

INTERNATIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

NORTHERN EXPOSURE

Canadian News Notes *by Shlomo Schwartzberg*

LEAD STORY: FAMOUS CUTS TO THE CHASE

Famous Players Inc. has named Robb Chase to the post of president and chief executive officer of the chain. Formerly president and chief operating officer of Famous, Chase replaces John Bailey, who had been with Paramount Pictures and Famous Players (both owned by Viacom Entertainment Group) for nearly 30 years. Viacom's Tom McGrath, in a press release, lauded Bailey "for his leadership and dedication over the years," and praised Chase as "a very talented executive who has a great understanding of the exhibition industry." Chase joined Famous Players three years ago from a previous post as vice president of marketing for Pizza Hut International. No reason was given for Bailey's departure, which came as a shock and surprise to many.



Famous Players president and CEO Robb Chase.

KREME OF THE CROP

Famous Players' concessions offerings will expand to include donuts, namely Krispy Kremes, which were recently introduced to great success in Canada. Ten theatres in Ontario will feature Krispy Kreme kiosks, with more theatres to be outfitted later. "[It's part of] our continuing effort to offer new concession options to our guests," Famous' manager of corporate affairs Andrew Sherbin told **BOXOFFICE**.

YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE HEART

Famous announced a remarkable tally of over C\$500,000 (US\$325,000) raised for Variety—The Children's Charity by selling C\$3 Gold Heart pins in theatres. Famous' manager of corporate affairs Andrew Sherbin exulted that the promotion did better than expected. "We were completely blown away by the efforts of our theatres. It was amazing to see."

BRINGING IN BUSINESS

Famous' initiative to offer its facilities to corporate clients, including satellite broadcasts which link all the auditoriums in one complex, has already attracted the likes of Microsoft, which hosted 800 software developers in March at Toronto's Paramount multiplex. Famous' set-up, including "stadium-style seating, perfect sight-lines, excellent sound and large screens," tops other convention facilities in the city, according to manager of corporate affairs Andrew Sherbin. The corporate outreach is "part of our ongoing way of increasing revenues."

PSA PROMOTES PEDESTRIAN PRUDENCE

Cineplex has signed onto a special public service campaign that warns pedestrians to be careful when crossing the street in Toronto. An image of a blanket-covered pedestrian will be shown in the city's theatres. Pedestrian fatalities in Toronto have gone up in recent years.

MORE PRICES SIMPLIFIED

Famous Payers has announced another new uniform pricing policy, known as a Simplified Price Plan, for Halifax, Nova Scotia and London, Ontario. Films at Halifax's Park Lane theatre will cost C\$7.95 (US\$5.15) at all times. At the SilverCity and Wellington 8 theatres in London, the standard price will be C\$9.95 (US\$6.49). The Simplified Price Plan is already in effect at theatres in Thunder Bay, Ontario; Victoria, British Columbia; and Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The pricing plans coincide with Famous' recent movie price increase in Toronto and Vancouver, where tickets have now hit C\$13.95 (US\$9.20). "It's just a cost of living increase," Andrew Sherbin, Famous Players' manager of corporate affairs, told **BOXOFFICE**.

Asked how Famous Players decides which markets get Simplified Pricing Plans, Sherbin said the company "looks at individual markets and individual theatres to see if they can support a flat pricing plan," factoring in operating costs and the surrounding community's moviegoing attendance to ascertain viability.

CINEPLEX, CHAPTERS/INDIGO COUPLE FOR VALENTINE'S

Cineplex Odeon and Chapters/Indigo bookstores recently connected on Valentine's Day weekend to give all patrons attending any Cineplex theatre a C\$10 (US\$6.50) coupon toward use at the book chain's website, chapters.indigo.ca. "We wanted to offer something special to our patrons for Valentine's Day," said Greg Mason, Cineplex's director of marketing, in a release announcing the promotion.

EGOYAN SUMMONS GENIES

"Ararat," Atom Egoyan's critically acclaimed film about the Armenian genocide, and the little-seen (and originally made-for-television) film "Savage Messiah" dominated the 23rd annual Genie awards, showcasing the best in Canadian cinema. "Ararat" snagged five Genies, including Best Picture; Best Lead Actress (Arsinee Khanjian, who is Egoyan's wife); Best Supporting Actor (Elias Koteas); Best Original Score (Mychael Danna) and Best Costume Design. (Inexplicably, Egoyan was not nominated for Best Director.)

"Savage Messiah," which chronicles the story of a cult leader, won Genies for Best Actor (Luc Picard); Best Supporting Actress (Pascale Montpetit); and Best Adapted Screenplay (Sharon Riis).

Two significant Canadian films won only one Genie each. David Cronenberg, whose psychological drama "Spider" did not receive a Best Picture nomination, won for Best Director. Deepa Mehta won Best Original Screenplay for her Toronto-set musical "Bollywood/Hollywood."

Shut out completely from the Genies was "Men with the Brooms," the critically panned but enormously successful curling comedy, which grossed over C\$4 million (US\$2.6 million) at the box office.

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