

to the roar of the mighty Harley-Davidson driven by an indifferent black leather jacket type, a *blouson noir*.

In "Act of the Heart," Geneviève Bujold and a priest discover that another kind of communion can happen in a church.

In "A Married Couple," Antoinette Edwards can't convince her husband Billy that he is an egocentric bore, no matter how many four-letter words she flings at him.

Danielle, Geneviève and Antoinette can be regarded as midwives at the *accouchement* of a rather pregnant feature film industry in Canada. The presiding obstetrician is the two-year-old Canadian Film Development Corporation. When the baby will arrive is a matter of lively interest.

It would have been easy for the Film Corporation to expend all of its \$10,000,000 line of credit in its first year of operations because there was a line-up of producers waiting for no-strings-attached grants. However, they discovered that the Film Corporation operates with the refreshing idea that its money is risk capital and needs all of the normal risk-reducing safeguards like completion guarantees, distribution guarantees, strict budget control, etc.

Today, the Film Corporation has money invested in more than 50 projects. Some of these will become completed features. Of the few that reach the screen, only a smidgen will ever achieve that blessed of all states: artistic and box-office success. So a new industry is being born and its future is the subject of that uniquely Canadian debate: what is our national identity? Will a feature film industry be an expression of Canadian-ness? Or will the exigencies of the international market force Canadian film makers into some kind of non-national mould?

Fortunately, the film-makers themselves are not that self-conscious. Take Gilles Carle as an example. In his metier he is probably a genius. Film reviewers 10 or 15 years from now will run his "*Le Viol d'une Jeune Fille Douce*" (The Rape of a Sweet Young Thing) and "Red" to re-examine his uncanny ability to reveal the eternal moment that is both ugly and unexpected.

Naturally, the industry still has some hurdles to clear. The unpredicted success of "The Graduate" and "Easy



Billy and Antoinette Edwards, their son Bogart, and dog Merton in "A Married Couple", produced and directed by Allan King. The film was financed in part by the CFDC.

Rider" spawned a spate of lightly-veiled plagiarisms in script form—an enormous waste of energy in these times when films succeed because they do not adhere to a proven formula. Anglophone film makers still have a little catching-up to do to match the *élan* and intensity of their French-speaking compatriots.

There was a time when people apologized for the absence of a feature film industry by saying there was no money in Canada to invest in it. That alibi can no longer be used. There seems to be ample private capital in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver willing to finance feature film production.

Thus a new unpredicted role is being played by the Canadian Film Development Corporation: that of the 'finder' of film ideas, as well as the money to produce the ideas. The search for ideas, for good writing will be the hardest part of the job and could, in the future, involve the Film Corporation in the development of people's writing skills so that there will be enough scenarios to meet the needs of a growing pool of film investment capital.

Aggressive and thoughtful young Canadians—many of them with *primes à la qualité* from the Film Corporation—are, like their homologues in other countries, making 16 mm color films on an experimental and shoe-string budget basis.

Meanwhile, all around the world, good friends of Canada express concern in strongest terms that the National Film Board should be one of the many government agencies that have to operate with restricted budgets under the Government's program of expenditures guidelines announced last summer. In the 30 years of its existence—with the John Grierson philosophy of documentary as its underpinning—the Film Board created for itself an astonishing image of excellence in the short length category. In the same time period, France, Italy, Britain and the Scandinavian countries developed their existing individualities and capabilities in feature length films for worldwide sale. Canada can do the same with more joint ventures that blend private and public capital and that—through coproduction deals with other countries—will blend foreign and domestic, private and public money in feature film projects.

Drama critic Nathan Cohen of *The Toronto Daily Star* may have *le mot juste* on the subject of film in Canada: A rose can bloom on a manure pile, but maybe we need the manure first.

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