

Film industry grows

But Canadian movie quality in infant stage

How do you judge the viability of a national film industry?

In Canada, feature film-making is a relatively new phenomenon. It began in earnest in 1970 when the Canadian Film Development Corporation was established.

The early years of the CFDC produced encouraging but hardly earth-shaking results. There were the occasional artistic or financial successes like *Mon Oncle Antoine* and *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*. However, the industry wasn't growing.

Then the Capital Cost Allowance was introduced in 1978 and the production "boom" began. In 1979 more than 70 films were produced in Canada at a cost of about \$200 million. In 1980 the number of productions are down 50 per cent but overall costs are down by a modest 10 per cent.

Canadian film producers say the industry is on a par with major international film countries. However, it's questionable whether the industry is economically viable. To date, the \$200 million worth of movies have not returned \$200 million worth of profits.

There's also little evidence Canadi-



Movies

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ans are producing movies which are any good artistically.

In two years, Canada has produced two genuine box-office hits—*Meatballs* and *Prom Night*. *The Brood*, *The Changeling* and *Middle Age Crazy* have received international distribution and returned profits. The only films to reap any critical attention have been *Atlantic City* (co-winner at the Venice film festival), *Les Bons Debarras*, and *L'Homme a Tout Faire*.

The Canadian industry is now entering its third full year of production. In 1981 major distribution is guaranteed for a handful of big-budget Canadian financed films.

At Christmas, *Tribute*, starring Jack Lemmon will receive its premiere. The film's distributor, 20th Century—Fox, is predicting the picture will be a critical and economic blockbuster.

Tribute is followed by *Scanners*, *Silence of the North*, *Happy Birthday to Me*, and *Heavy Metal* in 1981.

The growth of the Canadian film industry is apparent in dollars and cents. Creative growth remains a thorny discussion. The current situation is hardly discouraging. It's just too soon to sound the death knell or herald the arrival of Canada on the international film scene.

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Claude Jutra, award-winning Canadian film director, is currently shooting the comedy *By Design* in Vancouver.

By Design is the story of a lesbian couple (Patty Duke Astin and Sara Botsford) who run a chic boutique. They want a child and go looking for a suitable father. Their choice is photographer Saul Rubinek.

Rubinek is a bit of a weirdo. One wall of his studio is covered with shots of single breasts. Amassing photos for the wall required the film's art director to canvas the set and eventually send out a plea to the inhabitants of Vancouver to expose themselves, partially.

It's amazing what is done in the name of art.