

festival of festivals

Our "ten days" a film festival for film-distributors

By Alan Fox

"The Second Annual Festival of Festivals". "The Second Annual Toronto World Film Festival". "Ten Days to Show the World". Depending on who you talk to, any of the above may be used for the title of the film festival which has just passed.

Officially it is the Festival of Festivals - in name and intent if nothing more. The flamboyance and presumption of its three titles reflect the bravado of the (public) personality of its director, William Marshall.

Fonz". These two superficial differences delineate the two directions the festivals are starting to take.

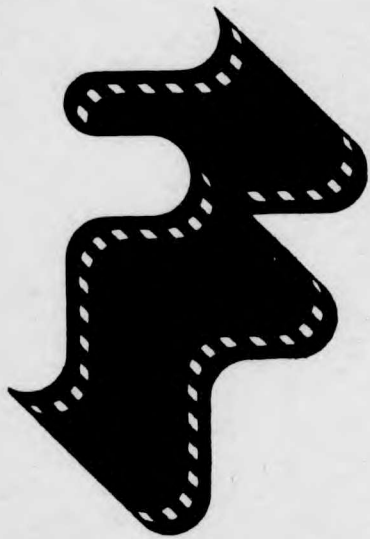
Montreal is becoming a filmgoer's festival, with film appreciation being the key word. (Like those at the New Yorker last year.) Toronto is becoming a film distributor's festival with all the beautiful (moneyed) people hanging around looking bourgeois. These aren't absolutes. In fact, they are only tendencies or leanings. Both have a way to go before the split becomes decisive.

Maybe we need the Toronto festival. Films are money-dependant. But, if these people have their way, Canada will become annexed to Hollywood, and we'll make American films the same way the Canadian auto industry feeds the American Big-Three.

And we don't need that. Films are not just a way to make money and your daughter famous. They're culturally-oriented, and a film which fails to reflect the myths of its culture is mindless fodder.

Our consumption of American product is sure to further indoctrinate us into American cultural myths. In Québec, where "cultural annexation" is the vilest possible epithet, many, many films are made which reflect that province's mores and attitudes.

There is room for a film like *One Man*, but *Outrageous*, and more importantly *Why Shoot The Teacher*, are the films that are truly Canadian. Until we grow up and stop playing Hollywood filmmaker, we will continue to be a convenient place to make American films and a profitable place to show them.



What has Marshall wrought? We have seen a festival appear from nowhere, spring, full-grown (over 100 films), onto the international scene, and show marked "improvement" in its second year.

The festival is being honed and polished, somebody's labour of love. Already the rough edges are disappearing. Anyone would have to admit that Marshall and his entourage have made the festival more slick and polished. This year, real stars did come, the premiers were watched, and the public eye is upon us.

But this isn't my Festival of Festivals. It's not what I remember from last year, and it's going in a direction which isn't altogether pleasing.

AMARCORD

Last year, sharing the New Yorker Theatre with 300 or more real film fanatics — the way we cheered, in love with the films we saw; the way we laughed at all the in-jokes, and noticed all the passing homages; a shot here, a line there, ("that's from Citizen Kane"). Sometimes I was annoyed, we were indiscriminate. But we were a mass, a crowd, a common mind. Electricity flowed.

This year that was absent, the community was gone. Even though publicity this year was hideous (we weren't told anything) we could tell that a promise of "bigger and better" would mean more commercial.

The same people didn't come this year. Probably the ten dollar increase in student prices threw a few (those who didn't have to come). The rest really didn't care to see Peter O'Toole, or listen to John Simon.

The fight is on. Montreal, with a film festival under the guidance of Sergei Losicque, provided us with what I hear was a good festival. Unlike Toronto, Montreal leaned toward the cultural, and maintained a "verité".

Ingrid Bergman, a popular figure, opened the Montreal festival. Henry Winkler, also a popular figure, opened the Toronto festival. Bergman has made many commercial films (ah, *Casablanca*). Winkler appeared in *Lords of Flatbush* (sole film) and is "The

A synopsis of the festival's films

There was one that was 'Outrageous'

By Alan Fox

La communion solennelle/First Communion (France)

Second feature by Rene Feret; well-received by critics and public. Traces the history of a family, from 1900 to the present, in which adultery and bastard children tend to be the norm. Great atmosphere provided by attractive photography; captures the feel of accepted values of previous years. Not a story of degenerates; but a beautiful film celebrating life; captures "the laughter that hides the tears".

Il ne faut pas mourir pour ça (Quebec)

Directed by Jean-Pierre Lefebvre. Many elements of Godard; main character has a variety of bizarre



Sidney Pollack, director of Bobby Deerfield

habits; a study in idiosyncrasy. When the touchstones of his lifestyle become altered, he is forced to change. Bizarre and fascinating.

Diary of a Lover/Tagebuch eines Liebenden (German)

Directed by Sohrab Shahid Saless, an exile from another country, yet still is extremely "German". Tending toward melodrama and overstatement, and thus frequently becoming hilariously overdone. A study in angst.

Skip Tracer (British Columbia)

Feature debut of Zale Dalen. Modest "B" film. Flawed, but only in minor ways. Dalen has potential. About a loan collector (Skip Tracer) who is struggling to stay on top in a competitive business.

Joseph Andrews (USA)

First film from an American major to open at the festival. Whoopee thrill. Directed by Tony Richardson. Period farce, based on a novel by Henry Fielding *Tom Jones*. Very amusing, equally superficial.

Student Films (Sheridan and York)

A program of shorts from Toronto filmmakers, most shown in area film festivals already. Good potential exhibited.

Outrageous! (Canada)

Written and directed by Richard Benner. Excellent study of the relationship of a gay hairdresser cum female impersonator and a schizophrenic girl. Uncontrived, succeeds well in developing audience empathy without becoming a freak show. More about it next week.

Anatomie d'un rapport - Further than sex (France)

"... the first duel-autobiogra-



Max Ophuls directed many of the festival's films



Peter O'Toole

phical relationship directed jointly by a man (Luc Mollet) and a woman [*Antonietta Pizzonro*]. A study of a couple trying to cope with sexual problems caused by his machismo ignorance. Not blaming, only examining. Sensitive, and a must for anyone trying to re-define the "couple".

One Man (Quebec)

Feature fiction debut by Robin Spry. The best American thriller made in Canada. When it opens here, go to see it instead of *Marathon Man* or whatever, and you'll be pleased to see that we can make commercial and entertaining thrillers in Canada too. About a reporter trying to fix the blame for a child-killing poison on a major factory. More on it next week.

Rejeanne Padovani (Quebec)

Directed by the talented Denys Arcand. A study in corruption among high-level politicians. Slow-paced but intense. Often brutal intellectually.

Bobby Deerfield (USA)

Directed by Sydney Pollack, who is a fascinating auteur but has an affection for sappy romances. All of the usual earmarks of a Pollack film are here, yet it is sickly melodrama.

Harpicord Builder (Canada)

Short by Bernard Saueremann. About Wolfgang Kater, the harpicord builder of the title. Engrossing, better than the average documentary.

Les Vatuurs - The Vultures (Quebec)

By Jean-Claude Labrecque. About a young man whose mother dies just as he is about to get a job as a clerk for the Duplessis regime. Black and white with a blue tint, which adds texture to an already compelling film. Probably the best at the festival.

The Making of Serpent's Egg

Interesting short showing Bergman at work on his newest film (not yet released) which was shot in English in Germany. Fascinating to watch a great director at work.

L'une Chante, L'autre pas/One Sings, the Other Doesn't (France)

By Agnès Varda, director and festival programmer. Interesting film about the relationship of two women who remain physically separated, but emotionally close, throughout the film. They are different in their interests and their relationships, and their contrasts are integral to the film's narrative. Similar in tone to *Anatomie d'un Rapport*.