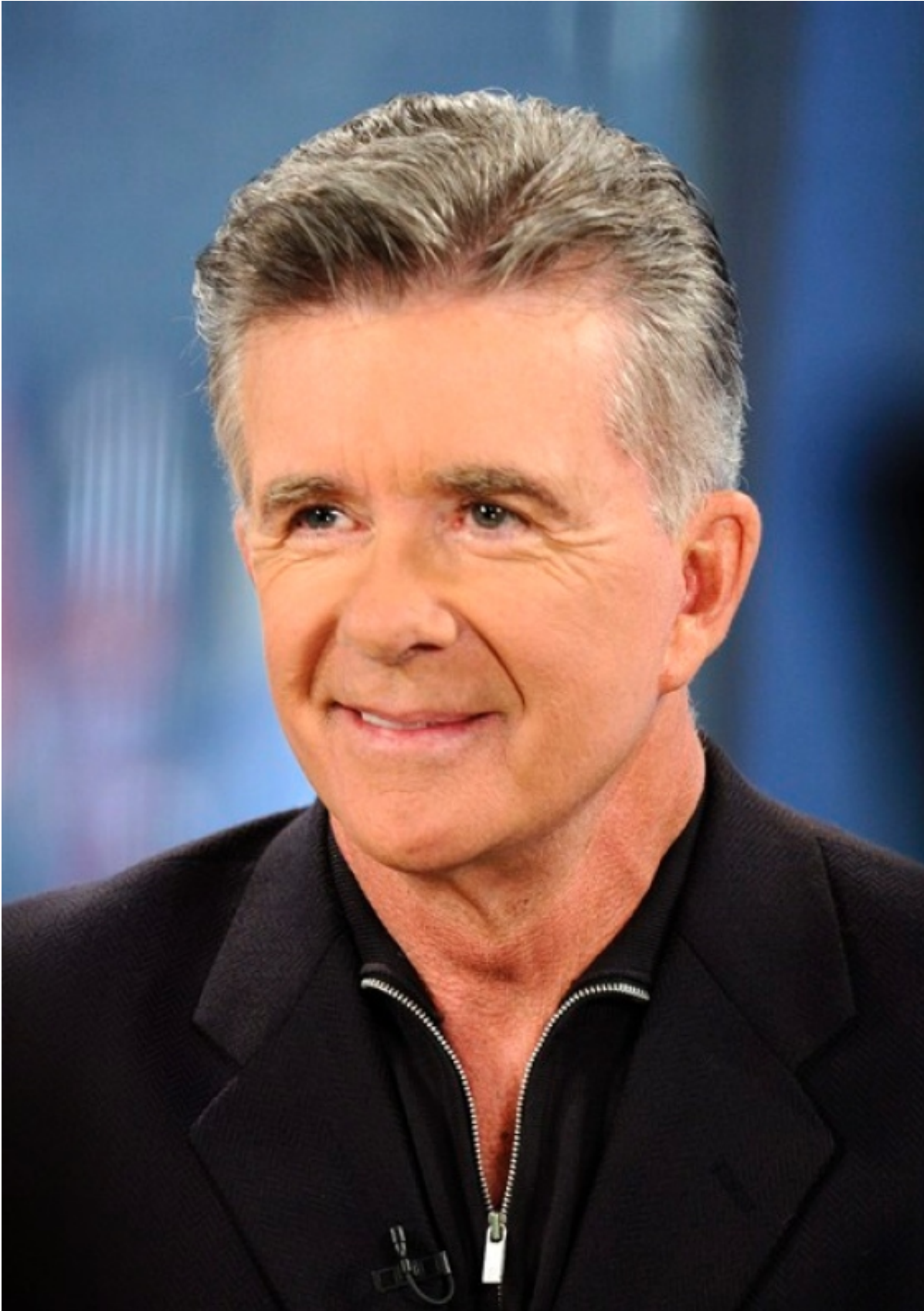


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Victoria partners' film focuses on Canada's star exports

[Michael D. Reid](#) / Times Colonist

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Actor Alan Thicke, a Canadian who went south.

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When Ian Ferguson and Les Bland say their stars are aligning, it's not because they've taken a sudden interest in astrology.

The Victoria production partners are talking about the progress they're making on *Gone South: How Canada Invented Hollywood*, their light-hearted documentary about the influence Canadians have had on Hollywood and American pop culture.

The duo has confirmed that Arthur Hiller, the Oscar-nominated filmmaker whose credits include *Love Story*, *The Hospital* and *The In-Laws*, is the latest Canuck to join a growing list of famous Canadians living up to a reputation for niceness.

"Deep down, everybody's still a hoser at heart," Bland said, laughing. Howie Mandel, Shannon Tweed, Neve Campbell, Adam Beach, Alex Trebek and Alan Thicke are among the first wave of stars participating in the film produced by Less Bland Productions with assistance from the Canadian consulate in L.A.

"Canadians south of the border tend to support each other and that's what we've experienced," Bland said in an interview. "As the story travels through the Timbits grapevine, more and more Canadian stars are getting wind of it and want to be involved."

Ferguson, an award-winning author and humourist, and Bland, a University of Victoria theatre instructor and former artistic director of Kaleidoscope Theatre, are heading to Hollywood next month to conduct interviews and shoot Canadian stars in action. They also plan to fly to New York to film famous Canadians who live and work there.

Celebrity interviews and humorous action will be combined with archival footage to provide a historical overview of Canadians in Hollywood. Three of the first Oscar winners for best actress were Canadian, they note. So was MGM studios founder Louis B. Mayer, raised in Saint John, N.B., and *Keystone Cops* creator Mack Sennett, who discovered Charlie Chaplin.

The documentary is slated to be released in tandem with publication of a humorous book of the same name by Ferguson.

Gone South, which Bland and Ferguson are co-producing and directing with financial assistance from Rogers Documentary Fund and the Rogers Cable Fund, will be distributed in Canada by Kinosmith before making its broadcast première on Superchannel.

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