

## BRIEFLY

### Here's the scoop on the show kids love

The television show *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* has captivated kids like no other show in recent years. For more details on the part live-action, part awful-special-effects show, please see F5.

### Dunvegan poet in running for prize

Area poet Gary Geddes has been shortlisted for a prestigious British poetry prize. Geddes, who lives in Dunvegan and has just published a new collection, *Girl by the Water*, is one of six poets in the running for the 1993 Arvon International Poetry Competition, sponsored by the London newspaper, *The Observer*. The winning poem, whose author will receive about \$10,000, will be announced March 17. Geddes wrote the poem, *What Does A House Want*, last fall while travelling in the Middle East. It was one of 13,000 entries in the competition.

### Country jamboree will aid food bank

The Bank Street Saloon, 363 Bank St., is hosting a nine-hour country jamboree Sunday at 2 p.m. to raise money and supplies for the Ottawa Food Bank. The benefit features performances by several Ottawa country acts, including Gail Gavan, Bruce Golden and Borderline, Jack McCrae and Bigfoot, Steve Agnew, Heart of Country, Donna Lee and Broken Arrow, Mickey Hayes and New Country and John Henry. Admission is \$2 and fans are encouraged to bring non-perishable food items.

### Investment firm's \$1M helps Barnes exhibit

**TORONTO** — The Art Gallery of Ontario has found a corporate fairy godmother for its upcoming exhibition of the Barnes collection, snagging a \$1 million gift. Gluskin Sheff and Associates, a small Canadian investment company, is donating the money to the blockbuster show, *From Cézanne to Matisse: Great French Paintings from the Barnes Foundation*, that opens at the gallery on Sept. 17. In exchange for the money, which will help pay the cost of installing 80 French masterpieces, the company will be mentioned in all material related to the show.

### Artists get their own free trade deal

**WASHINGTON** — Artists in Canada, the United States and Mexico are getting a little dose of North American free trade. In the spirit of the trade deal introduced Jan. 1, the three countries will be swapping artists in an exchange program announced in Washington on Friday. Starting in 1995, about 20 artists from each country will take up two-month residencies with arts organizations in other countries.

### Film-makers create Hot Docs awards

**TORONTO** Canadian documentary film-makers now have their own annual awards show and documentary festival. Hot Docs: The National Documentary Film Festival is a four-day Toronto event that began Thursday, Paul Jay, co-chairman of the Canadian Independent Film Caucus and host of the festival, says Hot Docs "has already established itself as the premiere documentary event in Canada." More than 140 Canadian documentaries were submitted last fall. There are about 25 finalists.

Citizen staff and news services.

## WHAT'S ON

**Theatre**  
**Our Country's Good:** Great Canadian Theatre Company, 310 Gladstone Ave., until March 5. For ticket information, call 236-5196.

**Comedy**  
**Yak & Dot:** Boston stand-up comedian Bill Braudis performs tonight at the comedy club, 88 Albert St. For information on times and tickets, call 236-5233.

## TOUCHLINE

For information on the following topics, call Touchline at 721-1990 and punch in the four-digit code.  
**2005:** Local Movie Review Hotline  
**2006:** The City 120 Instant Top 20  
**2060:** Top 10 Jazz Albums  
**2063:** Classical Album Countdown  
**2064:** Top 10 Singles  
**2070:** Top 10 Heavy Metal Albums  
**2080:** Top 10 Rap Singles

# Degrassi grows up

Director of popular high school series, Linda Schuyler, sets out on new pilot.

**X-Rated** is about have-nots: twentynothings locked in limbo by their job-sucking parents' generation

**AN ARMY** of make-up artists, hairstylists and lighting directors give *X-Rated* a glossy sheen. The movie, to be broadcast at 8 p.m. Sunday on CBC, is more like *Beverly Hills 90210* than *Degrassi*

By Tony Atherton

Linda Schuyler shudders. Her 90s-vintage halo of frizzy curls vibrates. She is recalling the seminar for teachers she heard about during a visit to Ottawa a couple of years ago.

"It was called Suppressing The Urge To Hug," she says with obvious distaste. Clearly, the precautions of litigation-wary educators don't jibe with Schuyler's earth-mother approach to teaching, an approach she took out of the classroom and onto television about 13 years ago.

The kids of CBC's *Degrassi High* used to call Schuyler Mom. Some had worked for the teacher-turned-producer since they were 10. First in *The Kids of Degrassi Street*, then *Degrassi Junior High*. They had been raised in her unique repertory company, a protective cocoon meant to mitigate the unreality of being a child actor.

The *Degrassi* kids weren't allowed to wear make-up on camera. There were no stylists fussing over their hair. They didn't join actors unions. It was a non-union set. They collaborated on scripts and their performances were recorded in a style that was deliberately unglamorous, with none of the manufactured slickness that could make a media literacy activist like Schuyler cringe.

### Degrassi like a family

It was a creative, warm and inclusive structure, if confining — rather like a family. And Schuyler, unable to have children of her own after an automobile accident at age 20, redirected her maternal instincts to the series and the company.

Her devotion resulted in a ground-breaking series that dealt with complex issues honestly, from the perspective of kids. It was controversial — broadcasters as broad-minded as the CBC and PBS edited out unscripted snows on issues like abortion and teen pregnancy — but it aired unscathed in Canada and attracted a large and loyal following.

Now, two years after the end of *Degrassi*, she is ready to take the next logical step, a series based on the lives of the twentynothings, the generation held in stasis by the job-sucking, culture-dominating profession of their baby boomer parents.

*X-Rated*, a two-hour movie whose title is a play on the phrase Generation X, airs on CBC Sunday at 8 p.m. It is a pilot for a series Schuyler hopes to get on CBC next season — if she can nail down a U.S. partner.

"Only now Mom finds she has to bend her once strict house rules."

"It's like being a parent," Schuyler says. "The kinds of rules and regulations you have when your kids are 14 are going to be different when they're still living at home at 20."

"I still want some kind of rep company. I don't know how it will run. I was working with kids before. Now I'm working with adults who have dedicated their lives to working as professional actors."

It's not only her relationship with the actors she's had to adjust, but also her approach to her audience. She is aiming at 17 to 24-year-olds, the group that watches the least amount of television and is the hardest to please.

The older they get, the more informed they get, their reaction is scary. I want to do story-telling that will make them feel good and not cynical. The work we have to do is to make sure we get the voice right.

And the look. *Gone* is *Degrassi*'s almost fanatic devotion to naturalism, and in its place is an army of make-up artists, hairstylists, and lighting directors who give *X-Rated* a glossy Hollywood sheen. The movie is more



Ragtag group of young adults cling to the fringe of society they've been allowed to claim in a rooming house they call *The Pit*



**THE FIRST DATE:** River, (Stacie Mistysyn) and Tony (Gordon Michael Woolvett), the bankrupt son of parents who conduct sensitivity training

like *Beverly Hills 90210* than *Degrassi* in its storyline; it is about relationships rather than issues.

This is not an about-face, says Schuyler, but an evolution.

"Drama is trying to recreate reality. Whatever you do, it's still fake. You have to look at the needs of your audience and the needs of the people doing the show. We're dealing with a sophisticated and slick crowd now."

*X-Rated* stars Gordon Michael Woolvett (a

former YTV program jockey) as a charming hustler named Tony, the ambitious but bankrupt son of self-absorbed parents who have made a pile of money conducting goofy sensitivity training sessions.

Woolvett looks and acts like a young Michael J. Fox, a resemblance reinforced by the fact that his character is pure Alex Keaton. Over-educated and under-employed, Tony convinces his parents to let him act as sales agent for their decrepit rooming house

named, in a more gracious age, The Epitome. It's The Pit to its inhabitants, a ragtag group of young adults who cling to the fringe of society they've been allowed to claim.

Marsha (Marcia Laskowski) and Nathan (Billy Merasty) are bike couriers; he's gay and native, she's belligient. Lucille (Katherine Ashby) and Ernie (Richard Zepher) affect cynicism and sideburns and run a retro store in The Pit's basement. Flex (Richard Chevolleau) and Wilson (Richard Yearwood) are black entrepreneurs trying to run a silk screen business. Stuart (Dean Parra) is the resident pessimist.

The only holdover from *Degrassi* (not counting the five former rep company members Schuyler has hired as crew) is Stacie Mistysyn who played the introspective Caitlin. Now she's a free-spirit named River Owen who uses The Pit as home base between bouts of bumming around the globe.

It's a role that Mistysyn will have to grow into, she still seems more preppy than hippy. Tony convinces to get The Pit's residents to clean up the building while hiding his intention to sell it. Meanwhile, he falls for River and his ambition falters.

It's a movie about the generation gap as seen from the have-not side. And Schuyler admits to a little trepidation because she knows she's not of that number. "I'm old enough to be their mother," says Schuyler, who was named this month a member of the Order of Canada for her contribution to television and media history.

*X-Rated* works as a soft-spoken romantic comedy, particularly as it lampoons the culture of baby-boomers. But it lacks the bite of *Degrassi*, its teeth dulled, perhaps, by too much polishing.

## Waiting in wings: NAC ready to resubmit bid for arts channel

By Ron Eade

Citizen national staff

The National Arts Centre is resubmitting its controversial application for a performing arts channel just weeks after it was forced to withdraw before the CRTC.

The application, confirmed by NAC officials, will offer the same programming as the bid they were forced to withdraw on Feb. 11, when the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission refused to accept a new financing scheme.

Despite the swift resubmission, a CRTC official said the earliest the new plan will be considered is the fall.

"There is no programming change, there are no personnel structural changes," said Jack Mills, acting director general since Jan. 14, when NAC trustees fired Yvon DesRochers for reasons that have not been disclosed.

The NAC hoped to re-submit its bid as early as Friday, but was delayed at the last minute while bankers and lawyers fine-tuned de-

tails. "It will be submitted in the near future," said Richard Lussier, the NAC's marketing director, operators.

The NAC's original application sought a specialty channel licence for The Arts Network and Le Réseau des Arts to be issued this spring so that a separate television subsidiary could begin broadcasting in January 1995. A six-month delay in the licence, if approved, could postpone getting the network on air until the summer of 1995.

Just two weeks ago, the CRTC ruled that restructured financing to reduce The Arts Network start-up costs to \$19.5 million from \$27 million was too big a change to accept just three days before the current round of hearings on new specialty channels was to begin. The CRTC does not allow significant changes to an application after it has been put out for public comment.

Bill Allen, the CRTC's director of communications, said there's "no chance" the NAC proposal can get back on the current agenda for hearings scheduled to wrap up on March 11.



**ACTING DIRECTOR:** Jack Mills eyes NAC's top job

Four other bids for arts channels are under review by the commission.

In April, CRTC members will meet to decide which proposals it

will consider late this year, the next time the arts centre proposal could be heard, Allen said.

In a wide-ranging interview, Mills also revealed that he may be interested in the centre's top job and that he's interested in looking for a way to help other community groups better afford the use of the NAC.

Mills confirmed he is considering applying for the permanent job as director general. He was appointed acting director general after DesRochers was fired. Mills is also managing director of NAC programming, and managing director of the NAC orchestra.

The NAC has no deadline to name a replacement for DesRochers. "What they (directors) are looking for is the right person, rather than the first person."

The NAC is working on making a deal with community groups like Opera Lyra to make the centre's stage more affordable. Community organizations have long complained the NAC is too expensive for them to use, but officials argue they have little choice because of

## Update

**The Issue:** The NAC, which pulled its bid for a television network on the arts out of the current round of CRTC hearings in a surprise move two weeks ago, is now poised to re-enter the fray with a revamped application.

**What's New:** The CRTC isn't prepared to consider the new application until the fall.

**What's Next:** In a wide-ranging interview, the NAC's acting director-general says there's no deadline for hiring a new top executive. Yvon DesRochers was fired in January.

financial pressure. "I'm hopeful within the next few months we may be able to sit down and discuss with them in various ways in which it can work better," Mills said.

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