

Aim to increase involvement

3 12# More movie money

By Steve Merti

CALGARY (CP) — The pattern of film investment in Canada won't change in the foreseeable future, say officials of the federal Canadian Film Development Corp.

But much more of the private money being put into movies is coming from Western Canada and now it remains to increase the involvement of western talent and production.

"There's money and there's talent, so you've got the two initial ingredients," says Karen Laurence, the Vancouver-based regional co-ordinator for the corporation.

Canadian investors put about \$115 million into Canadian feature films last year, says Ian McDougall, corporation director and head of English-language production.

The corporation generates about half its budget, this year set at \$4.3 million. About one quarter of the money came from Calgary investors alone.

The main pull Canadian films hold for investors still is the 100-per-cent income tax write-off on capital, says McDougall. Most investors are in the 50-per-cent bracket and a \$5,000 or \$10,000 deduction can be significant.

Few films make a profit and investors who get back 50 to 60 per cent of their original investment in two years feel they've

broken even, he says.

There are goals to shoot for, of course. The Canadian-produced comedy *Meatballs* has grossed \$50 million since its release two years ago on an investment of \$1.6 million. My *Bloody Valentine*, one of a few ketchup-stained horror films, is also box-office gold, says McDougall.

Business is brisk enough in Alberta for Newhouse Securities Ltd. of Winnipeg, which is the broker for a lot of film investment, to open offices in Calgary and Edmonton.

But for the time being, the West remains little more than a pretty backdrop for films shot by producers from Eastern Canada or the United States.

Alberta's embryonic cinema community complains constantly that producers import not only actors and production crews but costumes, props and even animals for western location shots.

Ken Rosenberg of Toronto, corporation head of English-language projects, says that is changing and he urges western film-makers to be patient.

"I would like nothing better than to see more talent evolve from this part of the country," he says. "But it's an evolutionary process."

Many outside producers would not come here in the first place if it weren't for the

scenery, the record amount of sunshine and daylight hours, says Rosenberg. But they are beginning to pick up actors and production crew members locally.

Becoming better known are western producers such as Jack Winter and Fil Fraser of Edmonton, who brought out *Hounds of Notre Dame*, a much-acclaimed but so far little-seen film. Other "small films" run the gamut from the horror of *Ghost Keeper*, recently completed at Lake Louise, Alta., to *Grey Fox*, a romantic comedy.

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