

?Big News? from the Bancroft Village Playhouse



By Nate Smelle

Twice in one day audiences filled the seats of the Bancroft Village Playhouse on Tuesday, June 9 for a pair of screenings of the film *Big News From Grand Rock*. With help from their sponsors at the Grail Springs Retreat Centre, Hospice North Hastings wrapped up its 2014/2015 season of the North of 7 Film Fest. The series of fundraising events is part of a film circuit affiliated with the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF).

Big News From Grand Rock follows the misadventures of a well-intentioned editor/reporter named Leonard Crane (Ennis Esmer) at a weekly newspaper based in the fictitious town of Grand Rock. With the paper about to go under Leonard takes it upon himself to try and save the publication from bankruptcy. When a woman playing the lottery nearly qualifies as news, he comes up with the idea to fabricate exciting stories from old movies that he rents from the local video store. After his plan surprisingly works, it is then foiled by another reporter from the city who exposes his deception. Fighting to redeem his reputation the story takes a series of twists as there turns out to be some truth to one of his fabricated stories.

Making this very special night out at the movies even more unique was the fact that three of the film's stars showed up to engage the crowd in an intimate Question and Answer session before the show began. The trio of Canadian-born actors to face-off with the event's co-organizer and acting talk show host Barbara Shaw were: Peter Keleghan, who played Bill, a not-so-witty reporter working at the *Weekly Ledger* newspaper, Leah Pinsent, the Town of Grand Rock's corrupt Mayor Jane Davis, and Gordon Pinsent as the newspaper's publisher Stan.

?Being on stage with these greats of Canadian culture is a really big deal,? said Shaw.

?It makes me feel like I am somewhere. This is really big news for Bancroft. Leah, Peter and Gordon represent the very best of Canadian television, film, stage and radio.?

Opening themselves up to the audience, the actors bantered with one another on stage about the characters they played in the film.

Before taking questions Keleghan gave the audience a quick rundown of the storyline. He got a rise out of the crowd when he revealed that his wife Leah's portrayal of Grand Rock's Mayor Jane Davis was based on a combination of former senator Pamela Wallin and Toronto's former mayor, and now Councillor Rob Ford. Taking time to answer everyone's questions the family of actors did a good job of peaking the audience's interest in the film without spoiling any of the surprises.

Reflecting on how his simple love for the movies as a child transformed into a career in show business that spans six decades, Gordon shed a little light on two of the secrets to his success...perseverance and passion.

?I think I was born in a theatre watching movies,? Gordon said.

?I liked it all, everything that was being done. I followed it. It was the only education I had. In a small town in Newfoundland I found myself imitating everything that was ever done on the silver screen.?

In a last attempt to help raise a few more dollars for Hospice North Hastings the guest stars auctioned off a signed poster and photo-op. By the time the bidding had come to a close the auction had brought in an additional \$500 for Hospice, thanks to a generous donation by Mike Henrichson.