

'Skin flick' publicity blamed

Montreal's Cinepix pulls out

By MARILYN BEKER
of The Gazette

TORONTO — Montreal has always stolen Toronto's thunder. It happens all the time.

That's why no one was surprised when it happened at the Canadian Film Awards, taking place here this week.

The big news this time concerns the Montreal film company Cinepix, which yesterday decided to withdraw two of its films, *l'Initiation* and *Love in a Four-Letter World* from the competitions.

The films were scheduled to be judged at a public showing at the St. Lawrence Centre Wednesday evening.

RECONSIDERED

Cinepix directors Denis Heroux and John Sone and producers Arthur Voronka, John Dunning and Andre Link agreed unanimously to withdraw the films on Friday but decided to reconsider when the awards committee sent a telegram to Mr. Dunning urging that he reconsider on behalf of the technical staffs of the films who "deserved the recognition the awards would give them."

But the initial decision was reconfirmed after a morning meeting yesterday.

Mr. Dunning, in a telephone interview Friday, said the films were being withdrawn because "the recent publicity Cinepix has been getting as makers of skin flicks upset us terribly.

"We feel the awards committee is doing nothing to combat this reputation."

Mr. Dunning referred to a recent *Time* magazine article (Sept. 28) by Geoffrey James which said: "The Canadian Skin Wave was started by Montreal's Cinepix, where officials carefully avoid the term 'sexploitation.' Vice president Andre Link prefers to call them 'adult, erotic stories' — an unfortunate

description since the films are neither erotic nor adult."

The *Time* article went on to quote Andre Paquet, head of the Cinematheque Canadienne's film section: "Until now, Canada has had an excellent reputation as a maker of fine, serious films. Now it risks having its image changed to that of an exporter of garbage."

"How would you feel," said Mr. Dunning, "after criticism like this?"

"The people who make our films work hard to put out a good product so when they hear things like this they get very depressed.

"Some of the people organizing the film awards have criticized us in this fashion.

"I'm now speaking of the judges of the festival now, but of the critics involved with the awards. It looks like a set-up to us," Mr. Dunning added, "and if that's the way a certain group looks at our films we'll forget about them and go our own way in the commercial market."

AMAZEMENT

In Toronto, the reaction has been one of amazement and disbelief. Stan Helleur, a spokesman for the Famous Players theatre chain involved in the Canadian Film Awards, said yesterday that he would "question the judgment of the people who decided to pull the films.

"What the critics say is one

thing," said Mr. Helleur, "but what counts is what the public says and such criticism isn't going to keep them away from the theatres.

"The films are both doing very well and that's all that's important.

"As far as the film awards people go, I feel sorry for them because they have scheduled this showing and now they're left with nothing. They've advertised 14 feature films and now they have only 12."

SORRY

Margaret Collyer, chairman of the awards, said "we're sorry the decision has been made, and we feel that the reasons were unjustified.

"We are very well aware of the different facets of film production and we welcome all films in the festival.

"Certainly, we have no feeling that the Cinepix films did not belong in the awards, and we regret their decision."

"The committee has not yet decided what films will be shown in place of the two withdrawn.

Meanwhile, as schedules were being juggled, the judges prepared to meet the press at a reception in their honor.

The international jury is made up of: director Jan Kadar (*Shop On Main Street*); composer Miklos Rozsa (*Ben Hur*); director Eric Till (*Hot Millions* and *The Walking Stick*); journalist Louise

Bresky; and Montreal critic and film expert Marc Gervais.

The judges face a gruelling week of film watching which will culminate in the presentation of awards in Toronto on Saturday night.

Other Quebec films still entered in the feature film competition include: *Act of the Heart*, directed by Paul Almond; *Q-Bec My Love* and *La Chambre Blanche* by Jean-Pierre Lefebvre; *Red*, directed by Gilles Carle; and *Danger Pour La Societe*, directed by Jean Martimbeau.