

# Genies turn on their magic

## Canadian film industry comes of age with sparkling awards night



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movies

TORONTO — It was the Academy Awards East last night. It was as if the klieg lights and the black limousines and the dancing girls and the dreary thank you speeches had been moved intact from Hollywood and plunked down in Toronto's Royal Alexandra Theatre.

In fact, it was not the Oscars.

It was the first annual Genie Awards, and the preparations the Canadian film industry went through to give the event an ethereal aura were elaborate — national TV coverage, a host of star presenters that included Jack Lemmon, Lee Majors, Margot Kidder and Donald Sutherland, a black-tie reception beforehand, a sit down dinner for more than a thousand afterwards, an awards luncheon during the day, mini-press conferences in the morning.

**I**N FACT, even though it was not the Oscars, it proved to be very much the magical sort of event the Canadian film industry has hungered for. There have been Canadian film awards in past years — they were called Etrogs — but there were too few films to create any genuine suspense and the procedures for selecting winners was haphazard.

All that changed last evening. There were enough films of quality made in Canada last year (even if most have yet to be exhibited in theatres) to produce genuine competition and enough glamor on parade last evening to charge the event with anticipation.

A new Academy of Canadian Cinema was created last Fall, with about 500 Canadian performers, directors, writers, producers, cameramen and other technicians as members. Voting procedures are similar to those in the American Academy. The Genies which were awarded last evening therefore took on some real significance.

The Changeling, an occult horror film, won for Best Picture and also carried off awards for Best Foreign Actor and Actress (that is, non-Canadian) for performances by George C. Scott and Trish Van Devere.

Christopher Plummer won a Genie for Best Actor for his portrayal of Sherlock Holmes in Murder By Decree. "We're all gypsies," a charming, theatrical Plummer told the elegant Royal Alexandra audience. "Nationality has nothing to do with acting, and the sooner we can put ourselves in the running with everyone instead of thinking in terms of the best Canadian or the best whatever, the sooner we'll be equals."

**K**ATE LYNCH accepted a Genie for Best Actress for her spunky performance as a camp counsellor in Meatballs, and Genevieve Bujold won for Best Supporting Actress for her role as an insane asylum inmate in Murder By Decree.

The Genie for Best Supporting Actor went to Gordon Pinsent for his work in Klondike Fever, based on the life of Jack London. Pinsent thanked a number of people before adding, "Thank you team of huskies. Especially Nancy, second from the end. Who still owes me a letter." In noting the phenomenal growth of the Canadian film industry, Pinsent recalled a movie he made nine years ago, "where most of the interiors were shot inside a Johnny-on-the-spot."



Christopher Plummer accepts award for best actor.

— UPC



Van Devere: Best foreign actress.



Kate Lynch: Best actress.

The two hours of awards swept by at a cracking pace. Bruno Gerussi proved a robust host. Female impressionist Craig Russell slinked down the aisle in one interlude dressed in the bodysuit and persona of Judy Garland, singing Somewhere Over the Rainbow. A leggy line of dancers kicked out a number from the Broadway musical, A Chorus Line. At the end Jack Lemmon, currently in Toronto making the film version of Bernard Slade's play, Tribute, came out wearing a red bowtie and a smile to vow, "If you held this thing in the basement of a deli, I would be here tonight. I have the utmost respect for the Canadian film industry and its values." Lemmon then bestowed a special Genie upon George Dostounis of Famous Players Limited for his contribution to Canadian cinema. Earlier, during a noonhour awards luncheon, Canadian film distributors honored Ivan Reitman and Dan Goldberg, producers of Meatballs, the runaway Canadian box office success of last year.

**I**N ACCEPTING, Reitman expressed his appreciation to Bill Murray, Meatballs' star and Saturday Night Live veteran who he said showed courage in showing up the second day of shooting. "He didn't believe in the script and he didn't trust me, but I just kept telling him if we work together, everything would be all right."

Murray, boisterous throughout the luncheon and slightly askew at the head table, stood afterwards to deliver a hilarious monologue. "All kidding aside," Murray finally said, "I don't know why I'm here really. I should give Ivan credit, but I will not. He is the goofiest Canadian I've ever met. It was a lot of fun making the movie, though it didn't seem like it at the time."

Late in the afternoon many crowded into Stop 33 at the top of the Sutton Place Hotel for a champagne reception. Press from across Canada and from Los Angeles mingled with movie people. Bernard Slade, the CBC writer who went to Hollywood and became a top writer in American TV, then one of Broadway's most successful playwrights with Same Time, Next Year, stood in front of the fading Toronto skyline and waxed a little cynical.

"The infighting is just more turmoil than it's worth," he said about the difficulties of writing for the screen. "I'm just getting too old and too rich for the nonsense," Slade added, saying that the screenplay for his latest Broadway play, Romantic Comedy, will be the last he will write.

**W**ILL SAMPSON, the mountainous Indian from One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, leaned against the bar the whole time, talking with admirers.

Celine Lomez, the girlish Montreal actress who played Elliott Gould's love interest in The Silent Partner, filtered through the crowd.

In another hotel room Lenny and Jack Blum, ex-Hamiltonians and collaborators on Meatballs, sat on a couch and sallied forth with a rendering in two part harmony of Hey There, for no particular reason.

It was that sort of day.