

ATLANTIC FILM FESTIVAL

80 films and videos comprise three and a half day event

By ELLEN REYNOLDS

The Atlantic Film Festival Atlantic taking place this week is a showcase for 80 films and videos by filmmakers of the Atlantic region. The three-and-a-half day event which started yesterday is the second annual film festival put together for and by filmmakers from the four Atlantic provinces.

"The festival is first and foremost a public event" says Brian Hanington, the festival's enthusiastic director. Whizzing from piles of films to video cassettes in his small office donated by the National Film Board (NFB) he claims "there's no false glitter here".

Accepting entries only from or about the Atlantic region, it is the only truly regional film festival in North America, says Hanington. A film festival before the present one was organized by an independent filmmaker didn't get enough support to survive.

The festival has grown considerably since last year. Although they expect to lose financially this year, Hanington says they will have a corporate sponsor to offset much of the cost of next year's event.

The festival is also an opportunity for Atlantic filmmakers to discuss and exchange ideas. This support of other filmmakers to retain their regional identity is important in an industry so dominated by the high budget box office hits from the U.S.

Hanington says "a few of the biggies" include: *Loyalties*, a film about an English couple who at the turn of the century come to live in Alberta and *Dancing in the Dark*, the story of housewife dying of boredom.

Nostalgia Night (Friday) features *Back to God's Country*, filmed in 1919, the original print has been colour-injected and stars "Wapi-Wonder Dog of the North". On the same bill is *The Viking*, a story of two sealhunters which was filmed in Newfoundland in 1931. During the making of this film 17 people, including the director, were killed when a New York production company decided it needed an explosion to a little excitement.

The Last Days of Okak is a documentary about a tiny community in Labrador which was wiped out early this century by an epidemic of influenza brought in by missionaries. One of the French language films of the festival is *Tapis de Grand Pre*, a film exploring Acadian history through folklore.

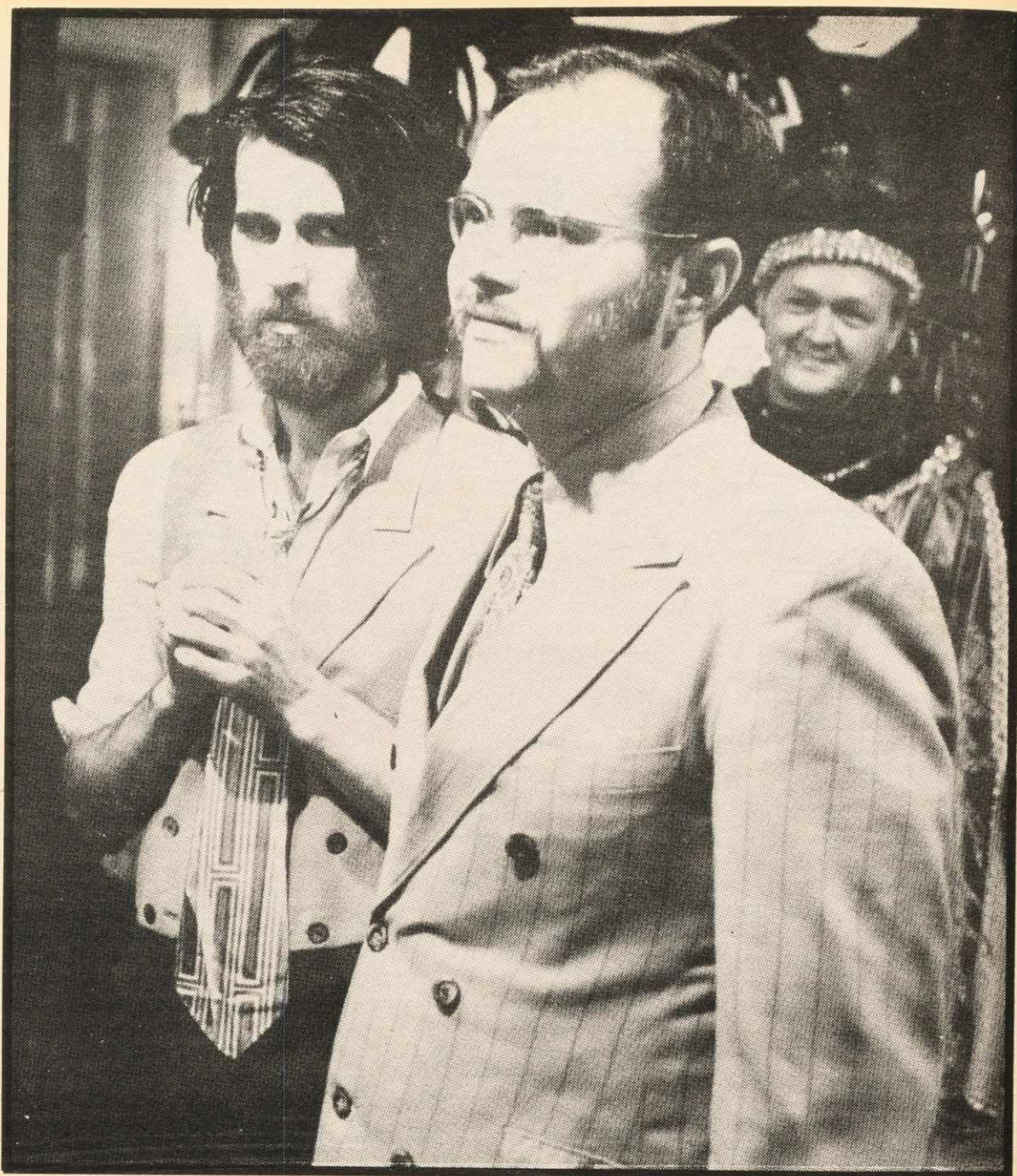
Screenings of the films and videos will be at several locations around Halifax: NFB, Wormwood's Dog & Monkey Cinema, Rebecca Cohn, World Trade Centre and The Paramount Cinema.

There will also be seminars, workshops and receptions sponsored by the Atlantic Filmmakers Co-op and NFB.

The festival wraps up with an awards dinner on Saturday night where the filmmakers receive The "Moonsnail awards" of Merit and Excellence. A moonsnail is a snail shell found on the beaches of the Atlantic provinces. Hanington says he chose this emblem because, "the shell is something magic — little treasure which is here but not often seen."

Three anonymous judges, will select the award-winning films. Awards of merit are to honour a specific part of the filmmaking process, and the craftsperson responsible, and the awards of excellence go to films of overall excellence.

Whether or not you are familiar with any Atlantic films or filmmakers, Brian Hanington invites everyone by saying, "The standards of production in this region are as high as anywhere in the nation and we are thrilled to be able to prove that."



Andy Jones in *The Adventure of Faustus Bldgood*, opening the Atlantic Film Festival.

N.S. censorship mandarin scissors shy

By TOBY SANGER

Donald Trivett is late for our appointment.

When he comes, he asks me to leave his office so he can make a telephone call in private.

I feel nervous and quite out of place in the waiting room. So do the men in blue and brown suits who self-consciously busy themselves with their work. Much too busy for a government office at this time in the morning, I think.

Trivett could be the most hated man in Nova Scotia, as his counterpart Mary Brown, the chief censor of Ontario was, until she was recently replaced.

Recent controversy over former minister of Justice John Crosbie's pornography bill has brought the role of boards such as Trivett's into the public spotlight.

Trivett is the director of Amusements Board of Nova Scotia. His job is to classify and cut all the movies and videos that are shown in this province. He is also in charge of regulating, licensing and taxing racetracks, cinemas and festivals. Together with other members of the amusements board, he controls what we see and don't see on our screens.

Trivett is a disarmingly engaging and open-minded director of the amusements board. Not at all what one would expect after reading 1984. People who would

likely be his harshest critics describe him as "enlightened".

Oddly enough, he downplays the importance of his position. He compares his work to that of a grocer, classifying movies into different categories the same way a grocer might classify eggs.

Unlike his counterparts in other provinces, Trivett prefers not to cut scenes out of movies. If the board finds a movie or scenes in a movie obscene and inappropriate for audiences in the province, they simply don't classify it, making it illegal to distribute or publicly screen the movie.

"I have the authority in the act to cut but I don't find it useful," says Trivett.

Together with other members of the publicly appointed board (whose names are kept secret) he examines every film that is submitted to the board for classification — most of which are submitted in the original form without cuts already made by other boards.

The list of rejected film and video titles number less than sixty out of the thousands that have been screened by the board. It includes the snuff film parody *I Spit On Your Grave*, the classic *Caligula* (and its sequel, *Fonalia*), several volumes of the Swedish erotica series and the acclaimed educational drama *Co-ed Fantasy*.

Despite the many interesting-sounding titles, Trivett admits it is "a dreadful bore" to go through all the films.

There are three levels at which films and videos can be held back from public viewing.

Material entering the country can be, and often is, withheld by customs officials, who Trivett says are "not accountable to anyone".

At the next level are provincial boards such as Trivett's with mandates which vary from province to province.

Material can also be declared illegal in the courts under section 156 of the criminal code, the subject of much recent debate in the House of Commons. Trivett says it is important to have different boards for each province because standards of taste vary across the country. Having different boards in the country also ensures that there is a constant and often lively debate going on. "The risk of centralizing judgement is (the) lack of diversity of opinion," he says.

While Trivett agrees different standards should exist for different provinces, he rejects the charge that his board discriminates between different audiences, allowing a film or scene to be screened at a cinema such as Wormwood's which they wouldn't allow for a more general audience.

He says that the board is under-

standing of the specialized audiences a repertory cinema might have but disagrees that different standards should exist between movies for entertainment and films which are considered art.

The art community in Ontario has been the most vocal critics of the Ontario Censor Board, claiming that its rulings severely limit the freedom of artistic expression. Trivett argues this argument is "specious". The entertainment industry supports the classification system because it gives them and the public a guide for their entertainment, claims Trivett.

Gordon Parson, director of Wormwood's cinema, says they have very good relations with the amusements board and describes the administration there as "enlightened". But he says the amusements board should have no role in censoring movies from public view, a decision which is best left to the courts the same way the public acceptability of other arts is determined.

Trivett says it would be a mistake to shift the power of the board to the court because "judges aren't as informed as people on the board."

"I'm convinced a group of trained citizens are the best assurance of some sanity in a very complicated field. Judges are often more whimsical than boards."