



I N T E R

WINTER 2007

ACTRA

The Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists



ACTRA *demands action* **from CRTC!**

**Performers speak out at opening
day of television hearings**

– See page 4



by
 Richard
 Hardacre

On a wet night in late December it's helpful to have some perspective on where things stand...

For quite some time the focus of ACTRA's united energies has been aimed at two distinct goals. At this writing, we are at a critical stage in the negotiations of the Independent Production Agreement (IPA) – the biggest contract under which we work. It's uncertain whether a fair deal can be achieved without using the mandate the members have given us to call a strike.

Among the bargaining dates in December we were also busy arguing for the survival of our cultural identity. We reached a plateau in this campaign with our coalition union partners to convince the broadcasting regulators of the CRTC to undo the damage done since 1999. They must re-work the regulations shaping the television environment in order to bring scripted dramatic production – stories made in Canada – to the airwaves of the big private broadcasters. There's more on that below.

In our negotiations with the associations of Producers, you can be proud of the number of your colleagues who, united with your negotiating committee, faced down the appalling demands we heard on the first day of bargaining, and the unacceptable terms we were offered on the last. Since the opening day, many performers sat in on bargaining sessions in Montreal and Toronto, introducing themselves as being there in support of our union. They were veterans and newcomers, they were work-a-day members, voice artists, stunt performers, background players and actors who play the leads in our industry. On our final day in December, some of our most prominent performers joined us. They were the tip of the iceberg.

Thousands returned ballots giving their mandate to support our negotiating team. ACTRA's members have been saying clearly that they will not accept rollback demands, or anything else that erodes our contract. No one wants a strike, but strike we will if the people sent by the producers continue to tell us we must concede that our worth has to be diminished to satisfy their corporate goals.

The approach of the representatives of the producers has been all the more shocking and frustrating in view of the effort ACTRA has been making to build a broad-

cast environment that stimulates Canadian production.

Your negotiating team held firmly to proposals and incremental increases designed to maintain stability. We proposed reasonable progress on pay, insurance contributions, and working conditions. We wanted incremental increases over five years to narrow the pay gap that exists between ACTRA and SAG members on the same sets of big U.S. films. (ACTRA was aiming for numerical parity with SAG rates on big-budget U.S. features shooting here by the year 2011.) We entered bargaining cognisant of the fact that the cast component of the budgets of most productions in this country is around 3%. Then we were told we had to accept less than that to allow productions to be viable.

During these weeks of negotiations, we brought the campaign to build a firmly grounded, Canadian television industry to its next stage. Over a one-month period, starting with powerful statements by prominent members in Vancouver during the convention of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters, and continuing to ACTRA's formal intervention at the hearings into the Broadcast TV Policy Review of the CRTC in Ottawa/Hull, we drove the message home. Now we must keep up the pressure until Canadian drama is restored to our television screens.

With that we returned to our other task...

On the night of December 20, the final scheduled day of bargaining, more than thirty of the most accomplished performers in Canada joined with us to present a package of *Comprehensive Terms to Settle*. It was a serious and reasonable offer demonstrating our willingness to work with the producers in all areas that both sides had identified as crucial to a deal. It was a clear opportunity for the producers to avoid what would be the likely harvest of their demands – the first labour disruption in ACTRA's history.

They rejected our set of terms. Their responses were that the value paid to our work for distribution to all new media (including internet) would be nil for 2 years

worldwide use and that general increases offered to wages would have to be limited to 0%, 0% and 1% for a three-year contract across a huge spectrum of the work we do.

At this writing, we are entering last-ditch efforts, initiated by us, to find a fair deal at the table. We go back with the strong support of our members and knowing full well how much they are relying on the negotiating team to fight for them. What kind of stake in our success this New Year holds, to a large degree, will be determined by our commitment and the strength of our solidarity.

With very best wishes for 2007,



Richard Hardacre
 National President

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STRIKE NEWS
 at press time

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

Calling all scribes!

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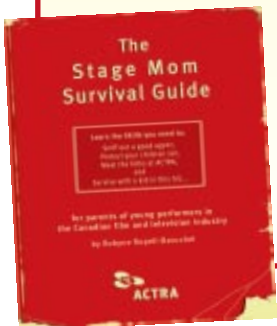
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The Stage Mom Survival Guide

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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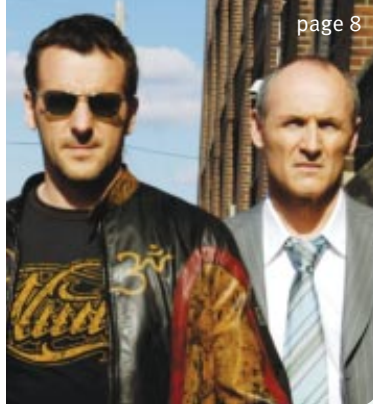
COVER PHOTO: ACTRA front-row-centre on opening day of the CRTC television hearings: (right to left) Barry Blake, R. H. Thomson (leaning forward), Sonja Smits, Fiona Reid and Richard Hardacre. See page 4 for details. Photo by Jonathan Hayward.

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by *Anny Murray*

Canadian stars demand ac



Sonja Smits is a Gemini Award winner and the 2004 recipient of Toronto's *ACTRA Award of Excellence*. Ms. Smits is known to Canadian TV audiences for her leading roles in *The Eleventh Hour*, *Traders* and *Street Legal*. On December 4, 2006 the *Ottawa Citizen* printed an edited version of this Op-Ed. We are printing it in its entirety so that you can read the whole story.

December 4, 2006 – This week the CRTC began a long-overdue review of the regulatory framework for Canadian over-the-air television. It's past time to fix the crisis in Canadian television drama. It is the CRTC's time for leadership.

The CRTC's current investigation is crucial as the future of Canadian television hangs in the balance. The 1999 Television Policy eliminated expenditure requirements for Canadian private broadcasters and expanded the definition of priority programming to include cheaper fare, such as variety shows and entertainment magazine programs. Since then, broadcasters have taken advantage. They've all but stopped commissioning locally made TV dramas – which are expensive to make and difficult to build an audience for – and loaded up on popular off-the-shelf U.S. dramas, which come with an audience and higher advertising revenues.

So private broadcasters are satisfying the looser Canadian requirements with cheaper shows that are easier to make, and making sure the best timeslots are reserved for the most lucrative U.S. shows. The CRTC's own reports show that private broadcasters spend hundreds of millions buying foreign programming, while spending only about a quarter of that on homegrown productions.

ACTRA, Canada's actor union, has been sounding the alarm about this TV drama crisis for years. ACTRA makes its case before the CRTC on December 4. We're asking the CRTC to fix its 1999

TV policy – an experiment that went wrong.

We are not alone in our view that Canadian drama is critically important to the future of Canadian television. Drama is the most popular genre of TV programming – Canadians continue to choose drama over other types of programming. Making and watching our own shows is crucial to our sense of self – our culture, our country. TV shows we make ourselves, chronicle our national experiences, our shared triumphs and create a sense of identity among Canadian viewers.

Canada's private broadcasters are given hundreds of millions of dollars worth of regulatory subsidies – subsidies that protect lucrative advertising revenues. Broadcast licences protect them from the competition of American networks and they currently meet their requirements while minimising their costs and boosting their revenues.

We must also note that it is not enough for our broadcasters to just spend on homegrown drama without a commitment to properly schedule it. For example, *Street Legal* was a huge success due to the consistent programming on Friday nights every week. It was given the chance to build an audience of a-million-plus viewers a week. Audiences knew where and when to find it. Now schedules are driven by the programming of U.S. simulcasts. We are sacrificing our Canadian shows by scheduling them around U.S. shows. This happened to the critically acclaimed and Gemini Award-winning *The Eleventh Hour*. U.S. shows get the prime time slots while the Canadian shows get the left-overs. Canadian shows face frequent schedule shifts, low-priority timeslots and smaller promotional budgets. These hurdles obviously make it even harder for a show to find an audience.

ACTRA's CRTC submission calls for regulations requiring Canada's private broadcasters to spend at least 7% of their advertising revenues on new Canadian English-language drama programming and to schedule at least two hours more of new Canadian dramas in real



Wendy Crewson and Fiona Reid in the media scrum outside the CRTC hearings.



ACTRA National President Richard Hardacre addresses the Canadian drama crisis at the CRTC hearings.

Photos by Jonathan Hayward

tion from CRTC

prime-time (Sunday to Thursday, 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.).

Issues such as digital conversion and high definition are being raised at these hearings but we have to remember that none are relevant without content. Broadcasting is an empty vessel without programming. With Canadian stories and dramas being marginalized more than ever on our public airwaves, we must encourage our own creativity and cultural sovereignty. Minister Bev Oda said it herself at the Canadian Association of Broadcasters' convention earlier this month – *it's content that's important*.

We know that unless trees are replanted our forests will be barren. We must end the clearcutting of our culture. Our identity as a nation is in jeopardy.

Our broadcasters are spending an all-time high on American programming while Canadian TV dramas are disappearing. In 1999 there were twelve 13-episode, 1-hour "true" Canadian dramas (10 point) on over-the-air television channels, including the CBC. I challenge you to see how many you can find now. I urge you to contact your local MP and let them know that you believe Canadian content is important on television. Canadian (not foreign) dramas need to be the cornerstone of our airwaves. The broadcasting system is in need of regulatory balance – private broadcasters must put as much into the system as they are taking out. Many other industries are doing this. For instance, we no longer allow the logging industry to simply clearcut. We know that unless trees are replanted our forests will be barren. We must end the clearcutting of our culture. Our identity as a nation is in jeopardy.

– Sonja Smits, Canadian actor



ACTRA performers attending the CRTC hearings (left to right:) Ottawa President **Thelma Farmer**, **Wendy Crewson**, **Sonja Smits**, **Barry Blake**, **Fiona Reid**, **R. H. Thomson** and ACTRA National President **Richard Hardacre**.

What Canadian broadcasters have been up to since 1999:

- The CRTC's 1999 *Television Policy* removed spending requirements for Canadian broadcasters allowing them to satisfy Canadian content obligations without producing drama. In 1999 there were twelve 13-episode, 1-hour "true" Canadian dramas (10 point) on over-the-air television channels, including the CBC. Now there are approximately three or four.
- Since the adoption of the 1999 CRTC *Television Policy*, private broadcasters have increased their spending on American programming to an all-time high of 35% of ad revenue, up from 27%.
- Spending on Canadian drama by private broadcasters hit a seven-year low in 2004 and 2005 – only \$54 million from a high of \$73 million in 1998.
- Spending by private broadcasters on Canadian drama is at its lowest percentage in eight years – only 3.2% of ad revenue in 2005.
- They spend more on foreign programs than their counterparts in the U.S., U.K. and Australia, AND pay the lowest average licensing fees on domestic drama. Canadian English-language broadcasters cover 30% of production costs for an indigenous drama – in the U.S. broadcasters cover 81% or more.
- Private broadcasters remain profitable and they're posting increased revenues every year.

The CRTC must:

- Require private conventional TV broadcasters to spend at least 7% of their advertising revenue on new Canadian drama. (Spending on Canadian drama would increase from \$54.5 million in 2005 to \$134 million in 2009.)
- Require private broadcasters to air at least two hours of original Canadian drama a week.

The federal government must:

- Direct the CRTC to adopt a new policy that will uphold Canadian content requirements for all new technologies such as mobile TV and internet broadcasting, which now escape regulation under the CRTC's New Media policy.

ACTRA *speaks*, Finance Committee *listens*...

As industry stakeholders it is vital for ACTRA to support Canadian culture at every opportunity. It's our future and our country's legacy. Each year ACTRA submits a brief and appears before the Standing Committee on Finance in the pre-budget hearings. We did it again this year, and I proudly spoke on behalf of ACTRA's 21,000 members. In mid-December the Finance Committee tabled its report with recommendations for the next budget. I am happy to report that they listened to us.

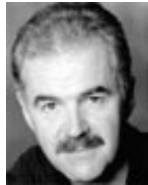
The Finance Committee, made up of MPs from all parties, made recommendations to the Finance Minister to support culture and called on the government to make a commitment to restore and enhance the CTF and increase funding to Telefilm and the CBC – the very things that ACTRA asked the Committee to do.

The Finance Committee called on the government to make a commitment to restore and enhance the CTF and increase funding to Telefilm and the CBC... the very things that ACTRA asked them to do!

The report from the all-party parliamentary committee is a clear message to the Finance Minister to put more into the cultural funds in the next budget. The Parliamentarians on the Finance Committee identified the value of supporting culture, so we hope the Minister will follow up and make a commitment for long-term funding for the CTF, Telefilm and the CBC, so we can build on our successes and create more.

Now it's time to turn words into action

Artists are still waiting for the Conservative government to make a long-term commitment to fund our domestic television and film industry. Our cultural industries, where we work, rely on stable funding. It's time for straight answers and some decisive action. This funding is seed capital for our domestic industry and the federal government can, and must, take the steps the Finance Committee recommends.



by Barry Blake,
National Councillor

JEERS...

To **Glenn O'Farrell**, CAB President, for his arrogant dismissal of the need of private broadcasters to support our creative community. He said, "...does anybody really believe that drama expenditure requirements are the answer to YouTube, and/or MySpace?" As a matter of fact Glenn, many of us do... 21,000 of us. We also think that regulations should start with over-the-air television broadcasting first!

CHEERS...

Nobody said it better on the day than **John Doyle**: "The CAB, which has the privilege of using our publicly owned airwaves to simulcast U.S. TV shows and has the advantage of using protective laws and regulations to insert commercials and make vast amounts of money, wants Canadian artists, writers and performers to get on-line and get lost." (*The Globe and Mail* – Nov. 8, 2006)

JEERS...

To CRTC Commissioner **Richard French** for his lame comments at the over-the-air television policy hearings and his pathetic excuse to do nothing to ensure that Canadians can see their own stories over their own airwaves left us breathless. He said at the CRTC Hearing on December 4, "I confess to having a bit of difficulty to see what my role in this particular drama at this particular point is." And what exactly did he mean when he said, "I am an amateur in the regulation of broadcasting...?"

CHEERS...

To **John Doyle's** response to Commissioner French's dismissive attitude towards the pitch made by the creative groups. "...Cry me a river, Commissioner. The vastly profitable commercial broadcasting racket in Canada doesn't need a break. It needs regulation and a sharp reminder about cultural responsibility. Later, they can cry all the way to the banks. These days, the CRTC's policy is to pamper the pampered and let everyone thrive except the creative community in Canadian TV. And yes, it's a disgrace." (*The Globe and Mail* – Dec. 7, 2006)



Canadian culture:
We are losing
the signal!



Affordable, sustainable insurance benefits



By Ferne Downey, National Treasurer & AFBS Governor
(Inspired by Sugith Varughese)

On March 1, 2007, your insurance plan with Fraternal will fundamentally change – for the better! Fraternal will contact you directly with additional information in January, February, March, and April! When your mail arrives, please look for the snazzy bronze, silver and gold logo, and read that mail – because you’ll have options for your new insurance benefits that require decisions on your part.

Let me give you a bird’s eye view of the changes to come. We’re changing the insurance plan for two reasons; firstly, it needs to be simplified and secondly, it needs to be sustainable. The Board of Governors of Fraternal along with Fraternal staff believe we’ve achieved this and we’re pretty darned pleased and excited. The national council of ACTRA has also endorsed this change.

In a world where health insurance costs are soaring (often 15% increases per annum), and work opportunities are frequently modest, your Actra Fraternal Benefit Society has proactively worked to keep your plan within your means, without substantially cutting the benefits you’ve enjoyed.

The most important change is that we’ve compressed seven “classes” of insurance coverage, into three easily identifiable levels of coverage: bronze, silver, and gold, which will continue to vary with your earned income. There is also a basic class that all members enjoy, but all levels will require *lower* incomes to achieve than under the old plan. We have had to change benefits in some significant, and not so significant ways, in order to achieve this. The net result is a far simpler, cheaper plan that provides comparable coverage while giving you choice.

The net result is a far simpler, cheaper plan that provides comparable coverage while giving you choice.

Whereas the old plan required that you earn a minimum income to obtain levels of coverage, the new plan allows you to lock in coverage at a lower level and you can bank your extra contributions in your insurance reserve account! You don’t have to be “overinsured” when you’re making a lot of money and “underinsured” when you aren’t. You can spread your contributions out to protect yourself and your family beyond the good years.

Dependent coverage is no longer reserved for the highest earners. It’s now available at bronze, silver, and gold! As an ACTRA member, you’ve already participated in minor adjustments to benefits in order to contain your costs over the last few years. Those small but significant savings, combined with the new plan, will result in dramatic **decreases** of between 2-26% (or even better!) in insurance premium costs for you!

We are thrilled and proud of this new plan. It’s the most significant change to your insurance coverage in the history of Fraternal and we hope you’re as pleased as we are when you go over the information that Fraternal will be mailing to you.

Please read it carefully. You will have some important decisions to make about whether to purchase dependent coverage, to purchase additional critical illness insurance, (which is a NEW benefit!) and whether to “lock in” your coverage for three years. If you don’t have insurance coverage currently, you have a one-time option to purchase up to bronze level. Please consider your options carefully – and we all hope you’re pleased to finally have some!

If you don’t have insurance coverage currently, you have a one-time option to purchase up to bronze level.

You may contact me, ACTRA’s appointee on the AFBS Board of Governors, at fdowney@actra.ca. AFBS has provided lots of extra staff to man the phones so don’t be shy to call AFBS at (416) 967-6600, (604) 801-6550 or 1-800 387-8897, visit their website at www.actrafrat.com or email benefits@actrafrat.com.
Happy New Year to all!

The Actors’ Fund of Canada

Emergency financial help for entertainment industry professionals

“The Actors’ Fund was there for me when I needed it most.”

“I am lucky to have worked steadily enough to keep the wolves from the door... most of the time. Earlier in my career, I did have to knock on the Fund’s door – and more than once at that.

It was a rather scary time, and the Actors’ Fund helped bridge the gap until I was able to find work again in the profession that I so dearly love. The Actors’ Fund of Canada was there for me when I needed it most – and still is today.



Dan Lett
ACTRA Member

We are very fortunate to be artists in this great country, but with no real safety net, no guarantee of employment, no crystal ball to be able to foresee our health and well-being tomorrow or a week from now, we all need to do whatever it takes to maintain and nurture the stability and future growth of the Actors’ Fund.”

Your donation will help the Fund deliver more than \$400,000 in emergency aid to ACTRA members and other artists this year. Even a small amount will make a difference. PLEASE GIVE TODAY.
(416) 975-0304 1-877-399-8392 www.actorsfund.ca

Bon Cop

a how-to for successful Canadian movies

by Randy Duniz



Patrick Huard and Colm Feore.

All photos courtesy of Alliance Atlantis Vivafilm.

Earning nearly \$13 million at the box office this past fall, the bilingual, buddy action-comedy *Bon Cop, Bad Cop*, has become the highest grossing film of all time in Canada – knocking the film *Porky's* out of the spot it has held since 1982.

The feat is even more impressive when you consider that at its height, *Bon Cop* was only released in 260 theatres across the country. That's an average earning of \$50,000 per screen – an average that is comparable to a Hollywood blockbuster like *Superman Returns*, which was shown in more than 4,000 theatres.

The DVD release of the movie hit shelves just in time for Christmas (undoubtedly becoming a stocking stuffer favourite and adding to its earnings) and news now from the producers is that the film is intended to be the first in a trilogy.

By all accounts, *Bon Cop* is a massive success that will pay dividends for its producers, director, writers and wonderful cast. So how did they do it?

Much of the success of the movie could be attributed to the fine performances and genuine chemistry between the leads, **Colm Feore** and **Patrick Huard** (who was also a co-screenwriter and developed the original idea for the project).

According to Feore, the camaraderie between them started before they even began filming. At their first meeting, Feore “worked very hard to prove to them [Huard and producer Kevin Tierney] that I was the guy they needed and that I had all these points of connection with the film. That in fact, he [Huard] must have been thinking of me when he wrote the script.”

Says Huard, “In the first three minutes, I looked at my partner Kevin and I said, ‘he’s the guy. He’s the one I want to work with.’ He [Feore] saw the same thing I was trying to put in the script and saw everything I was trying to go for.”

Of course, getting some fantastic performances out of Canadian actors has never been a problem. Giving Canadian movie-goers the chance to see those performances on a big screen, however, is a problem.

It is a dilemma that one could argue is uniquely Canadian – or at least English-Canadian. In 2005, Canadian films commanded 26.6 percent of the box office in Quebec, compared with a discouraging 1.1 percent elsewhere in Canada. So while most Canadian-made films die in obscurity on a handful of movie screens across the rest of the country, the province of Quebec has slowly, but surely, cultured the development of a pretty inspiring local film industry.

In this business, what makes Quebec a distinct “nation within Canada” has less to do with language and an affinity for gravy and cheese on french fries, and more to do with a hugely successful local film and television industry, unequaled anywhere else in the country.

For years, it has seemed like Quebec filmmakers (in French, that is), have had some secret formula for connecting with large audiences, that has enabled them to produce critically acclaimed films such as 2005’s *C.R.A.Z.Y.* and popcorn favourites like *Les Boys* franchise, that both achieved enormous box office success.

To be clear, for the most part, the audience for these films has been limited to *La Belle Province* and *La Belle Province* only. Just consider Quebec’s previous highest grossing film, 2002’s *Séraphin: Un home et son péché*, which was never released across the rest of the country and still managed to earn more than \$6.7 million in less than just 80 theatres!

As the first completely bilingual movie produced in Canada (the script was exactly 50 percent English and French), *Bon Cop*

is something of a gateway film. It introduced bona fide Quebec movie stars like Huard and **Lucie Laurier** to an English-speaking audience that might not have otherwise heard of them and gave the rest of Canada a glimpse into that Quebec-made formula for success that turned them into stars.

It isn't that Canada doesn't produce good films, it's just rare that anyone sees them – let alone to the tune of \$13 million. Not to state the obvious, but, it is somewhat more difficult for your movie to be a success when no one sees it. It's harder to develop a star-system – or at the very least, have audiences appreciate the talent of Canadian performers – if, once again, no one sees them. It's harder to convince many Canadians that Canadian films can be worth seeing if – you guessed it – no one sees them in the first place.

Of course, it doesn't help when most Canadians have no clue that a Canadian movie even exists. Thirty years ago, a distributor could rely on word of mouth to draw audiences in. Then, not to put too fine a point on it, something called *Jaws* happened and the studios to the south realized the value of wide release, and a blitz campaign, spending millions and millions of dollars to ensure a massive opening weekend.

It isn't that Canada doesn't produce good films, it's just rare that anyone sees them – let alone to the tune of \$13 million!

This is why another integral element in the success of *Bon Cop* must be attributed to the backing of distributor Alliance Atlantis Communications (AAC), who brought out the big guns with a marketing campaign totalling over \$1 million in Quebec and the rest of the country – a massive amount in comparison to marketing campaigns for previous Canadian films.

With everything from billboards to TV and radio spots, the multi-platform advertising saturation was all that AAC could do to compete with the likes of the Hollywood marketing machine, which at the time was promoting the release of the Will Ferrell comedy, *Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby* and Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center*.

Now, if the first step in turning your movie into a success is letting people know it exists, the second must be giving them something they want to see. And once again, as Hollywood has shown us, it does not necessarily have to be good. It just needs a hook.

Traditionally, Canadian films have fallen into one of two categories: dark, heavy themed (often critically acclaimed) pictures which fail to appeal to a broad audience (see *The Hanging Garden*), or trite American rip-offs that seem contrived and phony to Canadians.

Now while the cop-buddy pic isn't the most original idea out there, *Bon Cop* is certainly innovative in the way that it takes a
(continued on next page)





Bon Cop

– continued from previous page

time-tested and bankable formula (see the *Lethal Weapon* franchise and *Rush Hour* franchise, just to name a couple), and puts a uniquely Canadian spin on it; strait-laced Ontario cop, played by Feore teams up with rogue cop from Quebec, played by Huard. Hilarity and explosions ensue.

The result is something fresh and entertaining, fun, and yet meaningful to us as Canadians – which, to its credit, has found an audience in all “nations” within Canada and earning roughly \$2.5 million of its box office outside of Quebec.

In many ways, *Bon Cop* perfectly represents Telefilm Canada’s well publicized shift in policy, towards the production of more commercially viable films.

Bon Cop is innovative in the way that it takes a time-tested and bankable formula and puts a uniquely Canadian spin on it.

The move has been criticized by some filmmakers as evidence of Canadian cinema selling out: but what’s selling out? A good movie is a good movie, and a bad movie is a bad movie, whether there’s an explosion in it or not. Canadian audiences know the difference.

When it comes to *Bon Cop*, it’s hard to argue with its success. It’s also hard to argue that Canadians seeing Canadian movies that star Canadian performers on the big screen, is a bad thing for anyone, whatever the circumstances.

Just ask Ricky, Julian, Bubbles, and the rest of the gang from *Trailer Park Boys: The Movie*, who also celebrated a stellar 2006 and set their own record for the biggest opening weekend with a take of \$1.3 million.

According to Telefilm Canada’s annual report for 2005-06, Canadian films already accounted for 5.3 percent of tickets sold at Canadian theatres last year – despite the disappointing numbers outside of Quebec, surpassing the 5 percent target set by the federal funding body 6 years ago. One would expect the success of *Bon Cop* and *Trailer Park Boys* to boost next year’s English Canada numbers.

Canadian movies are finally making their way to Canadian screens, and are being seen and enjoyed by Canadians. Let’s hope the success continues.

As movies like *Bon Cop*, *Bad Cop* and *Trailer Park Boys* have shown us, the formula for making a successful film in Canada is hardly a Quebec-kept secret anymore.

Bargaining: Day One...

The impressions and rants of a negotiation committee member



by
Wendy
Anderson

It is October 23, 2006 – the first day of IPA negotiations. I'd been awaiting the event since March, then April, then June... but now... it's October. I'm on the front line, set between our friend from the United Steelworkers, **Ken Neumann**, and my Montreal pal, **Tyrone Benskin**. The room is full. I feel confident and proud to be a member of a skilled and formidable ACTRA negotiation committee, and uplifted by the solidarity of an impressive array of talented performers and numerous representatives from our fellow unions, guilds and associations.

What starts as a 10 minute producer break, stretches into an hour and a half. The producer committee's behaviour is oddly familiar... it reminds me of boys I'd known growing up who made dates, broke dates, gave unclear excuses, and made outrageous proposals and demands. Why all that posturing and power play from people who hoped to someday have a happy relationship with you? Why don't they see the big picture?

At last, the producers enter. John Barrack, chief negotiator for the CFTPA, and Guy Dusseault, counsel for the APFTQ, say that ACTRA is unrealistic in its current contract at a time when budgets are tight and competition is fierce. They say it's a new era in the

ACTRA's proposals include:

- a reasonable increase for all members under this contract,
- a move to parity with Screen Actors Guild (SAG) on high-budget U.S. productions incrementally over the next five years,
- improvements to protections for minors on film productions,
- and an incremental improvement to our hours of work.

production world and that 'we' need to face the realities of the future together. Okay, fair enough. I await your proposals to see just how the producers think WE are going to do that TOGETHER.

ACTRA's chief negotiator **Stephen Waddell** agrees and remarks that for years we've led the charge for a more stable production environment – every inroad that our union has made has benefited producers. Stephen states clearly that we are now seeking a fair deal before our contract expires.

John Barrack asks us about a 'safe harbour' agreement (an agreement that allows produc-

ers currently in production to continue under the present agreement). Why the pressing need to request this before we've seen their proposals? That clearly demonstrates that they do not have a lot of faith in the negotiating process. Let's see your proposals, let's get an agreement.

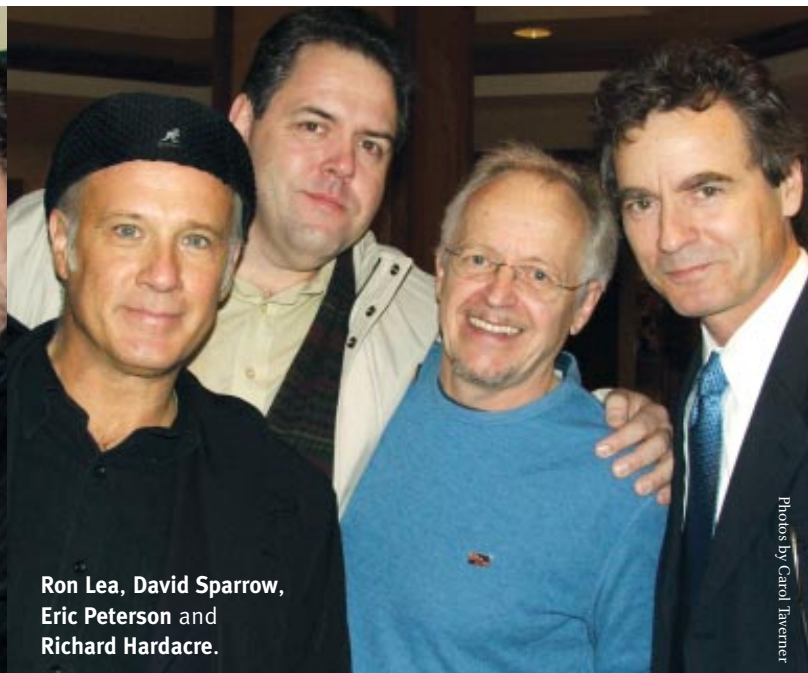
The producers request another break. We wait patiently... more delays... they don't have their proposals prepared. How can this be? Delays... delays... tick... tick... tick... Finally – the proposals!

The producers propose 'rollbacks' including, pay cuts of 10% to 25%, and gutting our residuals.

Tyrone Benskin, Ron White and I huddle around a copy of their proposals, and I get my first glimpse of how the producers think that WE should face this new future TOGETHER. According to the producers ACTRA needs to "rollback" to live within the realities of a new era: from 10% to 25%, depending on the budget.
(continued on next page)



Karl Pruner and John Paul Tremblay, Mike Smith and Rob Wells.



Ron Lea, David Sparrow, Eric Peterson and Richard Hardacre.

Photos by Carol Tavernier

Bargaining: Day One – *continued from page 11*

By year three, the impact of our proposals that affect producer costs would be less than a 1% increase to Canadian feature film budgets.

Hey, John and Company, just so you know, if you're looking to increase your budgets by slashing our budget line, you don't pay us enough for that. Our team created a database that can tabulate the impact of our "asks" on producer budgets. By year three, the impact of our proposals that affect producer costs would be less than a 1% increase to a Canadian feature film or MOW budget and 1.53% for a U.S. production budget. Nobody knows your "times are tough" mantra better than ACTRA members who make on average \$7,000 per year. Just so I'm clear on things, when you ask for a 25% rollback, should we just give you 75% of our performance, or is it 100% of our performance, but only for 75% of the script? Whoa... I'm getting a little heated here, let's read on to see what else they have to say.

The producers want us to forego use fees on internet, digital, and all other forms of use not yet realized to date. Give producers our work for free? To think that we have

fought on their behalf as well as for ours on the laughable licence fees broadcasters pay in this country, on issues of air time, on CRTC rulings, on stable funding for Telefilm, the CTF, and the CBC. We continually lobby on behalf of our Canadian film and television industry. It seems short-sighted and a poor strategy for the producers to try to take down their best allies. I read on and am about to reach my limit when... **Gordon Pinsent** gets up and leaves the room in frustration with the producers' unreasonable proposals. I understand his disgust. I would love to go with him.

ACTRA applies for labour mediation

Due to the producers' delays since March, and the rapidly approaching expiration date of the contract, we propose that the wisest thing to do is to seek conciliation. We inform the producers that we will apply for the appointment of a Federal conciliator. John Barrack suggests that this might be seen as bargaining in bad faith. We respond that we are prepared to continue to negotiate our proposals, and will do so, for as long as it takes.

The day ends and there are so many things that I want to say. I wanted to tell the producers that we don't make deals motivated by our fear of the future and what it may bring. Contracts are building blocks that improve

an industry and the well being of its workers. We don't go backwards when times look tough. The best response is to BE ACTIVE, PRESS FORWARD, and BE CREATIVE IN YOUR APPROACH TO THE ANSWERS. That is ACTRA's way – we don't agree to rollbacks. Instead, we take our hard-earned dollars and put them to work finding real solutions.

As industry stakeholders, ACTRA fights for funding and tax credits on behalf of Canada's film and television industry.

Anyone who takes the time to keep plugged in knows that. We are highly respected for it. Never, never will we entertain the concept of forfeiting our pay, rights or working conditions, because a producer tells us times are tough and they aren't making any money in the game. That's not our concern. We're concerned with gaining respect for our performers and securing adequate pay and safe working conditions for all members of our union.

I'm very proud of our efforts made throughout the day. We were there, prepared, and we are dedicated to finding the best solutions in the long days ahead.



Steelworkers president **Ken Neumann** and **Wendy Anderson**.



Art Hindle, Wendy Crewson, Michael Murphy and Kenneth Welsh.

Strike news at press time: January 8, 2007

ACTRA announced its first strike of any kind in its 64-year history

“We realize the gravity of our actions, but let us be clear, we are here because of the recklessness and lack of judgement of the trade associations – the CFTPA and the APFTQ. They set out to strip Canadian actors of our pay, and to hammer down our working conditions. They tried to force us to agree that our work can be distributed worldwide on the internet for free. We aren’t agreeable to any of these demands.”

– Richard Hardacre, National President, ACTRA

“Professional performers don’t work for free. Not on TV. Not on film. And not on the internet.”

– Wendy Crewson and Eric Peterson

“Canadian actors should be reading lines, not walking them. This strike is a disgrace which falls directly at the foot of the CFTPA.”

– Peter Murdoch, Vice President, CEP

“Screen Actors Guild extends its full support to ACTRA and stands in solidarity with ACTRA’s membership during their strike. The Guild will vigorously resist any efforts by struck employers to relocate productions to the USA and will, to the fullest extent permitted by law, prohibit the acceptance of struck work by Guild members.”

– Screen Actors Guild

“If there are picket lines we will be there. This is about Canadian culture and Canadian workers’ rights. It’s as simple as that.”

– Ken Neumann, National Director, United Steelworkers

“Our members run the risk of being affected by this dispute, but we know ACTRA’s position is fair, reasonable, and not too costly for producers. We’re with them.”

– Johnathan Ahee, President, NABET/CEP Local 700

“AFTRA will take all action, legally possible, to support striking ACTRA members, and in such event we will advise our members not to accept any engagements for ‘struck’ work, whether in Canada, or relocated to the U.S., or elsewhere in an effort to undermine ACTRA’s efforts.”

– American Federation of Television & Radio Artists

“Film and TV actors in this country contribute everything they have to this very important part of Canadian culture. They deserve to be paid properly for their work no matter where it appears, whether in the cinema or on TV, cell phone, internet, or the next thing.”

– Lise Lareau, Canadian Media Guild

For bargaining updates please check in at www.actra.ca



Maurice Dean Wint, David Sparrow, Priya Rao and Tonya Lee Williams.

Dan Redican, Peter Keleghan, Heather Allin and Gordon Pinsent.

A voice from our video gaming industry



By **Simon Peacock**, an ACTRA Montreal member who voices, casts and directs video games.

The video game industry is the newest area of growth involving ACTRA members and could soon prove to be our single largest employer.

U.S. computer and video game software sales grew four percent in 2005 to \$7 billion – a more than doubling of industry software sales since 1996 (source: *Entertainment Software Association*). We are experiencing an incredible growth in both the number of “blockbuster” games being produced and in the advances being made in gaming technology. Simply put, the next generation consoles (Xbox 360, The Sony PS3 and the Nintendo Wii – all released in November 2006) means more work for performers.

So if you are thinking that somewhere in their parents basement a spotty, pale, teen male, glued to a giant screen TV and surrounded by Doritos and empty cans of Red Bull, needs us... think again! This stereotype is outdated and today's video game audience is sophisticated with discerning tastes. Today's gamer is approximately 33 years old, has played video games for an average of 12 years, and 38% of gamers are women.

Old voice acting is dead, bring in the film actors

Bad or inappropriate voice acting can quickly snap a gamer out of their experience. The player is the star. Cartoons have an audience

“Working on international productions, it's important for Ubisoft to access a wide variety of voice talent. ACTRA Montreal is delivering just that.”

– Jeremi Valiquette, Sound Studio Director, Ubisoft Montreal

that sits back to enjoy it, but games have an audience that sits forward to be a part of it. Games are not cartoons, and the games of today are a far cry from the games of even two or three years ago. Old games, like *Super Mario*, were essentially cartoon characters in cartoon worlds. Highly animated vocal styles were perfect for this. Most of today's games are all about realism and require a very specific style of voice performance. The ideal for the majority of games is to create a cinematic, hyper-real tone that is totally immersive.

Games incorporate more dialogue than ever before

Increases in memory capacity mean that games can incorporate far more dialogue than ever before. The actions of the player in older systems may have triggered the same vocal response every time. Today that same action triggers a vocal response randomly selected from a dozen or more reactions, that are specifically recorded for this moment and result in a different response

each time. For actors this translates into longer sessions and more work. On a game like *Prince of Persia 3*, there were around 7,000 lines of dialogue. On some of the games I am currently working on, there will be closer to 50,000.

Actors are often being involved in the project far earlier than before, thereby creating another increase in our working hours on games. Many producers have discovered the advantages of using ACTRA's demo rate to bring in actors to record a read-through of the game. This is an invaluable tool for the scriptwriters to actually see what works and what needs tweaking. These tracks can then be kept as placeholders for the animators to use as a guide and as a guide track for the motion capture actors.

Motion capture has been common in the world of movie CGI for quite some time, but is only now being developed to make games look more real. ACTRA has a wide variety of members that have the special skills, such as martial arts, dancing, various sports movements or facial movements, required to do this type of work. The process involves a group of performers in tight black unitards covered in white balls performing against a green screen, acting out a script or performing along with the vocal track that has already been recorded. The balls are then tracked by a computer to capture an exact replication of the performer's movements that can be transferred to the character model. This gaming work is still in its infancy and a lot of bugs are still being ironed out.

Brush up on your accents

With the increase in game realism the same is expected of our ability to perform various accents. Polished accents are becoming highly sought after. Any actor who wants to get work in games should have a voice demo – get on it! Get your agent to make your demo available on their website – be proactive!

(Left to right:) David Lipas (Wave Generation Inc.), Claire Martel (ACTRA Montreal steward), Michael Rudder (ACTRA member), Simon Peacock (ACTRA member & Ubisoft), and Jeremi Valiquette (Ubisoft) at the 2006 Montreal International Game Summit.



Photo by Gary Saxe

“ We can always count on ACTRA talent to deliver. Not only are they experienced and professional, but each actor manages to add their own unique brand of creativity to our productions... and that’s exactly what we are looking for!”

– David Lipes, Associate, Wave Generation Inc.

The onos

The most contentious part of any voice booking for a game is the “onos” (pronounced “oh no’s”). Onos are onomatopoeias – essentially sounds to cover all the variations of the physical actions that could be required from you. Examples of these sounds can be anything from sniffs, a 45 second fall from a 40 storey building, or being on fire while being shot – the violent game scenarios are still around, so be prepared. I recommend that you have your agent confirm if onos are a part of your booking and how many of them will be required. If it’s a heavy load, try and get your booking scheduled for a time when you have nothing after it and possibly nothing the next day. Onos are extremely demanding and the numbers required is also rising with the next-gen systems. If you are not comfortable doing

this type of work – don’t. Tell your agent that you will not do onos. But if you do accept the job take your time and take as many breaks as you need. Everyone involved in recording them knows how difficult they can be.

Do your homework

If you really want to do gaming voice work my advice is simple – play games. It’s the quickest and simplest way to see and hear what will be required of you.

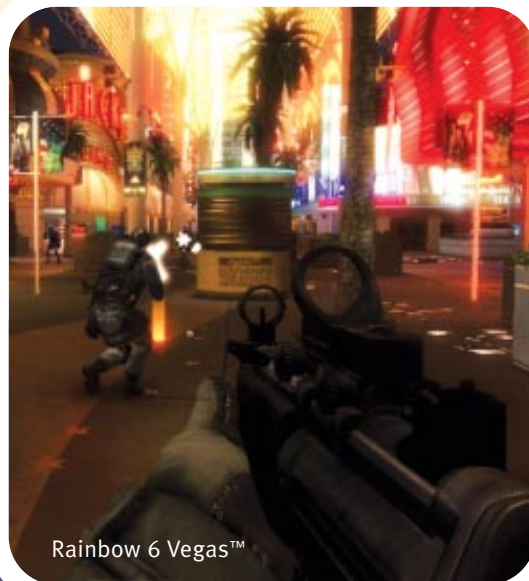
The quality of our work is second to none

During the Montreal International Game Summit 2006 we had an opportunity to talk to the companies using non-union actors. Many expressed

concern at the increased costs, but ACTRA representatives were there to make everyone aware of the value of using professional performers. The increase in performance quality translates to better game reviews and better game sales. A non-union game produced in Montreal recently was discussed – the game play was solid, but the voice acting was terrible. The reviews were catastrophic and the game was shelved, resulting in a massive loss for the company.

The gaming industry is one that is redefining itself at an incredible pace and the challenge to us as performers and as a union is to adapt. We are industry stakeholders and the strength of our position is simple – the quality of work we provide is second to none.

Now go play a game!



Rainbow 6 Vegas™



Prince of Persia: 3™

Photos courtesy of Ubisoft

The press conference held very near the CAB convention



By **Howard Storey**, who has been an actor for thirty years and currently serves as President of UBCP and as an ACTRA National Councillor. Trained in the BFA program at the U of A in Edmonton, Howard has worked on stage and in TV, film, voice and commercials.

Gearing up for the CRTC television policy hearings, ACTRA and UBCP staged a press conference on November 6, 2006 at the new Performing Arts Lodge (PAL) Vancouver. Canadian stars spoke out during the annual Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) convention and demanded that Canada's private broadcasters invest in more Canadian TV drama.

Canadian performers wanted to hold a press conference at the Canadian Association of Broadcasters' convention. This was not acceptable to CAB, plushly ensconced at the upscale Westin Bayshore Hotel, so the performers – at the inspired suggestion of UBCP Executive Board Member **Dax Belanger** – selected the lobby of the new and hugely successful PAL Vancouver located across the street instead. Not so plush, but flush with the creativity and collaboration it took for a diverse range of UBCP performers to enthuse each other and the community about values greater than the bottom line.

If all we see and hear are stories from another culture, we will lose the ability to foster and grow. Our culture will fade to grey if not black.

It was a truly inspiring choice.

We drew a parallel between the improvements we create – by coming to know each other by telling each other our stories – and the personal enhancements we create when we understand and know each other better.

If all we see and hear are stories from another culture, we will lose the ability to foster and grow. Our culture will fade to grey, if not to black. We are not going to let that happen! A broad range of leading performers were willing to join us to send a message to the broadcasters. The resultant press was local, national and international, and it continued for three days.

Many varied and diverse citizens who celebrate broadcasting as an opportunity that

Keith Martin Gordie, Jackson Davies, Christine Willes, Donnelly Rhodes, Joy Coghill and **Rob Morton** in front of the PAL Vancouver lodge.



“We’re focusing on more reality television, when what we need are new rules to protect our Canadian cultural sovereignty, and to get more home grown dramas on our televisions. The success of *Corner Gas* is a perfect example of Canadian television programming that audiences want to see. The support and commitment that this television series continues to receive has been critical, and we need to build on this success by increased funding and scheduling support for more Canadian dramatic programming.”

– Gabrielle Miller

Donnelly Rhodes, Jackson Davies, Joy Coghill and Howard Storey address the press.

Performers across this country are more able and willing to understand each other and to work together.

Canadians give broadcasters in exchange for effective access to express ourselves helped make this a transcendent event. ACTRA requested UBCP/ACTRA's help in pulling this off, and collectively pull it off we did. As part of the national lobbying campaign, ACTRA, in concert with UBCP, provided the participating members with comprehensive speaking notes, and a wonderfully warm and inclusive setting that compelled and held the attention of the fulsome range of media present.

Gabrielle Miller of *Corner Gas* who had generously agreed to participate, ended up with scheduling challenges and instead gave us a delightful range of dynamic quotes. **Jackson Davies** provided wit and wisdom. **Joy Coghill** demonstrated the value of long experience and great understanding. **Christine Willes**, recently of *Dead Like Me*, decried the fact that she is better known outside her country than in it, and **Donnelly Rhodes** brought it home by reminding us that it is through the arts and sciences that we are remembered, and not for our enhanced ability to make a profit. The ensemble said much, with great passion, and the result provided the press with more than enough sound bites (bytes) to make a very full and satisfying meal.

Another very full and satisfying feeling was brought about by the many profile performers who wanted, had they been able, to join us on that day. Performers across this country are more able and willing to understand each other and to work together. We are growing in our understanding that it is only by working more closely together, that we will be able to keep what we have – and have a chance of getting what we need and, indeed, what our country and citizens deserve.

– In solidarity,
Howard Storey
National Councillor ACTRA
President UBCP/ACTRA



“Coddled in the snug embrace of protectionism for decades, the CAB is exhibiting the worst sort of smugness and greed. After 80 years in existence, Canadian commercial broadcasters are still sneering at the very idea of Canadian content. Well, while you’re counting your profits, CAB, and exhibiting the narcissism and hypocrisy of tyrants, remember where you make your money. This is Canada. And this country, like any other, is simply inauthentic if its stories are not reflected back to its people. That’s why Canadian publishing is subsidized and Canadian television is regulated.”

– John Doyle, *The Globe and Mail* (November 8, 2006)



Howard Storey speaking to press.

MONTREAL

Bargaining Solidarity

With hot-button issues on the agenda, like the technician turf war in Quebec and our difficult IPA negotiations, nearly 300 members turned out to show their support for ACTRA at the 2006 Montreal Annual General Meeting on November 20th.

The presentations were often entertaining and enjoyable, even as they led the audience through some complex and alarming issues – like the particular disadvantages Montreal members often face as a result of the actions of the Quebec producer's association (APFTQ), and the recent regressive demands made upon all ACTRA members at the bargaining table.

Whether it was a Branch Councillor speaking, Regional Director **Raymond Guardia**, or invited guests like National President **Richard Hardacre**, National Executive Director **Stephen Waddell**, and AFBS CEO **Robert Underwood**, the message from the head table was clear, being a performer is difficult enough without having to deal with these added challenges.

Throughout the agenda, presenters pointed to ways in which ACTRA is doing its best to tackle the obstacles that reduce or hinder the work opportunities of performers in the city. Some were good news stories with happy endings, and some were areas where there is still much work to be done to improve the lot of Montreal members.

What was very apparent, judging from the comments of performers at the microphone, was that the membership in Montreal is solidly in support of ACTRA and its bargaining committee in this time of negotiations.

Even with the strike referendum ballots in the mail, **Walter Massey**, a Life Member of enormous respect, called upon the room for an immediate vote of confidence for the bargaining committee, which was met with a round of applause.

On an exciting note, ACTRA Montreal also used the opportunity to unveil plans for next year's ACTRA Awards and ACTRA Shorts Film Festival. The 2007 event, honouring Montreal members and showcasing their talent in short films, will be held April 28th, 2007.

Presentations will include the ACTRA Award of Excellence and four awards in performance based categories – Outstanding Female, Outstanding Male, Outstanding Voice and the new Outstanding Stunt Performance Award. We hope many of you will be able to join us.

– *Matt Holland*
President
ACTRA Montreal

OTTAWA

Barry Blake receives the first annual Lorraine Ansell ACTRA Award of Excellence

In September, **Barry Blake** was named the first recipient of ACTRA Ottawa's *Lorraine Ansell ACTRA Award of Excellence*. Barry is one of Ottawa's most accomplished actors, and one of our most recognizable and outspoken performers who has made a vital contribution to the film and television community both on camera and off. He is also an outspoken advocate for Canadian culture and performers.

The *Lorraine Ansell ACTRA Award of Excellence* is presented to a performer who has made a distinguished contribution to the film and television community in the tradition of former ACTRA Ottawa President, **Lorraine Ansell** who passed away in 2005. Lorraine worked tirelessly on behalf of Ottawa performers and left a legacy as one of Ottawa's most committed and best-known actors.

Barry has been acting in the Canadian and American film and television industries for more than 25 years. He also teaches screen acting as part of the Canadian Screen Training Centre's *S.I.F.T. (Summer Institute of Film and Television)* program, as well as their *Taking it to the Screen* series, and has taught ACTRA's *Acting for the Camera* master class. When Barry is not in front of the camera, he is working tirelessly to serve his fellow ACTRA Ottawa members as their National Councillor.

The 2006 award was presented by Lorraine's husband, **Josef Pliva**, at an evening gala held at the National Library and Archives of Canada at a reception that followed the screening of several

short films highlighting Ottawa talent. The event was attended by more than a hundred members of Ottawa's production community, alongside friends and family.

– *Thelma Farmer, President, ACTRA Ottawa*



Barry Blake receiving a sculpted mask by local ACTRA member **Guy Louis XVI**, presented by award MC **Rick Kaulbars**.

Special guests for a special birthday

Forty may well be the new thirty, but where ACTRA Maritimes is concerned – we're just hitting our stride. To celebrate forty years of achievement in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, ACTRA Maritimes threw a tremendous October party on Friday the 13th. Special guests were ACTRA's National Executive and senior staff, folks from the local industry and performers from the Viking thriller, *Outlander* – which was shooting just outside of Halifax. Maritimes President **Deb Allen** paid special tribute to one of our most illustrious founders, Life Member **Faith Ward**. And National President **Richard Hardacre** presented the Branch with a lovely birthday present (a delicate piece of Nova Scotia glass) which will grace our boardroom for the next four decades. All to the musical stylings of member **John O'Keefe** and his band.

And hot on the heels of the 40th Anniversary Party, was the 2006 *Silver Wave Film Festival*. ACTRA Maritimes was pleased to appear as a sponsor at this – the premier film event in New Brunswick. We co-sponsored the closing screening of the festival – the Canadian blockbuster *Bon Cop, Bad Cop* and presented a lively seminar on

working with ACTRA and its agreements!

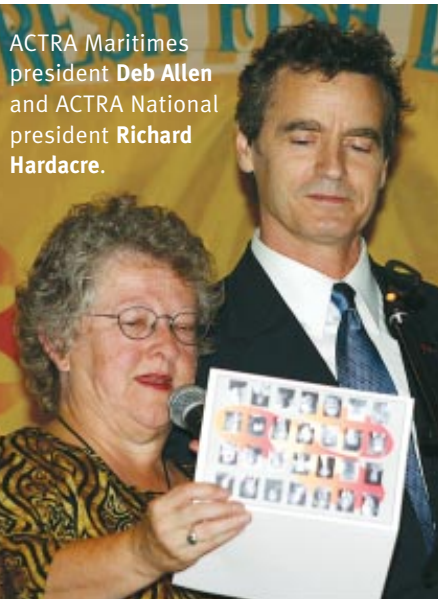
Congratulations to ACTRA Maritimes member **Barrie Dunn** who, along with partners **Mike Volpe** and **Michael Clattenburg**, received the CBC Award for their contributions to the Atlantic Canadian film industry. After a long history as a performer, Barrie is now making waves as a producer. He, and the two Michaels, produce the hit series *Trailer Park Boys*.

Maritimes member **Jackie Torrens** picked up an Honorable mention in category of Best Atlantic short for her directorial debut, *Pickled Punk*, which featured a stellar cast that included members **Mauralea Austin**, **Lee J Campbell**, **Stephen Coats**, **Gord Gammie** and **Peter Tyrell**. Also congratulations to the other ACTRA award winners at this year's festival: Montreal members **Genevieve Bujold**, **Juliette Gosselin** and **Celine Bonnier**, who shared the Outstanding Performance by a Female award for their work in *Délivrez-Moi*.

– Gary Vermeir,
Branch Representative, ACTRA Maritimes



Faith Ward



ACTRA Maritimes president **Deb Allen** and ACTRA National president **Richard Hardacre**.



ACTRA national councilors celebrate ACTRA Maritimes 40th anniversary celebration. *Front row: Tyrone Benskin and Wendy Anderson. Back row: Jamie Bradley, Ferne Downey, Karl Pruner, Richard Hardacre, Howard Storey and Brian Gromoff.*

Photos by Jeremy Webb

CALGARY TAKES OVER EDMONTON ADMINISTRATION

ACTRA Edmonton Branch Representative Sharon Killey announces retirement

After 23 years as the Edmonton Branch Representative, **Sharon Killey** has retired from ACTRA. Sharon dedicated the better part of her working career to fighting for the rights of the Edmonton membership, and says she will fondly remember all those members and colleagues who joined in the pursuit to fight for, and protect the rights of performers.

Some changes have already taken effect as a result of Sharon's retirement. The Edmonton office has been running a deficit for many years due to the substantive decline in Edmonton production. Therefore, it was agreed that the Branch's administrative functions would be transferred to ACTRA Calgary at the begin-

ning of November. The ACTRA Edmonton physical office space officially closed on November 30, 2006.

The Edmonton Branch Council and Edmonton member designation will continue for the time being. **Jennifer Blaney** will now serve as Branch Representative for both ACTRA Calgary and ACTRA Edmonton. She and her staff, **Donna Burwood** and **Taisa Dekker**, will work together to provide service to the entire Alberta community, while maintaining existing administrative arrangements with ACTRA Saskatchewan and ACTRA Manitoba.

We all wish Sharon the best of luck wherever her career takes her next.

applause

Wendy Crewson to receive Toronto's 2006 ACTRA Award of Excellence

Wendy Crewson will receive Toronto's ACTRA Award of Excellence at the ACTRA Awards in Toronto on February 23, 2007.

Ms. Crewson has eight Gemini nominations, four of them wins, and she also won a Gemini Humanitarian Award in 2002 for her charitable work for ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease). She has portrayed multiple Canadian "newsmakers" including, Sue Rodriguez in *At The End of the Day: The Sue Rodriguez Story*, and Jane Doe in *The Many Trials of One Jane Doe*. Selected credits include, **Sarah Polley's** *Away From Her*, *The Man Who Lost Himself*, *Sex Traffic* and *Perfect Pie*.

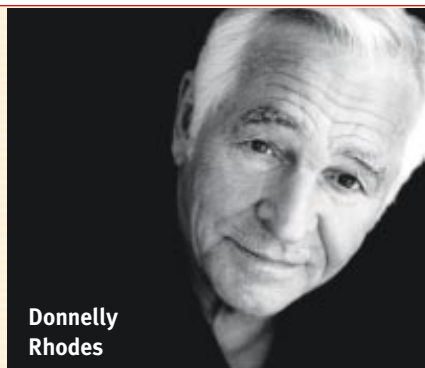
A strong voice for Canadian programming and Canadian culture, Ms. Crewson participated in ACTRA's news conferences to put culture on the agenda of the federal elections in 2004 and 2006. She was a force in Ottawa arguing for stable funding for the Canadian Television Fund (CTF) and most recently joined ACTRA to demand that the CRTC fix the Canadian TV drama crisis.

Recently Wendy joined the cast of *ReGenesis* that includes co-stars **Peter Outerbridge**, **Mayko Nguyen** and **Dmitry Chepovetsky**.



Wendy Crewson

Courtesy of the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television



Donnelly Rhodes

21st Annual Gemini Awards Honours ACTRA members: Donnelly Rhodes presented with the 2006 Earle Grey Award

Veteran Canadian actor **Donnelly Rhodes** was presented with the 2006 Earle Grey Award for his impressive 50 years of film and TV work, and contribution to raising the profile of Canadian television internationally.

Donnelly Rhodes has captured audiences with inimitable performances in some of the world's most familiar roles.

Donnelly is a four-time Gemini Award nominee, and is best known to audiences for his role as veterinarian Dr. Grant Roberts on the long-running CBC family series *Danger Bay*. His work on the successful dramatic series *Da Vinci's Inquest* earned him a 2002 Gemini Award for Best Performance by an Actor in a Continuing Leading Dramatic Role.

Donnelly Rhodes made his professional stage debut as Stanley Kowalski in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Impressed by his performance, Universal Pictures signed Donnelly to star in box-office successes such as *Mission: Impossible* and *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*.

Mark McKinney, Corner Gas double-winners at Canadian Comedy Awards

At the seventh annual Canadian Comedy Awards, *Corner Gas* stars **Brent Butt** captured the prize for Best Direction and **Janet Wright** for Top Female Performer.

Mark McKinney won two prizes – Best Male TV Performance and shared the Television Writing Series Award with **Susan Coyne** and **Bob Martin** for *Slings And Arrows*.

Mike MacDonald was honoured with the inaugural *Dave Broadfoot Award* for comic 'genius'. As well, special awards were given to **Don Ferguson** and **Roger Abbott** of the *Royal Canadian Air Farce* for their achievements in comedy at home and abroad. **John Pattison** won the Television Writing Special or Episode Award for *Puppets Who Kill: The Joyride*.

For a complete list of winners visit: www.canadiancomedyawards.ca.



Mark McKinney

Courtesy of the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television

Congrats to our Gemini Winners!

Best Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role in a Dramatic Program or Mini-Series: **Tom McCamus** in *Waking Up Wally: The Walter Gretzky Story*.

Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role in a Dramatic Program or Mini-Series: **Wendy Crewson** in *The Man Who Lost Himself*.

Best Performance by an Actor in a Continuing Leading Dramatic Role: **Mark McKinney** in *Slings & Arrows Season 2: Steeped in Blood*.

Best Performance by an Actress in a Continuing Leading Dramatic Role: **Martha Burns** in *Slings & Arrows Season 2: Brinam Wood*.

Best Ensemble Performance in a Comedy Program or Series: **Cathy Jones**, **Gavin Crawford**, **Mark Critch**, **Shaun Majumder** in *This Hour Has 22 Minutes: Episode 7*.

Congratulations to all ACTRA members who were Gemini nominees and winners. For a full list go to: www.geminiawards.ca.

IVOR BARRY 1919 – 2006



Ivor passed away of natural causes on December 12, 2006, at the Motion Picture and Television Home, Woodland Hills, California. He served six years in the Middle East, North Africa and Italy, as an officer of the British Royal Artillery during World War II. He then returned to South Wales to complete his degree in English and French Literature at the University of Wales at Aberystwyth. It was there that he first became interested in acting and joined the University's Dramatic Society.

In 1953 he immigrated to Montreal. His distinguished speaking voice made him perfect for radio work, and he became active in early Canadian live television. In 1957, he moved to Toronto and continued to act and write screenplays, while serving on the ACTRA's East Coast Board, becoming President of the Toronto branch in 1962.

A couple of years later, Ivor was cast as a regular player in the nationally broadcast American (Toronto produced) soap opera *Moment of Truth*. This series was eventually replaced by the American produced soap *Days of Our Lives*. For the next 24 years he enjoyed a good run of film and stage work (which included plays at the Kennedy Center, Washington, DC, The Mark Taper Forum and the Huntington Hartford in Los Angeles, The Alley Theatre in Houston Texas and a Canadian tour of *Sleuth*), as well as many guest and feature roles in various television series. He said his most fun film job was playing the crotchety grandfather in *Weird Science*, and his favorite guest-starring performance was as the villainous drug lord S.N. Savage in an episode of *Hawaii Five-O*. Ivor received the honor of membership into the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in 1974, sponsored by fellow character actors **Ned Glass** and **Harold J. Stone**.

BILL MEILEN 1932 – 2006



Bill wrote and hosted a series on the occult on the CBC, and we often saw him on the *Tommy Banks Show* talking about things that go bump in the night. What an actor the man was! Over the years we must have made hundreds of radio dramas together. He managed to sound differently in each show. On radio, this small, skinny Welshman played Gods and heroes.

Bill heard the musicality of all languages, and could accurately portray any accent. One of his best performances was the Métis guide Jerry Potts. Not only did he inhabit the character, he looked amazingly like the intrepid guide for the Northwest Mounted Police. Bill was a ceremonial First Nations Chief.

After a distinguished theatre career in the UK, Bill came to Edmonton in 1969 to teach screenwriting, acting and dialects. He is remembered by many for his lively interest in the theatre, and his ability to transmit that love to his students. He worked in the University of Alberta's drama department for nearly 30 years, and moved to Vancouver to continue acting in films.

Bill Meilen died of cancer on September 4, 2006, and asked to be buried in Wales, his birthplace. Writer, actor, director, poet, spinner of tales and scholar, Bill was larger than life. He touched many lives and no one he touched will forget him.

– Colin MacLean, ACTRA Edmonton

DARYL DUKE 1929 – 2006

Daryl Duke was named the 2004 recipient of ACTRA'S John Drainie Award, presented at BANFF. He was a life-long champion of Canadian broadcasting and an outspoken supporter of Canadian culture. Daryl's Emmy Award-winning career spans a wide range of accomplishments in feature films, documentary, and television. Mr. Duke directed the 10-hour mini-series from the best-selling book "The Thorn Birds", that ranks among the most-watched television dramas ever broadcast in the U.S. and Canada.

A native of Vancouver, and a graduate of the University of British Columbia, Daryl began his career as a film editor, writer and director for the NFB followed by an endless list of writing, directing and production credits. He served for a several years as a member of the Friends of Canadian Broadcasting's steering committee, and as a member of the Board of Directors of B.C. Film. Daryl's numerous honours include being inducted into the CAB Broadcast Hall of Fame in 2000, and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Directors Guild of Canada in 2003.

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

Peter Brierley
Claire Cellucci
Doris Chillcott
Pat Dissman
Norma Edwards
Thomas Gillie Fenwick
Paulette Hallich
Josephine Ann Janson

Ken Jones
Charmion King
Frank T. Mullen
Jackie Rae
Edwin Rubin
Fred Samuels
Donald Zale



LISTER SINCLAIR 1921 – 2006

He was determined to be there. Slowly, carefully, he unfolded himself from the car. Standing tall and resolute (in suit, white shirt, and tie), he quietly observed his colleagues, young and old, walking the line. He didn't say a word, though he was graciously invited to speak. He chose instead to walk. In the humidity and the heat, at the age of eighty-four, one long turn around the building expressed it all:

his sadness and his bitter disappointment for everyone – on both sides of the dispute – during the lock-out at the CBC. He stopped only once, to pose for a photograph with members of the ACTRA Executive who were also there to show their support for the CMG and its members.

Lister, as you know, was a founding member of ACTRA. He was proud of that until the day he died. He loved the company of actors, greatly admiring their talent, skill and generosity. He, too, was an actor, but he always made a point of saying he could not do what great actors do all the time: turn into someone else.

In the hospital, shortly before he died, he was still marvelling at the genius of Shakespeare; still chuckling at a story he'd suddenly recalled about Alfred Hitchcock ("One of the great directing tips of all time," said Lister: "Scare me to death! "); and still keen to hear how the very last show we worked on together – a dramatic adaptation of the book "Parkinson's Law" – was turning out.

He believed, until the end, that he'd created art – real art – only once in his life: just a few lines of poetry he had written many years ago for one of his plays:

So now this Eden fears another fall
Autumn's wound is on the woods

The hill bleeds sweet with the lovely blood of the maple.

Lister died in the autumn, on October 16th, 2006. The day he was cremated, the leaves were blazing red and orange and yellow, and all over Mount Pleasant Cemetery dozens and dozens of squirrels were scampering and prancing and doing, as Lister would have said, all the things that squirrels usually do. He would have been enthralled.

– Sara Wolch



LESLIE YEO 1915 – 2006

With great sadness ACTRA has learned that **Leslie Yeo**, Life member, has passed away at the age of 91. Les was an accomplished actor who can be considered a principal builder of theatre in our country, dating back to the 1950's when he first brought his London Theatre Company to St. John's, Newfoundland, in 1951 to stage 26 plays in 26 weeks.

Les moved to Toronto in 1957, a few years after the advent of television, and began directing large musicals and conventions before building his career in film and television. In films, he played Robert Shaw's bowling buddy in

MAVOR MOORE 1919 – 2006

Mavor Moore was a noted actor, writer, director, producer, critic and teacher who founded a host of Canadian artistic institutions. Moore acted in dozens of performances for radio, stage, film and TV, and wrote more than 100 plays, documentaries, musicals and librettos for stage, radio and television. Born in Toronto, Moore was one of three sons of actress, director and theatre matriarch **Dora Mavor Moore**.

Moore graduated from the University of Toronto, and during the Second World War served as a recruitment officer in the 2nd Battalion Royal Regiment of Canada. He later sat on the Allied Intelligence Committees in London. After the war, Moore returned to CBC Radio as producer for the International Service in Montreal, and he wrote and directed radio documentaries for the United Nations – three of which were honoured with Peabody Awards. He eventually became CBC Television's first Chief Producer.

Accolades Moore received over the years include, the Canada Council's Molson Prize, ACTRA's John Drainie Award, a Diplôme d'honneur from the Canadian Conference of the Arts, the Order of British Columbia, the Governor General's Award for lifetime achievement in the performing arts, and honorary degrees from a host of Canadian universities. Moore founded the Charlottetown Festival, the Canadian Theatre Centre, and Toronto's St. Lawrence Centre. He served as the first chairman of the Guild of Canadian Playwrights, and was a founding governor of both the Stratford Festival and the National Theatre School. Moore was the first artist to chair the Canada Council for the Arts and served as head of music network Jeunesses Musicales Canada. He chaired the British Columbia Arts Council and was Director of the Canadian Music Council.



Canada's first feature, *The Luck of Ginger Coffey*, and was **Kate Reid**'s husband in *Bye Bye Blues*. His final film appearance at the age of 84 was as Samuel Small in *Sleeping Dogs Lie* for Sullivan Productions.

Les was one of the first people to join ACTRA and was elected to its board and served as Treasurer from 1967 to 1971, during which time he became involved in the Board of Trustees for the ACTRA Insurance and Retirement Plan. When the Board was reorganized in 1972, Les became the first Treasurer, and was one of the founding fathers of the Actra Fraternal Benefit Society (AFBS) when it formed in 1975. He was Vice-President, Finance and Chairman of the Insurance Committee for most of the next 15 years until he retired in 1990.

Leslie Yeo died in Toronto on September 14, 2006. He is survived by his son Jamie and his wife Grete.

MEMBER DISCOUNTS

Show your card and save some cash!

All ACTRA and UBCP members (Full, Apprentice and ACTRA Extras) are entitled to a number of discounts when you show your membership card. For a detailed list of discounts and info on how to access them, pick up a copy of the *Benefits Guide* at your ACTRA branch, or download a copy from the 'Members' area at www.actra.ca. Questions? Contact interactra@actra.ca or **Christine Webber** at **416-489-1311/1-800-387-3516**, ext. 4005.

VIA RAIL Get up to **5% off** VIA Rail's best available fares in all classes by booking directly with VIA Rail using the **group discount number 709950**. There are no service charges or additional fees when you book directly with Via Rail by phone at **1-888-VIA-RAIL** or in person (not through a travel agent).

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Other plans are available – ask for details when you call Mike at **1-866-548-2666**, ext. **8003** quoting **plan number 100020530**.

PLAYBACK A publication about production, broadcasting and interactive media in Canada. A **25% discount** is available to ACTRA members on one and two-year subscriptions to Playback: 1-year subscription is \$52.50 (including GST), 2-year subscription is \$104.00 (including GST). Please contact customer service at **416-408-2448**. www.playbackmag.com/map

HOTEL DISCOUNTS... **Special rates** are available to ACTRA members at hotels across Canada and in Los Angeles, including: **Four Seasons** (Toronto), **Sutton Place** (Toronto, Vancouver), **Radisson Saskatoon**, **Delta Edmonton**, **Novotel Ottawa**, **Hotel Omni Mont-Royal** (Montreal), **Le Montrose Suites** (L.A.) – and many more! See the *Benefits Guide* for complete details.

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ACTRA PRS: \$ for you?

Attention all performers who have earned royalties, residuals and use fees under an ACTRA agreement (film, TV, documentary or commercial productions):

Have you moved and not kept a current address with ACTRA?

Are you holding on to an uncashed cheque from ACTRA Performers' Rights Society (ACTRA PRS)?

If you answered "Yes" to either of these questions, ACTRA PRS may be holding an unclaimed residual payment for you.

For info please locate the ACTRA PRS section at www.actra.ca, and find the list of performer names under "ACTRA PRS NKA Payments" to see if your name, or a performer you know, is listed. If it is, contact ACTRA PRS at **(416) 489-1311** or prs@actra.ca. We'd be happy to hear from you and arrange for payment!

Ellen Page inspires young ACTRA members



by Anny Murray

From *Pit Pony* and *Trailer Park Boys* to *X-Men 3*, **Ellen Page** is an accomplished Halifax actor. She appeared in the TV series *Trailer Park Boys* for which she received a Gemini Nomination for best ensemble cast and picked up a Genie Nomination for her performance in *Wilby Wonderful*. Her work in *Mrs. Ashboro's Cat* garnered her a Gemini Award for 'Best Performance in a Children's or Youth Program or Series', and she won a Gemini Award for 'Best Performance by an Actress in a Featured Supporting Role' for her work on the TV series *ReGenesis*.

At a recent ACTRA Maritimes meeting

Front row: Mack Murray, David Gibson McLean, Allison Murray, Donne D'Arnall and Janessa Hunt. Back row: Peter Doane, Kailey Sampson, Lauren Isenor, Mitchell Murray, Ellen Page and Madelaine Higgins.

for youth and their parents, Ellen gracefully spoke about her personal and professional journey. The ACTRA Maritimes Youth Committee hosts comprised of **Martha Irving, Sandy Lund, Ted Doane** and myself.

Ellen had just flown back from Pittsburgh where she was rehearsing for the feature film *Smart People* with Dennis Quaid and Sarah Jessica Parker. Known for her challenging and risky roles (like Sundance favourite *Hard Candy*), Ellen said that she is fortunate to never have been pushed by her parents to do anything that she didn't want to. "If anything, they would ask me if I was sure I wanted to do something," she added.

When asked if Ellen felt she had missed out on her childhood, Ellen responded, "Not at all. I just had a different childhood." Ellen feels strongly about making her own choices and being true to herself, even though she sometimes feels pressure

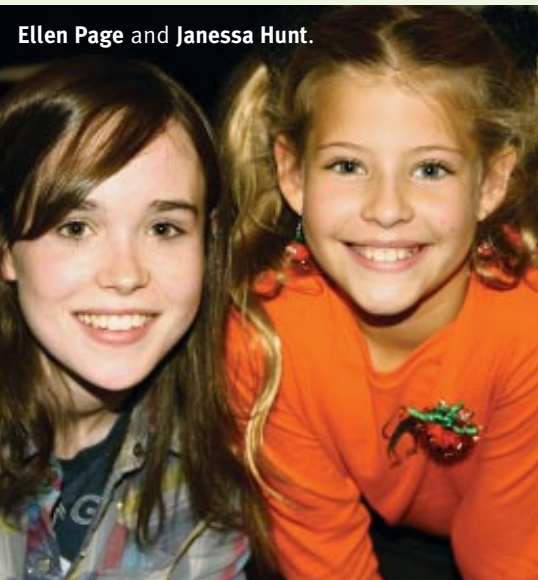
from the film industry to change she commented, "It's very subtle. People won't tell me directly to dress differently, but I can feel it."

Maritimes performers under 18 make up 15% of the membership. Events like these are a wonderful way for child performers to be inspired, and to encourage and support their peers in a profession that can be very challenging at the best of times.

Anny Murray is a mother of three ACTRA Youth members. Both she and her husband are ACTRA members who believe that their children gain great confidence and important life experiences by working in the film industry. Anny is also the newly-elected President of Association acadienne des artistes de la Nouvelle-Écosse (Acadian Association of Nova Scotia artists) and an active participant in the ACTRA Maritimes Youth Committee.



Photos by Jeremy Webb



Ellen Page and Janessa Hunt.

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