

update the on-line version every two weeks,” says Wolfe, who spearheaded the project. “It has become an invaluable tool for the American industry.”

Nurturing Canadian culture in the shadow of the U.S. is a big job. Canadian consulates in the U.S. work with the arts promotion division of Foreign Affairs Canada, Canadian Heritage and International Trade Canada to promote Canadian artists and Canada’s cultural sector, including the performing and visual arts, sound recording, new media and publishing, design and crafts, as well as film and television. For example, in the past year, the consulates have ensured a strong Canadian presence and visibility at the Sundance Film Festival, the San Francisco Gay & Lesbian Festival and the industry’s most prestigious event, the Oscars. Annually, FAC supports the presence of key U.S. buyers at Canada’s top festivals such as the Toronto International Film Festival and the Banff Television Festival.

In terms of trade, the Consulate in Los Angeles, in collaboration with Telefilm Canada and the provincial film commissions, arranged for 200 Canadian film industry professionals to attend the American Film Market in Santa Monica, California, in November for eight days of screenings and deal making. “The idea is to connect Canadian producers with the people who make decisions,” says Jennifer Price, a consul and trade commissioner who organized the mission.

One of the producers who made sales there was Sherrie Johnson, whose company, da da kamera pictures



photos: Justin Hall

▲ Andy Jones (left) and William Hurt starred in *Rare Birds*, a popular film by Newfoundland’s Pope Productions set in a remote Newfoundland outpost.

in Toronto, produced a comedy called *Wilby Wonderful*. Johnson says she sold the theatrical, broadcast and DVD rights to *Wilby* at the event. “That was incredibly important because U.S. sales drive sales in other international markets.”

While it’s common for Canadians to appear in American films, such as Ryan Reynolds’s starring role in *Just Friends*, the reverse can also happen. In 2002, Newfoundland’s Pope Productions made *Rare Birds*, a film set in a Newfoundland outpost with Canadian talent supporting the lead, American actor William Hurt. The film, which enjoyed an impressive 13-week run in Canada, has been sold to HBO. When influential movie critic Roger Ebert picked *Rare Birds* as a “DVD-of-the-week,” it also sparked rentals of the film in the U.S.

“We are working our way through the American market,” says senior producer Paul Pope. “It’s extremely competitive.” He distinguishes between the Hollywood majors, which have massive production and publicity budgets, and independent filmmakers in the U.S. who face many of the same obstacles as those in Canada. “We’re all trying to break into an industry dominated by studios with



photos: Pope Productions Ltd.

▲ Producer Paul Pope on the set of *Rare Birds*: “Before I die, I will make a film that breaks through in the U.S. I won’t do it by second guessing the market, but by making an interesting film.”

very deep pockets. And if you want to make a film about Canadians, it’s even more challenging.”

For Pope, success south of the border is important, but not at any cost. “Before I die, I will make a film that breaks through in the U.S.,” he says. “I won’t do it by second guessing the market, but by making an interesting film. That’s what matters.” 🍁

For more information about arts promotion in Canada see www.international.gc.ca/arts.

To learn more about the Consulate General of Canada – Los Angeles, visit www.losangeles.gc.ca.

Other sites of interest: www.popeproductions.com and www.dadakamera.com.