



A Canadian general is poised to shake up America.

And it begins at the Sundance Film Festival tomorrow evening, with the screening of Shake Hands With the Devil: The Journey of **Romeo Dallaire**, a stunning Canadian documentary about the general who headed up the United Nations in Rwanda during the genocide in that country 10 years ago.

"Sundance is huge," says director Peter Raymont, a veteran filmmaker who's attended the festival before. "I think it's a wonderful event. There's so much excitement about the art and craft of film. It's a celebration of independent filmmaking and they treat documentaries very well.

"Sundance is the big American premiere. We've gotten so many requests from film festivals. It's incredible."

The film arrives at the same time as the acclaimed narrative feature Hotel Rwanda, starring Don Cheadle, finally shining a spotlight on the slaughter that left 800,000 Tutsis dead. Raymont is a fan of Hotel Rwanda, except for one thing: "The film is very moving. I cried watching it. For me, the only awkward part of it all is the casting of [Nick] Nolte (as a character based on Dallaire)."

Shake Hands With the Devil documents Dallaire's return to Rwanda last year.

Diane Weyermann, director of Sundance's documentary program, says the film, the only Canadian feature at the festival, is a remarkable blend of personal and political stories.

"I think it's a tremendously important film. It's a devastating story," she says.

**After Sundance, a 56-minute version of the film will screen on CBC Newsworld's The Passionate Eye Jan. 31. It's also been sold to the CBC and the full 91-minute feature will be theatrically released in Canada.**

"We're honoured to be the Canadian film chosen for Sundance," says Raymont. "And I think it's nice, in a way, that it's a documentary.

"Canada's had such a major role in the evolution of the documentary. The Corporation, from Vancouver, is a good example."

Raymont, a Toronto filmmaker whose work includes the Genie-winning The World Stopped Watching, kept hearing stories about Dallaire's heroics during a visit to Rwanda six years ago. "When I came back, I was determined to track down **Romeo Dallaire**. It took me five years to get to him."

At the time, Dallaire was despondent. He had attempted suicide after returning from Rwanda. At the height of the genocide, he refused an order to leave. Despite his best efforts to stay and help, he watched as the rest of the world withdrew from Rwanda while the massacre of women, men and children continued in the streets.

"No question the West knew," says Raymont. "They just chose not to do anything about it. I'm talking about the U.N., the Clinton administration, the Canadian government, for that matter."

After undergoing considerable psychological therapy, Dallaire, haunted by what he had witnessed, slowly regained his health, determined to tell the world what he had seen.

"It's become his whole life -- Rwanda. He's devoted his life to telling people about the genocide.

"He decided to trust me and he really opened up to the filmmaking process. That's the key to the success of the film -- that bond we developed between us, that trust he gave me. He's an extraordinary human being.

"He's a working-class kid from Montreal who doesn't have a lot of airs about him -- a decent Canadian who became a hero."

Illustration:

- Photo: **Romeo Dallaire** (left) walks with Shake Hands With the Devil filmmaker Peter Raymond while together in Rwanda.

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