

# ARROW

## *through the heart*

The proud jet's sudden death in 1959 caused a fire storm of controversy. Now its story comes to an eviscerated CBC, raising more questions about government cutbacks and a battered national identity

by Shirley Knott

The Avro Arrow was designed by Canadian brains, built by Canadian hands and killed by Canadian politicians. Some say that it was a dud and that it made good old common sense for Diefenbaker to kill it. Others say that it was an aeronautical wonder and that American pressure and Tory spite killed it. But whichever way you see it, the great Canadian dream to build the fastest jet in the world died nearly 40 years ago. And in all that time, the recriminations, the bitterness and the charges of political plots and conspiracies have never stopped. So after it took seven long years to get the Arrow story onto the TV screen, it seems only natural to ask, "Why so long? Was it another conspiracy . . ."

"Against having the Arrow story go ahead while the Conservatives were in power?" Keith Ross Leckie says, finishing the question himself. "There's probably something to that." And if anyone should know, Leckie should. It was Leckie who got the idea, wrote the script and then spent seven years trying to get it made first as a TV movie-of-the-week (1989-92), then as a feature film (1992-93) and, finally, in its present form, as a two-part mini-series. When the project was planned as a feature film, he along with the two original producers (wife Mary Young Leckie and Paul Stephens) found plenty of interest in it — but strangely enough, not from the usual supporters of Can-culture.

"We had raised \$4.2 million from the Brits, and it was the Canadian funding that fell through," says Leckie. "Telefilm didn't believe that anyone would come to see it. Of course, you have to make your own conclusions about the influence of the government in power at the time."

Maybe after hacking apart Canada's great national railway, the



Mulroney government was none too keen to see a movie made about how the Conservatives killed the Arrow. And maybe Telefilm could only work up a lot of enthusiasm about *The Arrow* as a mini-series after the Liberals took power. But right from the time *The Arrow* was proposed as a feature film, Dan Aykroyd, who still calls himself a Canadian, was dedicated to the project. Leckie is the first to admit that it was Aykroyd's name that got *The Arrow* pre-sales in Britain, Australia, France, Germany and Japan and ensured financial support here at home. It's easy to say that it was ever thus — we Canadians only believe in the value of our stories if others think they are important. But the mini-series, coincidentally, airs at a time when CBC is under the Liberal axe.

"I've heard from more than one source that this will probably be the last mini-series on the CBC for a few years," says Leckie. "So *The Arrow* is a wonderful parable for

**Actor Botsford and a model of the famous plane: A drama with intrigue and serious intentions.**

this country. The government is slashing the CBC in the same way that the government slashed the Arrow program. And do the people support this slashing of our cultural industries? But it's bigger than that. Do we want to have a country? That's a question we ask in this mini-series."

If *The Arrow* is the last big mini-series for the CBC, it makes a mighty impressive splash. There is a full roster of stars — Aykroyd, Sara Botsford, Christopher Plummer, Aidan Devine and Michael Moriarty. The props are lavish, the special effects are spectacular and the story crackles with intrigue. But let's not forget that *Continued on page 49*



# ARROW THROUGH THE HEART

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The Arrow comes with serious intentions to set the record straight. Even the well-informed among us have trouble separating what's true and what's false about the Arrow:

The Arrow never got off the tarmac. False. Five Arrows flew with American engines. As for the Arrow 206 with the made-in-Canada Iroquois engine, Leckie says, "It was only two weeks away from flying, but Diefenbaker was worried about them showing the true potential of the plane, so he cancelled the project early." In the mini-series, Leckie takes dramatic license with an uplifting *Free Willy* finale.

When the Arrow program was

cancelled, all the planes were destroyed. True. All of them were hacked to pieces. Only a nose cone survives at the National Aviation Museum in Ottawa. For the mini-series, the producers were lucky to find Allan Jackson, an Albertan who was building a full-scale model of the Arrow.

Canada could never have competed with the U.S., France or Britain in technology. False. According to Leckie, "We were really a huge technological power in 1959. After the Arrow was cancelled, its chief designer, Jim Chamberlain (played by Devine), went down to NASA with 33 Arrow engineers and designed the space capsule for John Glenn." At the end of

the mini-series, a list of achievements by former Arrow scientists rolls. Watch and weep.

Elwy Yost would never have become Mr. Movie on TVOntario if the Arrow hadn't been cancelled. True. Elwy worked in the personnel department of A.V. Roe when 14,500 people lost their jobs. Try to find Elwy in the crowd scenes when the Arrow is unveiled — he's the one crying real tears.

■ The Arrow airs Sunday and Monday at 8 p.m. on CBC



Yost and Lynn Cormack as Mrs. Gordon: Watch and weep.

## THURSDAY JANUARY 16

For Daytime listings  
see pages 33-35

### 6:00 P.M.

- 2 3 4 5 6 7 9 11**
- 12 13 41 57** News
- 17** Carmen Sandiego?
- 23** Tracks Ahead
- 25** Ce soir
- 29** The Simpsons (CC)
- 47** Access Hollywood (CC)
- AE** Quincy, M.E.
- BRV** Appointment With Ziggy
- CNN** WorldView (CC)
- DIS** Go for It! (CC)
- FA** Spirou (CC)
- LIF** Awesome Interiors
- MM** Daily R.S.V.P.
- NW** BBC World News
- SEK** Beverly Hills, 90210
- SHO** Heartbreak High
- TBS** (6:05) Family Matters
- TFO** Les Chevaliers de l'extreme
- TLC** Furniture to Go
- TNN** Club Dance
- TV5** Des chiffres et des lettres
- TVO** Kratts' Creatures
- V** Little House
- WGN** Saved by the Bell (CC)
- WTN** Double Duty
- YTV** Rupert (CC)

### 6:30

- 2 4 7** News (CC)
- 6 41** First National (CC)
- 11** Canada Tonight (CC)
- 17** Nightly Business Report
- 23** In the Prime (CC)

- 29** Roseanne
- 47** Coach (CC)
- FA** Mission Top Secret
- LIF** Kitty Bartholomew
- MM** MuchMegaHits
- NW** Business World (CC)
- TBS** (6:35) Family Matters
- TFO** Volt
- TLC** The Renovation Guide
- TMN** (6:45) My Life as a Dog
- TSN** SportsDesk (CC)
- TV5** Studio Gabriel
- TVO** Off the Hook
- WGN** Saved by the Bell (CC)
- WTN** Resourceful Renovator
- YTV** Charlie Brown

### PRIME TIME

### 7:00

- 2 6 41** Entertainment Tonight 4500 2784 731806
- 3** Star Trek: The Next Generation A Romulan warship thwarts attempts to rescue Geordi, stranded on a planet swept by electrical storms. 9719
- 4** Inside Edition 6968
- 5** Adrienne Clarkson Presents Canadian tenor Richard Margison. 22697
- 7 9 13** Wheel of Fortune (CC) 9210 2516 5500
- 11** Wings Lowell lives in the plane after his wife kicks him out. (CC) 4784
- 12** Baywatch Megan narrowly escapes an attacker on the beach, who then stalks

- her; lifeguard Shauni suffers from burnout. 59719
- 17** The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer (CC) 75351
- 23** MotorWeek Olds Cutlass. Olds Cutlass sedan; 1997 Fords; car-care tools; automotive centennial. 68968
- 25** Virginie (CC) 84974
- 29** Cheers Diane plans to restore Frasier's self-confidence. (CC) 18500
- 47** The Simpsons Bart discovers a comet headed straight for Springfield. 375264
- 57** Hard Copy 331158
- AE** The Equalizer His girl friend's (Tammy Grimes) death leads McCall to a woman (Jennifer Grey) pursued by a terrorist (Lewis Vanbergen). 730697
- BRV** Bravo! Video 253326
- CNN** Moneyline 979332
- DIS** at discovery.ca Human behavior; Internet; numbers game. (CC) 278887
- FA** Dick Van Dyke Buddy obtains a wholesale fur coat for the Petries. 891500
- LIF** Just Ask With Donna Holgate 5795005
- MM** ClassicMuchMegaHits 373806
- NW** Early Edition 1203622
- PIX** Movie: ★★ Hold-Up (suspense-comedy, 1985) Jean-Paul Belmondo, Kim Cattrall. Two men and a woman rob a Montreal bank ingeniously, then hijack a school bus for a getaway.

- (To 9:00 p.m.) 427351
- SEK** Seinfeld (CC) 4651429
- SHO** Friday the 13th Micki's visiting nephew tells of a house where he saw a child presumed dead. 636887
- TBS** (7:05) America's Funniest Home Videos 5777351
- TFO** Panorama 6574993
- TLC** Hometime Remodeling a kitchen. (Part 1 of 2) 170528
- TMN** (7:15) Movie: ★★ Dunston Checks In (comedy, 1996) Jason Alexander, Faye Dunaway. A posh Los Angeles hotel's manager and owner hope for a critic's glowing review, but a thief's orangutan is loose in the duct work. (To 9:00 p.m.) 23490722
- TNN** Dukes of Hazzard Two crooks turn Boss' scheme to their advantage by threatening to dust crops with lye if farmers don't pay protection money. 256993
- TSN** That's Hockey! 726974
- TV5** Nouvelles (CC) 275210
- TVO** Heart of Brightness Scientists explore Zaire's rain forests aided by Bambuti pygmies. 77719
- V** Skylight Irshad Manji. 4342429
- WGN** Family Matters 770582
- WTN** Jane Hawtin 84061
- YTV** Stickin' Around 564581

### 7:30

- 2 41** Mad About You Paul scrambles after forgetting to mail Jamie's college preregistration. 177 9581
- 4** American Journal 245
- 6 41** Sabrina, the Teenage Witch Sabrina accidentally enters a reverse world where everyone is unhappy. (CC) 4429 454245
- 7 9 13** Jeopardy! (CC) 8055 4413 2697
- 23** Wild Kingdom Monarchs of the Wild. Animal territory. 89993
- 25** Espace libre 36871
- 29** Home Improvement Tim's ogling of breast-enlargement literature makes Jill feel inadequate. 40697
- 47** Murphy Brown Murphy must apologize publicly to a popular talk-show host (Shelley Long). (CC) 137513
- 57** Seinfeld A friend (Jon Lovitz) fakes illness to get Jerry's sympathy; Kramer obstructs justice. 983055
- BRV** Literati Jerry Bledsoe. (Conclusion) 899121
- CNN** Crossfire 601429
- FA** The Fig Tree With the help of her great aunt (Doris Roberts), a young girl (Karron Graves), melancholy since her mother's death, learns to cope. 654332
- MM** Spotlight Moist. 937595