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NORTH SHORE STUDIOS

Cannell and Comweb Break Ground for Canada's Largest Production Facility



On July 29 in North Vancouver, Stephen J. Cannell, Chairman of the Board of The Cannell Studios, wrote an introduction to the next chapter of western Canadian production at the ground-breaking ceremonies for the new North Shore Studios. With the first shovelful of earth from the studio site, Cannell simultaneously signalled the start of construction on the \$20 million facility and announced the involvement of Toronto's Comweb Corporation as a joint venture partner.

At the ceremonies, Cannell was joined by North Vancouver Mayor Jack Loucks, Minister of International Business John Jansen, and Minister of Regional Development (formerly Provincial Secretary and Minister of Government Services) Elwood Veitch, along with a host of industry representatives and guests. Paul Bronfman, Comweb's Chairman of the Board, had planned to take part in the high-profile ceremony but Stephen Cannell made gracious excuses for him - Bronfman was kept unavoidably absent by the birth of his child.

According to Cannell, while Comweb is taking a significant position of involvement in the North Shore Studios project. The Cannell Studios will maintain majority interest, as well as keeping a high profile on the site through the operations of Cannell Films of Canada Ltd., the studio's major tenant and one of the four major subsidiaries of The Cannell Studios operation.

Michael Dubelko, President of The Cannell Studios, predicted that the development of the North Shore Studios and Comweb's involvement would mean an increase in production activity in Western Canada. "Cannell will assist in getting more production into Vancouver and Bronfman will help to get more central Canadian-based production into the studios," he said.

Dubelko reiterated Cannell's goal of creating a world-class production centre, as well as the company's

continuing commitment to Vancouver-based production. Originally, he admits, Cannell would never have made the move to western Canada if the currency differential had



Stephen Cannell - 'More successful as a joint venture.'

not made production attractive, but, once here, "we found other benefits."

"The vision of a lot of unions (in Hollywood) has been a little clouded," Dubelko stated, adding that the Canadian unions have been responsive to Cannell's activities, and that recent negotiations have left the company "reasonably content."

With regard to the benefits of filming in western Canada, Dubelko says that Cannell has been happy with the look of their B.C.-based productions - "Canada has a fresh, clear look. Slightly different," he says, "but not too different."

Dubelko also spoke of an imminent announcement regarding a deal with the CTV television network which will see Cannell involved in an all-Canadian dramatic series for prime-time first run. Cannell is looking on

the project as a 'test balloon', Dubelko said, and, if successful, more of the same could follow. The series will mark CTV's first foray into major dramatic television production in B.C. Cannell will also be marketing the series to cable and other outlets in the U.S.

The Cannell Studios purchased the 13.5 acre studio site in January of 1987 and has spent the last year and a half in rezoning, development, and union negotiations. When fully operational, the master planned state-of-the-art film and video facility will comprise the largest motion picture and television production complex in



At the ceremonies - Loucks, Jansen, Cannell and Veitch .

Canada. Seven sound stages with adjacent stage facilities will be combined with production support facilities, two buildings' worth of office space, and a vendor building for service and support, as well as external shooting fronts and a central employee's mall.

As primary tenant, Cannell Films of Canada will utilize production space

for its large stable of Vancouver-based series and telefilms, including Wisegu for CBS and the Fox Network's 2 Jump Street. In addition, Cannell and Comweb see the facility as a means to satisfy a portion of the lucrative rental market that the current volume of production in the region has created what with no central facilities for support services and only one major studio complex in the greater Vancouver area.

Comweb's participation in the North Shore Studios project comes at a point where both corporate and international partnership with the domestic industry are on an upswing. According to Cannell, "Since the inception of the project, we have always been interested in bringing in a Canadian partner, based on our feeling that the studio will be more successful as a U.S./Canada joint venture."

Comweb is a relative newcomer to the industry - the North Shore Studios partnership is their first major project but the strength of Comweb's planned involvement in production distribution, and marketing, Cannell feels, will provide a solid foundation for success in combination with Cannell Studios' own commitment to television production in Vancouver. In a pre-release, Paul Bronfman expresses his own confidence in the studio's potential, not only as a centre for Canadian production, but also as an eventual world-class facility. Bronfman is currently Vice President of Business Development for Astral Bellevue Pathe, and he brings to the project the marketing and promotions to North Shore.

Architecture for the studio project is by Driscoll, Hess and Neill Associates of Eugene, Oregon. Hyland Turnkey, Ltd. of Vancouver are the local development consultants. Completion of the facility is slated for the summer of 1989.