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'MEATBALLS' MOST SUCCESSFUL FILM YET FROM CANADA

New York, Aug. 14 — With approximately \$26,000,000 clocked at the boxoffice in its first four weeks of domestic release via Paramount, producer-director Ivan Reitman's "Meatballs" has become far and away the most successful Canadian feature ever, long before its overseas release plans have even been drafted.

Financially, "Meatballs" signals a lot of winners, including the Canadian Film Development Corp., which Reitman says will reap a not inconsiderable 1½% of the comedy's eventual profits.

Still talking nationalistically, Reitman (a Canadian citizen) avers that "the industry is getting a lot more out of this than

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'Meatballs' Canada's Most Successful Pic Yet

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dollars," and predicts a further loosening of private investor purse strings, based on "proof that Canada really can produce a breakaway hit."

That has to be solace enough to the CFDC, considering the fact that the government commission originally put up \$400,000 in essential seed coin toward the pic's \$1,400,000 budget and stood to reap a multimillion dollar windfall if it had maintained its full stake in the project.

Last November, however, the CFDC (along with smaller investor Famous Players Ltd., Reitman and line producer Dan Goldberg) sold out its interest to a Canadian tax group.

As for the producers of the summer camp parody (in addition to Reitman and Goldberg, exec producer John Dunning and Andre Link figured prominently in the financing equation), they're doing well.

Reitman allows that the pic "has been in a very healthy profit situation for some time," even without imminent signing of a foreign distribution pact with Cinema International Corp. (Par's joint overseas arm with Universal).

That profit situation is largely the result of upfront parceling of the film's sundry distribution and ancillary rights in piecemeal fashion. Among other deals, the strategy eked \$3,000,000-plus for Par's U.S. release rights (highest price ever paid for a Canadian pic), \$300,000 in a separate Paramount pact for Canada and a \$1,050,000 pay tv/syndication deal with Home Box Office and corporate daddy Time-Life Inc.

Network Sale

Paramount is also handling the network tv sale of "Meatballs," which Reitman said is just beginning to be pitched, as well as merchandising rights to "Meatballs" spinoffs. Music deal — which has spawned two chart-climbing singles along with the soundtrack album — was signed separately with RSO Records.

"We were very careful to keep everything non-cross collateralized," Reitman stressed, noting that "all our profit centers stand on their own," hence aren't subject to soft results in one area being written off against banner profits in another.

The pay-tv deal, in fact, was intentionally made before beginning negotiation for a U.S. distrib. — the deal having it

20th Century-Fox, which had a light summer program "and could guarantee us good tracks," per Reitman. The Fox deal was virtually signed in fact (nothing could be signed until studio topper Alan Ladd Jr. screened the pic) when Paramount's top brass saw the film in Gotham and "a deal which gave us better points than Fox" was firmed virtually on the spot.

"We obviously sold our picture to the right company," Reitman beams, crediting distribution and marketing topper Frank Mancuso with "doing more than we could have dreamed was possible" with the pic.

Tv Spinoffs

As to potential tv spinoffs of "Meatballs," Reitman says he intends to keep a tight reign on series rights, after having been "badly burned" by Universal's short-lived "Delta House" offshoot of "Animal House," on which he was exec producer.

Reitman estimates that by putting the tv show into network playoff when the pic had had 3000 to 4000 theatrical playdates, "they cut into the picture's performance, especially in all the territories where it had never played."

"If it had been a better show," he muses, "it might not have hurt us as badly, but it still had

to hurt. This time, I want to make damned sure the show is right and will come at the right time. I know the networks all have a number of summer camp pilots cooking. That doesn't really bother me, as long as I know our's can be the best of them."

Reitman, who says his prime ambition is to be "accepted as a director," intends to hang loose during the next few months, perusing script offers he said have emanated from each of the majors.

Down the line, he's developing the "Animal House" sequel at U, preproduction on which is expected to begin in January. Another Universal project, "Sex In America," which he was to produce for director-topliner David Steinberg (another Canadian), has been scrapped after long hazy status.

Reitman, who despite his recent transplantation to Hollywood says, "I've got lots of nationalistic feeling in me," says he intends to do more work in Canada, where he expects carte blanche based on the "Meatballs" experience.

He's quick to credit CFDC topper John McCabe as "the key to getting this whole thing off the ground" and describes the Commission in general as being "a lot more conscious of business realities than they had been."



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MONTREAL (CP) — M the recently-released comedy a slap-happy summer camp ready established an all-time office record for a Canadian film, producers John Dunning and Andre Link of Haliburton announced recently.

Forty days after its release, the film had grossed than \$25.6 million in North America, Dunning said, adding that lion of this came from Canadian box-office sales.

"Obviously the film will handsomely to its backers," Dunning said.

The initial investment in