

!!!NEWSFLASH!!!

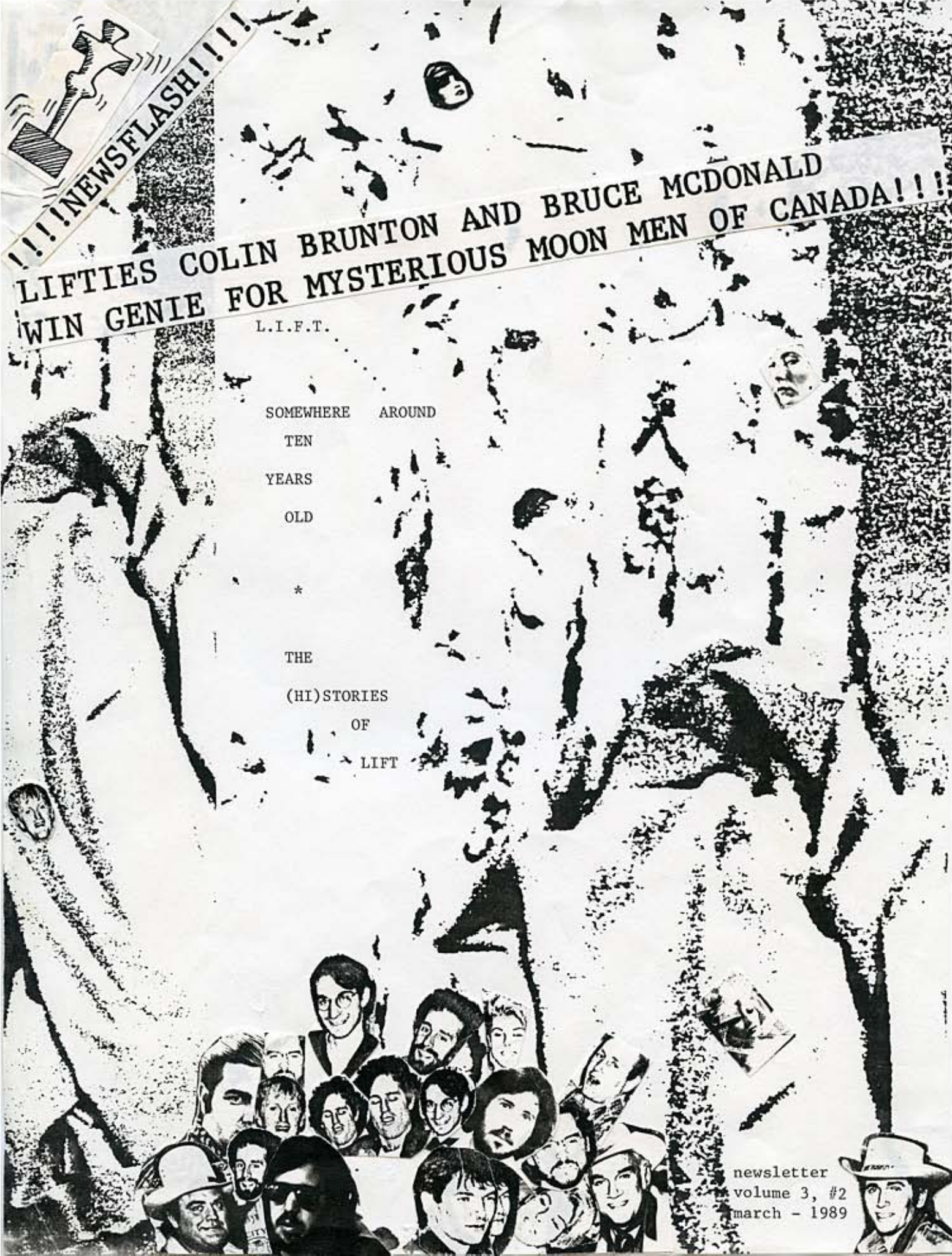
LIFTIES COLIN BRUNTON AND BRUCE MCDONALD  
WIN GENIE FOR MYSTERIOUS MOON MEN OF CANADA!!!

L.I.F.T.

SOMEWHERE AROUND  
TEN  
YEARS  
OLD

\*

THE  
(HI)STORIES  
OF  
LIFT



newsletter  
volume 3, #2  
march - 1989





## CO-OP NEWS

### AWARDS AND MAJOR SCREENINGS

Richard Kerr's *The Last Days of Conitron* has won first prize in one of the categories at the prestigious San Francisco International Film Festival. Kerr, a LIFT member in exile and assistant professor at the University of Regina, will travel to California on March 8 to accept a Golden Gate Award and a cash prize. The awards drew 600 entries from 20 countries. "*Conitron* has been called an indictment of the American myth," says Kerr, "so the acceptance by the San Francisco jurors is generous and will encourage me to screen it to any Americans who want to see it." Congratulations Richard!

Two evenings of Canadian films were presented at Millenium in New York City. March 11 Mike Hoolboom's *From Home and Was*; March 10 Phil Hoffman's *passing through/torn formations*, Richard Kerr's *Last Days of Conitron*, and Gary Popovich's *Immoral Memories 1*.

Congratulations to the LIFT members whose films were chosen for screening at the Images 89 Festival in Toronto. Selected films include: Kim Derko's *Scientific Girl*, Judith Doyle's *Lac La Croix*, and Gary Popovich's *Caress*.

Please tell us about your grants, awards and major screenings. We can't publish what we don't know.

### HELLO, GOODBYE

We say goodbye and good luck to former LIFT publicist Cindy Lewis, whose recent work included the highly successful LIFT-CFMD NEW WAVES IN CANADIAN

CINEMA screening at the Rivoli. Cindy is now working at Telefilm in Toronto.

Hello to Susan Norget who has been hired as the new LIFT publicist. In addition to getting together press kits, and the promotion of LIFT screenings, Susan will be concentrating a lot of her energies on publicizing the LIFT retrospective planned for the fall of this year. Welcome and good luck Susan!

### ATTENTION LIFT MEMBERS

Starting with Luis Garcia's films on March 22, we hope to have LIFT screenings on an ongoing basis at the Bloor Theatre.

Full written proposals for a 90-minute program, including rationalization of program and press release, can be submitted for consideration to the LIFT office. For any further info, call Susan 596-8233.

### 3 CURATORS FOR LIFT RETROSPECTIVE DESIRED

LIFT is looking for three people to curate the upcoming LIFT Retrospective. Two LIFT members and one from outside LIFT will select a twelve-hour program spanning and representing ten years of LIFT productions. Curators will be rewarded with a small honorarium and many volunteer hours. Program selection will take place between May 15 and June 30, 1989. Interested members are asked to submit a resume and brief letter of intent to The Programming Committee, LIFT. We also encourage all members to submit nominations/suggestions for the position of outside curator.

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

All LIFT Board minutes will be posted on the bulletin board in the LIFT office, for members who wish to be apprised of Board policy decisions and other issues affecting the co-op.

### ATTENTION ALL GRAPHICALLY INCLINED LIFT MEMBERS

Despite the many fabulously creative LIFT T-shirt designs submitted in response to our last announcement, the deadline for submission has been extended to May 1, 1989. So keep those designs coming!

### LOOKIN' FOR A YANKEE DISTRIBUTOR?

Alexandra Raffe of VOS Productions has forwarded information to us about a distributor, Caridi Entertainment, who is very interested in selling independent work, particularly dramatic shorts, in the U.S. They cater to the cable, broadcast and home video markets. I have a brief letter on file from them, but for more information, please contact:  
Caridi Entertainment  
250 West 57th Street, Suite 811  
New York, NY 10019  
(212) 581-2277 / Fax (212) 759-3818

Thanks for the info, Alex!

—Rob Pazdro

### ERRATUM

The January 1989 issue of the newsletter incorrectly credited the stills from Lori Spring's *Inside/Out*. The stills were taken by David Rasmus. We regret any inconvenience this may have caused.



## CLARIFICATION REGARDING ARTICLE "TAIS JOINS LIFT"

We wish to make it clear that TAIS as an organization is not becoming a part of LIFT. Rather, TAIS is encouraging its members to join LIFT. While TAIS and LIFT hope to develop a connection which will benefit members of both organizations, TAIS will continue to exist as a wholly independent association whose prime aim is to serve Toronto's animation community.

## ALL THE CHILDREN ARE IN

Shadow Shows and Mr. Shack Productions are pleased to announce the signing of Toronto filmmaker Bruce McDonald to direct Canada's first feature length rock film, *All The Children Are In*. Shooting begins in May in Rexdale's teenage wasteland and then rolling through the wilds of Northern Ontario. The movie will feature Toronto actress Valerie Buhagiar and the notorious underground band A NEON ROME. Bruce, aka The Film Doctor, is known for his editing work on a great number of independent Toronto films for directors Ron Mann, Peter Mettler, Atom Egoyan



and Colin Brunton, with whom he'll be attending the Genie Awards as a nominee for *The Mysterious Moon Men of Canada*. Bruce is also known for his own films *Let Me See (...)* and *Knock! Knock!* as well as his controversial one-shot issue of CINEMA CANADA, THE OUTLAW EDITION.



## JOBS!!!!!!

LIFT  
will be hiring

A CO-ORDINATOR  
Salary: \$400/wk  
Dead-line for application:  
April 28, 1989

and

A TECHNICAL MANAGER  
Salary: \$350/wk  
Dead-line for application:  
April 14, 1989

Job descriptions are available  
at the LIFT Office

## OTHER NEWS

### TVO'S MOVING IMAGES

The most adventurous and creative programmer of television in Canada will soon have more surprises in store for us. Richard Johnson has consistently provided refreshing new images culled from ten years of innovative, independent image making. MOVING IMAGES (Tuesdays at 10:30pm until May 23 on TVO) includes 125 pieces, 90% of which are Canadian films and videos. As independent filmmakers supported by such programming let's let TVO know about the good work Richard's doing so that such programming can continue. Send letters to Mr. Donald Dubrey, General Manager of English Programming and Mr. Daniel Richler, Creative Head of Arts Programming at Box 200, Station Q, Toronto, Ont. M4T 2T1.

### IMAGES 89

Northern Visions Independent Video and Film Association is once again putting on the hottest festival of independent films and videos at Images 89, May 3rd through 7th, 1989 at Harbourfront's Studio Theatre and The Euclid Theatre. The programs, from the leading edge of new independent production from across Canada, are compiled by Tom Waugh, Sara Diamond, Frances Leeming, Peggy Gale, Ihor Holubizky, Brenda Longfellow, Midi Onodera, Andrew Patterson and Richard Johnson. A comprehensive catalogue listing screenings, producers biographies and other festival-related information, published in English and French, will be available. As an added attraction Images 89 will also present a special 4 day Technical and Trade Forum with workshops, panel discussions and much, much more. For further info contact: Annette Mangaard at 971-8405.



**FILM TREK—CALL FOR FILMS**

FILM TREK is a 10 week summer tour of Ontario to commence mid June and end in late August. The tour is funded in part by the Canada Council Exploration Program, the OAC, the NFB, and through the generosity of individuals and organizations. New prints of work selected for the three hour program will be purchased from filmmakers or their distributors at standard distribution rates. Screenings will be free, will take place on beaches, in parks, and in artist run centres. The program will not be submitted for censorship and approval.

Work will be selected to meet the following criteria:

1. Short films—preferably 15 minutes and under.
2. Work produced within the last two years.
3. Film format must be 16mm with optical sound or silent.
4. Films produced for commercial release, advertising or industrial purposes shall not be accepted.
5. Works that show exploration of cinematic structure and processes.
6. Films that attempt to find relationships between image and identity by recording personal and collective experience.
7. Work that is representative of the diversity in Canadian culture.
8. Films that present challenging and revolutionary concepts and ideas.
9. New voices, young filmmakers.

Following the Ontario tour the films will either be returned to the filmmakers, donated as a program to the film archives or, ideally, toured around Canada and then donated to the archives. The deadline for submissions is April 30th, 1989. Please complete the entry form provided and send your films or preview tapes to: Film Trek, 11 Camden St., Toronto, Ont., M5V 1V2 416-369-1468.

**CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS—  
KINGSTON INTERNATIONAL  
FILM FESTIVAL**

The first annual Kingston International Film Festival will be taking place in Kingston, Ontario from Nov. 1-5, 1989. Featuring films from the Third World, with environmental issues as a focus, the festival will also be curating a video component dealing with Third Cinema from Canada.

Curator Martha Rudden is currently seeking proposals from film and video producers who either represent a minority or whose work deals directly with a minority social issue. Such topics would include native rights, environmental issues, race issues, sexual discrimination, etc. All submissions are welcome. Video format must be either 3/4" U-matic or 1/2" VHS. For more information, please contact Chris Johnson, Artistic Director, at (613) 548-4883. Send proposals, with return postage, to: Martha Rudden  
Kingston Artists' Association Inc.  
21A Queen Street  
Kingston, ON K7K 1A1

**CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS—  
NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL  
FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL:  
PRODUCER'S MARKETPLACE**

The National Educational Film & Video Festival announces its third annual Producer's Marketplace, a unique three-day event that showcases independent productions for non-theatrical distributors seeking new acquisitions. Both completed works

and works in progress will be accepted. Deadline for entries is April 15, 1989. For entry forms and info, contact:

National Educational Film & Video Festival  
314 East Tenth Street  
Oakland, CA 94606  
(415) 465-6885

**INVITATION TO ALL CANADIAN  
ARTISTS**

Fringe Research Holographics Inc. is accepting proposals for the production of original pulsed holograms. 7 Artist-In-Residence positions are available in 1989. All work will be executed at the Fringe Research Studio with the assistance of our technicians. Each successful applicant will receive a \$500 artist fee as well as up to \$750 worth of holographic materials. The time allotment for each artist will be a maximum of two weeks of laboratory time. Proposals should make creative use of pulsed holography. Those artists not familiar with holographic techniques are encouraged to call Fringe Research for consultation in the preparation of submissions. The proposal should include a sketch or photograph of the content of intended hologram(s) as well as a short, detailed, written description of the artist's intent, complete address and phone number(s) for correspondence, C.V. and description or slides of previous work if relevant. Deadline for submissions is May 15, 1989. Residences will begin in the summer and fall of 1989. Submissions will be judged on artistic merit and technical feasibility by an independent jury. Please address submissions to: 1989 A.I.R. Program, 010-1179A King St. W., Toronto, M6K 3C5 535-2323.



continued from page 6:

Fringe Research also offers an introductory holography workshop devoted to the artistic and technological aspects of holography. The holography workshop will give participants a working introduction to a practical understanding of holography. The course will consist of two full days of studio teaching during which students will participate in the actual making of a hologram. Tuition for each holography workshop is \$175, payable in advance and tax deductible. The workshop will be held April 22 and 23, 10am to 6pm with an hour lunch break. Call or write to Fringe at the above address.

### COMIC BOOK CONFIDENTIAL

Genie nominee Ron Mann (*Imagine the Sound and Poetry in Motion*) will be present to screen and discuss his new film, *Comic Book Confidential* a profile of 22 of the most important comic book and comic strip artists working today. The film was written by late poet bp Nichol. All proceeds from this screening will be donated to the Innis College Silver Anniversary fund. Friday March 31, 7:00pm Innis Town Hall 8T0. Admission \$2 including refreshments. For more information call Janet Shaw (Vic., 585-4502) or Jim Shedden (Innis, 978-7790).

### THE ART OF ANIMATION IN TORONTO

The Toronto Animated Image Society (TAIS) is presenting a show celebrating non-commercial animation, from March 2 to April 1, 1989 at the John Black Aird Gallery (MackDonald Block, Main Floor, 900 Bay St. at Wellesley).

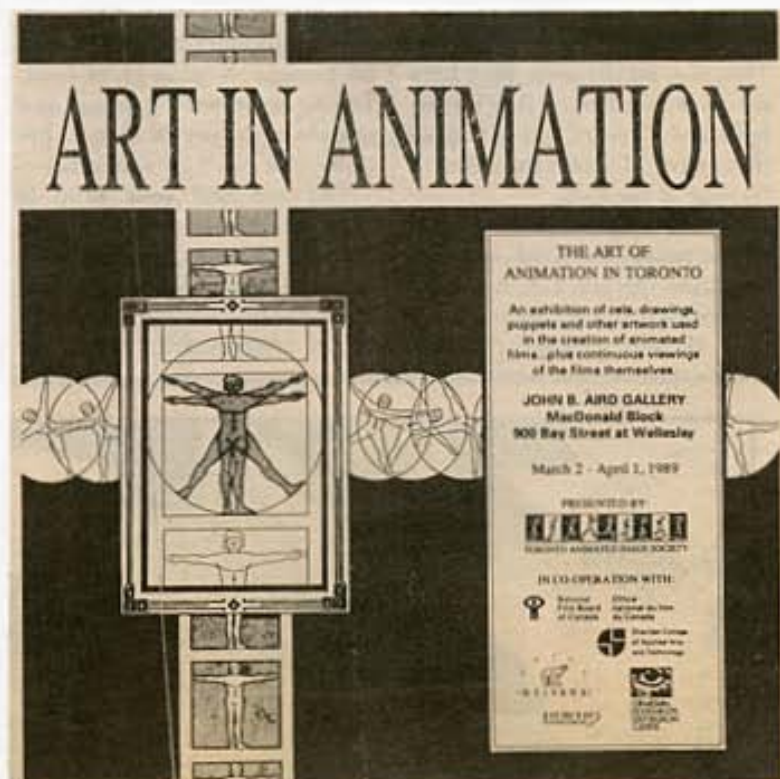
The show, called "Art in Animation", consists of final artwork and works in progress from various films made in the Toronto area. There are 3-dimensional displays demonstrating a variety of animation techniques, and the films themselves are presented on video monitors placed around the gallery. More than 20 animation filmmakers are represented in the show.

Participants include many of Toronto's independent animation filmmakers, animation directors working with the NFB's Ontario Regional Production Centre, Nelvana (represented by its new theatrical short) and Sheridan College.

Among the independents are Michael Fukushima, Arnie Lipsey, Ed Ackerman and Elizabeth Lewis, whose film *Villanelle* recently won a prize at the Poetry Film Festival in San Francisco (a festival organized by such American poets as Allen Ginsberg). There are two outstanding bas-relief pieces by Iris Paabo (based on her current work in progress *Wake Up, Wake Up*) and Patrick Jenkins has turned the final artwork from *Four Short Films* into several effective graphic pieces. His flipbooks are also on display.

The organizers of "Art in Animation" hope that the show will shed some new light on animation by showing the range of techniques and subjects this versatile artform is capable of handling, and by revealing a little of what goes into the making of an animated film.

—Ellen Besen



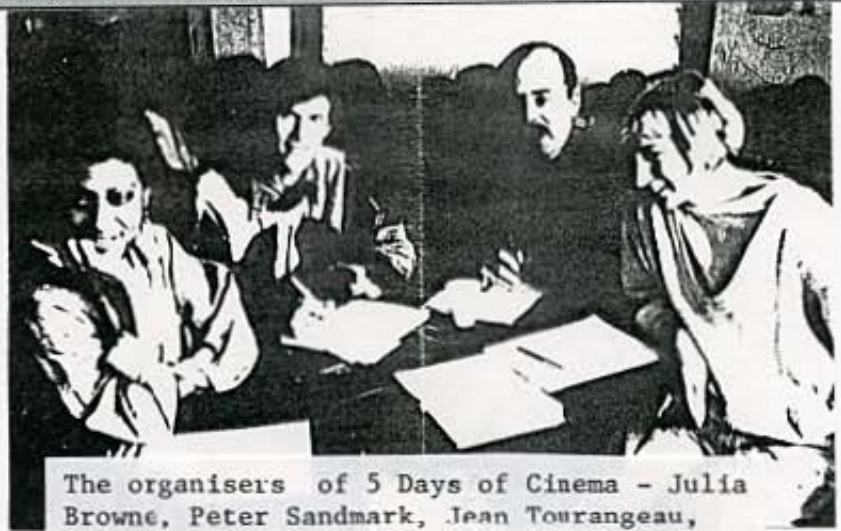


## THE THIRD ALTERNATIVE by Gary Popovich

In November, Montreal's film co-op, Main Film, hosted an event called 5 Days of Canadian Independent Cinema. Participants came from co-ops across the country to attend screenings of independent shorts from all the regions, the premiere of Rick Raxlen's feature, *Horses in Winter*, and the forum which included talks on independent film distribution and exhibition. What follows is a brief report on some of the main issues raised during the forum...issues dealing with Montreal and the rest of the country.

In Montreal, many of the repertory cinemas have closed; houses like the newly reopened Rialto will show predominantly English material, and seem to be interested mainly in the commercial stuff. Cinema Parallele, a downtown cinema that does run independent work, now has a programming committee which comprises various groups in the city of Montreal, including Main Film. But again, Main Film, a co-op much like LIFT, has access to very few dates per month while the more powerful distributors take the major portion of the screening dates. Main Film sees it as an improvement, because they now have a good theatre in which to show their material; but so much more is necessary to show all the good independent work that is available and willing to be programmed by the Main Film members.

Francois Poitras of La Boite Noire defined video as a complement to the traditional ways of distributing film. He talked about viewers being inundated with mainstream film at the major cinemas, on TV, and Pay TV...so he has been distributing less commercial stuff, and he has a good collection of experimental works from Brakhage, Anger,



The organisers of 5 Days of Cinema - Julia Browne, Peter Sandmark, Jean Tourangeau, Guylaine Roy

Smith, Deren, and others. Claude Forget brought to everyone's attention a practice that is now mainly happening in Europe: video tapes that include a film, video analyses of the film by critics, as well as video interviews with the directors—all in one package. Something that may be ideal for our own work.

Jan Rofekamp of Films Transit, a distributor of Canadian films in foreign markets, talked about the existence of galleries and co-ops in Europe that show exclusively art films, or experimental films, but explained that there is no organized circuit, and most often the venues are under-funded just like our co-ops here. On a more dour note, the short is seen as a stepping stone to features. Rofekamp explained, "If a short is an essay in style or a formal expression, then there's no market for it. I wouldn't know which buyer to approach. You can find a producer and stick your film with a long film or put it in festivals. That's about it probably. Then again your short film may be your business card for doing other things later. And if your short film gets screened at a number of film festivals or had a nice run with a Canadian feature film then your position as a filmmaker is a thousand times stronger when you go up for your

next application to Telefilm or whoever gives the money away, for other projects." Jan said that the best way for him to sell short films is by selling issues, using the films as informative vehicles for generating discussion on social and political issues.

Andre Bennet of Cinephile, the highly successful Toronto distribution company that has taken on independent work such as Patricia Rozema's *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing* and Atom Egoyan's *Family Viewing*, led a lively discussion that proposed a third alternative—an independent circuit of exhibition houses. Here are some of the highlights of his talk:

"We are in a crisis. Initially filmmakers were being supported in this country, then producers were being supported, now distributors are being supported. But there's one critical element left out of this scenario—exhibition. What do you do with your films once you complete them—whether they're shorts or features. What can you actually do with them? The whole idea is to get your film out into the world." So began Bennet's talk. Theatres must make money. They often own expensive real estate, and even when they begin as



independents, interested in showing independent films, they end up moving to more commercial films. Why? Bennet explains, "Independent films are very, very marketable." But, because the independent exhibitors "get bitten by the tsetse fly they want to get the films that they anticipate can make them lots of money and they forget their original impetus, their reason for being." Bennet feels there is a potential for short films to be packaged and distributed quite successfully, but not in existing venues.

"We need the establishment of a third alternative to the chains of Famous Players and Cineplex-Odeon, partly in support of those independent exhibition houses that still exist and ways and means to increase the existence of independent houses across this country. The audiences are still there, but there's nowhere for them to go." Many of the theatre owners don't even know about the independent films—even those films that have had some commercial success. These owners have what Bennet calls "consciousness blinders. They don't even think of these films in terms of making money, because their consciousness has to do with the high profile, American commercial, mass appeal films." What can be done? Bennet suggests instead of changing the minds of these chains and theatre owners, we should be creating viable alternatives. "I don't know how many cine-clubs you have in this province, but that's one viable alternative." Someone suggested exhibition co-operatives, to which Bennet replied that that was exactly the direction we should be taking; co-ops with strong affiliations across Canada, perhaps the world.



Someone else suggested that we can look at alternative and underground publishing as an example. Peter Sandmark of Main Film pointed to the underground and independent record industry as an example of direct access to the public and wondered how we might access that public. Bennet suggested that instead of just trying to hype up your own film, you should be promoting alternative cinema, getting the press to write on it, etc. Furthermore, "it's not enough to get a film into the theatre for a week. Part of what I'm talking about in terms of ideology and consciousness is this commercial bog. It's important for independent films that they are allowed to stay in a cinema for more than a week, or two or three weeks, whether the house is full or not. In terms of promoting a film, part of a viable process is word of mouth, not just the newspaper interview, review, advertisement."

And finally, perhaps just what we need...to have politicians and bureaucrats across the country as courageous as those who have set a precedent in Winnipeg. Greg Klymkiw of the Winnipeg Film Group told us that, in addition to other funding sources, Film Manitoba (comparable to our Ontario Film Development Corporation) "kicks in a little more than \$50,000 per year," to be used as the Winnipeg Film Group sees fit for the promotion and distribution of their short and long films. WPG comprises film production, distribution and exhibition in their own elegant cinematheque which shows predominantly Canadian independent work. Each new WFG film is given a premiere, and about a two week run in the cinematheque; subsequent to this the film is run periodically throughout the year. The screenings are highly successful and it's given the filmmakers a much higher profile—both film and filmmaker are given coverage by television and the daily newspaper. The third alternative has some tangible support from government in Winnipeg...something we must begin fighting for here.





## JANIS LUNDMAN IN INTERVIEW

by Leo Faragalli

**Leo Faragalli:** You are credited with being one of the founding members at LIFT. How is it that you felt the need to organize a film co-op in Toronto?

**Janis Lundman:** The old film co-op here had disbanded in '78. It fell apart for financial reasons, and while I was at York I used the facilities of that co-op, going to workshops and generally behaving as a marginal member—I paid my fees and took advantage of what it had to offer but only from a distance. When I got out of school the co-op no longer existed, there were no facilities, no way to meet other filmmakers, no workshops or anything like that. So in 1980 when the [Canadian] Filmmakers' Distribution Centre called a meeting for people interested in forming a co-op I showed up, along with about fifty other people, and out of that meeting a number of us got together to discuss exactly what we would do to form a co-op.

**L.F.:** So the CFMDC actually initiated the discussion...?

**J.L.:** Yes. It was actually Jane Gutteridge. She called the meeting and about a month after that there was an IFVA (the national grouping of co-ops and distributors) meeting, and they required someone from Toronto to go and so I went. It was really exciting because suddenly I was at this national conference with co-ops that had been around for about five or six years, who were all very excited about their role in independent film production. I came back really geared up to start this co-op, but of course the enthusiasm waned quite quickly after that—forever plugging away for money and grants. But in the end it turned out really well. I think



Still from *Matinale*

it's a great place for filmmakers to meet, there are workshops now, screenings and such.

**L.F.:** Your expectations of what a co-op should be then were fulfilled?

**J.L.:** Oh yeah, the workshops that the old co-op had were a little more extensive than LIFT's, but then so were the facilities. I think that LIFT is fulfilling all sorts of needs, and there aren't any other places in Toronto that do that, where you can go to a single source and get all that information.

**L.F.:** How has your film aesthetic evolved? What are the films that you made since leaving York University?

**J.L.:** Well, the aesthetic sensibility is a little confused because when I first started out I worked as a sound recordist and a producer at York. I worked on documentaries, dramas, experimental films, a real mixed bag, mostly on other people's films. But the first film I did is called *Matinale*, and it's a 22-minute

experimental, black-and-white and colour film. It was fun to do because I got to fool around with all sorts of ideas, colours and forms and at the same time introduced a certain feminist perspective. The next film I did was very political and somewhat journalistic. It's on El Salvador. But it, again, altered the documentary form by using one long, beautiful take of these rocks and streams with a voice-over describing what this reporter sees happening in El Salvador. That was *Las Aradas*, and the film I did after that was another interpretive documentary called *Toronto 6:17*. I went out and shot several Toronto sunsets and lights, and tried to capture that evocative time that happens between day and night. To me it's my most unsuccessful film because I didn't capture that magic feeling that I was after. I could have done much more with it. My last film is called *Close Your Eyes and Think of England*, which is a docu-drama. So I would say that apart from my movement towards drama, the only consistent thing in my films is what people



would perceive to be feminist content, things dealing with women and women's concerns. That, and a politically motivated sensibility that is also present in something that I'm working on now about refugees.

While working on these projects I have also been doing other work within the film industry. I've worked as a secretary on a very large production that involved coordinating departments, doing call sheets and answering phones. That was a real eye-opener just because of the size of the production. When you compare the way a crew of about sixty goes about doing its business, from my point of view, having used just three or four people, well, it's just overwhelming and very exciting. The work that I did there allowed me the opportunity to observe other people at work and to learn from them. I'd say it was a good

experience. Since then I've been doing a lot of research and writing for different companies, and I've been accepted by the Academy on their director observer program, but I've yet to find a director. So that's what's happening now, I'm trying to develop my craft as a director and to develop my projects by pushing myself to develop and to write several projects on my own. The project that I mentioned earlier on refugees has to do with the Canadian attitude towards refugees and the bureaucracy that is presented to the refugees by these people in Canada who really don't have a clue or a sense of what it's like to live in a situation of horrific political oppression and human rights violations. And in addition to that I'm also working on two other documentary projects with Adrienne Mitchell.

L.F.: With *Las Aradas* you went into the Elora Gorge to document something that happened in El Salvador. Given that you come from a documentary background, to what extent do you feel that film should represent reality? Are you attracted to the abstract or conceptual evocations possible in film?

J.L.: Well, first of all I wanted people not to be distracted by the visual image; I wanted them to listen to what was going on. Often in film you're distracted by the cuts and by what's happening visually that you don't really listen to what's going on. And so if the visuals are beautiful and relaxing, then I think that what's being said on the audio is felt more strongly. Now what is being said in *Las Aradas* is quite horrific. It describes a massacre of innocent people. So what I tried to do was to choreograph the visuals so that they would correspond to what was being said, but only in a very subtle way. So in addition to contrasting a horrific event, via the audio, to a very tranquil setting and in a way suggesting a certain irony, I was also able to get out a certain amount of news and information that I wanted people to hear directly, rather than having it filtered through the regular news media, where they cut so much out. I also felt that the people who had died as well as the survivors who had been through the massacre deserved to have their story told.

L.F.: Who are the directors that you would like to approach for the observer program?

J.L.: I would like to work with someone who's been around for a long time and knows what's going on. My preference would be someone like Marguerite Von Trotta, right? That would be great, but she's not around for this



Still from *Close Your Eyes and Think of England*



particular program. I'm not sure, but I know I would like to be on a very big production so that I could improve what I perceive to be my weakness as a director, so that I could learn to design coverage to suit the style and the tone of the film at hand.

So far what's been happening is that I've been on the lookout, keeping an eye on who's in Toronto, and who's coming to shoot here. The Academy also calls me to make suggestions; Leonard Nimoy, for example, was the last one. Now, I think he makes very well-crafted films but he's not Canadian and in terms of my sensibility there could be a problem, but I know I would still learn a lot. I didn't go for the interview with him because I had other commitments.

L.F.: Are there other people whose politics or whose feminist concerns have led you to work with them? Do they help you on your films in any way?

J.L.: Certainly the filmmakers that I know, especially Keith Hlady and Brenda Longfellow. Keith has done a lot of great work as a cameraman on numerous documentaries concerned with social/political issues. And working with him is great because he's so very excited and enthused about continuing that kind of cinema. His shooting style I also admire a great deal and I think that it has helped my work a lot. There's also a woman, Nancy Nichol, who is a video artist and whose work I've been involved with. Working with her has helped me a lot because she's involved with the Internationalist Socialist group and so I've learned a lot there. As for other media like theatre or dance, I'm not sure. I think that the arts are pretty isolated. I mean you have the visual arts community and the music community and the film community and they don't overlap a



Still from *Matinale*

lot. Even with the film community, the extent to which you talk about content, form or theory is limited although it does happen. I may not do it as much as someone coming out of an academic background but, for instance, Lori Spring and Brenda Longfellow and myself occasionally get together to discuss the issues that connect our films. It's fun too, to try to rationalize why it is that we're doing this, why we're persecuting ourselves with all this work and no money. But it's this kind of discussion, for instance, with *Close Your Eyes*, that we would get into discussions that I wasn't prepared for. The combination of documentary and drama, which we all have in common, and the extent to which these two forms can successfully work together is something we've talked about. People in general who have seen *Close Your Eyes* also approach me sometimes with such extreme ideas regarding what they presume to be my opinions on feminism. I had no idea that the film would be taken to such extremes. I certainly set out to

make a feminist film. I mean in terms of the advice given to women and how that advice affects us and has affected me, and how confusing it is to be told everything from "find a good job" to "find a good man" to "stay at home and go out and do everything." It seems to me that anyone would go nuts after a while because a lot of the so-called advice is so contradictory. So I wanted to show that and how funny it can be both to men and women.

L.F.: Was to work specifically with women, on *Close Your Eyes*, one of your goals?

J.L.: Oh sure. Certainly in terms of the crew and the production, most everyone was a woman. Part of the thinking behind it was meant to give women the chance to upgrade their skills, and that seems to have worked well.



## HISTORIES OF LIFT

Since Camelia Freiberg, and others, politely refused my trashy request for a gossip column for this publication, I cleaned up my act and asked Janis Lundman to write a history of LIFT for an upcoming newsletter; and, during a few inebriated fits, I asked Alan Zweig to do the same. Soon this issue was expanding as rapidly as the LIFT membership, so I decided that the March issue would carry articles that somehow dealt with some of the people and events that have a bearing on what independent film might be in terms of a Toronto co-op. Writing, editing, and publishing a publication every two months allows some kind of news coverage as well as the opportunity for so-called "depth".

There's no shortage of news: increasing numbers of members are getting grants, major screenings, and awards. This can be attributed to at least two things: a skyrocketing membership (over 390 at this moment), and about a 20 year history of independent filmmaking in this city that now finds itself in a semi-stable position vis a vis production equipment access, and distribution (especially the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre (CFMDC) which since 1967 has distributed film art, and DEC since 1974). Exhibition is still problematic.

But none of the problems, be they exhibition, finding money, whatever, have stopped the growth of the independent film movement in Canada—"the cinema of resistance" as Francoyse Picard of the Canada Council calls it. And with a movement that continues to grow, there are stories, there are the details of its day-to-day struggles that form a part of our history. A gossip column may have made an



uncomfortable equation between our independence and the way in which print tends to turn details into dross. We need more of the daring articles, and stories, that howl in the bones of our faces.

So it was time for some histories. There comes a point in the life of anything that it comes to be defined; it's at that point that its origins lie back far enough that fictions appear to sketch out those origins. As Godard has said, "There are times when reality becomes too complex for oral communication. But legend gives it a form by which it pervades the whole world."

If Alan Zweig can call himself the father of LIFT, then surely Janis Lundman is the mother (not that they might have anything in common). Janis's history brings together scraps of the official history, slivers from the Eye, mixed with personal reflections, to construct a history that constitutes an "official history" of LIFT from someone who had to actually work

and write those grant applications, and represent LIFT at "official co-op functions", to construct the fiction when most independent filmmakers didn't believe a co-op existed here. Alan Zweig's history is truly from the outsider's position, the outlaw position. Self-inflicted marks of Cain and perhaps a little bitterness...Zweig continued to articulate and felt more bitterly what many others thought: in the widely diverse independent scene in Toronto, is it possible to have a co-op open to production and a real exchange amongst filmmakers, or does it always come to self-servingness, and is that bad? Zweig makes his re-entry into the co-op with a piece of writing that seems to have been jettisoned from his veins splashing the passion, confusion, silliness, and first inauspicious steps of the co-op, onto these pages in a poignant balance of humour (often self-deprecating), honesty and good story telling. Adrienne Mitchell's and Bruce McDonald's reflections provide a view from inside: the zaniness, the dreams, the stories,



the disappointments of people who were constructing a thing which necessarily went on to become something with a life of its own. The last piece is also a personal account of living within this "thing" called LIFT.

Other histories about independent film can be found in previous issues of the LIFT newsletter as well as those that will surely come. Still others can be found in the newsletters of the CFMDC and the other artist-run centres across the country (the LIFT office has a binder that gathers the newsletters of many of the country's co-ops between its covers). If all goes according to plans, the May issue of the newsletter will feature letters, articles, etc. from many of the film co-ops across Canada, allowing us better to understand their struggles, their work, and to provide a more detailed history of independent film in Canada. Finally, we are always eager to receive and publish articles, letters, etc. that can spark further discussion and provide a record of the colourful history of independent film in Toronto.

So, the following pages present a few of the legends that constitute some of the histories of LIFT. In addition to celebrating this history, perhaps these pages can also inspire discussion on those questions that still haunt us: What is LIFT; what is this 400 member behemoth and what should it be doing?

—Gary Popovich

## FROM THE FURTHEST FILES

### THE LIAISON OF INDEPENDENT FILMMAKERS OF TORONTO

#### CONSTITUTION

##### I Name and Address

The name of this society shall be the Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto, and the registered address of the society shall be at Toronto in the province of Ontario.

##### II Aims and Objectives

The objects for which this society is registered shall be to:

1. Exist as a support and encouragement for independent filmmakers who represent an alternate and independent way of filmmaking.
2. Provide an environment in which personal contact promotes communication, exchange of ideas and learning through the experience of others.
3. Serve as an information centre about conferences, festivals, publications and all matters concerned with film production, distribution and exhibition.
4. Provide an organization which will maintain communication and film exchange with other filmmaking groups across the country through correspondence and seminars.

#### HISTORY OF L.I.F.T.

**1979:** LIFT was formed as a service organization to: 1. support and encourage independent filmmaking; 2. facilitate personal contact and exchange of ideas among filmmakers; 3. organize screenings and workshops for members.

**1979-1981:** LIFT operated on volunteer labour and involved itself with screenings of members' films, workshops, seminars as well as becoming an active member of the Independent Film Alliance du Cinema Independent (IFACI), the national association of film co-operatives and distributors.

**December, 1981:** the membership unanimously decided to extend the services of LIFT into a production-oriented co-op.

**January 1982 - August 1983:** LIFT worked on revising its' bylaws and constitution, gaining credibility within the community and with funding bodies, and continuing with its already established meetings, screenings, and workshops. Most importantly the filmmakers continued to network by exchanging information and working on each others projects.

**August 1983:** LIFT moved into its' own 300 sq. ft. space with office furniture and editing equipment donated by York University Film department and the National Film Board-Ontario region.

**January 1984:** trial funding was received from the Canada Council (\$6,790. for operations and \$8,000. for equipment) and from the NFB- Ontario (\$2,500. for film production).

**April 1984:** the NFB-Ontario increased the amount of production funds to \$10,000. for the fiscal year 1984-85. Also at this time a co-ordinator was hired on a part-time basis and membership began to steadily increase.

**June 1984:** funding was received from the Toronto Arts Council (\$500.) and the Metro Arts Council (\$500.).

**January 1985:** LIFT moved into a new space of 700 sq. ft. With the latest grant from the Canada Council for the fiscal year January 1 to December 31, 1985 the funding increased 121% to a total of \$15,000. for operations and \$10,000. for equipment with up to another \$10,000. allotted in matching funds for a steenbeck.



## LIFT—An Historical Recounting by an Original Member by Janis Lundman

In the Fall of 1979 Jane Gutteridge (now working for the NFB), then co-ordinator of the CFMDC, and Bruce Elder called for an informal meeting of independent filmmakers to try and raise from the ashes of the old Toronto Filmmakers Co-op a new association. About 100 filmmakers met one Sunday afternoon in the Showcase Theatre to discuss goals, aims and objectives, and possible directions for the new film co-operative. Those who had been involved in the old co-op, or in any other initial setting up of an organization, sat back and cheered as the rest of us blindly and enthusiastically rushed to sign up for one of the suggested committees.

A few months later (as reported in the CFMDC's *Independent Eye*)....

### **LIFT — Liason of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto**

We are a new organization of filmmakers and persons interested in film who have decided to get together and form an association. After an initial general meeting in February a steering committee was set up to investigate locations for our meetings, suggest activities and look into funding. The steering committee met several times and then called another general meeting on April 27th at the Funnel Theatre to report back to the interested film people. It was decided at this meeting that we would start a membership drive. Our fees will be \$10.00 per year and anyone that is interested in independent filmmaking (be it 8, Super 8, 16mm or 35mm) can join.

The steering committee will continue for the present organizing a series of screenings of members' films to be

held in June at Harbourfront. The purpose of these screenings will be to introduce the members to one another and to give the filmmakers a chance to create an awareness of their films. Future activities include workshops, guest speakers and a newsletter with the end goal being production equipment access through the membership.

Persons interested in joining should send a cheque or money order for \$10.00 to *L.I.F.T.*

Liason of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto  
c/o CFMDC  
144 Front Street West, Suite 430  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5J 2L7

It's hard to believe the initial fees were \$10.00 (oh, for the good old days). We were given space at the CFMDC offices on Front Street. We borrowed, scrounged, sponged, used and abused, repaired and loved their postage machine, typewriters, projector, chairs and tables. (We hadn't figured out how to spell Liaison.)

A few more months later....

## **L.I.F.T. UPDATE**

By Robin Lee

The Steering Committee of L.I.F.T. (Liason of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto) within the last two months has met three times and a General Meeting was held at Harbourfront on July 15.

In the Steering Committee meeting the major general question that was discussed was: to what concerns is L.I.F.T. interested in addressing itself? More specifically: should L.I.F.T. be primarily concerned with bringing together, for discussion lobbying and screening purposes, people in all walks of life interested and concerned about alternative film? What exactly do we mean by "alternative" or "independent" film? To what extent should L.I.F.T. be film production and equipment oriented?

No hard and fast conclusions were reached about these questions, so, after the screening of some co-op members' films, they were raised again at the General Meeting. The debate to a large extent circled around the question of what sort of structure L.I.F.T. should adopt: a structure entailing a core of higher fee paying members who would be interested in film production and would have access to equipment L.I.F.T. will have purchased, and an associate membership, which would pay less and would be mainly interested in screenings, workshops, and discussions or a more open structure in which the emphasis would be on contact

between all people interested in alternative film and more specialized interests would develop as they would.

Again, no real conclusion was reached, although discussion was lively and many valuable and useful points were made. So, at this point L.I.F.T. is still considering the shape it will take in the future. Therefore, if you care about having a film co-op in Toronto, a hard city to get people together about anything, you can and should have input into L.I.F.T. It will only work if many people show interest and attend the meetings and screenings. The date of the next Steering Committee meeting and of the next General Meeting have not been determined yet. However, if you are interested in attending either, or are interested in being put on L.I.F.T.'s mailing list please write to the address below. This is your co-op; it will only work if you make it work.

L.I.F.T.  
Liason of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto  
144 Front Street W., No. 430  
Toronto, Ont. M5J 2L7

SPRUC 1989

SUMMER 1980



There were as many opinions and viewpoints as to what LIFT should become and in what direction it should go as there were independent filmmakers. A few of the initial participants dropped out due to temporary insanity caused by too much talking. (Liaison was still being spelled with only one "i").

And still later....

## L.I.F.T. — LIAISON OF INDEPENDENT FILMMAKERS OF TORONTO

L.I.F.T. has been active over the summer and early fall preparing its Aims and Objectives (which were approved at a general meeting in late August) and its Bylaws. We are now in the process of incorporation which will enable us to apply for funding for various projects.

On November 17 L.I.F.T., along with the CFMDC and Harbourfront, is sponsoring a seminar with Jean Pierre Lefebvre which will take place between 1 - 4 p.m. in the Brigantine room at Harbourfront. Lefebvre's film **THE OLD COUNTRY WHERE RIMBAUD DIED** is to be screened that evening, and on November 18 **CONFIDENCES OF THE NIGHT** and **STRAIGHT TO THE HEART** are to be shown.

The L.I.F.T. steering committee is now working on a Directors Series which will take place once a month starting

sometime in the new year, plus a series of workshops relating to the different crafts involved in making films.

The next general meeting of L.I.F.T. will be held at Harbourfront at 8:00 p.m., November 8 in the Loft. These meetings enable filmmakers to meet with each other, exchange information and screen their films. Everyone is welcome to attend.

People interested in joining L.I.F.T. should send a cheque or money order for \$10.00 to LIFT.

L.I.F.T.  
c/o CFMDC  
144 Front St. W.  
Suite 430  
Toronto, Ontario M5J 2L7

FALL 1989

Looking good. We eventually worked out membership, aims and objectives, a constitution—a goal some of us thought would never be reached. Many thanks to people from the CFMDC and The Funnel who gave their time, thoughts and copies of their constitutions and incorporations to help us along. (We finally started spelling Liaison correctly.)

A year later....

## L.I.F.T. the Liaison of Independent Filmmakers in Toronto

The initial paperwork is almost over! We now have our Aims and Objectives, our Bylaws and our incorporation as a non-profit organization. All that remains is the filing of our charitable status which will take place next month.

On March 1st we applied to Explorations Canada for money to create a resource centre and hire a part-time coordinator. We will be informed of the decision in June. Services offered by the centre will include a job file for members; an up-to-date listing of films presently in production in Toronto; current information on all workshops, festivals, conferences, etc. taking place in the Ontario area. Additionally, the association will organize regular screenings of members' films as well as our own programs of Directors Seminars and Craft Workshops.

Discussions are under way with the Canadian Film Institute regarding National Film Day to be held sometime in June. LIFT is approaching members of the film industry and the independent film community to participate in a program of screenings and presentations designed to introduce the general public to filmmaking — both past and present — produced in the Toronto area.

Our membership is steadily increasing, and we hope to see both old and new members at the resource centre when it opens in mid-June.

Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto  
144 Front St. W. — #430  
Toronto, Ont.  
M5J 2L7

SPRING 1991

LIFT **did not** receive the Explorations grant. It seems our idea to initiate an independent film co-op coincided quite nicely with the government's idea to initiate cutbacks to all arts councils, indirectly stopping core funds available to new organizations. The co-op began mirroring the fate of many independent filmmakers—rejection, burnout and poverty. At this stage a large number of the original members of LIFT left and were replaced by fresh, enthusiastic, hard-working people, many of whom had never been involved with a film co-op before and like the rest of us only a mere one year earlier, were somewhat naive as to how difficult it was going to be but were eager and excited.



At this time LIFT entered a period of ups and downs that was to continue for almost 5 years. The co-op would receive a group of new people and a bit of funding and for a short time would be buoyed by cash and enthusiasm. As the money dwindled and the workload necessary to keep the co-op going increased, LIFT foundered. We continued to have meetings, screenings, and workshops but constantly faced having to rely on organizing everything with members' volunteer hours. There were constant stops and starts with LIFT being reborn a number of times during that space of time. But thanks to the constant work of its members, it refused to die.

A short chronology: 1983—moved into our own space on Niagara St. 1984—moved into 345 Adelaide St. West, Suite #501 with funds supplied by our first core funding grant from Canada Council (\$ ). The room was small but cozy. We tried to ignore the cockroaches.

1986—Moved down the hall to Suite #505. Although one large room painted all black when we moved in, thanks to the efforts of LIFT members and the refined renovation skills of our co-ordinator at that time, Caroline Wuschke (hurray for Caroline and her amazing power-propelled screwdriver), it became the bright, cheerful and glowing office you see today.

What followed was several screenings, workshops, coordinators, more funding, and ...missing equipment (the story of the missing Nagra can be found in Board minutes).

In the summer of 1986 LIFT was once again heading for a slump. The usual burnout, alcoholism, drug addiction and stress had hit the board and members. Well, certainly stress anyway. It was during this period of extreme depression that I discovered Federal Job Development, and LIFT was reborn. Recognizing the urgent need for stable funding and at least one full-time staff, it was hard to believe that there was a government fund willing, able and simply begging to assist us. After a month of mad proposal writing, meetings with government program officers and our bank, 30 pages of a proposal for Job Development funds were slid under a government door. Three months later money appeared, the co-op now had one full time co-ordinator (let's hear it for Rob[erta] Pazdro) and 3 full-time staff. LIFT was on its way.

Since then LIFT has continued to receive assistance from Federal Job Development, has started to receive core funding from the Ontario Arts Council for one full-time position, and its allotment of funding from the Canada Council has been slowly increasing (underline slowly but we appreciate every penny). LIFT now has 2 full-time staff (the co-ordinator and equipment manager), over 300 members [since the writing of this article the membership is 394], full 16mm production and some post-production equipment. It holds regular workshops and screenings of members' films, has begun participating in co-production ventures with its members, and continues to churn out those grant proposals for regular and increased core funding.

For me LIFT has become a place to exchange ideas with other independent filmmakers, to view films, to increase my skills through workshops and seminars and to get financial and equipment assistance for my films. It's a place to go on those days when nothing is going right and I simply want to tell everyone about the latest Telefilm or editing disaster, and it's a place to go when everything is going right and I want to share some of that good luck with people. I don't regret my participation in the formation of LIFT although there were moments when I wish it had never begun. I think what I enjoy most about it is seeing it as it is today: a thriving, constantly changing film co-op supporting a community of talented and exciting independent filmmakers.



The first LIFT boardmeeting



## THE FATHER RETURNS...OR, WHY I'M (RE-) JOINING L.I.F.T. by Alan Zweig

I founded LIFT. I know that sounds self-serving but...it's either that or stay bitter. I have a lot of lost time to make up.

I'm saying this because I was the only one who was there at the very very beginning and who was still around when the thing had a name and was starting to get a national profile. I didn't stick around long enough for that first grant. If that first grant is the essential distinction for the founder, I'd have to pass that honour on to Janis Lundman.

But now that I've begun to drop names, here's a good one—the person who can ultimately claim credit for LIFT's initial conception—and there is a certain irony here—Bruce Elder. I have to give credit where credit is due; back in the days when he was building bridges rather than burning them, Bruce got this ball rolling.

I don't know if he knows this himself. Maybe it's just another repressed memory. It's actually a little hard to believe in this modern era of increasing entrenchment, but about ten years ago Bruce organized and chaired a forum, a public meeting to which all filmmakers were invited, and he pretty well filled the old New Yorker (now Showcase) Theatre.

The reason he called the meeting was to simply ask, "How are we going to help each other get our films made?" That took a lot of guts—to stand before Toronto's "independent filmmakers", that cynical group of rugged individualists, and talk about "helping each other." He'd have done better suggesting a lottery in which half of us would be forced to stop making films. (Not a bad idea, eh, Bruce?)



Zweig Star Man

Anyway I must have gotten stirred up. I'd been out in the "real world" a couple of years then, out of film school, my "stardom" there well on its way to becoming just another tale of faded glory. I had this unfinished film, my tragic albatross. (Just trying to build up the drama...) I had hopes that this meeting would be the 'solution to all my problems'—a co-op. It would be just like film school, all of us interested in each other's work, helping each other out. We'd finish our films, garner ego gratification, choose a class star. I'd get another grant.

The meeting was starting to die. Bruce bravely fought against all the cynicism, all the negativity, but he was drowning. I wanted to say something, tell them "I had a dream"... Just as the meeting was running out of steam, I worked up the courage to stand up. I didn't really know what I was saying. All I remember was the sensation of the immense quiet that surrounded me. I felt like I was naked onstage telling the world's longest and most pointless joke. I had a sense that what I was saying was impassioned, all the more embarrassing in this particular audience.

Then I was finished, my voice ending on a high squeak, my eyes beginning to tear up. I think I ended with something like "Gee, kids, let's put on a show." There was a moment of total silence, and then the whole audience was on its feet, applauding, clapping me on the back...

After that it's all a bit of a blur. Years went by. We started having meetings, semi-regularly. I remember certain things distinctly but the chronology is obscure.

Bruce stuck around for awhile then disappeared. A lot of people went through those meetings. I remember that Robin Leigh was around for a long time. We held a lot of meetings at his house. He was sort of a liaison to the Funnel, the hope being that the two organizations would not become mutually exclusive. I remember one meeting at Robin's house where Ross McLaren came with his cadre. They sat in judgment silently (would we be hip enough?) and then, like everyone else, never returned.

I remember with mixed emotions the originators of the LIFT name: "The three kids from Humber." I



don't remember their names. I do remember distinctly the night that they came to the meeting and announced this clever name they'd come up with. When they said it, I closed my eyes and made a face like someone farted. What did they mean by "liaison"??? When I opened my eyes pandemonium had broken out. People loved the name. (People generally love clever acronyms.)

My disgust for the name and my attitude toward the namers is significant to this story. They were nice kids but they weren't "filmmakers". To me at the time that was like a moral distinction. I guess I still find the term "filmmaker" a distinction too easily granted. But these kids hadn't even made a film. I take that back. One of them had "directed" something.

Those were the days when Humber had (maybe they still do) that brilliant program in which students were streamed into categories after first year—directing, writing, producing and editing or something like that. It was the theory of the head of the department—a former programming director at CHFI—that this system ("specialization") best reflected the situation in the real world. So much for a well-rounded education...

The film "the namer" had directed was a quasi-performance documentary on the rock band Max Webster. On occasion, *Max Webster* (the film) was generously spirited from the Humber vaults and presented as a "LIFT film". Clearly there weren't many films to choose from...

Anyway back to the name. It was obviously that "liaison" which got me. I wanted a co-op, a place to come and actually make films. Everybody else seemed to want a referral service, a place to come and meet other people who

someday, maybe, wanted to make a film. Most of the "members" at that point had not made a film. To paraphrase somebody, they didn't want to be part of any club which wouldn't have them as members.

They eventually left anyway. Further on through the haze there's the arrival of Jeff Steinberg and Janis Lundman. I don't think they arrived at exactly the same moment but close enough. (At the time neither of them had films to their credit either...but they at least seemed like filmmakers.) They ushered in the next era: me, Janis, Jeff and another guy I'll call Sheldon.

That he so perfectly reflected the 'problem' with LIFT really wasn't his fault. Sheldon was still just a kid, a showbiz groupie (who later realized his perfect fate—publicist). Even as a teenager, Sheldon was too obsessed with the trivia of films to ever consider actually making them. He was an archivist, a "buff".

I first met him when he was a "camper" at a summer arts school. He was a showbiz phenomenon, only about fifteen at the time but truly ageless. My friend and

classmate (R.K.) was Sheldon's "instructor". Sheldon would walk around all day haranguing anyone he could find with an endless series of Hollywood facts (a Brian Linehan research assistant in the making). He was a new phenomenon for my friend and I (coming from such anti-Hollywood education)—something that we considered peculiarly un-Canadian. But he was strangely entertaining.

Anyway a few years later Sheldon showed up at a LIFT meeting. He was looking for a forum, a real adult place to channel all his showbiz energies...a liaison. I think all of us who were around then knew immediately that this was not really the right place for Sheldon. But the thing was—the reason why Sheldon initially stayed (and why I eventually left)—we really couldn't muster enough of an organizational philosophy, enough of a politic, to exclude him. He wasn't a filmmaker (clearly) but so what? Who was?

Sheldon not only stayed but became our first chairman. I remember that meeting. By that point it was definitely just the four of us. We decided we had to have a chairperson. But when we started



Alan Zweig's The Boys



asking "Well, do you want to do it?", the only person who said "okay" was Sheldon. I can't really talk for the other two but I think that we all knew that letting Sheldon do it was incredibly lazy and cynical on our parts. Maybe the others were just too modest to volunteer. Maybe they wanted to be asked. Maybe they thought the other guy would do it. For my part I was moving toward the conclusion that it didn't matter who did it—this thing was a joke anyway and Sheldon was the perfect punchline.

I don't really remember how long Sheldon lasted or what he did or didn't do. He might have started planning a LIFT-organized retrospective of the films of Tippi Hedren but I could be confused. But eventually the three of us got embarrassed enough by this joke that we told Sheldon he shouldn't be chairman anymore. So he quit.

The next thing I remember distinctly was Janis volunteering to go to a national meeting of film co-ops. Somebody from the OAC asked if one of us wanted to go. I guess by this point at least Janis had learned her lesson and didn't have to be asked twice. She jumped at the chance.

I remember thinking at the time that I should do it. I was still the only one who had actually made a film and the one who had been around the longest. But the reason I didn't go—another key point in this saga—was that I thought, "How can one of us go and represent this thing that doesn't really exist?" Oh youthful naivete.

So Janis went to Winnipeg (?) on OAC money as the representative of LIFT—supposedly the film co-op of Toronto. No matter that we didn't make films, didn't have any membership, didn't really have any filmmakers. The fact was there was no other co-op from Toronto.



Alan Zweig's *Where's Howie?*  
So Janis not only went to Winnipeg but came back the national secretary of the organization.

I think it was shortly after that I quit. I do remember a "meet the filmmakers"-style screening that I organized at the AGO where we showed early works by Clay Borris and Tibor Takacs. (That's sort of irrelevant to the story but...it's just more evidence.)

But while I'm talking about screenings, what I also remember are the screenings that continued what I saw as the myth of LIFT—like the Canadian Images screening where they asked us for a package of "LIFT films" to go into the Co-op section. LIFT films didn't exist. Films that people in LIFT had made years ago in film school, films that people in LIFT had helped other people make, films that friends of

people in LIFT had made...this became the LIFT package. In spite of the repeated screenings my (film school) film *The Boys* got as a result of this, I was embarrassed by this sham. Nobody else seemed to care though.

I probably was just being precious but that never stopped me before. So I quit. (I'd show them...) I prepared myself to laugh knowingly when LIFT finally applied for its first grant. I was speechless when they got it. But still I stayed away. I wasn't going to come crawling back for my handout...(finish that thought yourselves).

For years I had invited friends and acquaintances, "actual filmmakers", to come to LIFT meetings, to join. They would come but they'd never stay. In fairness to them, part of the reason they didn't stay was that it was never a very impressive group in those days. They were out there making films. LIFT members (at that time) were sitting around waiting for an invitation. But I was angry at them anyway—for not seeing how their presence could make the difference, turn the thing around, make it real. In the end the reason why they didn't stick around was because they couldn't see how they would ever get anything out of it.

I think that's partly just Toronto—not just our supposed coldness, but, particularly in the film community, the illusion that we have other choices, that we don't need each other. It seemed fairly apparent to me that in the other co-ops in the country, the ones that were "political" were not so privileged as to live under that illusion. Out in the boonies they knew they had no choice but to band together. (Probably there's an analogy here somewhere in comparing Toronto's film vs. video communities.)



I quit because I wanted LIFT to stand for something, to promote a certain kind of filmmaking practice. Maybe I was shortsighted but at the time it seemed like all we were doing was waiting. We weren't creating anything as much as we were waiting around to get something. We'd just keep being there until somebody finally said, "Are you still here?"

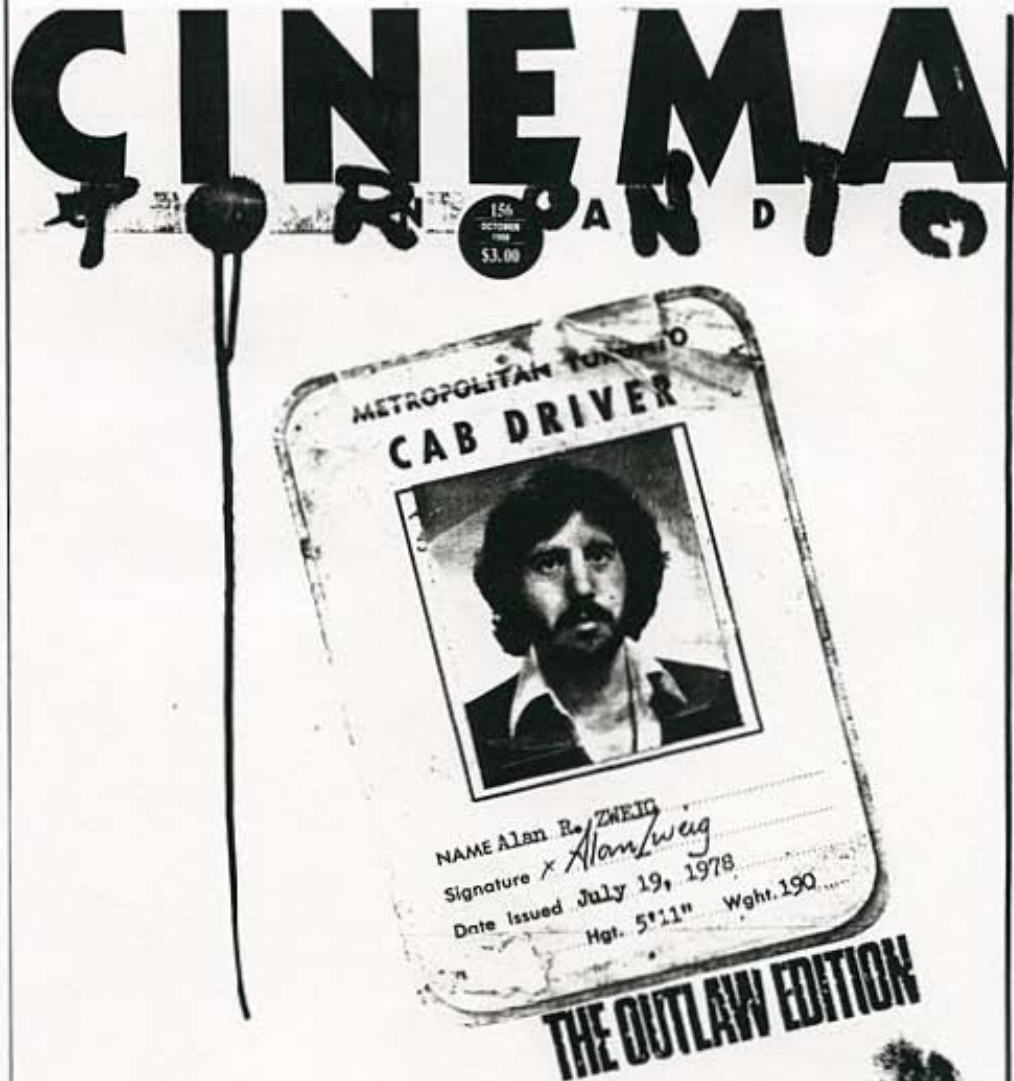
And after I left that's what happened.

One of my problems was I wasn't very good at being selfish, political. (It's called "guilt". Supposedly I come by it honestly.) Since then one thing that changed me was my involvement with the CFMDC. The thing I learned most clearly was that however I might wish otherwise, in the end, the people who were there putting in the time and the energy and who stayed around were only those who got something for themselves out of it. Interested parties, members of the larger film community, filmmakers whose careers had originated with the Centre but had moved on...none of them would stick around very long. I also saw that though people may have participated for essentially self-serving reasons, they were the only ones who stuck around to do the mundane (unselfish) work that needed doing.

I'm finishing a film. It's only natural for me to come to LIFT for a little help—a little break on equipment. So I'm back—more accepting of the way the world really is and more accepting of my own selfish motives. I think I was snapped back to reality at last year's Festival of Festivals—by all the attention the local filmmakers got. I even got a little myself in the reflected glow of one of the films. I want more.

(Or maybe it was that "outlaw" issue of *Cinema Canada*. After all, I drove a cab too. If I'd been a LIFT member, maybe...)

Anyway...disappointed I quit, bitter I stayed away, and now older and wiser I finally join—to put all that stuff behind me, to make films again, to get all the help I can get, wherever I can get it—and maybe in all of it to give something back.





## SPATS, PLATZ, RIFTS AND LIFT

Adrienne Mitchell in conversation with Gary Popovich, March 18, 1989

What follows is an edited version of a one hour telephone conversation with Adrienne on a Saturday evening when she was off to a billiards hall to meet Bruce McDonald to take back a vicious defeat she was handed the week before. I asked Adrienne to tell me stories about LIFT around 1984, one of the last times that LIFT was in fact a small group of energetic friends who decided to keep a dream going because it was an extension of what they were already living.

LIFT went through a period of several administrators: Carolyn Wuschke, Bruce McDonald and Colin Brunton, (and supposedly others, some of whom lasted only a week). The organization moved from a corner in the CFMDC's office on Front St. to Niagara St. then to Adelaide, Suite 501 (next door to the present LIFT office). Suite 501 had a shower which attracted Bruce McDonald's attention. Bruce's clothes would be piled up in a corner. And Bruce wasn't, "how should I say it...he wasn't that clean. He just sort of lived there. But he cared about the place. He once spent a lot of time sawing off the legs to a desk we were trying to get through the office door. Unfortunately as he started pounding the desk, swarms of the grossest cockroaches came pouring out." If the Board had no other social imperative to drive them on, they at least acted responsibly in keeping McDonald off the streets.

Adrienne became a member of LIFT while still a student at Ryerson, completing her film *Potzdammer Platz*. "The



Strangled By Creation  
Adrienne Mitchell  
and Bruce McDonald's feet

bureaucracy was becoming a horror. The whole co-op was so far away from filmmaking. They were putting all of their energy into working out a system. And this system was horrible. They went bureaucracy haywire."

"I got involved when the Board was almost crumbling. There were a lot of disagreements with the coordinator. She was fired and we had to take control and run the place. There was no time to go through the democratic process. We had to write grant applications and get the money and keep going. We had to be fascistic. Then when we got the grant we were able to hire a coordinator."

What was once love of getting together with friends, talking film, desperately trying to save a strange fledgling organization, turned into a place that evoked a definition, and a need for financial accountability. With successful grant applications LIFT was able to hire coordinators and allow the members to get back to the business of filmmaking.

"It's very polished now compared to what it was before." Reflecting on the dream of the kind of co-op they wanted to create, Adrienne raised that perennial question: Can a co-op in Toronto be more than an equipment access place? "LIFT was a kind of organism that everyone fed into...but we were never part of the organism. I don't know...I think we all have our own films to make, but there should have been more of a discussion about film. It wasn't creative enough; we're so wrapped up in the system...it's so Canadian. I have conflicting emotions about it. I wish it was based more on group discussions or cinematic approach...you know...what is cinema? We never sat down and said, 'we are a talented group of filmmakers, how do we fit into the world?' Instead we either sat down to bureaucracy or became self-serving."



A COLLECTOR'S ITEM

LIFT Newsletter Volume 1, No. 1  
April 1985



Welcome to the new LIFT newsletter. You hold in your hands issue No. 1 Vol. 1. (Scheduled to become a collectors' item) as the form of this newsletter may vary somewhat in the first few issues, bear with us during the change (we welcome your suggestions regarding its format).

This newsletter is proud to announce the birth of LIFT's new location. Yes, we've moved into luxurious, spacious new quarters at 245 Adelaide W. Amongst the new features of the space (other than space) is a Steinbeck-style about that further in. We've also acquired a logo which will be present on all forthcoming mailings, as well as an animated tag which can be used on LIFT associated films.

LIFT is entering a new, exciting phase of its growth, as is evident by its broadening and increasing scope - more membership, a new space, and for the first time, a public screening of seven films made by LIFT members, at the River cinema on Wednesday, April 3. Tune about time. Further in as well.

LIFT-OFF

The LIFT newsletter is edited by Robert Sheeh and Peter Chapman. Any submissions can be made into the LIFT office.

LIFT News/Member Update

Updates on productions by LIFT members include:

**SHOCK! SHOCK!** by Bruce McDonald. In essence, this is the story of a filmmaker who wants to record President Reagan and the First Lady shooting his their bedroom...a satirical search for awareness on the part of the director. Mr. McDonald received \$2000.00 for raw stock, and is now in editing. The colour/sound 30-minute drama is now taped to be completed (with the grace of god) in late April.

**TRANCE** by Janis Lundman captures images of Toronto at dusk. Receiving \$2000.00 for production, the colour/sound 8-minute documentary is currently being scored and will be completed by early April.

**SHOCK!** by Michael Farolan deals with the filmmaker's coming to terms with his father's death. The film includes footage of his family in the Tyrolean village of Alpbach, Austria. Mr. Farolan received \$700.00 for post-production. The sound/raw film (printed on colour stock) will be 5 to 8 minutes long. In editing now, the film will be completed in May.

**The Struggle for Choice**-Janis Lundman is working as the associate producer on this 55-minute videotape dealing with the abortion rights movement in Canada. The history of the movement will be explored, as well as the strategies pursued by abortion rights groups since the adoption of the current legislation in 1980.

**TRANCE** by Lois Garcia. Mr. Garcia was granted \$100.00 for post-production. An animated portrait about power; the colour/sound, 8-minute film will be completed in June.

We're counting on everyone's support at this screening, as being a friend (or foe) with you. This could be the first of a series, so let's see some serious numbers there!

We have our Steinbeck!

Yes, it's a lovely 8-quart, low cost & one motor. There is no charge for a trial of under three hours of use on the machine. Anything over three hours constitutes a day/shift. A day is 24 hours (8:00-7:00) and a shift is 12 hours. If you're working on more than one film on the machine (111) the rate is \$25.00 per week - 4 shifts - for a full member, and \$25.00 for an associate. The rate per shift is \$7.50 and \$11.00 respectively. If you're like most people and work on one film at a time, the weekly rate is \$30.00 for a full member and \$40.00 for an associate. The single day rate is \$10.00 and \$15.00 respectively. Full members have preference over the associate members to use the machine if they book one out in advance. To show are charged full rates, and cancellation of less than three days is charged one third of the full rate.



"66 EAT OF IT STINKS..."



B. McDonald, A. Mitchell, P. Mettler

LIFT Member Update (cont)

**There was a rally in NY** by Keith Hasty is an experimental documentary dealing with a dissentment rally in New York in 1982. The raw/color/sound, 10-minute film received \$2000.00 for post-production. In editing, the film will be completed sometime.

**CRASH**-Douglas Colling would like to announce that production has commenced on this 30-minute video. It will consist of five segments of original video works by five different artists. LIFT members involved include: Ray Lorenz, who will provide graphics and titles, Michael Farolan and Jeff Steinberg, who will each contribute one segment, and Douglas Colling who will produce. The program will attempt to combine artistic intent with ENG-style spontaneity. A screening of the finished work for LIFT members is planned for the summer of '85.



SHOCK! SHOCK! A FILM BY BRUCE McDONALD

Workshops

**Camera Workshop** - A workshop will be held on April 6 and 7 from 9am to 1pm at the LIFT space for a maximum of 8 LIFT members (full and associate). The workshop will review the operational aspects of the LIFT Arri 16, the Arri Tripod, and Schemo Studio Deluxe light meter. There will be an opportunity for hands-on experience during the two sessions. We will also try to squeeze in any other camera-related information such as aperture, focal length, etc. Please get word to the LIFT office as soon as possible if you're interested, or contact Grah Hasty at 523-7140. Sorry for the short notice but there will be many more to come. By the way, there will be no discussion of how membership pertains to the camera.

**Lighting Workshop** - There will be a workshop held on April 13 from 9am to 1pm at the LIFT space for a maximum of 8 LIFT members (full and associate). The workshop will give the participants an opportunity to play and experiment with various lighting instruments and set-ups. We will photograph each set-up on film with the SL. Those interested in participating get in touch with the LIFT office or Keith Hasty at 523-7140.

**Tools Workshop** - On April 15 at 7:30pm at LIFT there will be a 'tools for film' workshop. The class will be 90 minutes in length, and will deal with the art of film scoring. Included will be a brief summary of the mechanical method used to synchronize audio with film. Seminars and a

The March/LIFT screening!

On Tuesday, April 9th at 7:00pm there will be a screening of seven films all made by members of LIFT. The screening is a 90-minute package whose contents include:

**Get the Juggler** by Keith Hasty. A visit to your dentist is never this terrifying.

**Ice Arches** by Janis Lundman. An 8-minute impressionistic documentary examining the 1980 Stungul River killings, in which an entire refugee camp was slaughtered by Salvadoran soldiers. This film was one of six winners of the Canadian Independent Short Film Showcase.

**Under the Table** by Lois Garcia. A 30-minute documentary dealing with the experience of a Latin American illegal immigrant. Shown at this year's Festival of Pacifica and the '84 Screen Documentary Festival.

**Classified** by Laura Deville. An abstract, playful exploration of geometric imagery. Animation.

**Shock!** by Michael Farolan. A 1-minute animated film featuring a soundtrack by Napoleon Brownson's new-infant band, the Art Dogs. Like **Classified**, too. It utilizes non-camera animation techniques.

**Salting** by Linda Ouellet. A 25-minute docu-drama which looks at how the American pop culture industry shapes our society.

**Let Me Sing** by Bruce McDonald. Overwhelmed by influences ranging from Sara Bond to Gotthard, a young filmmaker must choose between conventional film narrative and graffiti as media for expression. Seeking advice from his colleagues, he eventually finds a solution, (aided by love, the coffee and donut men).

Discussion on the aesthetic and decisions that are made to produce an effective score will be covered. The workshop will be given by Bill Gillies. Mr. Gillies has composed a variety of music for narrative and experimental films including: **Salting** by Sylvia Jacobs

**Under the Table** by Lois Garcia

Mr. Gillies graduated from Berklee in film scoring, and has lived in Canada since 1981. Those interested should contact the LIFT office.

If you have a great, amazing, thrilling, exciting, interesting idea for a workshop get in touch with the office or with Luis at 523-1524.

On April 22 to 27, as part of the "5 Days of Resistance" campaign, films will be screening on the windows of Pages bookstore on Green St. (at JMW). This should prove to be fun and help in the arts community's rally against censorship. If you're interested in exhibiting your film (or somebody else's) contact Corina.

Classified

Stan Hishin (488-8732) is looking for P.J. work on any speaking productions. Available any time.

Nancy Carter is a local actress looking for work in any speaking productions. Nancy's last role was in the feature **Let Me Sing**, and can be reached at 925-9958 or 925-3000. A "work for experience" arrangement is offered.



## LIVING AT LIFT

Bruce McDonald interviewed by Gary Popovich, March 11, 1989

With Jim Morrison growling out "L.A. Woman" in the background, McDonald and I discussed the beginnings of LIFT from the point of view of an early member, someone who just wanted to make films and wandered in because he had nowhere better to go.

McDonald: I left school; I wanted to make films. I found LIFT, went to a meeting and I was bored immediately. I thought, "What kind of a bozo operation have I gotten myself into?" But there was a little potential there that I saw, and we just worked hard and tried to keep the meetings down to a minimum, and phoned up the Ponderosa, signed the papers, and here we are. People have come and gone, some people are still here, some people are bank tellers now.

Popovich: What was your first meeting like?

McDonald: Nobody knew what was going on; nobody had even made a film, and we spent most of the time talking about who should talk first. It took about six meetings to figure out who should talk first. And then once we figured out who should talk first...

Popovich: ...you had to figure out who was going to talk second.

McDonald: Yeah. It took another six meetings to figure out who was going to talk second. But all the time was worth it, 'cause look at LIFT now. They said it couldn't be done; and we did it. Ha-ha-ha-ha! [Distortion on tape] I just laughed. Ha-ha-ha-ha!



Bruce McDonald

Photo Credit: Chris Buck

Popovich: Where did you live?

McDonald: I lived at LIFT. When it was on Niagara Street...there wasn't even a couch, I had a sleeping bag. So I had a vested interest in LIFT 'cause it gave me shelter from the storm. That's why I helped out.

Popovich: A little photo of Bob on the wall?

McDonald: Yup. Listen to a little Coltrane, smoke a little boo.

Popovich: Tell me about the films you made at LIFT.

McDonald: Well, I couldn't have made *Knock! Knock!* without LIFT. Got footage from them, got editing time, lots of tea, stole a few cookies.

Popovich: Didn't you run the organization for a while?

McDonald: Yeah, for a little while. Kept it in a very critical moment, in a very critical time when everybody had abandoned ship. Colin Brunton and myself managed to keep it alive for a few months until the

wonderful and talented Alexandra Raffe stepped in...it was the first time LIFT got their shit together. Alex Raffe got it on the boards, 'cause before that it was just a bunch of crazy meetings and nobody knew what was going on. Alex brought the business side to LIFT.

Popovich: What did you bring to it during your administration?

McDonald: Me? Just a little rosy glow I guess. You know, I tried to get a lot of people into LIFT—some of the fringe dwellers that I knew that are now thriving members of LIFT. And probably without LIFT they would have been lost little sheep in the wilderness of film.

Popovich: Is that the progression then: lost little sheep to outlaws—a sort of mystical conversion from innocence, blood, and sweat to outlaw heroes, martyrs of the margins?

McDonald: It's funny how you become more respectable. They won't tell you what they were like then.



Popovich: It's the nature of the outlaw to have all the stories coming from an innocent past, a past that fills with killings, real or imaginary. There comes a point where you are what you are 'cause you say you are.

McDonald: It's what scares me about LIFT: maybe we've lost the desire for killin'.

Popovich: You can still see some blood on people's lips. But it's often tough for the sheriff to be an outlaw. You took some trips representing LIFT across the country. Tell me about some of those dusty travels during your administration.

McDonald: Colin Brunton and I during our term in office represented LIFT at the Quebec City IFVAC [Independent Film and Video Alliance, the organization that brings together film and video artist-run centres across Canada, serving as a lobby organization, information gathering and exchange, etc.] conference. And we made a very good impression because in one drunken night Paul Pope of the Newfoundland Film Co-op put his arm around us and said, "You know, you guys don't look like you're from Toronto." And that made us very happy because he didn't think we were the kind of people that he would have met from Toronto. Because we were as fucked up and drunk as he was...and we had no pretensions and we...we didn't want to go to the meetings, we watched the films,

talked to the people. So we represented them...I think we turned in a fine image of LIFT.

Popovich: Any other highlights from your administration?

McDonald: Oh...I remember painting the LIFT office, where it is now. Before LIFT came it was previously lived in by a girl who used to perform Mexican death rituals in there. She had a dead coyote in her fridge and a circle of flowers and candles around the floor. And everything was painted black—floors, ceiling, fridge, everything. We really got along well together... 'cause I was there then. After a few months of the Mexican death rituals, perhaps because she made contact with other people, she painted a yellow stripe around the whole place, which was a big, big moment for her in her life, 'cause it was a little ray of hope and then she ended up moving out,

shaving her head, going to Mexico, burying all her possessions in a pit, setting her dog on fire, and becoming a Buddhist kind of person.

Popovich: Wow. And out of these ashes LIFT arose, like the Phoenix bird.

McDonald: Yeah. That's right! So LIFT now resides in an ancient Mexican death ritual parlour. It's given it some very magical powers, and that's why it's doing so well today. It's got the mojo rising...yo!

This wasn't the history of LIFT that I found in the old minutes or the old newsletters. The Doors were winding their song down to the end as we made it out of McDonald's door and out into the street. I thanked Bruce for disclosing a history that was only partially covered over by the respectability of wallpaper, council grants, and more timid members.



Signing of the LIFT constitution



LIFT Gonzo screening in front of the University Theatre during the Festival of Festivals.



## DIARY NOTES— ONE YEAR AT LIFT by Gary Popovich

### Personal Political

I was a member of LIFT for one day in 1984. I payed my \$10 yearly dues at that meeting, received newsletters and phone calls, went to a few screenings, but never really returned to do any work, to attend any meetings. I'd come from too much schooling and being with the wrong person. LIFT seemed like another wrong person in its burgeoning efficiency...another institution. Maybe I quit LIFT because I disliked happy endings.

I'd spent a long time oozing into the ground only to find that ground always stood in relation to something, and if I didn't want to turn into a compost heap I'd have to turn my energies outward. Thanks to Steve Sanguedolce I heard about the job at LIFT, applied, and thanks to Rob Pazdro I retired my position as Collector of the Dole.

Starting a new job is like moving into a new apartment—everything looks totally foreign at first, but soon you know the neighbourhood so well you can listen to the traffic at night and know the space the cars drive through as you lie in bed staring at the ceiling. You're no longer thinking as a foreigner; you're beginning to draw pictures. I stared out of the 5th floor window at LIFT in between looking at old board minutes and newsletters, wondering what else I could see besides the worst pollution I had seen in my eight years here in Toronto. I hated the thought of working through my first summer in years; but pictures started to develop in my mind.

When you're paid to talk to more than just yourself you either get a sense of responsibility, an enlarged

ego, or both. That's what filmmaking and publishing often do. What's most difficult is deciding what is irrelevantly or pretentiously personal and what is personal in the most politically interactive way: the individual in relation to the plurality of individuals constituting a human nexus that celebrates differences in an engaging and demanding way.

I have to thank Rob for giving me the freedom to create my own agenda—an agenda that I filled by screening, for myself, LIFT films, meetings with people in the community as well as in the co-op, loads of disagreements, conciliatory gestures, and workable solutions. When I look back at my notebook of 11 months ago I see personal details such as "pick up toilet paper...call Tom at the CFMDC...rent air conditioner...order some 7362"—lists of things to do mixed in with film ideas, with the highlights of meetings, with my notes on the films I'd seen, with impressions of organizations and people, with ideas for articles, with summarized reports I was reading, with quotes from books, sketches, scribbles, cryptic comments, etc. It seems to me impossible to separate what is political/social from what is personal; it moves through your notebooks like it moves through your body. You just don't know how so much of it will be used...and you shouldn't think in those terms.

"Reality, however complete, has to be altered by being turned into art, so that it can be seen alterable and hence alterable and hence alterable."  
Bertolt Brecht

*Reality, however complete,  
has to be altered by being  
turned into art, so that  
it can seem to be alterable  
and be treated as such.*

*Bertolt Brecht*



The first meeting at which I represented LIFT—The Coalition for Educational Film—saw me protesting that it cannot be the teachers who decide what artists should be creating, and that money cannot be contingent upon a teacher's curriculum. I was asked not to come to the next meeting. Divisions run deep when it comes to independent film—everybody has their own take on what should and should not be funded, money is scarce, and the personal is often associated with the esoteric banishing it from social circles because it is perceived as being difficult to integrate within a homogeneous fabric. Of course it is; as Brecht points out, it's that fabric that we need to show as being constructed, textured, and actually heterogeneous.





**People 1**

Working in an artist-run organization inevitably means you meet people. If you're used to semi-isolation then the constant onslaught of telephone inquiries, crazy questions which often may have little to do with the co-op, people constantly coming and going in the office, not sure what LIFT is, not sure what they want, some who come to talk, some fascinating, some just in need of companionship, etc., etc....can at first seem disconcerting and counter-productive. But you find that the office acts as a center—an information gathering place, a place where people can come, like-minded people, who know they can satisfy at least some of their needs most of the time. I had one man who, after exhausting every conceivable avenue (literally every one), called LIFT wanting someone to make a film on his life to expose the terrible atrocities inflicted upon him, and the misunderstandings he's suffered...and because I showed some interest I ended up spending long periods of time with him on the telephone, having lunch with him several times, listening to his stories, reading the literature he's been collecting on his life for years now. It's hard not to get swept up in people's pain when it's so graphically vivid, when they seem so desperate, and you know they have nowhere else to go. That's the most extreme example; but everyone in the office has had to navigate a path through uncomfortable waters finding the right balance between attentive compassion, and callous dismissal.

Having been closely involved with the CFMDC for several years, I was struck by the differences between it and LIFT. The CFMDC is always buzzing with energetic people working on any number of different projects; it's an extremely well-run business that closes at 6:00 p.m., and holds amongst the finest of Christmas parties. The LIFT office has the ability to transform. In the evening it can often have filmmakers wandering around, editing, talking, writing grant proposals, or, on several occasions, sleeping on the couch. More often than not it was Bruce McDonald, who until recently had nowhere else to go. I only fault him for having left a window open one night last summer, allowing a sparrow to wander in and spend a frightened morning flying amongst the wires and pipes of our ceiling trying to escape several sympathetic staff who were attempting to guide it back out the window.

But the office has also been the scene of many meetings/screenings/parties. Some screenings turned into raucous

*handwritten notes:*  
 ...drinks with passionate discussions that would often allow a lot of overwound people to get a lot of stuff off their chest. I remember one such night...the party/screening in honour of Judy Guoin (former Film/Video Officer at the OAC) and the filmmakers who had films selected for the Festival of Festivals. Discussions continued until all the beer was gone, many of the bottles of wine given to the honoured filmmakers were gone, and

drinks with passionate discussions that would often allow a lot of overwound people to get a lot of stuff off their chest. I remember one such night...the party/screening in honour of Judy Guoin (former Film/Video Officer at the OAC) and the filmmakers who had films selected for the Festival of Festivals. Discussions continued until all the beer was gone, many of the bottles of wine given to the honoured filmmakers were gone, and

anything else that happened to be around, including some isopropyl that an editing filmmaker tried desperately to hang on to. During the early hours of the morning when everyone had left, a few filmmakers were seen driving down Queen Street barking joyfully like dogs at less exuberant passersby. And there are other screening/talks that have produced astounding discussions that have demonstrated a liveliness, passion and critical engagement that filmmakers usually dream about. One recent example is the Richard Kerr screening/talk (the transcript of which will appear in the next LIFT newsletter).



**Travels**

Being employed by LIFT meant that any travelling I did last summer was going to be either LIFT business, or short distance. So last summer saw me exploring some of Canada. For the first time in my life, I travelled north of Sheppard Avenue (no joking), where I shot film and did other more unmentionable things. I also travelled to Winnipeg and Montreal where I represented LIFT.

Sometimes you just need to get out of Toronto to figure out what's going on in this city. I represented LIFT at the ANNPAC (Association of National Non-Profit Artists Centres) meeting in Winnipeg in June 1988 where I either ran into non-film





artists who apologized for not watching or programming Canadian independent film in their organizations (seems our cumbersome projectors, and threading, and the need for a technician puts us a distant second behind video), or I heard nasty asides about the death of film (experimental, or art film...again) from people like video artist Gary Kibbins. Mike Hoolboom (who was representing the CFMDC) and I washed our frustration and anger down with a lot of beer and tears about film art in Canada in a seedy Winnipeg bar, trying to evoke sympathy from the bartender, waiters, and native Winnipeggers. I was robbed that night—lost my regular-8 camera, 3 rolls of film, a print of my film *Immoral Memories*, and my travelling Jean-Luc Godard poster that I wanted to hang in my overly elegant hotel room. I decided that night that I was either going to have to become Telefilm material...or turn to video art... 'cause the gods of decadent film artists didn't seem to care.

But....5 months later...

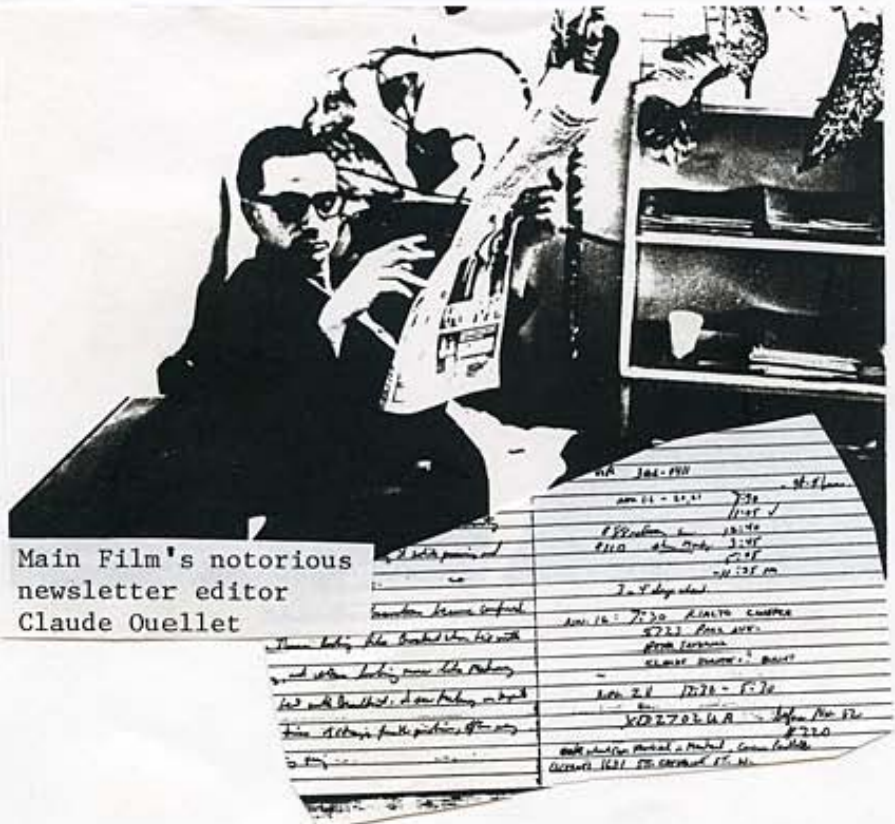
I again represented LIFT, this time in Montreal for the 5 Days of Canadian Independent Cinema. The event was organized by the production co-op, Main Film, who decided to put in the hard work and celebrate independent film from across Canada. Screenings were held at Cinema Parallele. There I ran into Bob Wilkie (a writer and interviewer of filmmakers); he mentioned that perhaps Gary P. and Gary K. (both hailing from Toronto) should get together and talk about their differences arising out of Winnipeg...because both of us may have misunderstood one another. I agreed, reluctantly, until he told me that Kibbins was at the bar (Cinema Parallele runs a cafe and bar in front), then I tried my best to postpone the meeting,

figuring there was no use in spoiling a good evening. Feeling the inevitable coming, I faced the challenge, swallowed deeply, met Kibbins, explained my concerns, and found a caring, intelligent, understanding man. Both of us were too hasty; both of us too far removed from the other's experience.

It was disturbing to find that pattern repeated in my different experiences. For me, Quebecois filmmakers meant Jean-Pierre Lefebvre, Jacques Leduc, etc...that's like saying Toronto film is Don Shebib and Don Owen, neglecting anything else that has been or is happening. Because I never really hooked into their scene, because we've grown up learning about a barrier (historical, cultural, etc. between Montreal and Toronto) that only lets little glimpses through, I too was unable to see...because I wasn't looking. Main Film's event succeeded in making independents from across the country much more aware of each other (the people, the films, the concerns) and much more aware of what is happening in Quebec.

On this trip, my companion, representing the CFMDC, was Steve Sanguedolce, who was billeted with filmmaker hip-with-his-hats-and-drumsticks Peter Sandmark; I stayed with filmmaker street-smart-love-sick Claude Ouellet; both men had apartments twice the size of the cockroach-infested, over-priced dumps we accept in Toronto. It makes you wonder why you're staying here in Toronto: they've got cheap shelter, great food, a winning hockey team, a lot of people who really dig film, smoke the same black as us, and they always have a second way to say something.

Our 5 days were an emotional whirlwind that wound up at Poodles, where exhilarated filmmakers careened in a club where heads as well as walls and floor were dancing like a Paul Sharits colour/flicker/sectioned film. Between the slashes of light and the sine waves pounding our eardrums I indiscriminately gave up a video copy of *Immoral Memories* to someone who said he wanted to show it in video bars (each trip I seem to lose a *Memory*), watched Toronto programmers Isabelle and Richard stalking films



Main Film's notorious newsletter editor Claude Ouellet



and filmmakers, while Sylvain, Guylaine, Jean, Rick, Gyslaine, Julia, Denis, Velcrow Ripper, Eric, and others led their Queen Street colleagues to yet another of the haunting grounds of St. Laurent, where the scary catches of Waldman's fish store are not far off, gentrification is always a threat, but old-time fellow travellers like Leonard Cohen are still to be found in dark black suits handing out quarters to the outstretched hands on the streets.

Even though you had little food in your fridge, you fed me good stories, streets, and especially coffee in bed, or on the floor, or wherever I stayed, stumbled...thanks Claude.

Mark Twain once said that experience was like a toothpick...nobody wants it once you've had it. I guess it's better to be someone with his/her own rivers to navigate, and always willing to take a momentary detour onto someone else's raft.



**Bits and Bites**

1

Sometimes what a person finds attractive is the very thing they start running from. The stakes are raised; their desire is put to the test; they begin to feel competitively inadequate; beguiling themselves they say that's never what they wanted and they turn on their original desires.

2

People carry with them too many assumptions about you before they've actually tasted your cooking. People shouldn't speak to each other until they've cooked together and shared the meal.

*I beg is important in the Cholechille  
Even chole near copper  
bitten " stone in break*

Whatever happened to the ingenuous? People send out such confusing signals when they have problems with their own fears and desires. Most of them just need a few stimulants to loosen them up...to be able to say 'I like this, I don't like that.' Then they talk like they'll never get another chance for ten more years. It's too bad there aren't prescriptions for such maladies; it might prevent a lot of ulcers and sadness later on.

4

The more you throw yourself into the public arena the more you need to fear the reprisals of a floating name. A name is like a magnet for all the filings from knives that are constantly being sharpened. The knives are never plunged directly into your breast; one just looks at the name and sees a sign, a symbol for all the sharpened knives that exist...somewhere. It's insidious because everyone acts as if there's no real murder, no real victim. Because they really don't know what they're slowly killing.

5

Silence is only good when you know it's part of music; at any other time it's vengeful.

6

Meeting a friend you haven't seen in several years plunges you into the position of radically redefining everything that existed between you. Always conscious of trying to

strike a balance, both of you are cautious, testing the ground; still, the first few moments are often alive, electric. Then, in the desire to catch up, you tend to run away with yourself. One steps too far, the other retreats. And you never see each other again.

7

How is it that you can fall in love with an arm, an umbrella, a movement, a turn of the face towards a street lamp, a dance you never had, a dance you thought you had? And then let it disappear alone into the night.

**People 2**

...my grandmother says that the wheel is always turning, turning one thing into another...work? play?— Steve, Mike, Randy...Richard and Phil needed to go far in order to get close again...Louise leaves, works for video and plays with film...Lori and I made up faces in the mirror, then the TV cameras took them off of us and sent them down the tubes...at that venerable drinking hole with the scorpions crawling up the Queen Street facade, after a New Waves in Canadian Cinema screening, listened to Cynthia's and Harald's excitement about LIFT, and Toronto independent film—their marvelous theory about our scene being a sort of United Nations...the



*July 1 5:54 AM  
The relation between the body and the feet.  
The body leans a bit to need to play the feet, so that  
it leans the feet through the rhythm of the language  
17 was 0.1.1.1*

*Apr. 27/88  
Structure is the residual deposit of duration  
- Barthes*



rooftop party bringing together the Ryerson and the Sheridan filmmakers hasn't yet happened...it should...where did the name Snake Lady come from?...where's Ed?...how's Peter's Head?...Jeff, whither those breakfasts, whither those lunches?...trials, tribulations, tributes and tender thank yous to Rob and Marc...and Maureen...Ignace and I watched the sunset at Queen and John cursing the monitors across the street at City TV and calling for the return of the Situationists...as The Funnel slowly withers...?...the DEC benefit for the Euclid brings together money and memories, a sort of '60s gathering in the bewildered late '80s, where radicalism becomes vaudeville, where I'm wondering what brings us huddling together like porcupines, where I'm working separately on Janis and Alan hoping that I can draw the blood of at least two histories into the public arena, where they might profitably mix; as the lights come up and Alan is still stalking me with Yiddish words in his holster and my mouth runs on past patience...I think we've all burned enough bridges for now;

since the healing time isn't inordinately long, gonna have to learn how to swim with people whose bathing suits we once thought were either silly, old-fashioned, much too protective, not daring enough, or simply not there (the emperor's new bathing suit). When there's already enough sharks in the water why kill your

swimming partners just because you don't like their suits. You can always settle that argument on the sand over a few cold ones...or better yet disappear into the woods for a bit, slip off your suits and start from scratch...the diary ends with a return to filmmaking...



A collage of handwritten notes, drawings, and printed elements:

- PRINTED ELEMENTS:**
  - "APPRECIATE YOUR PATRONAGE" (yellow sign)
  - "ONTARIO COLLEGE" (red stamp)
  - "TORONTO 22 MAR 1989 ONT" (red circular stamp)
  - "CANADA POST 0.35" (red stamp)
  - "THE DEATH OF A CANADIAN ART MOVEMENT" (yellow sign)
  - "EMPLOYMENT" (yellow vertical sign)
  - "100 PAPIERS A CIGARETTE" (green diagonal sign)
- HANDWRITTEN NOTES AND DRAWINGS:**
  - "Mixing PIX" with a tree sketch and "voice over"
  - "MAG 1" and "MAG 2" with "in words"
  - "Kodak FILM 4XR449" and "16MMX100FT 7277 4X RVSL" (written vertically)
  - "best wishes" (written diagonally)
  - "MARGINS" (written vertically on the left)
  - "The Funnel" (written vertically on the right)
  - "I regret" (written near a red stamp)
  - "Love may not always last, but the photograph of it does." (written at the bottom)
  - A drawing of a face in a circle at the bottom left.
  - A drawing of a tree in the center.
  - Various scribbles and symbols like circles, triangles, and lines.

*A wish is a kind of experience. What we wish for is not youth, we wish an abundance of old eyes, and beauty. The earliest purpose we wish a wish, the further we wish, the greater the fulfillment. But it is experience we wish. And it is experience we wish to see reached. The place of distance in feeling, which changes as space, has become the*

*MARGINS*

*you do know your immigration consultant. They can't stop to think that somebody has been opposed to experience that they would have... maybe they do not see the experience and connect it to the attitude toward the experience.*

*bridge*

*What we wish for is not youth, we wish an abundance of old eyes, and beauty. The earliest purpose we wish a wish, the further we wish, the greater the fulfillment. But it is experience we wish. And it is experience we wish to see reached.*

*YOU'RE ALLOWED TO HAVE COMMITMENTS*

*late summer*

*with the*



## REVIEWS

LIFT AND TAIS  
COLLABORATE  
by Ellen Besen

In January, LIFT and the Toronto Animated Image Society (TAIS) presented an evening of animation. This is the first time the two groups have collaborated to create an event of interest to both animators and live action filmmakers.

The films ranged from Bob Cowan's experimental *Electrametric*, to Jonathan Amitay's political pieces, done in a direct under-the-camera technique, to Arnie Lipsey's charming *The Crow and the Canary*, which uses traditional cell animation to tell a story drawn from his own childhood. This last film is interesting because, not only does it describe the kind of neighbourhood conflict that everyone can relate to, but it doesn't attempt to fit its story into a neat mould, rather allowing its moral ambiguities to speak for themselves. Its visuals are full of detail and the soundtrack, with narration by the filmmaker's father and music inspired by the Klezmer tradition (Eastern European Jewish popular music), is very effective.

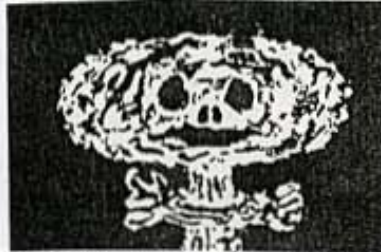
Another highlight of the program was *Villanelle*, a new film by Elizabeth Lewis. This film,



Bob Cowan

rendered entirely in coloured pencil, is based on a poem by Earl Birney. It opens with a live action sequence in which Birney himself introduces the poem. It then moves into the fluid, subtly coloured visuals which nicely illustrate Birney's reading.

There were two films from Sheridan College: *Trouble with Joe* by David Andrews and *Fishing Is for the Birds* by Sean Curran. *Trouble with Joe* is a good example of a



Jonathan Amitay's Nukie's Sermon

"film without words", a tradition of non-verbal storytelling which has remained an important part of animation filmmaking. It tells a

story about a conflict between an artist and his creation, using only a lively musical soundtrack which helps to move the film along at a brisk pace. Sean Curran's piece also follows a path which has been of on-going interest to animators: how to bring children's drawings to life. *Fishing Is for the Birds* is based on a story written by the filmmaker when he was a child. The animation is stylized in a way that truly suits the deliberately child-like drawings. The overall effect is delightful.

In a more experimental mode was Ed Ackerman's rhythmic *5c a Copy*, which explores how images created on a xerox machine can be put on a film.

The screening was held at the NFB's distribution theatre, with some of the filmmakers in attendance. The house was close to full, with an audience that was a mix of LIFT and TAIS members, as well as the general public. The films were followed by discussion.

Ed Ackerman's 5c a Copy





**YONGE 'N SAFE HARBOUR**  
by Thom Hounsell  
review by Don Booth

*Yonge 'n Safe Harbour* is Thom Hounsell's first film. Working as a one-man crew, recording sound separately from picture, Thom has made a film about his grandparents, Charles and Frances Hounsell, who now reside near the bustling corner of Yonge and Eglinton. Though they make their home in downtown Toronto, their hearts are in Safe Harbour, Newfoundland, a fishing village they left almost forty years ago.

Thom filmed life on Yonge Street: street hawkers, busy people rushing by, empty bank interiors, and a construction worker. He contrasted these shots with footage of his grandparents going about their everyday routines. The elder Hounsell took the camera in stride as they shopped, tended flowers, worked around the house and insisted on posing for a portrait in the mall. They did all that is expected of a retired couple, carrying themselves with great dignity, integrity and restraint. The images are not particularly beautiful, nor is the camera work sophisticated; nevertheless, the film allows their personalities to emerge in a loving and honest portrait. This is the film's greatest strength.

There are no interviews. Mr. and Mrs. Hounsell did not respond well to being interviewed, so Thom began to visit his grandparents regularly for dinner. He hung a microphone over the table and recorded their dinner conversation, which consisted entirely of comments about their lives in Safe Harbour. After cutting out all the dinner noises, Thom found that he had lost much to heavy Newfoundland accents and stories told through mouthfuls of food.

The only image of Safe Harbour is a brightly coloured painting done by

Mr. Hounsell. The film suffers by not having communicated the importance of this painting. Mr. Hounsell painted it from memory; he still remembers with vivid clarity every detail of life in Safe Harbour, down to who sat in what pew in church. The Hounsell family keeps alive in their daily conversation a village that has not existed since the day forty years ago when its buildings were carried across the ice and combined with a neighbouring town. They now live in Toronto but are consumed by the life they left forty years ago.

*Yonge 'n Safe Harbour* does not use any particular idea or image as a structure. It is primarily a collection of contrasting images, anecdotes and quips grouped by subject. Some sections work well. Early in the film the Hounsell family push a cart through a modern grocery store while on the soundtrack they talk about shopping in Safe Harbour, where they handed the grocer a list and he filled the order. Other times the picture and sound diverge completely and some of the impact is lost. In one such section Frances Hounsell recounts catching a trout in her water bucket while unconnected images of the Hounsell family in their apartment and a huge construction drill play across the screen. If the various sections had been linked by more specific themes and images, the film would have been better.

Thom Hounsell has successfully captured a sliver of two people's hearts and souls. Capturing this elusive human element is the greatest challenge to every filmmaker. No film, no matter how finely crafted, can succeed without it. If *Yonge 'n Safe Harbour* were longer, this lack of structure might cause the audience to lose interest. But because it is only eight minutes long and because it is simple and unpretentious, it succeeds on its own terms.

**PASSING THROUGH** by Marc LaFoy  
review by Josie Massarella & Michael Werth

Under a big blue sky, a cool kid pounds the hot prairie highway. Jack's coming to the city for the first time, wearing everything he owns, attempting a life independent of his family. Light warm jazz, cool and funny, could place this film in the fifties. Jack narrates from a "future present", but then this film's theme is timeless—you can leave home and go to the big city, but the spirit of your ancestors follows you everywhere. In this film Jack is moving on for the first time, out of a small town we never see.

The non-actor playing Jack has been perfectly cast. His natural self-possession allows him to move through the summer of the film with the easy grace of an innocent. Jack's inexperience renders him brutally vulnerable to comical confrontations. In this paved Western, a mob of skateboarding boys attempts to terrorize our hero during his day off, which he is spending leisurely in the park. His life and loves pass before him with the same speed that governs his nervous actions—a relaxed pace that creates comic tension. And like a comic strip character, this unusual-looking kid wears the same clothes over the period of a summer.

Rich foregrounded sound abounds in this cartoon mix of natural and artificial sound effects and dialogue. The bright sun and wide open sky give the film a surreal, high-key look. This comedy, uncluttered (to push a metaphor) as the prairie, has been directed with a confidence evidenced in the careful selection of locations, colours, angles, and framing. One of the many visual surprises in the film is a red and white ball, disguised as a playful prop, which takes on comic menace as it is transformed in the character's mind into an instrument of terror. *Passing Through* is well-written and humorous and should be enjoyed by everyone.



**FORGOTTEN MOTHER** by  
Adrienne Amato and Derek  
Rogers  
review by Howard Dancyger

The 24-minute documentary *Forgotten Mother* is a story of reunion between filmmaker Adrienne Amato and Alice, the black domestic worker who raised her in Zimbabwe. The combination of voice-over narration—read in the form of a letter to Alice—and the conversations of the two women as they go over old times provides a moving and intimate portrait of the relationship between them.

More importantly—and in my opinion, this is the strength of the film—it explores and establishes the personality of Alice with a warmth and intimacy that only a close personal relationship can inform. More powerful for me than the getting re-acquainted conversations between the two women—which at times felt like being with strangers as they go over 'remember when' stories of which you have no part—

were the narrated images of Alice's then-daily business of child raising, as well as the moments in which Alice simply describes her feelings to the camera.

The backbone of the film comes from Alice's charm as she relates her memories and experiences. And it is the warmth and fascination that the filmmaker has for Alice that ultimately gets passed on to the viewer.

#### GRANT DEADLINES

##### CANADA COUNCIL

##### EXPLORATIONS

DEADLINES	RESULTS
January 15	mid April
May 1	end July
September 15	mid December

##### AID TO ARTISTS (INDIVIDUALS)

DEADLINES	RESULTS
A: October 1	January 1
B: April 1	July 1
October 1	January 1

#### FILM PRODUCTION

DEADLINES	RESULTS
July 15	October 1
November 15	February 1
March 15	June 1

#### ART BANK

DEADLINES	RESULTS
February 1	mid March
August 1	mid
September	

#### ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL

##### FILM PRODUCTION

DEADLINES	RESULTS
November 1	early February
April 1	early July

##### SCREENWRITING

DEADLINES	RESULTS
February 1	early May

##### PROJECT GRANTS

DEADLINES	RESULTS
September 15	mid November

##### ARTISTS AND THE WORKPLACE

DEADLINE	RESULTS
March 1	mid April
July 4	mid August

#### FESTIVALS

##### 38TH MELBOURNE FILM FESTIVAL

Melbourne, Australia  
Deadline: March 31, 1989  
Telefilm Coordination

##### 37TH INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL OF MOUNTAIN EXPLORATION AND ADVENTURE

Trento, Italy  
Deadline: April 15, 1989  
No Telefilm Coordination

##### 25TH YORKTON SHORT FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL

Yorkton, Saskatchewan  
Deadline: April 3, 1989



Still from *Forgotten Mother*