

CANADIAN COMPANIES IN MEXICO

LES PRODUCTIONS DU VERSEAU

continued from page 14

In addition to financial assistance from Telefilm Canada, the company received help from the Canadian Embassy in Mexico City. Although the embassy staff were not as familiar with the film industry as they are with the traditional exporting industries, they were very helpful and hosted a reception for the release of the film. Permits both for the temporary import of equipment and for border crossings by personnel were handled by the Mexican producer. No unexpected difficulties were encountered, although the budget did include an unusually large amount for "public relations."

Ms. Lafontaine says that the biggest lesson she learned about working in Mexico is the importance of personal relationships. "Personal contacts are very important in Mexico, more important than here, and those contacts have to be carefully maintained," she says, "and it is important to verify, through your personal contacts, exactly who you are dealing with in any joint venture."

These theatres were operated by 43 chains, of which only about 10 percent were classified as large. At one time, *Compañía Operadora de Teatros* was the largest film exhibitor in Mexico. This was a government enterprise, formed in 1960 to facilitate public access to Mexican films. It operated at a loss for many years before being privatized. The new owners closed many money-losing theatres, and the chain is now Mexico's second-largest.

CONSUMER PREFERENCES

American films dominate the market, accounting for about 57 percent of the 290 films released in Mexico City in 1995. A recent survey identified Sylvester Stallone, Jean Claude Van Dame and Mel Gibson as Mexico's most popular movie actors.

There were only 39 Mexican movies exhibited in 1995, with the average showing of new releases in 10 theatres, compared with 24 theatres showing the average American film. Other important suppliers of films for exhibition were France and Italy. One Canadian film was exhibited in 1996, down from a high of four in 1992.

Action movies and animated films are the most popular foreign movies. The top 5 titles of 1995 were *Pocahontas*, *Muerte Súbita* (Sudden Death), *Apollo 13*, *Mundo Acuático* (Water World) and *Casper*. The leading Mexican film of the year, *Papa Sin Cásup*, showed in 40 theatres, compared with at least 60 for the top 5 foreign films.