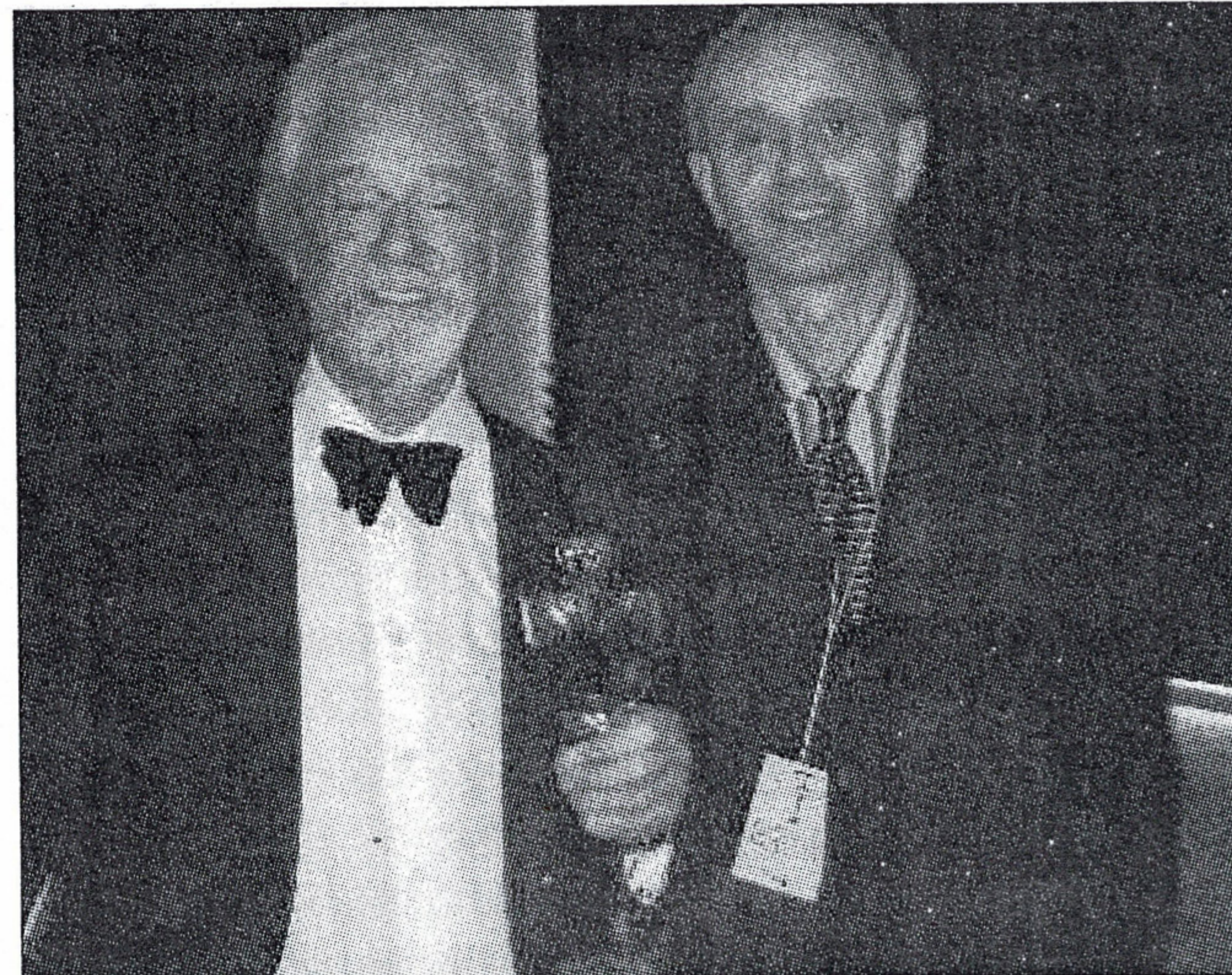


28th Annual Genie Awards

SARAH POLLEY'S BIG NIGHT



Bojan Bosiljic and actor Gordon Pinsent

28th Annual Genie Awards, the Canadian Oscars, were handed out at a gala ceremony at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, on March 3rd. It was a big night for Sarah Polley, 29-year-old actress and first-time filmmaker. Just a week after she was shut out by Hollywood's Oscars, Ms. Polley rebounded at the Genies to dominate the major categories.

"The winner is Sarah Polley". These words were a familiar refrain. Her directorial debut won seven awards, including best motion picture, best actress (Julie Christie), best actor (Gordon Pinsent) and best

supporting actress (Kristen Thomson). Sarah Polley received three awards for herself: for best direction, best adapted screenplay and the Claude Jutra Award for best feature film by a first-time director.

In her acceptance speech, Sarah Polley, a rising talent behind the camera, expressed dismay that she won Best Director award over David Cronenberg, Denys Arcand, Roger Spottiswoode and Bruce McDonald. "The ridiculousness of me winning in this category is not lost on me. This is totally absurd," she modestly said.

Adapted from Alice Munro's short story, *Away From Her* is a moving film about Alzheimer's disease and enduring love.

In winning the award for best picture, *Away From Her* beat out entries from world renowned Canadian veteran filmmakers David Cronenberg (*Eastern Promises*) and Oscar-winning director Denys Arcand (*Days of Darkness*), as well as *Shake Hands With The Devil*, based on the memoirs of General Romeo Dallaire about the genocide in Rwanda in 1993 and the Quebec black comedy *Continental*, *A Film Without Guns*.

Eastern Promises, a Russian-mob crime thriller (which according to David Cronenberg is "a film about multiculturalism and criminal globalization") also re-

ceived seven Genies, but those wins were mainly in technical categories.

In a video message via satellite, Oscar-winning British actress Julie Christie thanked Ms. Polley: "I would like to give an award to Canada for producing Sarah Polley. Not only is she a wonderful actor, a wonderful director and a wonderful screenplay writer, she is also the most persistent person I have ever met. And I am so grateful to her that she persisted in persuading me to make *Away From Her*; one of the happiest, if not happiest, film experiences of my life.

77-year-old actor Gordon Pinsent from Newfoundland also praised Sarah Polley: "She was well prepared and she was shining with confidence. She knew us (Julie and me), trusted us, so she concentrated on the other elements of the film".

After years of domination by francophone cinema, anglophone film production struck back with vengeance at the 28th Genies, winning most of the awards. The only major recognition for Quebec cinema was "The Golden Reel Award", presented to the Canadian film that earned the highest domestic box office in 2007. This award went to "The Three Little Pigs", a comedy of manners by first-time director Patrick Huard, which grossed over \$4,6 million in Canada last year.

By Bojan Z. Bosiljic