

# Crossing the line between Canucks and Yanks

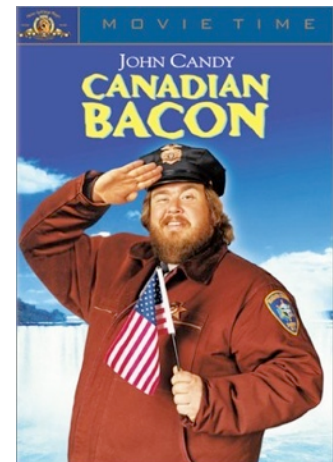
Saturday, June 30, 2007  
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North is north and south is south, but sometimes the twain do meet – on the 49th parallel.

Border issues between Canada and the U.S. are in the news again this summer. Passport requirements are changing, cross-border shopping is on the rise, and the strong value of the Canadian dollar is pushing people to head south for bargains and cheap vacations.

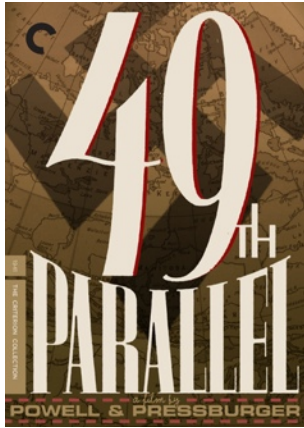
Since this is Canada Day weekend, and next Wednesday is U.S. Independence Day, let's look at half a dozen films that border-hop between the two countries. Is there a difference between us? The proof is in the parallel that divides and defines us both.

**Canadian Bacon** (*U.S.*, 1995) Director Michael Moore has always been interested in Canada; we're an antidote to the American elites he loves to hate. Here, Moore imagines what would happen if the U.S. invaded Canada. Two Canadians – John Candy and, in a cameo, Dan Aykroyd – shine in this satirical comedy that was shot at Niagara Falls and the CN Tower, among other locations. The MGM disc is widescreen and anamorphic.



**Highway 61** (*Canada*, 1991) The second film in independent director Bruce McDonald's "road trilogy" (bracketed by Roadkill and Hard Core Logo), this strangely funny musical odyssey follows a barber and a smuggler (Don McKellar and Valerie Buhagiar) as they drive from northern Ontario to New Orleans along Highway 61. The new VSC Service Corp. DVD has a commentary track and three McDonald short films.

**Outrageous!** (*Canada*, 1977) A wry comedy with a big heart that won many awards and put Toronto independent filmmaking on the world map. The late, great Craig Russell plays a hairdresser who goes to New York and hits it big as a drag queen, doing bang-on interpretations of Mae West and other singing stars of Hollywood. Restored on DVD by VSC with a commentary track by both the film's producer and its composer.



**49th Parallel** (*Britain, 1941*) This Powell and Pressburger wartime propaganda picture stars Laurence Olivier, Anton Walbrook, Leslie Howard and Raymond Massey. A German U-boat is sunk in Canadian waters and the surviving crew flees overland to get to the U.S., which hasn't yet entered the war. The climactic final scene is in a railway boxcar right on the border. New on DVD from Criterion in a two-disc set that's rich in extras.

**The Saddest Music in the World** (*Canada, 2003*) A New York theatrical hustler competes with his Canadian father in Depression-era Winnipeg in a contest to come up with the saddest music ever. Another creatively shot Guy Maddin folly, starring Isabella Rossellini as a beer magnate who organizes the proceedings. Kazuo Ishiguro wrote the original screenplay. The extras-loaded Maple Pictures/TVA Films DVD comes with three Maddin shorts.

*Still waiting for the DVD:* **The Grey Fox** (*Canada, 1982*) After 33 years in the slammer, what should a kindly old Arizona stagecoach robber do? Head up to British Columbia and rob trains, of course. Richard Farnsworth plays turn-of-the-century "gentleman bandit" Bill Miner, whose real-life exploits are the stuff of Western legend. Filmed in 10 B.C. locations and on an Indian reservation in Washington state. A Canadian classic, but on VHS only.