

SASKFILM CLIPS

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A SURE SIGN OF SPRING!

For SaskFilm, the arrival of trucks bearing cameras, lighting equipment and set materials is a sure indication that Spring has arrived.

The 2008 peak production season is beginning with a flurry of activity. Producers and production managers are busily crewing up their productions. The production offices at the Canada Saskatchewan Production Studios are buzzing with activity and producers from across the province are gearing up for a variety of productions including dramatic series, factual series, feature length dramas and informational and educational programming.

A new kick off to the production season was the celebration of Showcase 2008. SaskFilm extends congratulations to all nominees and to SMPA for bringing the industry together to honour its achievements. A round of applause goes to the Bionic Bannock Boys for their entertaining foray into hosting a Saskatchewan awards show.

While the industry has been gearing up for this years production slate, SaskFilm has been undertaking a review of its activities to ensure the programs available remain competitive and deliver their intended impacts and opportunities to our stakeholders. We look forward to moving into the future with renewed energy and initiatives that will provide efficient delivery and effective results.

Susanne Bell, *SaskFilm CEO & Film Commissioner*

THANKS FOR THE LAUGHS

For five years, the cast and team behind *Corner Gas* have kept Canadians laughing. It became contagious; people in more than two dozen countries, including Finland, Australia and the U.S are also laughing at the antics of the Dog River residents.

The Saskatchewan-made series has become a cultural phenomenon, spawning a chart-topping book, sold-out comedy tours, a successful line of clothing and merchandise, a top-selling series of DVDs and a thriving tourist industry in Rouleau.



And now, production is gearing up for its sixth and final season. *Corner Gas* is making a graceful exit at the top of its game. "...that's how I want viewers to remember *Corner Gas*: at its very best," says the series' star, Brent Butt, who is also a writer, director and executive producer.

Corner Gas has been nominated for numerous awards including the International Emmy Awards, Director's Guild of Canada Awards, Canadian Screenwriting Awards and Canadian Comedy Awards. Amongst others, it has received six Gemini Awards including Best Comedy Series.

CTV's Susanne Boyce, President of Creative, Content and Channels, says, "The series has paved the way for other Canadian productions by proving that if you make great TV, Canadians will watch".

SaskFilm bids a fond farewell to Canada's #1 hit comedy series and looks forward to its final production season at the Canada Saskatchewan Production Studios.

SASKATCHEWAN PRODUCTIONS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Saskatchewan-made film and television productions continue to attract attention and accolades at home and abroad.

On April 3rd, the Saskatchewan Motion Picture Association celebrated industry achievements and excellence at the **Showcase Awards** in Regina. *The Velvet Devil*, produced by WestWind Pictures, received 13 awards including Best of Showcase. The feature-length film set in 1945 about a young, small town Métis woman and her quest for fame and fortune is based on the original play by Saskatoon's Andrea Menard.

SaskFilm
and video development corporation

Michael Snook, executive producer/producer/writer with nearly four decades of experience in film and television was presented the *Industry Achievement Award*. Snook has extensive credits in non-fiction production such as *Designer Guys*, *What On Earth*, *Family and Friends*, *This Small Space* and *Wild Lives*. His performance and dramatic productions include *Shot in the Face*, *Youkali Hotel*, *At Wood River Hall* and *The Velvet Devil*.

For a complete list of the award recipients, visit www.smpia.sk.ca.

Four Saskatchewan productions were nominated for the **Canadian Film and Television Production Association's Indie Awards**. Alta Nova Pictures' *Flight from Darkness* was nominated in the Best Documentary Program or Series category. Producer Don Copeman reflected on the numbers, "There are 45 nominations in all, and four of these are from Saskatchewan. That's almost 10 per cent from a province that has three per cent of Canada's population. Not bad for Saskatchewan, especially when one considers that the industry hardly existed 20 years ago." The other nominees were Westwind Pictures' *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, Vérité Film's *Corner Gas* in the Best Comedy Program or Series and Lasa Media Arts' *Redemption SK* in the Best Mini-Series category.

Corner Gas writers Mark Farrell and Robert Sheridan received the 2008 **Canadian Screenwriting Awards** in the Drama Series 1/2 hour category for their script "Seeing Things".



The Englishman's Boy posse looks authentic thanks to coaching from wranglers like TJ Bews Photo Credit: *The Englishman's Boy*, Minds Eye Entertainment

Mark Wihak's feature film *RIVER* won three awards at the Canadian Film Fest in Toronto in March. It received the *William F. White 'Reel Canadian Indie' Award*, *The Meridian Artists 'Best Screenwriting' Award* and the *Best Actor Award* for Adam Budd.

Saskatchewan crew members and scenery received accolades from movie star **Charlize Theron** on the March 12th episode of the *David Letterman Show*. Theron, who was in Saskatchewan in 2006 filming *Sleepwalking*, was promoting the movie's North America release in late March. "We were on an extremely tight budget so we had to find a place that had some really good incentives for us. We heard of this place called Regina, Saskatchewan... It turned out really visually beautiful for the film," said Theron. She went on to say "Really nice place, really lovely people, great film community, great casino."

THERE'S A NEW WRANGLER IN TOWN

Buffalo, camels, reindeer, yaks, ravens, hawks, gophers and snakes – TJ Bews has wrangled them all. He has over 50 credits as an animal wrangler and trainer including work on acclaimed productions such as *Lonesome Dove* (the series), *Big Bear*, *Brokeback Mountain* and, most recently, *The Englishman's Boy*.

TJ is a fourth-generation rancher and rodeo cowboy from Longview, Alberta. It was there that he got his start on the rodeo circuit and eventually as a wrangler and stunt performer in the movie business. Throughout the 90's, he grew his business in concert with Alberta's booming film industry, but as opportunities arose he also began accepting jobs on Saskatchewan productions. Those opportunities have been increasing in recent years.

Now, TJ is part of a growing wave of people moving into the province to pursue careers in Saskatchewan's film

and television industry. Last year, he relocated his family, 57 horses and 62 cows to his new ranch close to Regina Beach. "There are more prospects for me in Saskatchewan," says TJ. "You have a labour tax credit program and a great production studio which are both really helping to grow the industry."

TJ is finding more opportunities here to diversify his career and expand into the stunt area. He already has extensive experience as a stunt coordinator, staging car stunts and working with camera mounts. "Saskatchewan is more affordable, there're fewer people, less traffic, more room and I like the weather better - it's more predictable", says TJ. He is also enjoying the people and the growing film community.

For the past ten years, TJ has been mentoring Saskatchewan's wrangling community in the film business and helping to build the crew base. The work has paid off and the results can be seen in the four-hour mini series *The Englishman's Boy*, which had its television premiere on CBC on March 2, 2008.

TJ was the Key Wrangler on the production, managing the crew of professional cowboys from across Saskatchewan and a team of 30 horses. The horses were well-trained for their roles; falling down, rearing and swimming on command. They also know how to behave on a film set and are not spooked by gun shots or bright lights.

TJ was also one of the people responsible for transforming the actors into cowboys during the two-week Cowboy Camp which preceded filming. "Most of the actors had little or no riding experience," said TJ, "but, by the time we were finished putting them through their paces, they looked like accomplished cowboys."

CANADA'S FIRST 'RED TECHNOLOGY' FEATURE SHOOTING IN SK

Hybrid (a.k.a. *Hunter*), a 'creature car' action-based thriller currently shooting in Regina, is the first feature to be shot in Canada exclusively employing RED technology. A relative industry newcomer, The RED ONE is the hottest prototype camera that many believe will replace celluloid down the road. The camera captures images straight to hard-drive, thereby increasing some production values and simplifying the post-production process.

Hybrid began shooting in and around Regina on March 31st and will wrap production in June following 47 shooting days. *Hybrid* is co-produced by Stallion Media (USA) and Minds Eye Entertainment.

CHESHIRE SMILE ANIMATION IS ON THE MOVE

Producer/Director Tim Tyler established Cheshire Smile Animation in 1998. With a background and training in theatrical design and web interactive work, he got his start in animation at Studio Saskatoon. Tyler's company has since grown to employ five animators and directors and produce a range of products including commercials for Valley National Bank of New Jersey and SaskEnergy. In 2005, it completed Saskatchewan's first long form classically animated film *A Fairy Tale Christmas* for Waterfront Pictures in Vancouver.

Recently, two projects that have been in development have been given the green light by broadcasters and funders. In order to accommodate this production slate, Cheshire Smile is expanding its operations by moving to a larger location and hiring more animators and production staff.

The Side Show Christmas, written by Saskatchewan writer Jeff Martel, was developed in partnership with Teletoon, SaskFilm, SCN and the CTV Program Development Fund. The 48-minute animated special will be broadcast on Teletoon Canada Christmas 2008 with additional content located on the Teletoon site. Truly national in scope, the \$900,000 production budget will

own short video-casts. Traditional animation techniques are combined with live action recordings using Macromedia Flash animation software to allow Toby to interact in the 'real world' and help kids explore Canada and new technologies. Tyler is thrilled with the opportunity, "It's great to see an appetite at CBC Kids for original Saskatchewan television content with a national focus."

You can follow the antics of Tim Tyler and Cheshire Smile Animation Inc. online at Tim's blog. <http://timtyler.wordpress.com>.

SASKFILM TRAVEL PROGRAM HELPS INK DEALS

Marketing a film or television production to the international marketplace is as challenging as producing it and as critical to the process as casting or editing. The film and television industry relies on international markets such as MIP TV in France, the Banff Television Festival, the American Film Market and Reel Screen Summit in the U.S to connect buyers with sellers. SaskFilm assists Saskatchewan producers in attending these and other market places.

Ian Toews, 291 Film Company, has been to three international television markets recently and has made successful deals at all three. In Amsterdam he attended the International Documentary Film Festival where he sold six shows from Season Two of *Landscape as Muse* to the Dutch public broadcaster AVRO



The Side Show Christmas, an animated one-hour special will air on Teletoon in December 2008

Cheshire Smile has been able to reach into multiple markets including broadcast, interactive and web-based production by working with producers, writers and directors using the internet as a tool for communication and collaboration. In addition to developing and producing its own productions, Cheshire Smile acts as a service provider for other animation houses.

be split between Saskatchewan and BC with Cheshire Smile providing development, pre-production, storyboards and post production services in Saskatoon, and Studio B providing animation production services in Vancouver.

The second project, *Toby's Canada* features a media-savvy seven-year-old who makes and stars in his

Netherlands. It's deals like these that allow production companies and their investors to recoup their money and make room for future productions.

Toews knows that it is critical to prepare well in advance of the market, "It's important to study the market and know who the buyers are and what they're looking for," says Toews. Once you're at the market, Toews' advice is to "begin building long-term relationships and be prepared to negotiate with confidence."

Next, Toews is off to MIP-TV in Cannes, France where he will be offering 45 episodes of *Landscape As Muse*, two one-offs and several other projects in development to international broadcasters, distributors and co-producers.

"WHO SAYS THAT A LITTLE SASKATCHEWAN BOY CAN'T BREAK DOWN THE WALLS OF HOLLYWOOD?"

Saskatoon's Scott Parisien wrote his first movie script when he was a teenager. During the past 16 years, he has written 14 more. He explains, "Screenwriting is like painting... you don't paint the Mona Lisa on the first try, or a half dozen tries even, you need to practice and hone your craft before people really start to notice your work."

Parisien has been doing just that. Last year, he was one of four Saskatchewan writers who took part in SaskFilm's Writer-in-Residence program. Under the guidance of veteran screenwriter Bill Boyle, they met monthly, talked scriptwriting, brainstormed, critiqued each other's scripts and developed their story ideas. "Over the course of the program, I wrote the script *Feral* the way I usually write a spec script, but having the deadlines and the group discussions and notes was a great addition to the process," said Parisien. "The chance to pitch (the final scripts) to producers at the end of it all was nice as well, to get a good test drive on how people may react to not only the script and story, but your pitch technique as well."

At the end of the program, SaskFilm commissioned the Praxis Centre for Screenwriters at Simon Fraser University, to provide each writer with 'reader reports'. Parisien took their suggestions to heart, did a rewrite, did another couple of



photo Scott Parisien

rewrites, and then submitted *Feral* to a major Hollywood contest. Out of the 1,000 entries submitted, Parisien's placed second. Along with the prizes associated with the contest, this win opens up doors for future scripts.

And, the doors are opening. All indications are that another of Parisien's scripts, *Unraveled*, a thriller about a serial killer who mummifies his victims, will be shot in Louisiana this fall. In February, Parisien's agent in the U.S. lined up a group of investors and production companies to piece together a budget of \$6 million for the feature.

Parisien is thrilled to see his hard work paying dividends. "You need to put in the work, have the passion to push through the rejections, and if you persevere enough with your talent, you can finally break through the walls," says Parisien.

NEW INTERNSHIP PROGRAM FOCUSES ON BUSINESS SKILLS

Three Saskatchewan residents are about to learn the ins and outs of business affairs and producing in the film and television industry. SaskFilm and SMPA are supporting their training through the new Producer/Business Affairs Internship Program.

During the next nine months they'll get hands-on experience in the progressive stages of film or

television production while they assist with the companies' current production slates. This experience, along with the business skills curriculum provided by SaskFilm and SMPA, should give them the experience and credits necessary to compete for positions in the sector following their training.

FILMMAKERS PROGRAM

Five new productions are underway in Saskatchewan thanks, in part, to SaskFilm's Filmmakers Program. A retrospective on Elder Jim Settee, a feature length drama about personal crises and self-help books, the story of two veteran pow-wow dancers, an animated short about a diet camp and dangerous promises, and a ten-minute psychological thriller were all approved for funding following the March 1, 2008 application deadline.

The successful projects and the filmmakers are:

- Interpersonalities*, Ryan Lockwood / Hulo Films Inc.
 - Jim Settee: A Heart as Wide as the World*, Jeanne Corrigan / Inner Nature Productions Inc.
 - Kept to Himself*, Brett Bell
 - Pow-Wow Thunder*, Cory Generoux / Buffalo Communications Inc.
 - Trevor Takes a Taking*, Adrian Dean / Head Start Productions
- Congratulations to the successful participants.