

Disney Studios go 'Artistic' in link with independents

NEW YORK — Art and commerce are conflicting values in Hollywood as in no other place in the film industry. So the latest "marriage" between representatives of the two extremes has taken everybody by surprise.

The talk of the town is about the independent team of producer Ismail Merchant and director James Ivory, who have created some of the most admired films of the last decade, signing a deal with Walt Disney Studios, the company which like no other in Hollywood puts profits at the very top of its list of priorities.

Merchant, who hails from India, along with Ivory, an American, and writer Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, have proven

Can the people who gave us Mickey Mouse get along with those who filmed "Room With A View"? writes HELMUT RAETHER.

that they can make a low-budget film into a huge commercial and acclaimed success.

The three have been working together for decades, and their breakthrough came in 1986 with "A Room With A View." Based on a novel by E.M. Forster, the film cost three million dollars to make, and at last count had grossed \$68 million at the box office.

Their latest hit is the film "Howard's End,"

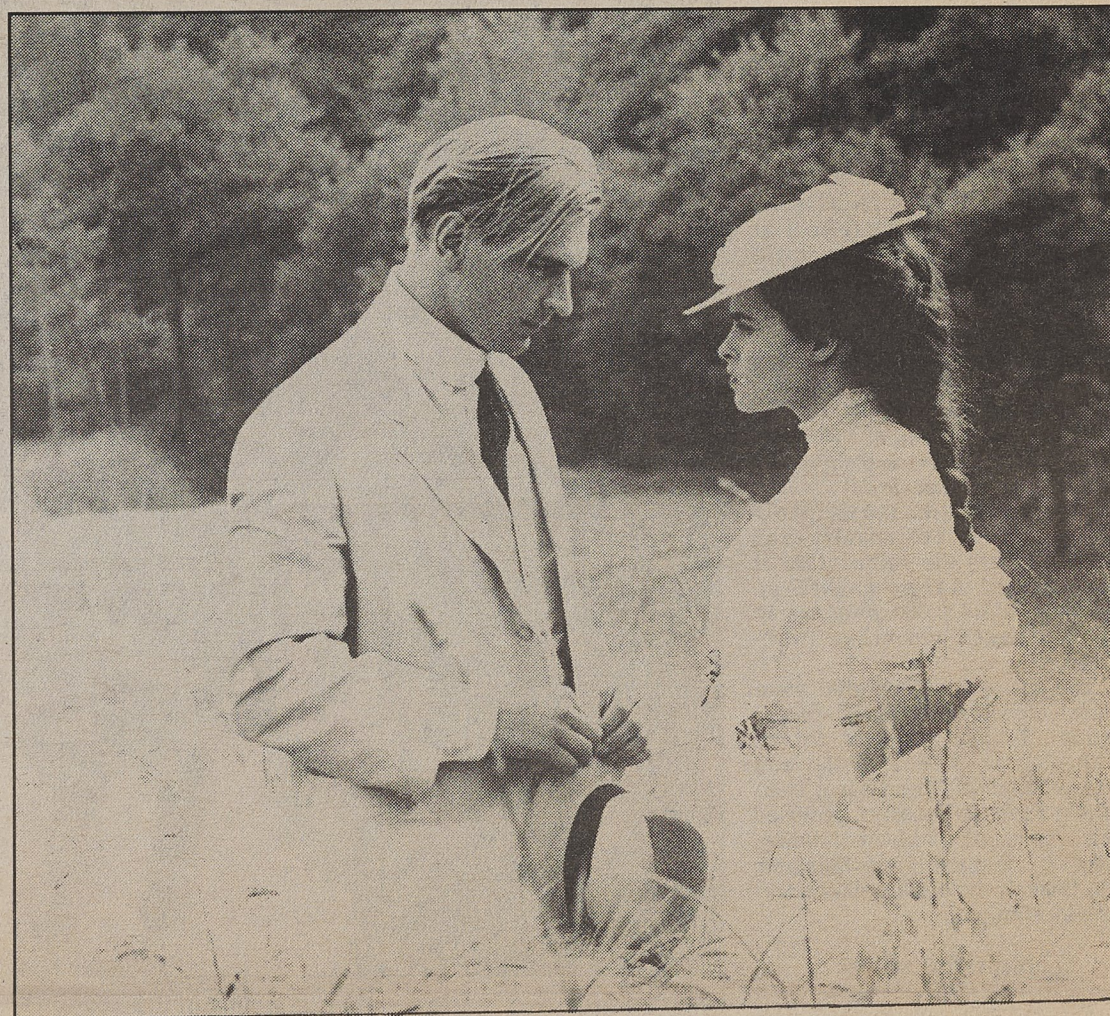
also based on an E.M. Forster work, costing \$8 million but certain, after all the early acclaim so far, to make a handy profit as well.

Such success has obviously caught people's attention in Hollywood, where in recent years the studios have produced a series of artistic and commercial flops with films that have cost 10 times what Merchant/Ivory productions do.

But it was still something of a sensation that it was Jeffrey Katzenberg, chairman of Disney Studios, who became the first to call up Merchant.

Even more astonishing was the fact that Katzenberg, whom directors fear because of his interference in even the slightest details of a film, put it down in writing that Merchant and Ivory would be left alone. In films with a budget of less than \$12 million he guaranteed them a completely free hand, while promising to be at least more tolerant in the more expensive productions.

The advantage for the Merchant/Ivory team is that the powerful Disney company would take over the distribution of their films, the area where their small



Romance . . . Helene Bonham Carter and Julian Sands in a scene from "Room with a View". The film's producers Merchant/Ivory are signing a deal with Walt Disney Studios.

outfit in the past has had its problems.

The timing also looks right for the next few projects. They will no longer be dealing with Anglo-Indian themes such as "Heat and Dust" based on a novel by Mrs Jhabvala or British ones such as the two films based on Forster's works.

Mrs Jhabvala, who is sometimes referred to as a "German living in India", wants to tap more deeply than before

her own personal history. She is the daughter of Polish Jews, and spent her childhood, between 1927 and 1939 in Cologne, where she experienced firsthand the persecution of Jews by the Nazis.

Her family emigrated to England, where she began to write and where she earned a Master's degree in English literature. In 1951 she married, and moved with her husband to Old Delhi, the old part of the

Indian capital scarcely visited by foreigners. There she wrote numerous books and short stories which gained major critical acclaim.

The first project for Disney Studios by Merchant/Ivory, who live in New York, is to be called "Jefferson in Paris". It is the story of Thomas Jefferson, who before becoming the third US president, spent five years as America's ambassador in France, where he had

a long affair with a married woman.

After that, Merchant/Ivory plan to do "Portrait of a Lady" based on a novel by late-19th Century American writer Henry James.

Initially, the linkup between Disney and Merchant/Ivory is set for three years. Both sides say that the co-operation could be expanded for much longer than that. — dpa Features.

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Memories of SABC's first woman announcer in a black tafetta dress

The momentous milestone of Margaret Inglis's 80th birthday last week has been celebrated in the most enthusiastic way, both in England, where she lives, and here, where she left an indelible imprint on the country's theatrical life.



**PERCY'S
WORLD**

PERCY BANESHNIK

She dismissed her good looks as merely those of a "round-faced Scots lassie" inherited from her Scottish grandmother. She was married to a Scot, Stewart Leith, known in the family as "Sam", and it was I who attached the name, "the Sammy", to the second she met.

"night supervisor" at Broadcast House, in my office three floors above, I heard the rustle of that taffeta frock coming over my office loudspeaker like electrical static. Down I went to the studio to warn her.

"Really, Peggy", I

I don't suppose the "family secrets" here let out of the White House bag are particularly significant. One tiny personal revelation Patti makes about her girlhood, however, is rather diverting.

She explains her mother dominated her style of dress a

DANCE

ADRIENNE SICHEL talks about watching a Dance League Festival at the Nu-World Centre.

The Indlamu Cultural Association/King Korn Traditional Dance League Festival held at Nu-World on Sunday could have been an endurance test, but it wasn't.

It was a grass roots dance marathon representing a groundswell of cultural expression, artistic excellence and creativity which anyone involved in dance or theatre in this country ignores at their peril.

This mammoth event, which drew entries and participants from all over the country and Transkei, was the culmination of eight months of regional heats involving some 8 000 dancers in rural villages and urban townships.

The sections represented were Pedi, Ndebele (only out of competition), Tsonga, Tswana, Swazi, Zulu, Xhosa, Venda, Sotho and Bhaca/Shameni. The Bhaca, from Mount Frere in Transkei, provided the origins of gumboot dancing. Like the Shameni from Zululand, the Bhaca's dances are characterised by stamping.

No time sense

The logistics and practicalities of reviewing or reporting on this multi-cultural festival in its entirety, were daunting. It started 90 minutes late and finished not at 5 pm but at 9 30pm, which meant I missed five categories, including Xhosa, Venda, Sotho, and Bhaca/Shameni.

It also proved impossible to get the final results from the ICA organisers a day later. What was very obvious was that the important thing was not to win the prizes (R1 300, R600 and R300) but to be one of the four groups chosen to dance in Johannesburg, to represent the cream of their culture.

The ICA was formed in 1984 and I recall one extraordinary evening in a tiny office in downtown Johannesburg when groups were promoting a competition.

Nu-World was certainly an improvement, but not the ideal. It was a jarring experience to see the jewels of African culture in a setting of corroded Western architecture.

Non-competing groups, including six troupes from the Transkei Traditional Music Association (Tratma), performed in the kraal outside while the main action took place in the indoor, artificially lit concrete arena.

Dress and costumes ranged from the fascinating to the magnificent. A male Pedi group looked like traditional golfers and cyclists — traditional abstract motifs were worn on singlets bound by straps topping knee-high pants. The outfits were finished off



Whistles and axes . . . Group 41 competing in the Tsonga section waving ceremonial or token objects. Pictures: Mothlalefi Mahlabe

Jewels of African dance culture



Och aye! . . . the kilted Pedi men in an energetic dance which included turning at speed on one leg.

with white visors, white tackies and golf socks. The steps, circular formations and flutes which are blown to create an eerie orchestra, appeared totally traditional.

Then there were the Pedis in their kilts, large foot rattles tied to their knees and the women's groups in heavy wool tutus worn

under bright cloths. The characteristic flicking hip movement created the effect of prancing ostriches.

The two ICA judges, Nomasa Njakazi and John Manyathi, (assisted by a representative from each style) gave points to choreography, the meaning of the songs,



Percussion orchestras . . . the women drummers of Ngwenya Nkelenge.

the rhythmical clapping, the singing and the drumming. Groups were penalised by 1 point for every minute that transgressed the 10-minute limit.

Apart from the leaping acrobatic Shangaan men the most spectacular dances (and most accessible to an outsider) were the Swazi and

Zulu dances, which in this case appeared to be mostly war dances. It was thrilling to see the groups entering the arena, against the sunlight, like conquering armies.

The Swazi men couldn't be equalled in terms of power and precision on-the-spot kicking. The 40 bare-breasted young women (split into two groups) sporting red sashes with royal blue tassels, accompanied by 15 drummers, caused a sensation with their elegant, co-ordinated stepping, even in reverse.

Exciting

The eight Zulu troupes compounded the spectacle. Adults, teenagers (boys and girls!) and young children stamped and fell, singing and chanting in breathtaking ensemble work and exciting variations.

The ICA intends making this festival/competition an annual event. When and if Johannesburg has its international Festival in 1994 this is exactly the uniquely South African event (more streamlined of course) which could be a focal point to keep local culture in perspective — and in the limelight.