



lens flare

+ cowboy hats

= independent filmmakers



THE LIAISON OF INDEPENDENT FILMMAKERS OF TORONTO
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EDITOR:

Barbara Manguy

DESIGN/PRODUCTION DISTRIBUTION

MANAGER:

Christina Zeidler

WRITERS THIS ISSUE:

Jonathan Culp, Jane Farrow, Lisa Hayes, Mike
Hoolboom, Scott McLaren, Alyson Mitchell, Greg
Woodbury

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE:

Jonathan Culp, Pedram Fouladianpour, Cara Morton,
Jason Romilly, Jeff Sterne,
Diana Vazquez

LIFT STAFF:

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Deborah McFines

TECHNICAL CO-ORDINATOR 1:

Greg Woodbury

TECHNICAL CO-ORDINATOR 2:

Lisa Hayes

MEMBERSHIP CO-ORDINATOR:

Deanna Bowen

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT CO-ORDINATOR:

TBA

THE LIFT BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

CHAIR:

David Nancoff

VICE:

Christy Garland

SECRETARY:

TBA

TREASURER:

TBA

THE REST OF THE GANG:

Dominique Cardona, Keith Cole, Jonathon Culp,
Siobhan Devine, Victoria Hirst, Simone Jones,
Mdudusi Molgakala, Deborah Tabah, Nena Toth

The LIAISON OF INDEPENDENT FILMMAKERS OF TORONTO is a non-profit co-operative which supports and encourages independent filmmaking through the exchange of information and access to equipment and facilities. LIFT hosts a program of workshops and monthly screenings and it provides access to information regarding funding sources, festival and grant deadlines and other related matters.

LIFT is supported by its membership, the Canada Council (Media Arts Section), the Ontario Arts Council, Metro Council Cultural Affairs Division, the City of Toronto through the Toronto Arts Council, the National Film Board of Canada, Telefilm, the Ontario Film Development Corporation, the Government of Ontario through the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation.

Articles published in the LIFT newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors, the Co-op or members of the Board of Directors. Letters to the editor can be sent c/o LIFT, 37 Hanna Avenue, Suite 301, Toronto, Ontario M6K 1W5, Phone: 585-6444; Fax: 588-7017.

LIFT's website address is:
<http://www.inforamp.net/~lift>

e-mail: lift@inforamp.net

Anyone with questions, suggestions or ideas, please call Lisa at the LIFT office, or e-mail us.

EDITORIAL

Now that the groundhog didn't see his shadow winter is officially over, right?, or at least it will be on the official first day of spring, which is March 21. I'm getting more energetic and I'm thinking of making my new-millennium, apocalyptic, experimental art event film now, so as to have it in the can by the year 1999. But ever since I quit coffee, the preoccupations of my artistic mind (I've recently been dwelling on my friends dogs) are decidedly anti-apocalyptic and all I could muster for a statement about the year 2000 is that dogs are great.

So I went back on the bean hard enough to become either visionary or delusional, and combined it with some wicked over-the-counter Chinese cold and flu herbs and this is what I've come up with so far (it's a feature, by the way): A comfortably plump androgynous in cozy, furry bondage gear and a bad acrylic tube hikes a rusty jalopy and road trips out to Venus where (s)he morphs with the Venusians (who all look like dogs). In her androgynous/puppy form (S)he is picked up by a group of delinquent children with million dollar settlements from their abusive suburban parents and nothing to do all day but smoke hemp cigarettes the size of stationwagon tail pipes (S)he counsels them on the dangers of smoking as they tickle her(im) which sends her(im) into a 45 minute experimental neo-Brakhagian paint-on-film montage dream sequence, which uses only images derived from macro lens photography of a single dust-bunny. (This can be extracted from the feature and run on its own with solo bassoon accompaniment and an interpretive dance duet taking place immediately in front of the projector) Immediately following this is a chase scene where everyone's on motorcycles riding around Venus kicking up the dust until a definitively male cop wearing a 40lb cod-piece will counsel them on the dangers of careless driving underage. He scolds the androgynous/puppy morph and mocks her(im) for being part of the Terran diaspora. The morph follows him home. Fade out.

Now it's your turn! Turn to page 22 to see how you too can contribute your anti-millennium-vision to a special LIFT "It's not the Millennium yet, but we got to the party early" Newsletter Hurry! Only 3 years and counting!

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Message from the Chair

In the time since its inception, LIFT filmmakers have been applauded for their creativity, their daring, and for their willingness to explore diverse issues. We're seeing an increasing number of innovative works from women and other under represented groups, and LIFT endeavours are eagerly anticipated by the community.

As we enter a new era at LIFT with additional equipment and new technology I encourage you to exchange creative and business initiatives between this association's talented and unique filmmakers.

I wish everyone at LIFT much success.

David Nancoff

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ON THE COVER: ALLYSON JANE
AND RON
PHOTOGRAPH: JANE FARROW
(WAIT HOW DOES THAT WORK?)

critical dates & dubious deadlines

funding & grant deadlines:

Ontario Arts Council
(961-1660)

Artist Film & Video

April 1

Exhibition Assistance
(inclusive of Photography)
determined by individual
galleries

**NFB Filmmaker Assistance
Program (FAP) (973-3012)**

April 30

**Toronto Arts Council (392-
6800)**

Visual Arts

(Inclusive of Film & Video)

October 15

Canadian Heritage (819) 994-6035
Broadcasting, Film and Audio/Visual

April 14

Canada Council (1-800-263-5588)

Production Grant/Creative Development

March 15

First Production in Media Arts

March 1

**FUND (Foundation to Underwrite
New Drama for Pay Television)**
956-5431

Script Development and Equity
Investment Programmes

May 2

upcoming festival deadlines:

FESTIVAL /LOCATION /DATE:

DEADLINE:

TELEPHONE:

Cannes Film Festival Cannes (May 7-28)	2/2/97 to Telefilm Office) 3/1/97 (to Cannes Festival)	(514)283-6363
Ann Arbor Film Festival Ann Arbor (Mar. 11-16)	2/15/97	313 995-5356
Transmedia Videofest Berlin (May 97)	2/15/97	030 24 72 19 07
The Montreux International Electronic Cinema Festival Switzerland (April 23-28)	2/15/97	+41 21 963 32 20
Dreamspeakers Film & Video Forum/Aboriginal Film & Video Awards Edmonton (May 30)	2/28/97	(403) 439-3456
Hiroshima International Amateur Film and Video Festival Naka-ku (Aug. 22-26)	2/28/97	81 82 245 0245
Yorkton Short Film & Video Festival / Golden Sheaf Awards Yorkton (May 22 - 25)	3/28/97	(306) 782-7077
Sydney Film Festival Sydney (June 6-21)	3/7/97	+61 2 9692 8793
Carolina Film & Video Festival Greensboro (April 2-5)	3/10/97	(910) 334-5360
Smoky Mountain/Nantahala Media Festival Bryson City, NC (April 11-13)	3/14/97	P.O.Box 1068, Bryson City, NC 28713
Trenton Festival Trenton (April 25- May 3)	3/20/97	0461 98 61 20
Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival Tokyo (Oct. 6-13)	3/31/97	(03) 3266-9704
Wine Country Film Festival Napa/Sonoma Valley (July-August)	04/15/97	
Nantucket Film Festival (June 17-22)	4/18/97	(212) 642-6339
Toronto Worldwide Short Film Festival Toronto (June 2-8)	04/20/97	535-8506
Cabbagetown Film & Video Festival Toronto (Sept 3-4)	7/31/97	416-921-0857
San Francisco Jewish Film Festival San Francisco (July 17-31)		jewishfilm@aol.com

*Guidelines and application forms for the following festivals are on file and available for photocopying (10¢ a page) at the LIFT office. As much as we'd like to, LIFT staff cannot take the time out to fax forms to members. Please do not ask. If you are unable to make it into the LIFT office, you will have to call the festival directly to request an application form.

*1996 edition of the AIVF Guide to International Film & Video Festivals. An invaluable resource for planning your festival entries for the upcoming year. Available as an in-house resource for all LIFT members.

critical dates & dubious deadlines

calls for submissions:



Banff Centre for the Arts, Media and Visual Arts

Programme is calling for proposals for 1996-97 thematic residency, entitled APOCALYPSO. Residencies are between Oct. 6 to Nov. 12, 1997, bringing together 70 artists whose work is informed by apocalyptic narratives that resonate with predictions and grim forms of beauty and humour. Applications for research, writing, curatorial and production projects will be welcomed. Deadline: February 28, 1997.

THE INDEPENDENT EYE features Canadian short drama and animation on Knowledge Network and SCN. They are looking for creative, entertaining short stories between one to twenty-eight minutes in length, shot on film or broadcast-quality video. Sorry, no pre-buying or development funding available. Send VHS tapes and info between January 1 and March 31, 1997 to Judy Robertson, Knowledge Network 4344 Mathissi Place, Burnaby, BC V5G 4S8 (604) 431-3224

the capacity of Associate Producer on a one-time production with an independent producer. Eligibility is as follows: must be a Canadian woman; previous experience working in mid-level capacity on a production that went to broadcast or theatrical distribution; producer credit on a low budget production; strong organizational skills; experience dealing with budgets, funding agencies and acquaintance with industry collective agreements. Deadline: March 3, 1997.

CANWEST GLOBAL SYSTEM - CFTPA
1997 Mentorship Program for Women: Associate Producer Award applications are available at the LIPT office. The award offers a Canadian Woman the opportunity to work in

announcements:

Feature Film Project:

Currently in the process of being redesigned for its revitalized renewal is the Canadian Film Centre's Feature Film project. Colin Brunton has left to pursue his independent interests, but the project will continue in some form. Enterprising filmmaking teams (one person has to have attended the school) should continue to send submissions.

Confused about the Megacity? The Toronto Arts Council sent us a handy information sheet. Basically if the cities merge they will have to rationalize differences of strategy and opinion on the place of arts in the community. The current all-borough budget is 11 million, and the TAC announces that its mandate is to see that whatever body governs the new gotham, it recognizes the importance the arts have to quality of life, that any vision includes thought about cultural equity and the importance of arms-length funding and that the budget stays the same!

Worth thinking about for LIPT members and independent artists everywhere is how the different groups currently define artistic merit

MAKE SURE YOU VOTE! Phone 392-7833 for information

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR - Send us your comments or critique! Ask us for favours! Shower us with praise, gifts, personal photos...

lift news...lift news...lift n

new members:

Welcome new members
as of August-October

Luke Ballon
Gavin Caradonna
Kaayla Channe
Joy Corion
Greg Dinsmore
Jane Farrow
Adriano Ferreri
Matthew Griffis
Omar Kajouji
Jennifer Little
Elyssa Livergant
Lynne Smyth
Chris Urbas

congratulations:

Congratulations to LIFT Members whose films selected for screening at the National Screen Institute's Declaration of Independents in Edmonton: Carolynne Hew, Bangs; Naomi McCormack, The Hangman's Bride; Grimur Ardal, On The Rocks; Cassandra Nicolaou, Why I'll Never Trust You (In 200 Words or Less); David Weaver, Drive.

lift orientation:

Wednesday, March 19th 1997 and Wednesday, April 23rd, 1997.
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m

There will be an orientation session for individuals who haven't familiarized themselves with the co-op's facilities and resources. Call to reserve a spot! 588-6444.

farewell:

A fond farewell to **Greg Woodbury**... but not before Greg says goodbye to us!
see page 18



greg at his old desk



greg at his new desk

same shirt? you decide

ews...lift news...lift news...

liftgear & machinations:

What's new with equipment @ LIFT?

NEW DOUBLE PICTURE STEENBECK IN PINK ROOM

The 16/35mm Intercine has been retired, and a new (well... new to LIFT) double picture Steenbeck has been moved in. It is available 24 hours per day, 7 days a week, at the low low rate of only \$1.50/hr for full and \$3/hr for associate members

TWO BLONDES JOIN THE RED-HEADS.....

Yes, it's true. LIFT has just purchased two 2000 Watt Blondes! Don't forget that these lights do require more power. They can be run off a 20 amp household circuit, or with a tie-in. Keep this option in mind - you can rent a stove

plug or dryer plug adaptor (from a rental house, we don't have one yet) that will give you all the power you need for these lights, if your location has either of these sources. We also purchased another Strand Mizar. This light is very versatile since it can take either a 300W or 500W lamp. And finally, we have purchased some scrim sets for our existing lights. Just give us a call if you'd like to rent any of these new items. The Blondes rent for \$8/day for full and \$16/day for associate members.

FOR SALE: 16/35mm Intercine editing table for sale. In excellent condition. Asking \$2000 or best offer. Call LIFT at 588-6444.

FREE PROTOOLS HOURS!

LIFT has set aside hours in the ProTools Suite for full and associate members of LIFT to practice and get familiar with this new system. Those without previous non-linear editing experience or who haven't taken a ProTools workshop should first take an orientation. Up to two members can book the suite together for practice. This time cannot be booked to work on a project.

Free hours on Tuesdays:

10 a.m. - 1 p.m.,

1 p.m. - 4 p.m.,

4 p.m. - 6 p.m.

To sign up for one of these sessions, call LIFT @ 588-6444

shoptalk:

At deadline time, spaces still remained in the following Shoptalks:

INTRO TO 16mm Camera & Editing with Lawrence Green.

Learn how to shoot 16mm film with a Bolex, and then edit it on the Steenbeck or Intercine. Two days: Feb. 22, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. & Feb. 27, 6 p.m. - 10 p.m. Cost: members \$90, non-members \$110.

OPTICAL PRINTING with Roberto Ariganello.

Learn the fine art of Optical Printing with LIFT's Oxberry Optical Printer from someone who uses it almost daily. Two Saturdays: Feb. 22 and March 1, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Cost: members \$110, non-members \$150.

INTRO TO GAFFING with Jeremy Hudspith. Your chance to see those new Blondes in action! Find out the difference between tungsten and daylight, how to colour correct, etc. etc. etc. with hands-on lighting set ups. Two Wednesday evenings, March 5 & 12, 6 p.m. - 10 p.m. Cost: members \$60 non-members \$80.

INTRO TO SCREENWRITING with Annette Mangaard. Here's your chance to find out all about script structure from a real pro. Two Tuesday evenings, March 11 & 18, 7 p.m. - 10 p.m. Cost: members \$40, non-members \$55.

Call LIFT at 588-6444 to find out if spaces are still available. You can register in person or by mail.

more announcements:

YEAH.. PHOTOS ARE COMING IN!!!

For the LIFT year book in June, '97. Send in your picture, or any visual representation of yourself. Those who don't will languish forever in obscurity. You have been warned! As of now, we have received a few pictures, but we feel it is not enough yet to be a representative sample. What are you waiting for?

other people's money....



"Where Poetry Meets Reality"

-Roch Carrier, commenting on what he thinks administration is.

Canada Council Announces Job Cuts and Program Changes (With files from the IFVA Electronic News circular)

An Independent Film and Video Alliance (IFVA) circular says: "Recently, the Canada Council announced that it will be cutting jobs to meet budget cuts imposed on Council two years ago. 39 jobs will be eliminated, reducing their overall staff from 171 to 132." In order to manage with reduced staff, serious program changes will be instituted. For example, "the Council plans to go ahead with only one grant deadline per program and a restriction of 2 grants per artist in a 4-year period, despite recent criticism about these ideas from the arts community...." The IFVA goes on to ask if film production juries, which currently take six days to choose 30-40 projects from among 120 applicants, will now have 18 days to choose 100 projects out of 350 submissions? The IFVA asked Roch Carrier for a meeting, which took place February 7th.

IFVA Chair Peter Sandmark and Penny McCann met with Roch Carrier, (Director of Council) Joanne Morrow (the Head of the Arts Division, the overall chief of the different disciplinary sections of the Council) and Martine Sauvageau (Head of the Media Arts Section).

"Carrier started by reminding us that grants to artists have not been cut at all, and that, in fact, grants to artists in the Media Arts section had been increased (by \$500,000) for the current fiscal year's budget and would remain at the same level for the next year also. (Side note: ... Last summer David Poole said to me at the Alliance annual meeting in Winnipeg, that he was sure that it was a direct result of our lobbying that they had gotten the increase.)

"We got right to the point and responded that while we certainly appreciated their efforts to not cut artists grants, the effect of the changes they were proposing would make it more difficult for artists to apply, and therefore would be restricting access to funding for artists. We stated that we had received unanimous condemnation of the idea of one jury per year for all programs, and that this would result in an unreasonable amount of work for the jurors that would erode the integrity of the peer jury process. Furthermore, by having only one date a year, we stated that it is sure that many projects will die before the artist gets a

message from the new and improved Board of Directors with jonathon culp

It's January 22, and visions of participatory democracy are dancing in my head as my first meeting as a member of LIPT's Board of Directors gets under way. I've already performed a veritable parting of the Red Sea in getting here on my worst-night-of-the-week, and anything seems possible. I reset my jaw after reading the resignation letter of beloved Technical Coordinator Greg Woodbury ('bye Greg!) and the games begin.

The first order of business - after accepting the minutes * they didn't offend me - is an introductory address from Hope Thompson, outgoing chair. Besides accepting the gifts and sincere gratitude of all present Hope is obliged to enact one of these weird Board rituals where departing members dramatize their departure by departing some fifteen minutes into the meeting. I wonder to myself whether she changed any plans to be here for this; and I'm reminded that group planning is the Cultural thing smothered in symbolic rites due process and all that, and I need to get freshly acclimatized (having left Student Council some - eek! eight years ago).

Before doing the Chair Mambo, Hope dropped a bunch of procedural wisdom on us. Among the goodies was the news that the Board will be following Robert's Rules of Order to ratify its decisions. Having lived through the last CKLN referendum while at Ryerson, I know that Robert's Rules can, under the wrong circumstances be trained as an attack dog with "efficiency" holding the leash. So my heart races. Race race Will I dazzle the group with my knowledge of consensus and alternative decision-making in small groups the abstract study of which I have wallowed in for the better part of a year? Will I move to strike the Sub-Committee on Democratic Process? Well, in fact the LIPT version of Robert's Rules appears to be a timid beast, only poking its head out around voting time, with respectful and respon-

chance to apply. On top of these factors, Council grants are often the seed funding that helps artists leverage other funds; one deadline a year makes this process of seeking other funds more drawn out and again threatens killing projects before they get a chance to develop.

"We stated that we felt that the proposed change of restricting artists to two grants in four years would only hurt the most talented and productive artists, and that went against the mandate of the Council. We also questioned the proposal to prevent an artist from sitting on a jury for three years after getting a grant.

sive discussion filling the gaps. I file my concern for later.

Soon it is time to vote on the Executive Positions. The nominations of David Nancoff (in absentia) and Christy Garland for Chair and Vice-Chair respectively, stood unchallenged. I don't think I've even met David, but the people who nominated him tell me he's just great, and that's good enough for me! They are elected unanimously. The positions of Secretary, which involves typing, and Treasurer, which would seem to involve math, were less hotly contested (no one stood for them), and will be filled next time.

The rest of the meeting comprised various bits of business that might not be of interest to you, and one that might: a filmmaker has applied to block-book an edit suite for five months, which is well beyond LIPT's regular two-week maximum. Even with the newly not-useless Pink Suite at our disposal, access is obviously an issue here. The Board voted to respect the Technical Coordinators' judgment that an initial two-month block, followed by a review, is the way to go. If you have any feelings on the matter, let us know.

And a more general reminder. The LIPT Board of Directors is responsible to YOU, making decisions on your behalf, and we don't even know you! (well anyway I don't). Please be uninhibited in exposing your areas of administrative excitement to our voyeuristic ears. We are your humble servants - but keep in mind that if you don't sign the Anti-Cineplex Scab petition in the entranceway, I won't be your friend.

"They responded by saying that if they don't cut administrative costs (i.e. less juries) then they would have to cut the money for grants. I then asked Martine Sauvageau if she would be able to meet the budget targets without having to go to one grant a year, and she felt that she could, and that there were other ideas that could be explored. Joanne Morrow offered that they could consider two deadlines per year as a compromise, (eliminating the summer deadline for film, as it is the one with the least applications).

"On the point about not sitting on a jury for three years after getting a grant, Ms. Morrow mentioned that some of the Council's own Board of Directors had reservations about that and so they will compromise to make it two years before one



The Independents / review Jane Farrow

The AGO had to turn away dozens of eager cinephiles at the January 22nd screening of Cinematheque's

'Independents' series comprised of nine exciting works by the newest generation of film/video producers. And judging from the disappointment written on the faces of the audience members who got squeezed out, there's a starving artist-sized appetite for precisely these types of screenings, which showcase local talent in a high profile, fully equipped cinema that also boasts plumbing, heating and padded seats

Co-curated with Jim Shedden of the AGO, Susan Oxtoby explains that this program in particular, "brings together a group of new artists and shines a light on their works. It creates public awareness of the independent scene and encourages a sense of community by creating a mingling opportunity for new film and video artists in Toronto." The curators also decided to mix works by both Ryerson and OCA students in an effort to encourage exchange between the institutions and avoid simply repeating programming in shows like "OCA A-go-go."

"This is a selection of work that tends towards montage," Oxtoby continues. "On many levels, we're steering away from drama but the artists are combining experimental and conventional techniques. The camera work is interesting and innovative, the editing fluid. They tend to use the best of both worlds by shooting on film and editing and finishing on video so dissolves and technical manipulation can be employed on a small budget."

LIFT members were well represented

in the program. Abigail Steinberg's ten minute animation **Jules** is an intriguingly told tale of a cabaret drag queen and the journalist who is trying to discover his past. Winner of the Award of Merit for Animation at the Chicago International Film Festival in 1996, it was also presented in competition at the Montreal World Film Festival.

Galaxy Girls, Christina Zeidler's tweaked-out tale of alien invasion at the Trinity Bellwoods Park, is yet another luscious, hi-tech showstopper from this emerging giant of the indie scene.

Five Days in March, a nine-minute video by Zan Chandler, was also presented. This semi-autobiographical work strings together a number of years' worth of journal entries, all from the month of March. This work was presented at the 1996 Montreal World Film Festival and the British Short Film Festival and also picked up a 3rd Prize at the Canadian Annual Film Festival.

Ryerson film student Jai Sarin's **Just Words** is a three minute dissection of language scratched and scrawled directly onto film. Breathtakingly beautiful, his personal struggle to make meaning with notoriously clunky and imprecise 'words', is a rare triumph of meaning, theory and aesthetics which meld seamlessly here on celluloid.

Queercore, Scott Treleven's self-styled punkumentary, carries punk philosophy, activism and DIY aesthetics in this down and dirty look at the thriving scene. This 20-minute piece is quickly making the rounds on the indie and gay/lesbian festival circuit.

The 'free-admission' Wednesday night Independents series has been running for seven years and is guided by an elusive and unconventional ethos of underground means and ends that have created a parallel artist film/video culture and community. "The term 'independent' would include work that comes out of the artist-run film and video co-ops and distribution networks across Canada," Oxtoby explains, "work that falls outside the mainstream."

Cinematheque is a vital public screen for contextualizing and historicizing regional production centres, festivals and artist co-ops such as Ed Video in Guelph, CFMDC, Inside/OUT, LIFT, Newfoundland's NIFCO, London's Forest City Gallery, and an upcoming program with VVL. Trinity Square Video is profiled on February 19 with a group of works from Andrew Patterson and Alan Fox, General Idea, Larissa Fitzgerald and two Toronto premieres by Garinée Torossian and Harriet Wichin.

Line-ups for upcoming Independents evenings include canonical nods to the predictable pantheon of experimental film greats like Stan Brakhage (Feb 12), the 1950's NFB heyday with Arthur Lipsett, Norman McLaren and Wolf Koenig (Feb 26) and 'trance-film' originators Maya Deren and Sidney Peterson (Feb 5).

Filmmakers and curators are encouraged to send their works and programming suggestions to Cinematheque at any time. Since they present over 350 programs comprised of over 450 films annually, it's probably a better bet than you'd think, and what's more, they pay artist fees!

can sit on a jury after getting a grant. They wished to add that this proposal was designed to increase the pool of names used for juries and to make the juries more representative of the community at large.

"On the point about two grants in four years we did not come to any resolution.

"Other points: the grants for emerging artists are not being cut; the funds from the Touring Office for exhibition and distribution projects are being transferred to the Media Arts section and will be administered from there.

"The Alliance Board discussed all of this on the weekend and the President, Penny McCann will be sending a follow up letter to Roch Carrier, expressing the

Alliance's concerns. We are then going to wait and see how the compromises that were discussed at the meeting with Carrier will be presented and respond again.

"Please stay tuned, this will be a developing issue until it is resolved..."

Peter Sandmark
National Coordinator
Independent Film & Video Alliance

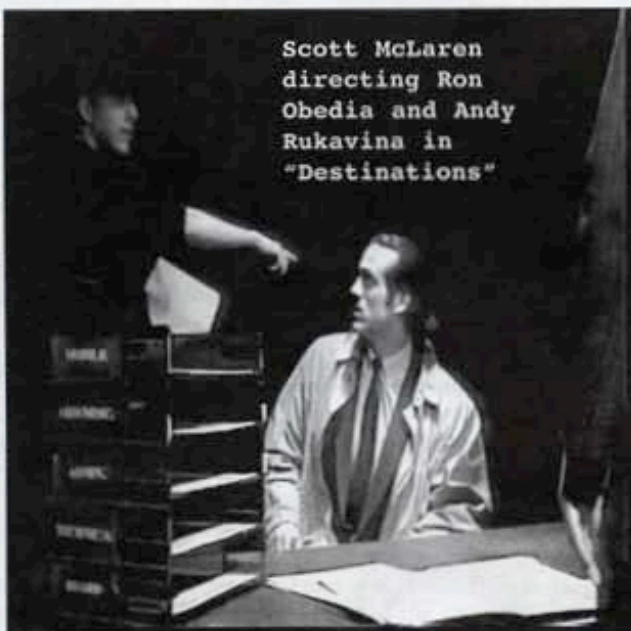


The Through The Looking Lens Acting and Directing Film Workshop was started in December 1995 by myself and four other local filmmakers who all shared the desire to learn more about the relationship between actor and director. We had never formally studied the acting process (an area we all felt was under-represented in film school) and we decided that it was crucial for us to understand how to work with actors if we ever hoped to make narrative feature films.

Our original goal was to find a core group of a dozen or so actors whom we could regularly cast in short scenes that would be written, shot and edited on video by ourselves; we would learn from the actors and the actors would learn from us. Our plan was to shoot a scene a week with each director taking a turn to write and direct their own work, with the rest of the selected directors acting as crew and support group for one another. We would invite acting teachers and working filmmakers to come and talk to all the participants in the workshop at monthly open sessions.

We threw posters up all around town seeking actors interested in joining the workshop. For all the restaurants, video stores, artists collectives, bars, and universities, the poster at Theater Ontario, an organization that assists non-union actors, seemed to generate the greatest response. Four days of auditions were set up at Trinity Square Video. We were looking for good actors who were knowledgeable about and dedicated to their craft and very interested in learning more about the filmmaking process. All the auditions were videotaped so we could refer to them later. The actors each performed a monologue and (at first) took part in a short improvisation. We would then interview them briefly on-camera about the acting process and what they considered to be the primary difference between performing in film and theater. All the directors in the workshop had made films with actors who had done mostly theater and whose performances were generally too theatrical or "too big" for the camera. We were interested to see if any of the actors who had done both theater and film had managed to come to terms with the major differences in acting between the two media.

Almost eighty actors auditioned over the four-day period; very few of them had experience in working with the camera. We had asked for a prepared monologue and we heard Shakespeare, Strindberg, Ibsen and a variety of other theater pieces which



Scott McLaren directing Ron Obedia and Andy Rukavina in "Destinations"

gave us a sense of the actors' ability but which we realized didn't give us much of an idea about how well they could perform on film. The improvisations we attempted didn't help much in determining how good the actors were either because we really didn't have the experience to properly conduct the exercises, so we stopped doing them after the first day. The taped interviews gave us the clearest idea of how the actors looked and sounded on camera, how seriously they approached their craft and whether we thought we could work with them. A depressingly large number of actors seemed to fall into the category of people who at one time or another had heard, "Say you're really good-looking. You should be on TV!" and had misinterpreted this as meaning "You should be an Actor." A lot of these people didn't seem to have much of an interest or awareness in the craft other than in its most superficial aspects. In the end we chose about a dozen interesting, articulate and professionally-minded actors who we worked with and who are continuing with the workshop.

The next step was to select shooting dates. It was each director's responsibility to have their scene written and cast at least two weeks prior to their shooting date. No matter what—doom, death, disaster, dismemberment—it didn't matter when that date came you were in a

room somewhere shooting that scene—absolutely no excuses. This do-or-die approach brings with it many problems: if an actor gets a callback audition for a paying gig and can't make it on the shooting day, you have to recast at the last minute. These types of things happened to us on almost every scene. One of our biggest problems is that we're non-profit and self-funded. When there's no money involved it's very hard to organize a day when all the necessary people can get together. In many cases we've had to go ahead, spend the money and shoot scenes that were wildly miscast with last-minute actors who didn't know any of their lines. When you spend the day feeding every single line to an actor while the camera's rolling, you don't get a chance to get into any of the intensities and complexities of the acting process which were the reasons we started the workshop in the first place. In the event of losing a lead actor a day before the shooting date, rescheduling the shoot has never been an option for us because it is only by meeting strict deadlines that we have been able to produce as much work as we have over the past two years.

Most of the scenes have been shot in the studio space at Trinity Square Video. Any equipment that we were unable to beg, borrow or steal from other sources, we rented from Trinity which, being an artist-run collective, has very good rates. The idea behind most of the scenes was to keep the productions simple, with the bare minimum of equipment, camera movement, set design or anything else costly and time-consuming. We wanted to focus specifically on the acting, reducing as many of the other variables as possible, but chaos reigns even in such small-scale film settings.

Once you're on the set, it is very difficult to communicate intimately with the actors because even in a stripped-down production, there are still many distracting technical factors to contend with. The biggest lesson we've learned so far is that preparation is everything. Without the proper focus put on casting and rehearsals, there isn't really any opportunity to experiment with the specifics and intricacies of a performance while on set, leaving the director and the actors at a disadvantage. In the worst case, things always seem to devolve into line-

THROUGH THE LOOKING LENS

Scott McLaren

feeding the actors the script or resorting to tricks designed to manipulate the right performance out of the wrong person.

Such a device had to be used when we encountered performances that were "too big." With the actors being mostly theater-trained, lines were often emotionally and physically projected in a way that works for theatre, but which reads as overacting on film. To make the shift to a more 'filmic' level of energy the actors need preparation and practice. When actors had trouble adjusting, and all else had failed, we resorted to various emergency techniques to help them: We would get to those actors' takes at the end of the day, after they had already read through the scene several times during the other actors' shots. When it was their turn on camera, we would have them do numerous takes using the constant repetition to eventually wear them down and make them "small" enough for the camera. This sounds like cruel and inhumane practice and is obviously not the ideal way to work with actors - and it was only after we tried everything we could think of that we resorted to such measures. In extreme situations, we threw away the script altogether and asked the actors to improvise on camera; sometimes doing something radically different from what was written. This has saved a few of our scenes, but it meant having to let go of the original idea.

By the time we got to edit the scenes though, we found that even the most stilted and awkward performance can be turned into a riv-

we felt we had learned a lot of ways to help salvage an inadequate performance a lot more about writing and editing but none of us felt any more confident about our ability to successfully communicate with actors or understand the acting process. It was at this point that we decided to conduct a series of open workshops.

We've held four open workshops so far two with acting teachers Miriam Lawrence and Bernadette Jones, and two with feature directors Bruce LaBruce and David Wellington. In the Miriam Lawrence and Bernadette Jones workshops we split into groups and worked on scenes from established films where all the participants took turns both acting and directing. The focus of these workshops was to familiarize ourselves with the vocabulary of acting: how to communicate with actors and how to give goals as opposed to result-orientated directions. The main conclusion we came to after these sessions was that as a director, if you really want to understand acting you have to study it as an actor yourself.

We invited filmmakers Bruce LaBruce and David Wellington to come and speak about their different approaches to working with actors. Bruce commenced by showing us a clip of what he called "the best acting job by a woman so far this year" then proceeded to screen the Courtney Love interview on the last Barbara Walters special. Watching this interview as a performance was fascinating and essential in understanding the ideas that inform LaBruce's work with actors. In preferring to use non-professionals and focusing on raw personality and on screen charisma he works against the Hollywood ten-

nious solution to working with theater trained actors who gave performances that were "too big" for the camera. While we approached the problem by wearing down and physically exhausting the actors, he noted that theater actors hold their upper bodies very erect and rigid in order to keep the pipes straight so they could project louder. He discovered that by massaging their shoulders and getting them to relax their posture a little it immediately cut down on the size of the performance. This, we decided, was a far more humane approach to the one we had devised. Wellington is also a believer in learning to understand acting by studying as an actor on an ongoing basis.

The open workshops so far have been tremendously instructive and we will continue to hold them. Our next two are in March with film director John Greyson and acting instructor Jacqueline McKlinton. We plan to shoot another series of scenes beginning in April. If there are any interested directors, actors or crew who would like to get involved with the workshop or anyone interested in a video copy of our first ten scenes, please call us at 416-960-9915. Through The Looking Lens is self-funded and non-profit, so anyone with any spare film and video equipment gathering dust, or with access to free editing facilities, please give us a call.

No matter what - doom, death, disaster, dismemberment, it didn't matter - when that date came you were in a room somewhere shooting that scene - absolutely no excuses.

eting and beguiling one with the judicious use of editing technique. Placing reaction shots in the right places, creating meaningful pauses and dropping or rearranging lines from the script were all useful ways to improve an actor's performance. No matter what happens during rehearsals and shooting once you get in the editing room you can manipulate the acting any which way you desire. Acting eventually just becomes raw material (see Kuleshov). After completing the first ten scenes from the workshop

dency towards the slick and seamless and highlights the acting process by deliberately using bad takes, flubbed lines and mistakes. LaBruce is a firm believer in constructing the performance in the editing room. David Wellington has a far more traditional approach. He places a great deal of emphasis on casting claiming that in his experience if the part is miscast there's really not much you can do to fix it beyond recasting. He presented us with an inge-

Gordon Flemming and Paul Fraggle in Scott Andrews' "positively Privileged!"



Mike Holboom Interviews John Kneller

My Life at the Movies

JK: It's funny people will wait at a bus stop or a laundromat but can't sit through a five minute experimental film. And they get so angry. People take their movies very personally, they know what they like, which is what's been sold to them. A few years ago I had to stop watching. I just got tired of the way your emotions are manipulated. It's a weird feeling when tears are welling up in your eyes and there's a big lump in your throat and you're thinking that all over the world folks you've never met are feeling just the same. I grew up in a small town of five thousand people but there was a movie theatre. The Royal Theatre in Hudson, Quebec. When I was nine my parents took me to see **Lies My Father Told Me**, a Canadian movie. In one scene these little boys look through a window and see a man sucking the breasts of a woman and they couldn't understand why. I think I had an idea. In the movie the boy asks his grandfather about it - he wasn't breastfeeding, what was he doing? Well, sometimes you do it just for pleasure. It was weird seeing that with my parents. The Royal Theatre turned into a sports outlet and now of course it's a video store. It's all changed. I remember many a summer afternoon matinee and the way the sun would scorch your eyeballs as you left the theatre. In our small town the Royal was something that kept people together.

MH: You'd meet people there.

JK: Yeah, for parents it was a chance to get the kids out of the house for a couple of hours.

MH: The communal babysitter.

JK: It reminds me of this guy who used to have small booths with super-8 cartoon loops. The show would last a couple of minutes and cost a dollar and he kept it running into the late eighties. Parents would send their kids in there with ten bucks just to get rid of them for awhile. Now he's switched to videotape.

MH: When did you start making movies?

When I was fourteen my neighbour got a super-8 camera and I figured we should make a little slasher movie. There'd be four characters who are offed in various ways. When you're a kid you've seen a lot of murders on television. This was one way of letting some of that out. We had screenings in the neighborhood, all the kids were in it so they'd come over and see it. A few years later my parents were worried about me going to the local high school that I needed something else so they sent me to a boy's private school for three years between 1980-83. At the time it seemed like the worst thing that could've happened; having to wear the uniforms and being so anxious about girlfriends, sex in general. But now I think it was a good thing, I might have got stuck in a rut back in Hudson.


In CEGEP I enrolled in commerce because my parents didn't see much of a future in film. I saw my first Brakhage and Anger films. Afterwards I applied to the University of Concordia for film but didn't make it. I still have dreams about the interview and have spoken with other filmmakers who all remember the terror of applying. I'd been going to movie nights run by a punk and when I told them what movies I was seeing they figured I wasn't for them. I think the interest was there but in a small town you're limited in what you can see. You'll find **Faces of Death** but not **Dog Star Man** in your video store. I'd planned on staying in Montreal but got accepted at the University of Toronto and I've been here ever since, ten years now.

You made films at the University?

That's when I really got going though it was frowned upon. We were told there were too many filmmakers out there already. I started to experiment with super-8 on my own time. The university program is strictly film history, criticism and theory. I used to go to all the Innis Film Screenings and have

a lot of good memories, that's where I really saw experimental films. As soon as I saw some of those films I knew this was for me. It was a much more purist approach to film, unconcerned with demographics or test screenings. It was film for film. I loved Pat O'Neill's work, Paul Sharits, Michael Snow, all that structuralist work, Joyce Wieland. I guess there's an admiration for what people were doing in the sixties. There were different approaches to lifestyles and as a result different approaches to filmmaking, you sensed the changes in their world.

I saw some films that were optically printed.



When I was nine my parents took me to see Lies My Father Told Me, a Canadian movie.

and felt that's what I wanted to make to use the printer to express a feeling or an idea, not to make it look like there's a Tie fighter in front of the Death Star, not to use it for standard movie magic special effects. To fool people. That's when I made those three 'S' films: **Spring** (4 min 1991), **Shimmer** (4 min 1988) and **Speck** (4 5 min 1989). I knew a lab guy that could put together three rolls of super-8, run them on separate pass-

es I was fascinated with multiple exposures to marry the images in the printing

I was doing a lot of time lapse work shooting clouds and landscapes which is what I'm still shooting now. A lot of the seeds were planted pretty early on. Especially this fascination with water. If you're printing with low quality systems



water seems to hold its image quality longer than other kinds of images, it stays extra sharp on film. I was also fascinated with the feedback you can get through a reflex viewfinder on a super-8 camera, if you look right into the sun. I'd set the frame up with the sun in the corner looking out a window, with the light spraying across the frame. You get your eye wet and if you press your eyeball right up against the glass in the viewfinder the

light comes into the finder, bounces off your eye and runs back onto the film. That particular effect is evident in parts of **Speck** and definitely in **Picture Start** (3 min silent 1985-90). The eyeball is magnified tremendously and luminous white eyelashes flutter about the focal plane. For a long time I was trying to perfect that. When I work with a camera I'm overly meticulous spending too much time setting up, but I enjoy working that way making every shot count.

Were you ever shooting in a gathering mode as opposed to following a script?

Absolutely. I still get the urge and decide I have to go out today and shoot something. I just don't feel comfortable shooting strangers, filmmakers have a responsibility not just to take take take. It's amazing what's changed in ten years. Everything but me. I'm still doing exactly what I was doing then, I'm just a little better at it. I still go about filmmaking as a major part of my daily life. As technology changes around I've continued traditional film approaches with a little help from my digital friends!

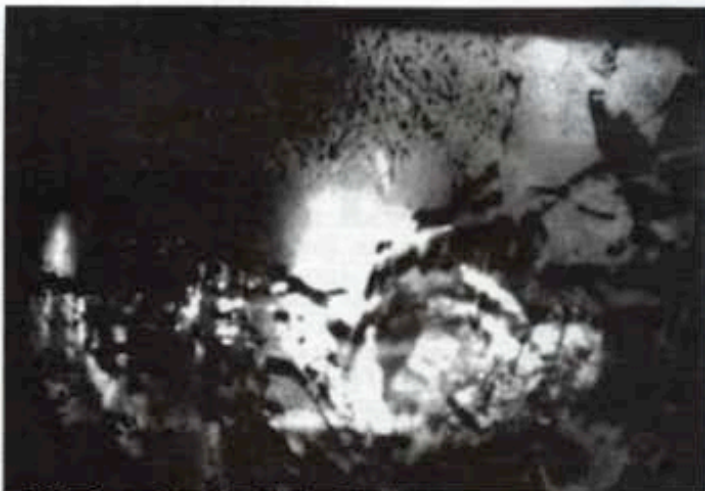
In the late eighties I had an apartment down in Kensington Market which I set up as a little studio. I had a couple of super-8 cameras and a projector with a flip mirror so you could project on the screen. I had also been experimenting with slow burning film frames and all kinds of crazy set-ups for multiple projection re-photography. I was interested in reflections of light patterns on various hand-held gels. I made experiments using single frame re-photography. Some very crude methods were used including filming from an editor/viewer screen. All of these limited techniques found their way into the three-part superimposition film **Speck**.

Spring is a bit different though. I went into an old abandoned building and put it altogether in my head before starting to shoot. There was a presence there. It was a place for the homeless full of shit and pornography and glue bottles. I was pretty naive then, it hadn't occurred to me that people would have to live like that. At the same time there was a certain

fascination with hobos because you're not tied to anything, you're free. The last shot of the film shows an oval window which the camera moves towards suggesting freedom, and its costs. Most opt for more regimented forms of freedom.

In 1988 I made **Toronto Summit** (6.5 min 1988) a document of the Toronto Summit rally and march. I'd become involved in the local activist scene though I was reluctant to accept this easy equation of the personal and political. A good friend it seemed, couldn't separate the two at all whatever he felt that day was the reigning politic. Artists are guilty of this too you have to let other things go to do the work, you have to be selfish to get it done but it can create problems with your relationships. It takes a toll.

The G7 is a meeting of world leaders from seven countries, including Canada and that year the meeting was held in Toronto. They spoke at the Convention Centre which was surrounded by a giant wall with helicopters circling night and day. There was one big well-publicized protest that drew a lot of people. We were going to march from the legislature to the walls and tear them down or at least bring attention to this barrier between the elite and regular shmoes like us. It was my first taste of a big city rally. It had never been my calling to do documentary type work but I was fascinated with the photojournalist's idea of capturing a decisive moment. It all took about three hours there was singing and speeches and then a march. There were cops in riot gear and a sit down protest. Anyone who tried to climb the barriers got arrested, and mostly it was very reserved. But with that many people it could quickly become dangerous. A newspaper box was toppled and burned and a circle of people danced around it while in the background you see endless rows of cops. You can hardly imagine it's Toronto it looks like something out of a war zone. That's when you saw how fragile democracy was. There was a line and you wondered at what point would the cops take out their truncheons and start beating people? It was a scary time to be living in Cold War. Reagan was saying crazy things. I'd grown up with the immanent threat of nuclear war. No one talks about it anymore but a few years ago my teachers would pray that no one crazy would take office and press the button. That was the



still from John Kneller's *Speck*



still from Kneller's *We Are Experimental*

fear We knew there was nothing like a limited scale nuclear war it meant the end of everything.

In 1986 I lived in residence which was very new and awakening for a guy coming from a small town Steve Lerner lived next door and we got along like brothers both away from home for the first time But to get anything out of the guy was murder I had this little film I was working on and wanted to shoot in his room, but before he said yes I had to type essays and run errands it was driving me nuts He had a bunch of regular-8 home movies from his family and I had a projector Every once in a while he's have a hot date and as one of his ploys, he'd borrow my movie projector and show his home movies I was jealous because I wasn't getting any action at all it was terrible years went by. But things were going well for him because of these movies and finally he showed them to me. He said there s this one which is really strange there s something wrong with it He put it on and it

blew me away. It's a very simple home movie showing a baby being washed, playing, rocking, being held by his parents A very basic home movie with in-camera cutting But something happened during processing the emulsion's not entirely there, it's peeled off and folded back, leaving lateral excisions The overall effect is that this banal home movie has a beautiful new life given to it by the material nature of the film That was *Traces, Fragments* (4 min 1986) I don't really consider it my film, I just found it I bothered Steve for years about it and in the end he acquiesced, he saw that I was serious

that I was committed to this kind of filmmaking and it was nice for him to help me along I had all these ideas of turning it into a multi-screen extravaganza In the clear areas of the image I wanted to show fragments from 1960s newsreels - moonshots, JFK assassination the King assassination There would be scenes from the baby's later life growing up and high school I tried to do all this on a contact printer at home on regular-8 but never achieved it Kika Thorne was always urging me to show the original saying that it was beautiful the way it was In the end I realized she was right For two years I made prints from the original and tried to rework it but finally realized the footage was limited and stopped

Through the years I've assembled all my films on large reels, but then I start optical printing and they all get broken down again It's like an endless expansion and

contraction, never being able to decide what I want to do with this stuff. It's always been process first. From 1992-95 I worked intensely on the printer and pilfered materials from past work to make new things. I had the idea that *Speck* could benefit from a complete reworking given the new possibilities of the optical printer. As was the case with *Traces, Fragments* this endless reworking of old originals did not prove entirely fruitful So I've finally decided (the hard way) to remaster all of the older superimposition films from the original super-8 A-B-C rolls exactly as originally intended.





still from You Take the High Road

There's often different versions of the same film, or re-worked materials which blurs the boundary between films. What I find incredible is that your films are very thoroughly worked through, and then never finished. They become part of a long continuum which privileges process.

Honestly I think I have to get away from that after going through this massive editing project trying to make some sense of it all. For the first time I'm going back and deciding what's a film and what isn't, and having proper prints made.

Tell me about your leaf obsession.

Every fall between 1990-93 I'd go out and shoot leaves. It would take me a month to shoot seven seconds because every shot was set up like a still photo. I remember Robert Breer doing frame by frame work in *Fistfight* using a different image for each frame. It had a fascinating kinetic effect on the screen unlike anything I'd ever seen before. That shooting was the beginning of *Architectures and Landscapes Compilation* (17 min 1993). I'd also been photographing a lot of water images which were processed by hand. Every day I woke up at seven and did a day's worth of processing sat at a table and did it. This went on for five months and the results were lousy. It was all very flat, lacking contrast. I thought maybe it needed more agitation but then there were areas of oxidation and brown spots on the film. I cut all the brown sections out and the remainder became the backing matte for the colour leaves work. They were run together in the optical printer, and that became a pretty important

part of the film. It was my signature style for awhile. I'd also collected all this regular-8 footage from garage sales. You shoot one side of the roll then take the film

out of the camera, turn it around, and shoot the other side. Usually when it's processed, they slit the film in half and give it back to you. But if it's not slit it can be cut directly into 16mm footage producing a four-screen effect. It was all Kodachrome so the colour was beautiful and saturated. This was incorporated with the water/leaves and some stained glass windows I shot. The windows are something made by humans which try to imitate the beauty of nature to evoke those translucent saturated colours. The film compares these two moments and reflects on its own making, its own evocation of colour. There's a shot of Hitler in the film and some said I should take it out but it's followed by these pixilated flowers I shot slowed down on the printer red against a black background, which have a very somber quality. The idea being that there's beauty but such horror as well.

Do you think your work is more akin to painting?

No but maybe there are some similarities in the way colour is controlled or affected. Water never travels in straight lines. It always curves and it's flat and often has a shimmering surface. The leaves provide translucence and contrast so they look terrific mixed with one another. Those negatives I hand processed years ago came in handy because I needed the blacks to be a little soft so that the leaves could show through them. When you're sandwiching images together one picture will show through the clear images of the next and slight areas of grey will also admit some of the image. In this case the trees. Mixing this grey with the colour trees saturates the image even more. I love those deep blues, reds and purples. It seems to me that good



John Kneller

still from You Take the High Road



experimental filmmakers have beautiful colours Working in black and white has never been of great interest to me. Black and white is in vogue now but even mainstream audiences don't always like it. It's funny I remember this guy who made a beautiful video for the New Country Network TV station After it aired people called in saying, "Look, I just bought this big colour TV and no way in hell do I want to watch black and white videos"

Do you worry about your audiences? Is there enough of an audience for your work?

In 1990 I got a call from Pleasure

Experimental film is the way and the truth.

Dome (an artist's film/video exhibition group in Toronto) They asked if I wanted to show and I said I'm surprised you're calling me I'm really just getting started, I'm honoured And they said, well actually we wanted someone else but they cancelled (laughs) But I think Pleasure Dome does a good job and have been supportive of my work. There used to be the Innis Film Society here but attendance became so bad it was embarrassing I remember the Ernie Gehr show where six people came You start wondering why am I putting all this time into the work? A show is never lousy though Even if there's just one person out there, there's something happening A good film is when you bring home images when something sticks.

Is there something political about making a film that has no use value?

If I made documentaries I honestly don't think I'd be shooting on

film. You want to shoot as much as you can to capture those moments. And that's not the best use for motion pictures anymore Agnes Varda came to the States and after seeing a number of Kenneth Anger films said, "Well that seems like a pretty easy way to make a film" They think experimental filmmakers have it easy because of the freedom but I've always wanted to work on film at my own speed In my own way I haven't pushed the promotion end of things I'd get the films so close to being finished that I'd lose interest because the challenge was no longer there, I'd learned everything I wanted to from that particular film. Then I'd move onto the next thing Because I was so

eager and excited to understand film a lot of those early films were in disarray I was scared of the big film labs because I've always done everything myself made all of my own prints People are amazed that I'm able to keep going on my own terms They imagine there's only so long you can be a film or jazz martyr (someone who plays jazz just for the love of it) But it's more important for me to make films than a comfortable living I have a day job and can keep going

I made **Architectures and Landscape Compilation** in 1993, revised it a year later then kept working on it until it became **We Are Experiencing Technical Difficulties** (17 min 1997) It also shows an intersection of landscapes and architectures with humanity in between But it's a lot denser using travelling matte images within images and shows a differ-

ent treatment of colour I used a lot of high contrast self processed water imagery which was re-photographed using alternating colour filters with a slide projector as the light source This produces a flickering colour field against the high contrast field The stained glass windows return, but while they're shown in their pristine original in the background, the foreground shows the same windows with fifteen added layers of superimposition I used my projector to run into the printer so the images are very quick, fifty times faster than normal.

This contrast between the two kinds of windows suggests that as much as religion strives for the best in human experience it's also responsible for the boys in Mount Cashel or going to war We're in such a high tech age but in other ways we're completely backwards. I find the combination of religious right extremism, anti-government sentiment and fire-arms to be particularly odious

Experimental film is the way and the truth. I do believe that It has such freedom because you're not catering to a market you're interested in ideas But why would you make those films - everyone who sticks with it is miserable, or they go crazy or shoot themselves A lot of people show promise and stop. I saw a student film which

was fantastic but now this filmmaker installs car

antennas for a living But I think there's a way. When I first saw **Dog Star Man** I was eighteen and very open and impressed, but as soon as people hit their twenties they just head for the dollars and leave these films behind They're missing out on something great I guess I'm a bit of a purist. I don't even work with a Steenbeck, I always work on a bench People say oh that's so archaic, but I find it useful when you're winding the film back you're thinking of

whether your decision is a good one or not Just because you can edit fast doesn't make you a good cutter One thing about working on a printer is that you're actually exposing film to light and as soon as you start taking film into the digital domain, you're getting further away from it being light and into information I still love the quality of projected light. And there's something to be said about taking time over things I just prefer working that way if that makes me a dinosaur well

What is ProTools anyway?

by Lisa Hayes

By now you've probably heard that LIFT has a new ProTools system. We've finally made it into the digital age, yet this new technology remains shrouded in mystery for some members. Here are the answers to some FAQ's (Frequently Asked Questions) concerning the technology. If you have any others, please let us know, and we'll publish the answers in the next newsletter.

What is the difference between digital and analog audio?

Audio is recorded via a microphone which senses the pressure in the sound waves and converts them into an electrical signal. Audio represented by this electrical voltage is called analog audio. Speakers work opposite to a microphone, converting the electrical signal into a pressure, which we hear as sound. Digitally recorded sound takes the analog electrical signal from microphones, cassettes or other sources and converts them into numbers which are stored on a digital medium, such as a hard disk, CD-ROM, compact disk, etc. Digital sampling is the process that converts analog to digital. It divides the audio into small regions, called samples, and numerically records the corresponding voltage of that sample. The more samples taken, the better the quality of audio. Compact disks record at 44.1 kHz, which means that each second of audio has been sampled 44,100 times. ProTools uses two different sampling rates: 44.1 kHz and 48 kHz.

Why is digital audio better?

Since digital audio is stored as a number, you do not lose quality each time you make a copy of it. The exact same number is re-copied for each sample. But with analog audio, each time you make a copy, the electrical voltage which represents the analog audio cannot be duplicated exactly. With each copy, or generation, the electrical signal is degraded, resulting in a poorer representation of the actual sound.

How does ProTools fit into the Filmmaking Post-Production chain?

First you must edit the picture. You can do this with the tried and true flatbed or with a digital non-linear system, such as AVID or Lightworks. If you choose the flatbed, and your film has sync sound, you will have to transfer your location audio to 16mm mag stock and sync your rushes, etc, just like you were going to do a traditional sound edit. It is very important that you log all your takes to help you match back your source audio in your sound edit. Once you have picture lock (the picture is completely edited and no further changes will be made), you will have one roll of edited picture, and one mag roll of location sound. You take these two rolls to be transferred to video with time code. Make sure that you get a frame accurate transfer, otherwise you will have sync problems. Ask the lab for both VITC (Vertical Integrated Time Code, recorded with the picture), and LTC (Linear Time Code, recorded on one of the audio channels, usually channel 2), preferably non-drop frame (or full frame, as some labs refer to it). The lab will transfer your mag roll onto one of the audio channels, and you will use this as a guide track. The video tape will be your visual reference for your sound edit. You can ask for a window burn (a box that shows the time code in the picture) or if you'd like to keep your picture clean, you can burn one in at LIFT. The next step is to verify that the time code can be read. It is very common to have difficulties getting a good time code transfer, and if this is the case, simply return it to the lab, and they will redo it for you.

What next?

You now have to load (or digitize) your guide track on the audio channel of the video tape into the computer. You must record it "on line" so that the guide track will be loaded into the computer at the exact same time code that it is at on the video tape, to ensure that you have perfect sync. The quality of this audio will probably be poor since it has been copied several times, so most sound editors replace it with the original source audio (usually Nagra 1/4" tapes or DAT cassettes). Now this is when you'll be happy that you kept accurate logs of all your rushes. You should make a list of the slates and takes that your locked picture is made up of.

ie. shot 1 slate 3, take 1
shot 2 slate 1 take 3
shot 3 slate 6, take 2

Now you need to load the audio from these slates and takes, and match them up with the waveform on the guide track. Good organization really speeds up this

process. Once the source audio is replaced, you are ready to load in sound effects, music, voice over, etc. from CD, cassette, DAT, or any other source into the computer and start designing your sound tracks.

Why do I need a video transfer when I'm finishing on film?

To interlock the digital sound (on the computer) with the picture, one device must be "slaved" to another. In this case, the computer is slaved to the video deck. When you press play on the video, the time code signal is sent to the computer, and the computer plays back the audio at the corresponding time code. Theoretically the computer could be slaved to a projector, but this is not practical for jogging back and forth.

Why is ProTools better than sound editing on magnetic stock?

Editing on LIFT's ProTools Project system allows you to have up to 55 tracks of audio, and there are methods that allow you to exceed that number. You don't need sound fill either. You can place a piece of audio on a track, and there is no need to splice in fill to hold its spot. You won't have to transfer all your music and effects to magnetic stock for editing, which is a considerable time and money savings. Splitting dialogue tracks is easily done with the click of a mouse. Once you load audio into the computer (digitize it), you can copy it and edit it endlessly, without degrading the sound quality. And best of all, you can play back up to 8 tracks at once whereas a single picture Steenbeck can only play 2 audio tracks at once, and a double picture can play 3. And switching between which 8 tracks should be played is done with the mouse, as opposed to physically changing mag rolls on the flatbed.

What about mixing?

It seems that the most expensive aspects of filmmaking involve visits to the lab and mixing theatre. But now you can mix your own sound and save tons of money. You can automate volume levels and panning, add fades and cross fades, plus you can apply equalization. The built-in mixing features also have sends, which allow you to send the audio to an external effects box, such as reverb. At this time, our system does not have any digital effects other than EQ, so if you do send the audio to an external box, the digital sound will be converted to analog, processed by the box, and converted back to digital for the computer. Once you have tweaked all your levels, you can mix your tracks down in multiples of 8. ProTools has a feature called "Bounce to Disk" which does just this. It mixes the 8 tracks down to one track. Then you can take those "bounced" tracks and mix them together, until you have one audio track. And all this re-recording does not degrade the audio quality at all, since it is all digital.

Can I send out my work in progress with a better audio track?

Some LIFT members have already discovered this great tool. Now if you send out a rough or fine cut of your film to get further financing or to submit it to a film festival, you can send a video tape with enhanced audio. You can automate the audio levels and add in essential music, voice over or effects and mix them all down to one track. You can also use this to put in temp music tracks, take the tape home with you, and decide if the music is right for your film.

What if I don't want to mix it myself?

It is true that a sound mixer has a trained ear for audio and can also make sure that your audio track doesn't have too large of a dynamic range for 16mm optical (remember that your pristine digital audio will eventually be crammed onto a mono optical track). It is fair to admit that a filmmaker may need this expertise. But you can still use ProTools to create your audio tracks, just as you would with mag stock. Once you have completed your edit and selected a mixer, there are several ways to proceed, depending on what technology their studio has.

To get the most out of ProTools, it is recommended that you take a weekend workshop before beginning a project. There are also one-on-one orientations for those who are familiar with other digital sound editing systems, and don't require as much training. LIFT recognizes that members require hands-on practice time to get more familiar with this new technology, so we are offering 3 free time slots on Tuesdays for members to practice: 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., 1 p.m. - 4 p.m., and 4 p.m. - 6 p.m. If these slots are not booked for practice, they may be rented by other members for work on their projects, or to members who need to use the mag transfer machine.

First Person: LIFT'S Filmmakers speak for themselves.

Questions from a Departing Technical Coordinator

Greg Woodbury

Eight years of Questions LIFT filmmakers ask the staff?

Can I buy a roll of paper tape?
Why isn't the soundhead on the
flatbed working?
Is the Nagra reliable?
Can I get an orientation on the S-
eight camera?
Where's the mop?
Can I plug a 2k blond into a 15 amp
fuse?
Should the switch on the SR be on
24 frames or 25?
Where is 37 Hanna Ave?
Why did LIFT move out here anyway?
How do you make a film?
How do I meet other filmmakers?
Why doesn't LIFT start up a dating
service?
How do I make a film? How do I
make a film? HOW DO I MAKE A
FILM?!?!
Can I buy a roll of splicing tape?
Can I buy a grease pencil?
Why did my footage come back two
stops over exposed?
Where's the mop?
Can I book the SR?
Can I book a light kit?
Can I book the Bolex?
Can I have your home phone number
in case I have any questions?

Questions LIFT filmmakers ask themselves?

Is this script good enough? Will
people understand it without narra-
tion?
Do I have enough money?
Why did he get the grant and I did-
n't?

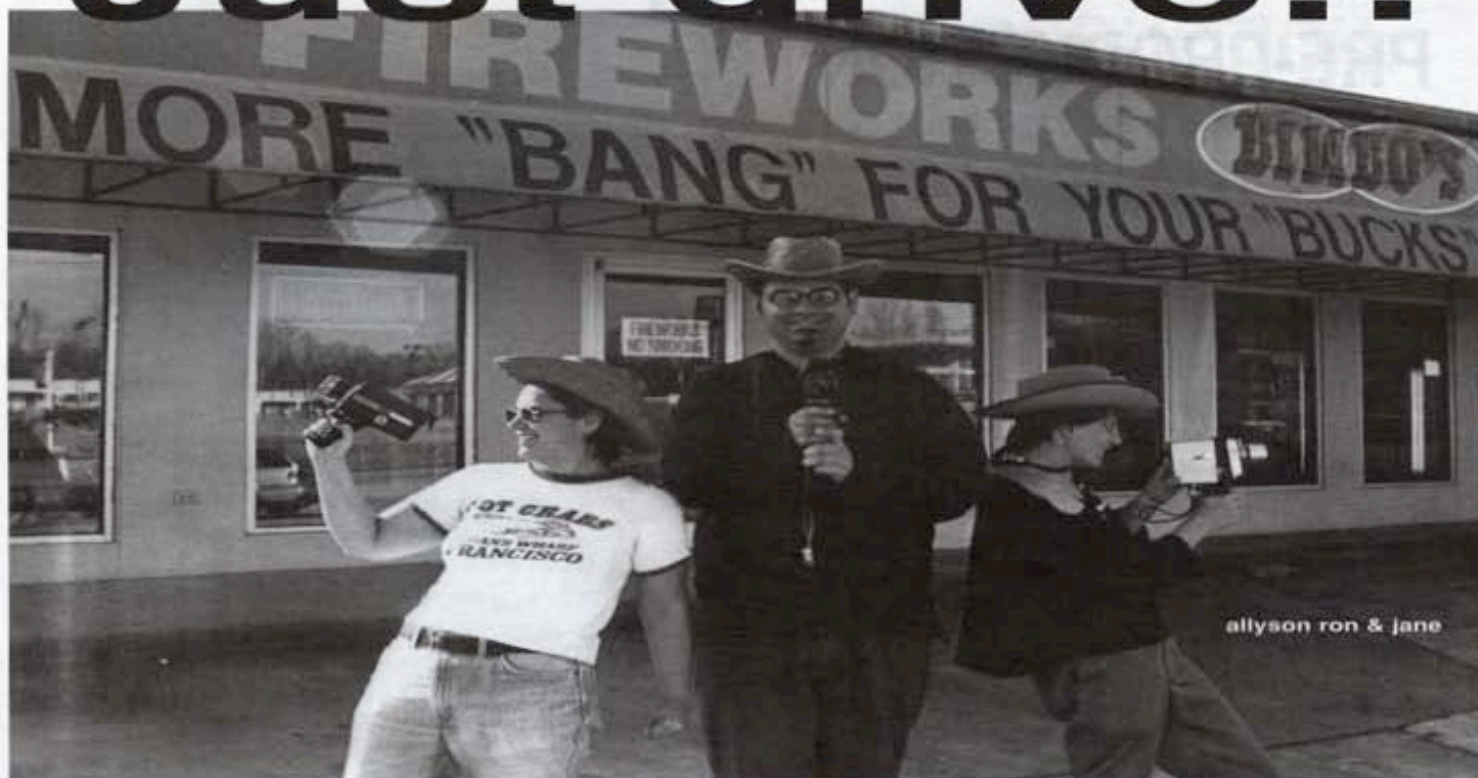
Why did I quit my job to do this?
Can I trust my camera person?
Does LIFT equipment work?
Why doesn't anybody talk about
ideas?
Why does everybody talk about
money?
Why is that guy at LIFT so crabby?
Is my film too autobiographical?
Why haven't I got this film done by
now?
How come that woman at LIFT has
made three films in the time it
takes me to make one?
How should I end it?
Should I end it?
What I'm I trying to say?
Am I contributing?
Does it mean anything?
Does it matter?
Am I a writer?
Can I direct?
Can I produce?
Do I have an eye?
Do I have an ear?
Could I use a rubber duck as a
life jacket if I was drowning?
Why am I getting different answers
to the same question?

Questions a Departing Technical Coordinator asks himself?

How many questions have I answered
in the last eight years?
How can Lisa make three films at
once and work full time?
If the couches in the mezzanine
could talk, what would they say?

If the SR had a personality would
it be Sam from *Casablanca* or the
Man in Edward Munch's *The Scream*?
What is the longest time anybody
has worked in an Artist Run
Center?
What can you say about someone
who has worked longer in the same
place than anybody else?
What is it like to be unemployed?
If I could do anything I wanted,
what would I do?
Would I get a grant for a film
that made fun of the independent
film community?
Is it true that trees grow
through temples in Ankor Wat?
How often does it rain in Fuji?
How much would it cost to live in
San Miguel de Allende for a year?
Does anybody want to go out on a
date?
Why do filmmakers ask so many
questions?
How many friends have I made at
LIFT?
How many enemies have I made at
LIFT?
Will all my friends and enemies
come to my farewell party?
Is it a contradiction to go to
the bookstore and buy, "How to
live on no income?"
Who drew the Alien in the hallway
window?
Can I retire at 34?
How does a jobless recovery work
anyway?
Am I crazy?

Just drive!!



allyson ron & jane

What do you do when you have a budget of about 200 bones each and you want to get out of the big smoke? Just drive south for 24 hours to Florida, the ultimate low-rent vacation, where everyone goes when you can't get anywhere else.

Allyson Mitchell goes on a road trip to Fla USA and lives to tell

I don't even need to paint a picture of ladies with blue rinses and old men sporting sans-a-belt leisure wear, pecan fudge, and all you can eat early bird specials at the buffet because we all know these FLA stereotypes too well.

But how do you justify such a trip when you've got projects you've been avoiding back home and no dough in the bank? Well, you're going there to make films right? Right! That was pretty much the ground plan as Jane Farrow, Roy Mitchell (no genealogical relation, phew!) and I jumped into a borrowed van on the afternoon of Friday, December 13th, for a ten day tour of the world's tackiest thrift stores and greasiest road food.

In that time we shot four rip snortin' mini-flicks on a budget of about \$360 spent on film, processing, buying cameras and batteries. Post-production transfers and audio/visual editing costs have not yet been tallied but suffice it to say, the films are likely to cost under

\$300 each, not including the cost of dubs and promotion.

Clearly the visual and audio quality are sacrificed on a pyre of down and dirty DIY methods with such a bargain basement budget to work with but hey, this is something rookies can get away with and well, pretty much have to in the current climate of slash and burn arts funding. We aren't the first to do art school projects on personal pocket money budgets.

None of them are films about road trips but I think they all speak to a certain "road trip aesthetic", fuelled by bad coffee (spiked with Fusion, an instant coffee caffeine booster for the late night riders) junk food, and trucker wake up pills (the Ephedrine cocktail). As you travel down the highway, time and space are measured by trips to don't-sit-down-while-you're-go-in' toilets and how many candy bar and burrito wrappers are crumpled up on the dash. The world flashing by you is now accom-

panied by a soundtrack of golden oldies stations and flaming Christian fundamentalists hopping mad about teenage masturbation encouraging girls everywhere to establish their own "unshakable unbreakable" barriers to intimacy. And life outside the bubble always seems a little weirder when you've just spent 48 hours in a speeding cubby hole with two other people.

As the left side of your brain goes on cruise control navigating the road, checking the horizon for smokies or serving up various delicacies from the raunchy smelling cooler, your brain's creative right side can take over. Not only do you remember some odd child hood memories and where you lost your house key, you begin to realize that your interpretations take on some nicely whacked out qualities, perhaps the state of mind that experimental film is trying to induce in its audiences. I find it more than a little bizarre writing this article about making films when I still have a hard time considering the work I've done; "film"

Here's how it happened for me:

PRE-PRODUCTION:

(Getting the gear together)



bonus !!

check list:

- * three super 8 cameras
- * 1 Key Stone XL 200 1975 purchased at the Salvation Army in Grand Rapids Michigan for \$5.00
- * 1 Yashica circa 1962 purchased at Village de Valeur in Montreal for \$12.00 (originally priced at \$15.00 but wheeled and dealed the manager)
- * 1 Canon 514, a yard sale acquisition.
- * 4 cassettes of b/w Kodak reversal film
- * 6 cassettes of colour Kodak Ektachrome movie film
- * One cassette recorder and tapes for making sound track since sync sound was out of the question. After being on the road for about 18 hours I had a desire to record over the home-mixed 80's dance music I'd brought for the ride. My fellow passengers having mercilessly teased me into such a frenzy that I actually found myself, in a bizarre moment, almost brought to tears defending HairCut 100.
- * Video 8 camera (Sony Handycam circa 1990) from mom. Which we couldn't use anyway because I forgot the battery. We limped along with AC power supply but not having it in the van limited its usefulness.
- * Three video 8 cassettes - only one used.
- * Props: assorted tinker toys, suitcase, auto-graphed picture of unknown but famous accordion player, space ship model, bathroom activist stickers, and nylon fishing line for animating the props.

Get free super 8 cassettes -we found two half used Kodachrome cassettes left in cameras at thrift stores. On the assumption that all home movies are good, we were hoping to see some really great stuff, like a stranger's family reunion or home pornos. We finished shooting the rolls and are keeping our fingers crossed having sent them off to Hollywood for processing at the Kodak headquarters it takes six weeks.

We needed to check out the cameras by making a test cassette and getting it developed before leaving. Having left it to the proverbial last minute, we didn't have enough time to actually project the footage before we left but held it up to the grey cloud filtered sky over lake Ontario as we left town on the Gardiner expressway. It looked greaaaaat.





PRODUCTION:

Delta Don

director Roy Mitchell

Delta Don, what's that flower you have on? This is a story of one man's (Roy-boy) search for his same sex lover, 'the mysterious dark haired man' (played by Jane). Retelling the story of Delta Don from a 'boy loses boy' perspective it is shot at Georgia and Tennessee truck stops and small towns along the I-75 and one location shoot at mom and dad's in FLA, the 'fantasy sequence' of the lovers having brunch on the patio and playing tennis.

Cracker Barrel My Ass

director Jane Farrow

Shot all in-van and in-restaurant as a media zap to homophobic firing practices of the Southern States restaurant chain, Cracker Barrel. Riding shotgun in the van, the POV is road footage inter-mixed with actual footage of walking through one of the restaurants, into the ladies room and defacing the walls.

So Over the Rainbow

director Jane Farrow

Shot in-van from the back seat this film records a conversation between the driver ("Marly") played by me and the passenger ("Brett") played by Roy-toy Mitchell. This post modern fag/dyke couple are just a little too bitchy for their britches... We recorded the audio to this one in the van but later, Jane re-wrote it and we laid it down professionally at the kitchen table back in T.O.



Interplanet Janet

director Allyson Mitchell

The story of how this Saturday morning School House Rock character shaped my babe-awareness and made it seem cool to want a girlfriend who travelled through space and could teach me the names of all the planets.

Shot poolside, with photography on-going back here in Toronto. This is partially an animation of a space ship, various toys and vintage treats of the week. It will be interspersed with excerpts from the actual ABC program and faux childhood super 8 footage.



POST-PRODUCTION:

Arriving in Toronto broke than broke we needed a scam so that we could do the sound for free. I had heard of large department-type stores with very liberal return policies, even on big ticket items like professional cassette recorders. Of course, as you all know, if you look hard and long enough you'll find someone to beg and borrow from.

The soundtracks were all recorded over a weekend on a kitchen table, maximizing technical advice from the likes of Connie Nowe, Barb Mainguy and Lisa Hayes. The music was performed on Sarah Lightbody's amazing synthesizer that has sound-effect keyboard tones like 'ouch ouch' and 'plink plink'. Megan Rivers Moore, a friend from another video I'm working on, My Very Own After School Special, played piano for Roy on his sparse yet exceptionally beautiful

rendition of Delta Don.

Jane edited her Super 8's at LIFT which at 50 cents an hour is the deal of the century. She transferred the finished visuals to 3/4 inch video and is laid the soundtrack down in the LIFT ProTools room with the Patron Saint of No-budget, Lisa Hayes. Roy is editing Delta Don on video, having transferred it to VHS at Exclusive, at an undisclosed megacity location. Interplanet Janet has evolved into a somewhat more involved shoot which will take a few more months to get in the can. We're all hoping to have at least one work in Images or Inside/Out so we can hit the weenies and cheezies circuit come spring time.

I'm on the cusp of completing my first 16mm film, a one minute animation called Don't Bug Me which was inspired by the LIFT animation stand workshop held in fall

'96 and it is premiering at the Melbourne Lesbian and Gay film festival. What I've found amazing about my super 8 FLA experience has been the accessibility of this low-tech medium (as compared to the anality of an even one minute 16mm project). From this spins yet another project, 3 Minute Rock Star. Jane and I are gathering a group of first-time filmmakers under the assumption that if you "give a girl a camera she'll make a movie" (girl defined loosely to include fags and any other cool freakazoids.) Keeping with the cheap and easy nature of super 8 filming we are giving 'amateurs' a camera and one super 8 cassette with the stated mission to make an in-camera edited short on the topic "why I'm a rockstar" (rockstar defined as a state of mind rather than actual career). Any amateurs out there give me a call!

as Spit Ball Girl and Dogardoo quabble over independent film

Are you trying to assimilate so hard you forgot you had your own ideas?

Are experimental filmmakers just pretentious scenesters???

What makes most Canadian film so dull? Does the grant system dullify, stultify, stupify? Are you sick of governmental organizations? Would you be working without them?

HAS THE FILM ART FORM MAXED OUT SO THAT EXPERIMENTAL FILM IS JUST MORE OF THE SAME?

Does film-as-bestseller (i.e. The English Patient) signal the end of the form?

PROMOTE YOUR WORK!!

DEFEND YOUR WORK!!

Have you ever seen a Canadian film? Why do you think that is?

Stan Brakhage is Over: Tell me Something New...

IF ART = LIFE CLEAN UP YOUR ROOM!!!

What is an experimental Film?

DO YOU JUST FOLLOW TRENDS? WHAT ARE YOU DOING THAT IS DIFFERENT??

does the thought of more ironic art just want to make you vote for the megacity and move to the suburbs???

Are you just slumming? Are you coming soon to a Cineplex near us?

Are you tired of showing your films to your friends? Or do you think the best place for them is your basement: Fuck the film scene, there's lots of beer in the fridge!!

Do you feel like going to the Cineplex Odeon and holding the projectionist-manager hostage until you see a program of shorts not made at the Canadian Film Centre?

Do you feel like going to the Bloor and holding the projectionist-film student hostage until you see your film shown in an 800-seat theatre!

we want to know what you think!

Assignment:

Either:

Tell us what's new in 400 words or less. Give us your opinion, your rant, your vision leave a message at 975-4681 or email: Barbara_Mainguy@tvo.org

Or:

What is your dream of the Great Canadian Film? Write it down, so it doesn't have to be made...

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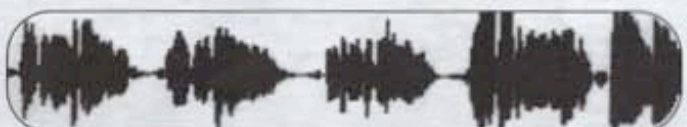
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ON THE FLY!

SHOT CUT AND SCREENED IN A DAY!

20 first-time filmmakers have been working on scripts for this unique film workshop. See the results Wednesday, February 26th, 7 & 9:30 p.m. at the Music Gallery, 179 Adelaide Street West.



FREE PROTOOLS HOURS!

LIFT has set aside hours in the ProTools Suite for full and associate members of LIFT to practice and get familiar with this new system. Those without previous non-linear editing experience or who haven't taken a ProTools workshop should first take an orientation. Up to two members can book the suite together for practice. This time cannot be booked to work on a project.

FREE HOURS ON TUESDAYS:

10 A.M. - 1 P.M., 1 P.M. - 4 P.M., 4 P.M. - 6 P.M.

To sign up for one of these sessions, call LIFT @ 588-6444

I guess we're all independent filmmakers

