. Members are informed when and where new Canadian films are playing by email and are encouraged to spread the word and buy tickets – boosting the box office for Canadian films on their opening weekend. FWC's Founder and President **Anita Adams** spoke to *InterACTRA* about what they're doing at the grassroots to keep Canadian films in the race:

Q If you were to pick one thing that you could change that would help find audiences for English-Canadian films, what would it be?

A That's actually a fairly easy question – a much larger marketing budget! How can any film stand out among all the noise made by the American films when their marketing budgets alone are 10 times the size of our production budgets?

Q FWC has been involved with the release of more than 20 Canadian films – what are some of your biggest successes? What made the difference?

A Working with a distributor in executing a marketing plan is how we work best, and which we believe delivers the greatest results. When I think about the films that we've been involved with that have been very successful, such as **The Delicate Art of Parking**, which had a theatrical run of 13 weeks in Vancouver, you look at the campaign behind that film and everything was in place – great reviews, great coverage, trailers, billboards, and a strong grassroots approach with 10,000 faux parking tickets plastered on cars around the city by FWC members!

Touch of Pink was another film we are very proud of working with – the distributor, Mongrel Media, was a dream. They had a solid marketing plan but were also open to our suggestions to bring in larger audiences. For instance, after the Friday night premiere screening we organized a 'taste of India' cuisine. The audience walked out

What can I do?

Get out and support Canadian films on opening weekend when it counts the most.

Join FWC – it's free!

Volunteer! FWC relies on the support of volunteers – if you are interested in being part of the solution and want to take an active role in supporting the Canadian film industry, sign on! Go to www.firstweekendclub.ca for details on release dates for Canadian films, becoming a member or volunteer.



A Touch of Pink: Jimi Mistry, Suleka Matthew and Kristen Holden Reid.

Sony Pictures Classics



Don McKellar in *Childstar*.

of the film and into a room filled with the aroma of some great Indian cuisine ready to sample. Then, for Saturday night, we flew director **Ian Iqbal Rashid** to Vancouver – it was a big success, with the film sold-out and patrons practically begging the director to come back for another screening. We also brought Starbuck's on-board as a promotional partner. The tie-in was perfect as they had a new drink with a large campaign called 'Taste of Pink'.

One of our most recent events was with **Don McKellar** and the release of his film *Childstar*. We did two-city, two-night First Weekend Club special screenings, starting in Toronto and moving to Vancouver. In Toronto Don introduced his film to a sold-out audience on the Friday night. The audience loved his quirky charm and sense of humour. Saturday morning, Don flew to Vancouver (thanks to ACTRA's sponsorship!) and did another intro and audience Q&A. The weekend was a great success, and our members were thrilled at the opportunity to meet with one of Canada's most preminent filmmakers and stars.

Q Speaking of stars... how important do you think it is to build a star system in English Canada?

A I think it's crucial. Most of us at some point in our movie-going experience have selected a film based on who is starring in it. We hope one day, Canadian audiences will start to identify with some of our own talent and will go to see a film because of that talent. FWC is trying to help things along by inviting Canadian stars to premier screenings and receptions with our members. These star-studded events are greatly anticipated – usually drawing out larger audiences and often creating sold-out events. A few other ideas in building a Canadian star system are in development and we certainly hope to be working with ACTRA in doing whatever we can to keep raising the profile of the great talent this country has to offer.

The dawn of a new era at Telefilm?

Clarkson says Hollywood is irrelevant to Canadian film and TV industry!

Last you heard, I reported on my lunch with **Richard Stursberg**, former head of Telefilm, mastermind of the much-despised CAA deal and current head of English programming at the CBC. He told me about his big scheme for more drama at the CBC and how great his CAA deal really was and that I should call up CAA to find out how it was going. So I gave them a ring and asked if there were any big breaks so far. Strangely, they declined to allow the managing agent to speak with me so I rang up Telefilm again and spoke to the Director of International Operations, **Danny Chalifour**. He told me that objectives of the CAA deal were effectively being reversed and that if those reversed objectives were not met then the deal would be reassessed although no deals had yet occurred as a result of the deal that could in fact be either reversed or assessed... So I tried another question. What about that spooky Ogilvy Renault report Telefilm commissioned to look into undoing Canadian content rules to 'facilitate' the entry of American 'elements' into Canadian productions? He answered by ruthlessly burying me in an avalanche of bureaucratic wordage that caused me to drop my pen.

What I did hear loud and clear was that the report is being used as a reference guide to revamp the *Telefilm Act*, but that we should wait until the new boss gets here and we'll see how things go. So I asked when I could meet with the new boss and two months later I was having lunch on College Street with **Wayne Clarkson**.

As former head of the OFDC (Ontario Film Development Corporation), TIFF (Toronto International Film Festival) and the CFC (Canadian Film Centre), Clarkson's lineage in acronyms is pretty well unsurpassed. He's been hailed as the saviour of the deteriorating Canadian film and TV industry, to which he has responded, "Whoa, calm down."

However, it came as no surprise to me that one of the first things Clarkson did upon his appointment was to dump the CAA deal. Good riddance. Why? Because he's committed to talent here at home and has the track record to prove it, and he

thinks Hollywood is irrelevant to the conversation about Canadian film. We talked for two hours about what he thought was relevant to the discussion on film distribution, TV drama and a 'star system' for Canada.

The core of his thinking is this: he believes in investing in artists and great stories. I really should end the article right here because there's nothing more important I could report, but alas there is more space to fill so I must ramble. He said Hollywood should never be the standard against which we measure our success and that we should consider building alternative ways to reach audiences and create a 'Canadian Way'. He spoke of the importance of the relationship between the artist and the audience and how we can strengthen it, and yes, he agreed we need more stable money but that money was not the answer.

The relationship between the artist and the audience is integral to the success of our industry

So how do we do it then? Stop thinking in Hollywood terms, and stop trying to take them on. The concept of a huge commercial release is a waste of time and money, and that the key is gross, not how many theatres a movie is in. 'Alternatives' to Clarkson means avoiding the big expensive distributors and reaching audience through the internet, video stores, DVD and independent theatres (like **Atom Egoyan's** 'Camera' in Toronto); going after the smaller markets and venues like the Film Circuit and creating more TV shows like the *Trailer Park Boys*, *Corner Gas* – all 'alternative' templates for success. And because we do very well in foreign markets we should continue to expand there (especially since our home market is essentially closed to us).

Clarkson describes his plan as a type of



Wayne Clarkson

guerrilla warfare where we focus our resources and find inventive ways to succeed. Interestingly, he thinks Canada's big breakthrough will come from our diverse cultures, because that is our great hidden strength and real-

ly who we are now, and have always been for that matter.

He thinks the relationship between the artist and the audience is integral to the success of our industry. I concur!! This is just another way of saying Canadians should know of and see the work of their creative communities – in primetime please! Call us actors guilty of measuring our success in Hollywood terms, but Telefilm policies and TV producers who demand so-called 'stars' to ensure funding

thrust it upon us.

And we're supposed to feel guilty about wanting attention? Please. What actors in this country want when we talk about the dreaded 'star system' is just that – a chance to develop a relationship with our audience – an opportunity for

Canadians to know

who we are and see our work. Call us 'stars' or not but Canadian actors should never have to play second banana to foreign movie stars in a film their country has invested in. Lead roles, please!

As far as TV is concerned Clarkson had this to say: He doesn't know what the solution to the drama problem is right now. He would not get on board with the idea of enforcing drama requirements for private broadcasters. His theory is that a drama will succeed on its quality alone, i.e. *Trailer Park Boys*, but clearly that's not always the case. *The Eleventh Hour* is a quality show that was moved all over the TV schedule and finally left to die in the shadows of Saturday night. If people can't find a show how do they develop a relationship with it? Hmm, seems like the plan coming down from the



by Christie MacFadyen

culturecrat pike is to let the private broadcasters off the hook as far as Canadian drama is concerned, and put all the money into the CBC – that’s what Stursberg wants anyway. His plan is to double the CBC’s primetime schedule of CanCon to include more dramatic series, comedy, miniseries and soap operas. My advice to him is to start a great talk show.

Which brings us to the question of foreign ownership. Clarkson thinks an increase in foreign ownership might not be such a bad deal as long as CanCon restrictions are in place – at which point I asked him if he were not slightly idealistic. If U.S. multinationals are allowed to own our TV networks, programming decisions will be made in L.A. and New York.

I think he still has some thinking to do where TV is concerned, but that’s natural, he’s the new guy and even saviours need a little warm-up time.

So, do we want to give up the fight to get our films back in the big theatres? Is it not a battle worth fighting anymore? The truth is we lost that fight about 60 years ago when our government gave in to Hollywood the first time on film distribution. Regaining complete control of our distribution system – or even a portion of it – may be impossible. Guerrilla tactics may be the only way. I’m willing to give it a try.

Our Heritage Minister **Liza Frulla** has said she needs a national arts policy to really secure the healthy growth of English-Canadian culture. That means ample secure funding and a shared philosophy that everyone will adhere to. How quickly things changed: a new leader at Telefilm and a new outlook and new hope for our industry, and guys like Stursberg singing a great new tune. Now that’s all wonderful, but please, t’was ever thus, can’t we have a little consistency?

P.S. Clarkson also promised to look into that Ogilvy Renault Report, apparently it hadn’t reached his desk yet. I’m not surprised. I hope Mr. Chalifour is using it for kindling.

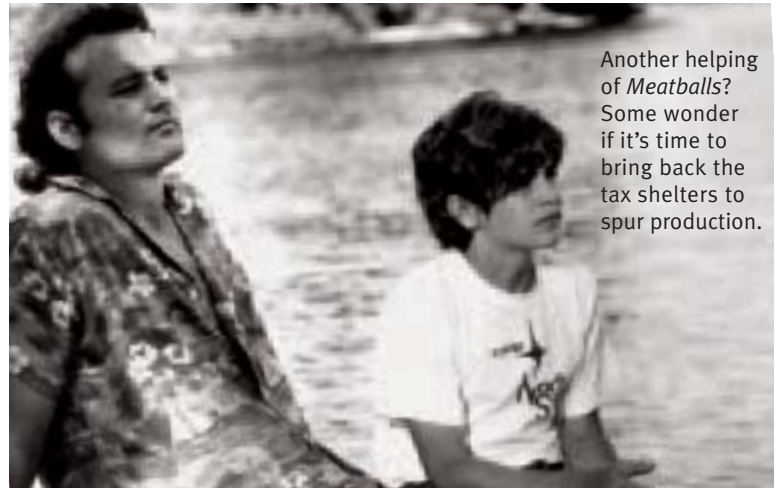
Update! But wait - there’s more!

During our lunch, Clarkson was not really ‘into’ the idea of building a Canadian ‘star system’ but he since seems to have changed his mind big time. During his presentation to the Heritage Committee, he included it as one of the five main principles required to have success in the English film industry. This is supercalifragilistically COOL!

CANADIAN FEATURES

Making it to the finish line

– continued from page 11



Another helping of *Meatballs*? Some wonder if it’s time to bring back the tax shelters to spur production.

We might never be able to beat Hollywood. But with the right support, Canadian films can sure as heck give them a run for their money and more importantly – give Canadians something to root for and celebrate. If Ralph can do it, so can we.

ACTRA’s key recommendations

- 1 Maintain – if not increase – the Feature Film Fund (FFF) for the long-term at least at its current level. Funding for script development should also be increased.
- 2 Telefilm’s marketing and promotion budgets of \$500,000 per feature must be maintained.
- 3 To reach the 5% box office target, the FFF must support a broad range of films, including drama, comedy, and long- and short-form films.
- 4 Develop, maintain and strengthen a diverse distribution sector that is owned and controlled by Canadians.
- 5 Impose spending and scheduling commitments on Canadian private TV broadcasters for Canadian feature film.
- 6 Include performers and other creators on the Feature Film Advisory board.
- 7 Tax credits such as a labour tax credit for film development are crucial for Canadian productions and should be maintained. The CFVPTC should be increased to 30% to strongly encourage Canadian production using Canadian talent. The PSTC rate should increase to 18% of expenditures.
- 8 Revise co-production guidelines to ensure that non-treaty third country performers and other creative personnel are not taking the place of Canadian and treaty country performers.
- 9 Consider implementing a box office levy to support Canadian film production.
- 10 Consider reinstating the Capital Cost Allowance provision
- 11 Consider introducing screen quotas and/or offer tax incentives to exhibitors, such as permitting the ticket sales on Canadian movies to be tax free.

FEATURE FILM DIGITAL DISTRIBUTION

Making technology work for Canadian film

by Jill Rosenberg, National Organizer Digital Media

Digital distribution could be the miracle drug we've been looking for to cure our chronic lack of access to our own films. Instead of the monolithic distribution system we now know, we could move towards a digital network, a sort of internet for film theatres. Until now, access to Canadian film has been largely the privilege of those living in Toronto, Montreal or Vancouver – and even there, the pickings are slim. One of the most attractive features of digital distribution is accessibility – it can bring an eclectic range of cinema to even the most remote areas of Canada, giving Canadians equal access to their own culture and their own stories, regardless of where they live.

did 10 years ago? Basically, we are temporarily stuck in a digital *Catch 22* – there's not enough content to justify the switch, and not enough equipment to justify increased digital content. Despite anticipated savings in print and labour costs, theatre owners are reluctant to take a \$100,000 risk on a digital projector with an unknown life expectancy, when their \$30,000 film projectors will last a guaranteed 30 years. As a result, distributors are forced to continue to produce film prints if they want their films to reach a wide audience. While the big studios have considered paying to install the projectors, they aren't confident that the technology is stable enough to justify the investment. They're also reluctant to

experiment, and one that we here in Canada should watch very carefully.

While we wait for movie theatres to catch up, digital distribution is already taking hold on a personal level. The new Playstation Portable (PSP) not only offers gaming, music storage, wireless internet connection and high-resolution – it also has full-length feature film screening capabilities. And it's being shipped with a copy of *Spiderman 2* to prove it. Short films are now being sold like ring tones to your cell phone and on the internet, sites such as Atomfilms.com are building global audiences and distribution opportunities for indie filmmakers that were not available 10 years ago.

**Instead of the monolithic distribution system
we now know, we could move towards a
digital network, a sort of internet for film theatres.**

It comes down to this simple fact: same quality, lower cost. Film prints are limited and expensive – digital content is virtually free to duplicate, can be streamed to countless destinations at once and can be copied instantly. For distributors, digital projection offers massive savings on the cost of film prints and a way to distribute titles based on real-time demand. Digital content can be delivered on a small disc – or even virtually by satellite, eliminating bulky 35 mm reels that cost around \$2,500 per print. Digital projection also makes it possible to add a popular film to a screen or remove a less popular film at the push of a button giving theatre owners the power to tailor content to the demands of their audiences. Setting up a film print is time consuming and labour intensive, theatres need to run a film for at least one week to make it worth their time. The quality of digital technology has improved immensely – it now offers better visual and audio qualities than film – it doesn't scratch, break or age. It's not hard to imagine film will eventually go the way of vinyl records.

So why are we still watching films as we

embrace the technology due to the increased threat of film piracy that comes with digital distribution. Theatre owners have other reasons to be wary of embracing the new technology. While digital distribution would technically give them more freedom in programming what they show on their screens, in reality, they're afraid that they lose even more control over what films they show and when – if they let the big studios pay for their projectors they might demand a say in what they're used for.

While progress on digital theatrical distribution in North America is slow, it is well on its way in other parts of the world. Countries such as China, Singapore, Japan and Brazil have already made digital projection systems a reality in their cinemas. In the United Kingdom, the government is taking aggressive steps to increase access to British films by investing \$30 million in digital projectors for 250 screens across the country, an initiative that will virtually double the number of digital projectors worldwide. What's more – cinemas that take the technology can only use it to screen 'non-Hollywood' films. It's a bold

An example of the multi-platform potential of digital content was seen at this year's Sundance Film Festival. An entire website devoted to Sundance-selected films made the films available online for the duration of the festival while also being shown on digital screens and computer terminals throughout the actual festival. The idea of a global film festival online is an interesting one and could potentially offer the type of exposure and support our Canadian film industry is so desperately seeking.

If embraced, digital distribution has the potential to positively change the landscape of Canadian cinema. For Canadian filmmakers, the digital projection system could revolutionize the distribution and exposure of our films both on our own turf and abroad. However, the key to making this technology successful for us is to be proactive and vigilant. While a new distribution model could free our theatres, it could easily swing the other way and give big U.S. studios an even tighter grip on our content. We have to be on our guard and make this new technology work for our own cultural objectives.

AFBS straight talk



by Ferne Downey
National Treasurer
& AFBS Governor

Thank you to the many members who emailed and called in response to my first article. Now look what you've done – you've encouraged me to write another! Here goes my second attempt to de-mystify AFBS and foster a better understanding of how it all works. I'm counting on you to keep me on an even keel. If I get too complex when I try to make things simple, don't let me get away with it. Pester me by e-mail and I'll try, try again.

Insurance Reclass for 2005/06 will have come and gone by the time you're reading this. You are probably acutely aware of the many pressures and trends that have affected health and dental insurance programs overall – and AFBS is not immune from those marketplace pressures. But containing Gross Premium costs is hugely important and AFBS successfully contained those costs to well below 'on the street' increases. Where we all felt the pinch is the all-important 'premium subsidy rate' (the non-member income that has helped subsidize member insurance) – which this year hit a low of 22%. Last year it was 28.5%. The year before that 37%. The declining subsidy hit your individual insurance account for a wallop and subsequently the Net Premium cost more than it did last year (except in Class 1P). That's the simple math of it. I feared it would be even worse, so I admit to being somewhat relieved. Less monies flowed from non-member income – mainly because more full members are working – which meant less money for subsidy.

Now that's admittedly a Coles Notes version, but I hope it illustrates why this will be the last year of this insurance plan model. It's unlikely that we will have a big surge of non-member income in the foreseeable future, so we need to plan anew. And we are.

As a counterbalance to the lower than usual subsidy, thankfully, ACTRA's effective collective bargaining resulted in increased producers' contributions to insurance on our two biggest contracts – IPA (25%) and Commercial (33%). This was a hugely important factor that helped make this transition year less painful – if you can measure pain by degrees.

Going forward: build your reserves

Put money in your own interest-bearing Insurance Reserve Account so that you have money banked to draw down if you need it to maintain your insurance classification in the future. AFBS offers flexible payment scenarios for we the chronically under-employed – annual VISA/cheque or pre-authorized monthly chequing options are available. When you have the chance to make a deposit, send your cheque directly to the AFBS Accounting Department along with written instructions noting that this is a voluntary insurance contribution for deposit into your Insurance Reserve Account, along with your ACTRA number and signature. So, when you are flush, top up your reserves to pave the way for the next bout of being broke.

New insurance plan design

Some initial forward-thinking suggestions were proposed for the new insurance plan design that would become effective next year (the 2006/07 benefit year). **Thor Bishopric**, our ACTRA National President and AFBS Eastern Region Governor, is one of the architects and a thorough analysis of a sustainable and more flexible plan design has begun.

Making connections

The ACTRA/AFBS Working Group filed an excellent report to ACTRA's National Council in late January and their recommendation was carried unanimously – a testament to Chair (and new ACTRA Toronto President) **Karl Pruner**. As the ACTRA AFBS Board Appointee, I will be collaborating closely with the Working Group as the new insurance plan design evolves. "Dialogue and cooperation" is the order of the day, with the best interests of members always at the heart of things.

On a less positive note, ACTRA's National Council was frankly appalled by the fact that the AFBS Board of Governors intend to re-brand AFBS – so as to no longer have ACTRA as part of the name. ACTRA members make up 90% of the total membership of AFBS – we are the chief stakeholders. At an important juncture in our relationship when close co-operation is so necessary, Council perceived this action to be an outrageous one.

RRSP ceiling

Once you receive your '2005 RRSP Deduction Limit Statement' from the feds, you can mail (or fax 416-967-4744) a copy to AFBS if you want to make sure deductions do not exceed your limit. Any RSP over-contributions can be refunded on a quarterly basis, or even more quickly upon request.

AFBS website enhancement

You can now access your RRSP statements online at www.actrafrat.com on a monthly basis. Then you can choose whether or not you want to receive quarterly statements by snail mail. Everyone will still receive the December 31 annual statement by mail but there is an opportunity to save some trees for the web-savvy. Just complete the online registration process and you're away to the races.

I would be honoured if you would nominate me to hold your proxy

AFBS annual general meeting

The AFBS AGM is Monday afternoon, May 30, 2005 in Toronto. It is your once-a-year chance to talk to the entire Board of Governors in person. I strongly encourage all of you who can go to attend and be heard. If you are not able to go – I would be honoured if you would nominate me to hold your proxy because I will definitely be there. In the meantime, if I can help in any way, call me at the ACTRA office and leave a message at 416-489-1311/ 1-800-387-3516 or better yet, email fdowney@actra.ca.

ACTRA and United Steelworkers – Stronger Together

by Thor Bishopric, ACTRA National President

On April 14 I had the honour of signing an exciting strategic alliance between ACTRA and the United Steelworkers in front of 3,000 people at the USW convention in Las Vegas. It was quite a thrill, and definitely one of the highlights of my time as your National President.

I am very pleased about this new partnership, and the opportunity it presents for our two organizations to learn from each other and share vital resources. This bond of cooperation makes ACTRA stronger and louder as we strive to improve the creative and working lives of performers across the country.

ACTRA is not merging or affiliating with the USW. Each union fully retains its independence and autonomy, but we will be working closely together in the months to come to learn from each other, to share resources where there is mutual advantage, and to team up on some of the public policy issues that are vital to both unions.

What could the USW and ACTRA possibly have in common? More than you might think. With almost a million members, the USW is the largest and most powerful private sector union in North America. The USW has a long history of lobbying governments and employers and speaking up for the preservation of our shared Canadian values. We share a lot

in our views of how to build strong Canadian cultural industries, and we will work with them to confront the numerous threats to our country's cultural sovereignty.

ACTRA wants to bring our campaigns on film and TV issues into the labour movement and to broaden our coalition to protect Canada's cultural sovereignty. The more partners we have in this fight – the better. The USW is a proven leader in partnering with like-minded organizations and campaigning on public policy issues.

Our new alliance with Steel will also enhance our ability to negotiate the best terms and working conditions for our members. Our industry has changed immensely since ACTRA was formed more than 60 years ago. Until recently our main employer was the CBC. Now more than half of our members' work comes from multinational media-conglomerates, many headquartered in the U.S. Steel has a solid record of standing up to multinational corporations. Their valuable experience will be extremely useful as we plan for future negotiations. For our part – ACTRA is viewed as one of the leading experts in negotiating agreements on behalf of self-employed, independent contractors. This is a new area for Steel – and one in which they will be looking to ACTRA for expertise and advice.

The values and goals of ACTRA remain

unchanged. We always have, and always will be, a performers' union run by and for performers. Reaching out to other unions who share our values and common interest can only make us stronger as we grow to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing industry.

This bond of cooperation makes ACTRA stronger and louder as we strive to improve the creative and working lives of performers across the country.

I invite you to read more on our new partnership – more details and a copy of the service agreement can be found at ACTRA National's website – www.actra.ca. I am confident that you will join me in celebrating and embracing this promising new friendship.



ACTRA and USW representatives celebrate the new alliance.

“Reaching out to other unions who share our values and common interest can only make us stronger as we grow to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing industry.”

The Lowdown: Frequently Asked Questions

What’s going on?

ACTRA National and ACTRA Toronto have signed an alliance and services agreement with the United Steelworkers. The ‘alliance’ means the two unions are going to look for ways to work together and to protect each other’s jurisdictions. The ‘services agreement’ means the two unions are going to look for ways to cooperate on public policy, organizing, training of staff, and contract research among other areas.

Does this ‘strategic alliance’ mean that ACTRA is merging with the USW?

No. A merger or affiliation agreement with another organization would require changes to our constitution and by-laws and would require ratification by the membership.

This strategic alliance is an agreement that creates a forum for our two organizations to exchange ideas and to support each other’s efforts in areas of mutual interest and also defines a mechanism that allows us to share resources and work together in pursuit of common goals.

Will we need to be Steelworkers to be actors now?

ACTRA is remaining ACTRA. Nothing changes in our constitution or our contracts. We are still fully independent. We have simply added another alliance to grow our strength.

So what does all of this mean for me?

All it means is that ACTRA will be extending its reach, expanding its access to skill training and other resources, and will be tackling its work with the benefit of a growing set of alliances. We’re going to keep working on our members’ priorities – like the need for more Canadian domestic drama – in a stronger coalition of like-minded unions.

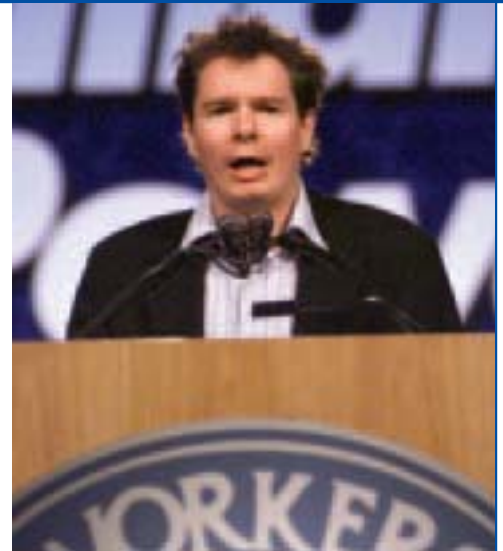
Why is ACTRA entering into a strategic alliance with USW?

Our industry has undergone enormous changes. Thirty years ago, the CBC was the principal employer of our members and, consequently, ACTRA’s principal counterparty at the bargaining table. Today, our industry is a fully globalized business and we are bargaining, directly or indirectly, with vertically integrated multi-national media companies, usually based in the U.S. We will be exploring ways to take advantage of the USW’s considerable influence and experience in lobbying and bargaining to assist our own public policy and collective bargaining work.

It is also worth noting too that, as we have become an effective competitor in the international film business, we have attracted the attention of other players who have sought from time to time, either to organize in our jurisdiction or to attempt to disrupt production here in order to drive work elsewhere. The strategic alliance gives ACTRA a measure of confidence in facing such organizational challenges.

What does ACTRA get out of this partnership?

The USW is a powerful ally with a well-established track record in political action, coalition building, organizing, collective bargaining, staff and member education and a deep commitment to fighting globalization with globalization. In Canada alone the USW represents the interests of 250,000 workers through the use of targeted campaigns. These workers are not only potential allies in the struggle to get our message to government. They are also taxpayers whose contributions have funded a highly regulated and subsidized broadcast system, which has utterly failed to deliver on the promise of the *Broadcast Act* – to let Canadians tell their own stories on their own airwaves. This alliance gives us a golden opportunity to insert a cultural message into the labour agenda.



ACTRA National President **Thor Bishopric** addresses the convention.

What does the USW get out of this partnership?

ACTRA will now play a more active role at the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and we are not an insignificant ally. As one of the 15 largest unions in the Congress, voting our own delegates, with a voice on the Council and represented on its committees, we will potentially increase the influence of the USW’s network of ‘like-minded’ unions by approximately 10 percent. The USW has also expressed interest in making use of ACTRA National’s developing research capabilities as well as learning from us about organizing independent workers and negotiating and administering collective agreements on their behalf – our special area of expertise.

Are we going to be making any payments to the USW?

If the USW decides to take advantage of the services agreement and to borrow ACTRA staff for projects, they will be making payments to ACTRA. If ACTRA likewise decided to borrow resources from the USW (for example, organizers) we would cover the associated costs. Otherwise there are no fees or charges contemplated in this agreement.

– continued on page 27

Women in the Director's Chair 2005

The Women in the Director's Chair Workshop (WIDC) brings together eight female directors for four intensive weeks of training at The Banff Centre. During the Prep, Production and Postproduction Module, under the guidance of mentors, directors are put through the paces of production working with professional cast and crews.

However, the workshop isn't just for female directors – both male and female performers are invited to work with the director participants, giving them a unique opportunity to experiment and hone their craft in a safe, creative environment.

InterACTRA asked two ACTRA members to share their experiences at WIDC 2005:

Sherry White, Director Participant, St John's, NF:

I'd been imagining what it would be like to direct the films I've written – if only I was a director. While I'd already directed two short films, they were overflowing with flaws so I'd decided that they didn't count. I really wanted to learn and I needed the opportunity to fail, to test, and to experiment as a director to see if I could actually be one. So another year rolls around, and after two unsuccessful attempts to attend WIDC as an actor, I thought, be bold, what have you got to lose? So I applied as a director.

I was over the moon when I got in. I had no idea what to expect and I didn't care. I knew it meant something that a jury somewhere in the world looked at my credentials, my letters of reference, and my mini director's demo and said this woman deserves a shot. And I will be forever grateful.

I spent the few weeks leading up to the program pouring over the agendas and course outlines, trying to get into a 'director' headspace. But nothing could have really prepared me for this program – the surprise is part of its magic. I don't know if it's the mandate on which the whole program is built, or if it is true that women do learn differently than men, and being in a program designed for women was actually better suited for me. Or maybe it was the corny way in which every failure was celebrated as a 'learning opportunity'. Or maybe, for me it was the seven other mid-career women, all of us thrown together, for five days in December, and then three weeks in January/February. All I know is I had revelation after revelation. As an actor, a director, a writer. A mother. A woman. A human.

There were also lots of opportunities to learn the technical side of filmmaking as well. We were surrounded by hordes of professionals who were all there to help the director participants achieve our visions.

All that was fantastic, but really what I walked away from WIDC with is the confidence to say that I am a director. This confidence wasn't handed to me on a silver platter in Banff, Alberta. I had to earn it. Through many 'learning



ACTRA members at WIDC (front) David Milchard, Sarah Edmondson, Sherry White, Ellen David, Carol Whiteman, (middle) Daniel Levesque, Arlene Hazzan Green (Writers Guild), Christianne Hirt, Iris Quinn, Chapelle Jaffe, (back) Michelle Thrush, Leslie Ann Coles, Sarah Michelle Brown, David H. Lyle, Yvonne Myers.

opportunities', bawling sessions, bitch sessions, falling off the horse, getting back on the horse. By being surrounded by a group of women and professionals who treated me like a director even when I found it hard to act like one. In the end I finally, with about one week to go in the program, was able to 'get over myself' and admit that I came there to prove what I already knew: I am a director.

Daniel Levesque, Actor Participant, Toronto, ON:

Being part of the actor contingent at the 2005 WIDC workshop has been a truly spectacular experience. I've met dozens of wonderful creative folks and I know that these short weeks here will make me a better person and therefore, a better performer for years to come. As an actor, it's an incredible learning experience that I will be able to share on sets and with peers the rest of my life.

I hope that ACTRA will continue to endorse this workshop – it fits into ACTRA's overall encouragement for taking risks and developing Canadian talent. This workshop develops actors (look up their credits when you have a moment – they're quite impressive), female directors (which is the main reason why we are all here), and union crew members right across the board.

I likened my experience to the youth program, Katimavik – it's not about the money, it's about the craft and the soul and what you give and get out of the zone afterwards. It's a lifetime contribution for all participants, from art school volunteers, to the directors, to the actor and so on.

This is an outstanding program that I personally feel is illuminating and uber-worthy for all ACTRA members to apply for, and hopefully participate in. Patience is a virtue – I have been applying since 2001 before being accepted into this year's workshop. This phenomenal opportunity is definitely worth the stamps and the time to put together a proposal letter!

WIDC 2006

Story Incubation Module: December 2-5, 2005

Prep, Production, Post Module: January 19-February 5, 2006

APPLICATION DEADLINES – Directors: September 30, 2005 – Actors & Crew: October 31, 2005

Applications will be available at www.creativewomenworkshops.com

Carol Whiteman, WIDC Producer, TEL: 604-913-0747/1-877-913-0747, EMAIL: carol@creativewomenworkshops.com

Tahira Baulackey, The Banff Centre, TEL: 403-762-6624, EMAIL: tahira_baulackey@banffcentre.ca

Joanne Deer, ACTRA National, TEL: 416-489-1311/1-800-387-3516, EMAIL: jdeer@actra.ca

OTTAWA

MIP: Members making their own opportunities

The Member Initiated Production Agreement (MIP) has breathed new life into a slow production cycle giving Ottawa members opportunities to stretch their creative muscles in areas such as writing and directing. It is also a great program for actors seeking additional experience and demo material. Here's what ACTRA Ottawa Councillor Karl Claude has to say about the program:

MIP is a great vehicle to allow ACTRA members to come together and create original productions. Members who may not have the financial resources to pay daily scale fees to performers will also greatly benefit from the MIP. In lieu of being paid for their performances, members share in the ownership and potential revenues generated by the production.

I recently co-produced a short film under MIP – *The Adventures of Mr. Inappropriate, Episode 1: The Detective*. My partner in this venture was Ottawa funnyman/actor/writer/director/producer **Steve Patterson** who came up with the idea and wrote the script while I handled the logistical and technical coordination of producing the movie. We shot *Mr. Inappropriate* over three days in

three different locations. We were blessed and grateful to see such a high number of industry professionals willing to help by donating their time and resources to make sure our project would be a quality one.

I asked Steve for his take on the experience of shooting his first project under the MIP and he writes: "I am excited (as a school girl as it were) to announce that my production done under MIP was a complete success. The program stipulates that all roles must be filled using ACTRA members, a requirement easily met with the high level of talent in our city. The *Mr. Inappropriate* cast includes ACTRA members **Norm Berketa, Robert Reynolds, Peter Dillon, Sally Cleford, Chelsea Ceci, Claudia Jurt**, and yours truly. The process was simple and the results were great," said Steve.

MIP is an excellent outlet for members

who want to try writing, directing and producing – especially in times when there may not be much going on in town!

Karl Claude, ACTRA Ottawa Councillor



New Presidents!

There's been a changing of the guard at three ACTRA branches over the past few months with three branches electing new presidents.

ACTRA Maritimes acclaimed one of its most illustrious members, **Nigel Bennett**, as the President of the Maritimes Branch. Nigel is well known internationally as a star of stage and screen and has a tremendous fan base for his work on series such as *Lexx* and *Forever Knight*. Joining Nigel on the branch's new executive are **Deborah Allen** (re-elected as Vice-Chair) and **Kathryn MacLellan** (Council Secretary). National Councillor **Jamie Bradley** also took on the duties of Treasurer.

Karl Pruner was elected as the new President of ACTRA Toronto Performers, taking over from **Richard Hardacre**. An ACTRA and Canadian Actors' Equity member for 25 years, Karl is an Executive Officer on ACTRA Toronto's Council and a member of ACTRA's National Council. Karl has also served as a team member for ACTRA's negotiations with independent producers. Karl is known for his leading roles in a number of series including *E.N.G.*, *Ready or Not*, *Total Recall 2070* and in French, the popular Radio-Canada series *L'or*.

In Edmonton, newly elected President **Maralyn Ryan** is joined by Past President **Kim McCaw**, Vice-President **Davina Stewart**, Secretary **Sonia Lyn Donaldson**, Treasurer **Coralie Cairns**, and Councillors **Robert Clinton**, **Chris Moore**, and **Rebecca Starr**. **Colin MacLean** remains the branch's National Councillor.



Nigel Bennett



Karl Pruner

MIP in action.



Shooting *Mr. Inappropriate*.

applause

Cowan Award presented to first National President Dan MacDonald

Long-time activist **Dan MacDonald** was presented with ACTRA Toronto's Bernard Cowan Award for his significant contribution to ACTRA.

The Bernard Cowan Award is given to a member to celebrate their critical contribution and service to ACTRA. A long-time CBC announcer (*Front Page Challenge*, *Wayne & Shuster*) **Bernard (Bunny) Cowan** was one of ACTRA's pioneers. He was a founder of RATS (Radio Artists of Toronto) in 1943, served as Branch President and went on to lead the young union in two huge and important achievements: the establishment of residual fees (probably the earliest such arrangement in the world) and leading ACTRA out of the American Federation of Labour – making us a solidly Canadian union.

Dan MacDonald is a most worthy recipient of the Cowan Award. Among his extensive contributions: leading the ACTRA Performers' Guild through the reorganization in the early '90s, serving as president from 1993-95, writing, editing and shepherding the 60th Anniversary issue of *InterACTRA*, and until recently, serving as President of Performing Arts Lodge of Canada (PAL). He was also pivotal in leading Equity out of American Equity and serving as its first President.



Dan MacDonald receives the Bernard Cowan Award from ACTRA Toronto President **Richard Hardacre** in December.

ECMA's honour Rita MacNeil

Member **Rita MacNeil** was presented with the Dr. Helen Creighton Lifetime Achievement Award at this year's East Coast Music Awards in February.

The presentation of the award followed a musical tribute that featured a performance by fellow ACTRA Maritimes member **Dutch Robinson**.

Rita is one of Cape Breton's great singer/songwriters and was the host of her own CBC variety series *Rita and Friends* that ran for three seasons. She has toured worldwide and last year released her 20th CD, *Blue Roses*.

Said Rita in accepting the award, "This award goes out to all the people who allowed me to make music all these years. I also want to tell all the young performers, don't give up on your dreams. I'm living proof you can make it, just be true to what you do. And last, but not least, Cape Breton, I love you."



Rita MacNeil



Rex Harrington



Ellen Page

Ellen Page creates a buzz at Sundance

Young ACTRA member **Ellen Page** had Sundance a buzzin' with her breakout performance in the controversial feature *Hard Candy*. As reported in *Variety*:

"*Hard Candy* is memorable most of all for Page, a Halifax, Nova Scotia thesp said to have been 15 when pic was shot. Self-possessed to an astonishing degree, both as an actress and as the character, Page handles her enormous load of dialogue with adult-sized portions of emotion, insinuation and driving rage, not to mention an appreciation of sexual dynamics and consequences that repeatedly astonishes. The actress will be in great demand as soon as Hollywood sees this, if she isn't already."

Walk of Fame inductees

Canada's Walk of Fame is inducting ACTRA members **Rex Harrington** and **Kiefer Sutherland** with their own stars. Kiefer's star will join those of his parents and fellow ACTRA members **Donald Sutherland** who received his star in 2000, and **Shirley Douglas**, inducted last year.

Member **Tom Green** will host the induction gala ceremony this June in Toronto. The walk – currently comprised of 84 stars – is located along a stretch of sidewalk in Toronto's entertainment district.



Jay Baruchel

Jay Baruchel gets million dollar kudos

Montreal member **Jay Baruchel** is getting kudos from a number of corners for his scene-stealing performance as 'Danger' in *Million Dollar Baby*. The talented 22-year old so impressed director **Clint Eastwood** that he thanked him in his acceptance speech for Best Picture – naming him as one of six actors of significance in his film. (More proof that Jay's mom – **Robyne Ropell-Baruchel**, author of the *Stage Mom's Survival Guide*, knows what she's doing! Ask your branch for your free copy or call 1-800-387-3516).



Rachel McAdams in *The Notebook*

ShoWest fetes Rachel McAdams

Member **Rachel McAdams** was honoured with ShoWest 2005's Supporting Actress of the Year Award at the international film convention's closing-night ceremony in Las Vegas. Rachel, who appeared last year in the series *Slings and Arrows*, as well as the hit films *The Notebook* and *Mean Girls*, next appears in the summer release *The Wedding Crashers*, opposite **Owen Wilson**, **Vince Vaughn** and **Christopher Walken**, as well as the thriller *Red-Eye*, directed by **Wes Craven**.



Courtesy Kodak Entertainment Imaging



Courtesy Kodak Entertainment Imaging



Courtesy Kodak Entertainment Imaging



applause

Genies

The best in Canadian film was feted at the 25th Annual Genie Awards on March 21 in Toronto. ACTRA member and SCTV-alum **Andrea Martin** hosted the gala event.

Congratulations to all of the performer-nominees and winners!

Actress in a Leading Role

- ★ **Pascale Bussi eres**, *Ma vie en cin emascope*
- Isabelle Blais**, *Les aimants*
- Celine Bonnier**, *Monica la mitraille*
- Emily Hampshire**, *Blood*
- Jacinte Lague**, *Elles  taient cinq*

Actor in a Leading Role

- ★ **Roy Dupuis**, *M moires affectives*
- Michel Cot **, *Le Dernier Tunnel*
- David La Haye**, *Nouvelle-France*
- Ian McKellan**, *Emile*
- Nick Strahl**, *Twist*

Actress in a Supporting Role

- ★ **Jennifer Jason Leigh**, *Childstar*
- Juliette Gosselin**, *Nouvelle France*
- Sylvie Moreau**, *Les aimants*
- Ellen Page**, *Wilby Wonderful*
- Susana Salazar**, *A Silent Love*

Actor in a Supporting Role

- ★ **Jean LaPointe**, *Le Dernier Tunnel*
- Gary Farmer**, *Twist*
- Brendan Fehr**, *Sugar*
- Bruce Greenwood**, *Being Julia*
- Kyle MacLachlan**, *Touch of Pink*

★ Denotes award winner

Photos, from top to bottom:

Host **Andrea Martin**.

Winner **Roy Dupuis**.

Pascale Bussi eres accepts Best Actress accolades.

Nominee **Gary Farmer**.

Don McKellar, Best Screenplay nominee with **Heather Allin**, National and ACTRA Toronto Councillor.

MERCEDES BARRY

1948-2004



The first time I saw Mercedes I

thought she was an Apache. The striking face and fierce stance

were reminiscent of a young Geronimo surveying the inevitable. I found out of course that she wasn't an Apache, though hers was not the white man's way either. She was a daughter of Placentia Bay, Newfoundland, which fully explains my mistaken first impression. Her people also had their homes stolen and were put in reservations i.e. industrial growth centres.

She was a beautiful woman and like all beautiful women she was dangerous. You could see it in the eyes. They could move from a twinkle to a glint in the twitch of a cat's whisker. Twinkle good, glint bad.

She was an artist. A writer, an actor and a dancer. As a writer she brought truth to the stage. As an actor she created and performed some of the most authentic and original characters ever to appear before us. As a dancer she felt the most vital rhythms of our island's heart. She was a great soul. Like a lot of truly creative people her life was not always easy. But in Mercedes' case the pain was relieved by a great sense of humour. She was quick to laugh – at herself as quickly as at anything else.

One night lying on our backs and gazing at the starry universe in a field on Bell Island I asked her if she thought there was any life up there. She replied, "I don't know. Do you think there's any life down here?"

But of course there is life and she was a great part of it. Extremely well read, articulate, funny and often profound she never took herself too seriously and expected the same of everyone else. She was a dear friend and a hero in the cause of human expression. We loved her and we shall never see her like again.

– Frank Barry

We share our sadness at the passing of the following members and colleagues:

Bill Cameron
Earl Cameron
Allan Harvey
Robert Jones
Peggy Loder
Robert Manitopyes

Bob McAdorey
Heather Sandford
Frank Stalley
Guylaine St-Onge
Bruce Vavrina
John Vernon

JONATHAN WELSH

1947-2005



Last January, for reasons the coroner was not able to explain, Jonathan Welsh passed away

in his sleep at the age of 57. Poet, author, fisherman, wine-lover, poker-player, pool shark, mischief-maker, dedicated hell-raiser, loving husband, understanding uncle, consummate dad, and true friend, he was also one of us. He was an actor. A damn fine actor. He could make you laugh or cry at will. He knew how to provoke anger, awaken compassion and inspire love. He saw the beauty and the ugliness that live together in the human heart and fearlessly insisted that you see it too. He hated phonies, ruthlessly mocked pretension and endlessly celebrated people. He would have laughed like hell at the thought of someone writing these things down – but he wouldn't have stopped them.

He was a great talent who understood that great talent is never enough; who had the heart and the courage to struggle to the 'top' of the horizontal ladder of Canadian show business again and again and who laughed at the constant, maddening absurdity of having to start over at the bottom. His undeniable presence had fuelled the success of no fewer than three dramatic television series, long before he re-invented himself as the genial host of *The New World Wine Tour* and went on to co-author *The TV Wine Guy*. He used to introduce himself at publicity events by saying "Hi! I'm Jonathan Welsh. For those of you who don't know me, I'm a Canadian television star!" The fact that it was true made it all the funnier. One day we will honour our performers as they do in other countries and the light of those 'Northern Stars' will draw crowds around the world to Canadian films and television shows. One day, success will build on success for performers in Canada. One day we'll stand that ladder up and let Canadian performers climb it. One day, a life's work will get a Canadian actor somewhere and actors like Jonathan won't have to do everything themselves.

Jonathan would have smiled to see his friends and family fill two churches to honour his memory. He was the life of every party he ever attended and his funeral was no exception.

...but he had a chance to leave behind
some of that which he did find
half a chance and left behind
it all for you.

Jonathan Welsh, *Letter to the West Wind*

– Karl Pruner

AILEEN SEATON

1920-2004



I met **Aileen** in 1953 when we were both with the *Straw Hat Players* in Gravenhurst and Port Carling. Aileen shone as Titania in *Midsummer Night's Dream* and as Eliza in *Pygmalion*. But more importantly to me, we became life-long friends. Six years earlier Aileen had won the Best Actress Award in the Dominion Drama Festival for playing Mrs. Manningham in *Gaslight*. The following year she married the director of that production, actor/writer **John Bethune** and they moved from Vancouver to Toronto where they joined the nucleus of actors in 'the great days of radio'.

Aileen had a wonderfully fey quality that ideally suited the heroines of Tennessee Williams. She was praised for her performance as Alma in *Summer and Smoke* and as Amanda in *The Glass Menagerie*, which I was lucky enough to see her play in London, Ontario. I miss you, Aileen.

– Louise Nicol

I worked with **Aileen** and **John** at CBC Radio for more than 20 years and it was both a pleasure and an education. Aileen played leading roles or smaller parts with the same dedication to detail (no tossing things off for her) in all varieties of productions. One of her loves was *Robert Weaver's Anthology*, on which she regularly read Canadian short stories. These she prepared with consummate precision, careful to capture the spark that illuminated each work. She was a delight. Good humoured with a great appreciation of the ludicrous, but always controlled, always generous, a real professional. We have lost one of our finest.

– Corinne Langston

I worked with **Aileen** and **John** many times but it was at the Canadian National Institute for the Blind that I really got to know what a delightful person Aileen was. In 1971 we were in Studio G in the old CBC building on Jarvis Street and **Alan King** approached us to ask if we would be interested in reading books for the CNIB. Aileen jumped at the idea and from then until a few weeks before her death she recorded more than 200 books and magazines for people unable to read print due to a visual or physical handicap.

Last November she was given an award by the Ontario Government honouring her for more than 30 years of volunteering and at the CNIB was nominated innumerable times and thrice won a Torgi – the CNIB award given for Reader of the Year. Fitting and wholly deserved as these awards were they only serve to emphasize the greatness of the legacy she left – hundreds of books recorded permanently in her beautifully distinctive voice.

– Desmond Scott



RON KRANTZ

1927 – 2005

Ron Krantz, veteran writer, producer and background performer, passed away in Toronto on January 10. Ron was one of the early graduates of the *Lorne Greene Academy of Radio Arts* in Toronto. In 1954 he started writing for the CBC National News and never looked back. He wrote for *Graphic*, the first *Canada Hit Parade*, *Close-up*, CBC's first major news and current affairs weekly program, *General Motors Theatre – The Blackwood Deal*, and for *Project*, a series of one-hour radio documentaries which included the award-winning *The Invisible Rain*.

In 1962 he was principal creator and senior writer for the legendary *Razzle Dazzle*, the award-winning variety comedy series for children that played daily for five years and gave so many performers, writers, and directors their first start in the biz. Through the '60s he continued to create and write for television, including *Time of Your Life*, *Swingaround*, *Barney Boomer* and *Upside Town*. In 1970 he became senior writer for CBC National and eventually moved into executive production first with CBC and then Global.

After retiring from Global he satisfied an old creative itch and became a valued background performer, almost until his death. He found work in almost all local series from *Due South* and *Traders* to *Earth – Final Conflict*, countless feature films and MOWs. One of his biggest kicks was during the filming of *Exotica* when director **Atom Egoyan** manufactured he be in the background for a scene in which his son (ACTRA member **Peter Krantz**), was appearing with **Don McKellar**. A creative man, a humble man and one to whom many in this business owe their starts to. He was a proud ACTRA member and an even prouder Canadian.



ACTRA's Face to Face Online: Someone could be looking for you!

Face to Face is ACTRA's free online talent catalogue that lets you show the world what you've got to offer. When you use *Face to Face*, you get the power to take control of marketing your unique skills and experience.

Did you know?

You already HAVE a profile! All ACTRA members automatically have a basic profile. The trick is to make it your own.

Your profile can include your résumé, a biography, up to 10 photos, audio and video clips, and web link.

Face to Face lets you instantly email your résumé, headshots, video and audio clips to producers and casting directors around the world – for free.

People are looking for you! More than 1,300 producers, casting directors AND journalists use *Face to Face*.

The more information and details about what you have to offer, the more likely it is that you will turn up on searches.

You can update your profile 24/7 and you can also authorize your agent to make changes on your behalf.

Last year, access to the profiles on *Face to Face* opened up to include a whole new group of industry partners that you've worked with your entire career: your fellow ACTRA members! Many of our multi-talented members are involved in other aspects of the industry and are looking for fellow members for their project. Now you can raise your profile and build links within your professional peer group.

You can control who has access to your profile – new features allow you to decide whether your fellow members can see your profile. Child performers have automatically been excluded from the expanded access; however, their parents/guardians can choose to 'opt in' by submitting a written request to ACTRA.

Get Started!

Visit www.actra.ca, click on 'Member' at the top of the page, then login with your Face to Face password. (If you've lost your password and your email address is on file, you can use the handy 'Lost your password?' button at www.actra.ca or contact ftf@actra.ca).

Select 'Face to Face Online' from the left-

Bragging Rights

Have you received any calls or an audition as a result of your smashing Face to Face profile?

Send your story to interactra@actra.ca and we'll help you brag in the next issue of *InterACTRA*.

hand menu, then click on 'Update Portfolio'.

Use 'Member Profile' and 'Online Resume' to update your credits and skills – click on the 'Preview' button at any time to view the changes you have made.

More questions? Need help getting started? Contact your local branch, or email ftf@actra.ca. Please include your ACTRA membership number on all correspondence.

Show your card and save your money

All ACTRA and UBCP members (Full, Apprentice and ACTRA Extras) are entitled to a number of **discounts** when you show your ACTRA or UBCP member card. For a full list of discounts and details on how to access these deals and more, pick up a copy of the benefits guide at your ACTRA branch, or download a copy from the Members' section or the Sitefinder role at www.actra.ca. Questions? Contact interactra@actra.ca.

IMDb Pro – IMDbPro.com is the ultimate resource for entertainment industry professionals – it has all of the depth of IMDb, PLUS: representation listings for more than 55,000 people, in-production charts, box office info, company directories, message boards and more..

ACTRA and UBCP members are entitled to a **two-week free trial** and a **10% discount** when you sign up for IMDbPro. To start an IMDbPro subscription, members should visit www.imdbpro.com subscribe and enter the code **actradiscount** in the promotional code box during the registration process.

Concierge Connection – Get discounts of **up to 40%** on movie tickets, theatre productions, amusement parks, sporting events, museums, zoos, and more. Participating movie theatres include: Cineplex Odeon Galaxy Cinemas, Famous Players and AMC Theatres

Visit www.conciergeconnection.com/members and register – click on the register button on the left-hand side of the main page. You will then be prompted to create your individual profile with your name, address, email address, username and password. And **MEMBER ID CODE: MAPCONC**. Or contact Concierge Connection Inc. by phone at **(416) 236-4985** or email at customerservice@conciergeconnection.com for more information.

Bell Mobility – Sign up for ACTRA's special plan! **\$22.50/month** gives you: 200 anytime minutes/month, free call display and voicemail, per second billing, \$0.20/min after 200 min., \$0.10/Canadian long distance, and NO connection charge.

For details on this and other plans, call **1-866-548-2666 ext 8020** or visit ANY Bell Mobility store, quoting plan number **100020530**. Existing Bell Mobility customers can also switch to this plan free of charge by calling **1-800-667-0123**.

Hotels – Participating hotels in Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Regina, Saskatoon, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and Hollywood. Check the Benefits Guide for full details and locations.

ACTRA and United Steelworkers – Stronger Together

– continued from page 19

What does this alliance mean to ACTRA's negotiations with producers?

Nothing has changed with our collective agreements. ACTRA will continue to negotiate with producers within the same legal framework we always have. On the other hand, much might change in the way ACTRA approaches difficult bargaining situations, as this alliance builds the power and effectiveness of our union. ACTRA will have access to significantly enhanced training and resources that will be relevant should producers fail to be reasonable at the bargaining table.

What do the Steelworkers know about Canadian cultural issues?

Not nearly as much as they are about to learn! Leading on Canadian cultural issues is OUR job.

The USW is a highly diversified union that speaks out on issues affecting working people in many sectors. They have been leaders in the fight to preserve Canada's public health care system. To them we are

an important, well-organized and highly motivated sector of the labour force that has become a strong voice in the debate on Canadian cultural policy – an issue of interest to their members.

While the players in our industry may be new to them, they have a deep understanding of the impact of globalization on local employment and a wealth of experience in getting a message delivered on Parliament Hill. What we stand to gain from working with the USW is an increased reach and power in our campaigns; security and stability in our jurisdiction; and a chance to learn from a large and successful union so that we can do a better job for our members.

Why am I hearing about this after the fact? Doesn't a strategic alliance require ratification by the members?

The alliance documents contain very strict and unambiguous language that protects ACTRA's identity, independence, autonomy, constitution, by-laws, assets and membership. This strategic alliance is neither



ACTRA National Executive Director **Stephen Waddell** gets ready to sign the Alliance Agreement.

a merger nor an affiliation. It is a time-limited, non-binding agreement that spells out ways that our organizations have chosen to work together on a case-by-case basis. It is an administrative arrangement and, as such, it does not require ratification any more than does our participation in other partnerships like the CCAU or CFTIC.

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GLITZ PATROL: The 2005 ACTRA Awards in Toronto



by
Karen
Ivany



Jackie Richardson

Richard Chevolleau



Shirley Douglas and Rachel Sutherland



Gordon Pinsent and Paul Gross



Wendy Crewson and Mimi Kuzyk



Bayo Akinfemi

Emily Hampshire

Well, darlings, if you weren't at the ACTRA Awards in Toronto at the Carlu, Friday February 18, you were nowhere. Everybody who is anybody was. And we all looked fabulous!

It was standing room only, (and hell on my pedicure), for the awards ceremony, honouring some outstanding Toronto performers. Making his gala debut, our new ACTRA Toronto President **Karl Pruner** set the standard for a night of eloquence, inspiration and richly deserved recognition, not only to the talented nominees, but also to all those who dream of that breakthrough role.

Our eminent, returning host **Peter Keleghan** proved a hard act to follow. Effortlessly charming us while keeping the pace rolling, he was especially ebullient (and somewhat modest) announcing his own outstanding performance nomination. Before the hardware handouts, the divine **Jackie Richardson** wowed the room with her soulful singing. (I know you won't believe me, dear readers, but I sound exactly like that in my shower...)

ACTRA Award winner (male) **Richard Chevolleau** accepted his prize with humble sincerity and sophistication, radiating true joy. Agent **Nancy LeFeaver**, accepting the ACTRA Award (Female) on behalf of her client, **Kristen Thomson**, was equally humbled and thrilled (Thomson was home recovering and celebrating birth of twins!).

The heartfelt thanks of Award of Excellence recipient **Paul Gross** almost overshadowed his incredible good looks and overall 'hunkiness'. Mr. Gross was obviously deeply moved by the recognition, pausing several times to harness his emotions. He accepted his win on our behalf, dedicating his award to all Canadian actors. His remarks were so moving, I almost forgot about the video montage that featured his (equally award-deserving) bare butt.

An intoxicating swirl of drinks and dancing followed the closing remarks, and darlings; I was surrounded by a glamorous array of Beautiful People! Nominees **Wendy Crewson**, **Emily Hampshire** and **Catherine Disher** were a sparkling trio, and **Bayo Akinfemi's** white-on-white shirt and tie ensemble was red hot! The ever-elegant ladies, **Charmion King** and **Shirley Douglas** proved that an actress only improves over time. The lovely **Kate Ashby** gets red carpet honours for her stunning black & white, '50s-inspired dress. Ms. Ashby could make Sarah Jessica Parker look like Paula Abdul at the Grammy's in this number! Meanwhile, funny men, **Bruce Hunter**, **David Huband** and (awards show writer) **Adrian Truss** represented the 'they clean up good' boys crowd.

Sometime in the wee hours, my poor piggies, released from their heavenly pink heels, trotted off to the coat check, the lilting gale of actor's laughter wafting behind me... Ta-ta 'til next year, kids!

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