

Spotlight on 2005: Canadian

Season spanned
Saints to sinners

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Lockouts, underfunding, bad time slots: welcome to the world of Canadian TV in 2005.

There are more channels than ever before, but Canadian drama almost disappeared. American imports got pride of place in many Canadian network schedules. And yet there had been watchable homegrown programs all along, some quite brilliant.

Here is one viewer's flashbacks on the Canadian TV season:

Best miniseries: It has to be CTV's *Lives of the Saints*, director Jerry Ciccoritti's beautifully done adaptation starring Sophia Loren and Fab Filippo, who truly bonded as mother and son. Strangely, neither received a Gemini nomination.

Best American imitation: Take a look at an old episode of *Cold Squad*, the Vancouver crime show starring Julie Stewart that ran seven years on CTV. Then examine *Cold Case*, CBS's series on Sunday nights that's set in Philadelphia and stars Kathryn Morris. Now, tell me which of the two is cutting edge — and has the prettier blonde with the trimmer haircut?

Teen fave: Mothers on my block keep complaining their teens stop doing homework every night to catch the sexy soap *Metropia* (11 p.m. on OMNI), made right here in T.O. There are only 12 new episodes of this slick serial left before reruns take over. Blame funding problems. As a showcase for a dozen up-and-coming young Toronto actors, *Metropia* has been tops.

Lockout: CBC President Robert Rabinovitch locked out his 5,500 employees just as the new

season was about to start, thus giving the competition a huge edge in the ratings race. Viewers seemed more indifferent than outraged by the CBC's descent into reruns. After all, American fare was only a click away.

Age before beauty: Canadian filmmakers Michael Maclear and Harry Rasky have been crafting memorable documentaries for decades. Once again they hit homeruns: Maclear with a visit to his ancestral roots and an examination of race relations in the new South Africa in *A Town in Africa* (on the History channel); and Rasky with his latest Raskymetary, *Modigliani: Body and Soul* (on TVOntario).

Canadian expatriates: On American TV you'll find dozens of talented Canadians who have migrated south to get discovered. Examples? How about Eric McCormack (*Will & Grace*), Kelly Rowan (*The OC*), Elisha Cuthbert (*24*), Kari Matchett (*Invasion*) and Michael Cera (*Arrested Development*).

Popularity contest: Canadians don't watch much homegrown TV, or so the surveys tell us. How then to account for the popularity of *Corner Gas*, *Degrassi: The Next Generation*, *Red Green*, *Puppets Who Kill* or *The Newsroom III*? Answer: each had that winning combination of talented performers and proper time slot.

It figures: Consider the strange case of *The Eleventh Hour*, which garnered 15 Gemini nominations plus a cancellation slip from CTV. Could the blame be placed on its lousy time slot, Saturday at 10, when nobody is watching network TV (outside of hockey fanatics)?

Best series actor: A gaggle of talents kept us watching *Da Vin-*

ci's Inquest/Da Vinci's City Hall (Nicholas Campbell), *This is Wonderland* (Michael Riley), *ReGenesis* (Peter Outerbridge), and *The Eleventh Hour* (Jeff Seymour and Ben Blass).

Best series actress: Sonja Smits (*The Eleventh Hour*), Cara Pifko (*This is Wonderland*), Thea Gill (*Queer as Folk*) and Wendy Crewson (*The Man Who Lost Himself*).

Best actor (single performance): Stephane Demers (*Trudeau II*), David Sutcliffe (*Murder in the Hamptons*), David James Elliott (*The Man Who Lost Himself*), Ron White (*Plague City*) and Ron Lea (*Mayday*).

A fond farewell: How many Canadian shows have lasted 15 seasons, I ask you? So let's cheer Red Green, a.k.a. Steve Smith, who departs with great class and a fine record of attracting enthusiastic fans as he moved over the years from CHCH to Global to CBC. Possum Lodge should be declared a national landmark, if it only existed.

New miniseries: Given Canadian TV's leaning to bio treatments of the formative years of Canadian personalities (Pierre Trudeau, Shania Twain, Tommy Douglas), I'd like to propose these: In "Young Knowlton," an eager reporter dons glasses to become newsreader for CBC's

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