

true tales of LIFT documentaries

including work from:

Marcos Arriaga

Katherine Asals

Joy Corion

Jonathan Culp

Larissa Fan

Lara Fitzgerald

Tina Hahn

Carolynne Hew

Mike Hoolboom

Ali Kazimi

Glance Lawrence

Brenda Longfellow

Jorge Manzano

David McCallum

Cara Morton

Paulette Phillips

Jeff Sterne

Clint Tourangeau

Mark Wihak

Carolyn Wong





**THE LIAISON OF INDEPENDENT FILMMAKERS
OF TORONTO**

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Doc Talk: The gang of great LIFT documentary filmmakers

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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, 588-6444; 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

Doxographer: One who writes down the thoughts of others.

A Doc Doxography is what this issue is: I want to thank LIFT's community of documentary filmmakers who have united to write down their revelations, reflections (and household hints). (I think it all started at the Island picnic), and there's not much more I can say, since so many people have said it here so well. (Scott McLaren, Laurence Green and Kika Thorne sent their best, and our apologies to any doc-ers we missed...)

p.s.: We're proud to know we have a hero in our midst:
Victor Crowl, you rule.

message from the Board

by Jonathan Culp

Coffee, cookies, beverages in recyclable containers... hey now it's the LIFT Annual General Meeting! The event took place November 24 in the mezzanine, which, while not as opulent as our old Music Gallery digs, proved a hospitable setting despite the sprint-distance to the WC. A respectable bunch of you showed up to stare us down (it's lonely folks) while we told you how we have been manifesting our servitude. All together in one place, the events of last year begin to resemble accomplishments.

Lisa seasoned her Technical Co-ordinator's report with cocktail-lounge microphone stylings and myriad admonitions to attend the forlorn Equipment Advisory Meeting on December 9th. If you didn't go, you missed the change to assert your New Equipment Priority -- a Super 8mm camera? A field DAT? Equipment rentals for '97 kicked the hell out of our projections, up 38% from last year. What else? Shop talks are now workshops. And the LIFT Production Grant shall continue to exist without the NFB. And John Knellor was sick.

Deborah's Executive Director's Report bore tidings from our grant-body benefactors. The OAC has decided to speak the Harris language, pooling artist-runs of all disciplines into one Megasection, thus (we hope) protecting our kind from outright termination. Speaking of Mega, the Toronto Arts



THE CANADA COUNCIL
FOR THE ARTS
SINCE 1957

LE CONSEIL DES ARTS
DU CANADA
DEPUIS 1957

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The Celluloid Corset: Brenda Longfellow on Gwendolyn McEwan by Paulette Phillips pg>>19

Reel Asian Film Festival Larissa Fan reviews the inaugural Fest... and has fun doing it pg>>22



Photo of David McCallum by Suzanne Reid

Council is asserting their continued existence... And the Canada Council is promising to stop biasing funding according to longevity, which bodes well for youngish yet functional co-ops such as us.

Subcommittee reports from Barb Mainguy and Victoria Hirst brought us up to date on the Newsletter and Special events. (There's a new LIFT Special Events Committee chair: Diana Vazquez). In the programming department, Cinecycle looks to be the winner in our Monthly Screenings sweepstakes, offering us a good venue on terms we like. (so no more running down the street for beer bargains.

Nominations to the Board of Directors kicked off with a confounding preamble which sure would have discouraged me from joining -- but the you-better-show-ups and what's-going-ons failed to intimidate our four NEW BOARD MEMBERS: Zan Chandler, Stuart Shikatami, Diana Vazquez and Carolyn Wong. This year, three two-year vets also stood for re-election, a first -- so hello again to Christy Garland, David Nancoff and Shay Schwartzman, who joined the other four on their victorious slate. Insert ticker-tape procession and tearful waving from the convertible. Then we went and whooped it up on Liberty Street. Wisht you hadda been there...

There's some important, pre-AGM news to report, too. In October, the Board voted 4-2 to withdraw from participation in the Independent Film and Video Alliance. This decision was based on Deborah's report on the Alliance's AGM, which was troubling in two respects. First, in confronting a reported incident of racial bias, against an independent filmmaker by a funding agency, the meeting's response appears to have been biased in itself. Where they might have chosen to represent the concerns of the filmmaker, a "full inquiry" was called instead, with the effect that the complainant was put under duress rather than the accused! Secondly, there was a breach of process which denied debate on an unrelated motion proposed by LIFT.

The IFVA apologized for the latter incident, but has not responded to concerns expressed about the bias issue. The LIFT board decision to withdraw reflected a belief that racially suspect incidents should be met with strong, direct responses -- thus reflecting the best interests of the IFVA members, right? We will retain our membership during our boycott, as we pressure IFVA to address this stuff in a satisfactory way.

Don't forget to let us know where you stand on these and other taxing issues. We might pay attention to you if you catch us in a good mood.

ON THE COVER:

Ali Kazmi and Jeffrey Thomas on the set of Shooting Indians, A Journey with Jeffrey Thomas

upcoming festival deadlines:

FESTIVAL /LOCATION /DATE: | DEADLINE: TELEPHONE: | E-MAIL:

WEBSITE: times

NORTH AMERICAN OUTDOOR FILM/VIDEO AWARDS

State College, Pa Summer 1998 12/19/97 814 234 1011

2ND GRENOBLE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL - BOARD AND BLADE SPORTS

Autrans March 8-11, 1998 12/20/97 04.76.95.30.70 autrans@alpes.net.fr

CIFC HOT DOCS

Toronto, On March 19-22/98 12/30/97 (416) 975-3977 debn@interlog.com

INSIDE OUT LESBIAN & GAY FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL OF TORONTO

Toronto, On Late Spring 1998 12/30/97 (416) 977-6847 inside@insideout.con.ca

MEDIAWAVE '98 - INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF VISUAL ARTS

April 27 - May 2, 1998 1/5/98 +36 96 315 664, 328 888 mediawave@arrabonet.gyor.hu

www.interlog.com/~filmgyor

NEW YORK LESBIAN & GAY EXPERIMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL

New York, NY June 1998 1/5/98 (212)3432707

NEW YORK UNDERGROUND FILM FESTIVAL

New York, NY March 1998 1/5/98 212 925 3440 www.nyuff.com

ASPEN SHORTFEST

Aspen, Co, April 1-5, 1998 1/15/98 (970) 925-6882 shortsfest@aspenfilm.org www.aspen.com/filmfest

PHILADELPHIA FESTIVAL OF WORLD CINEMA

Philadelphia, Pa, April 29 - May 10/98 1/12/98 215 895 6593 pfwc@libertynet.org www.libertynet.org/~ihouse

TAOS TALKING PICTURE FESTIVAL

Taos, Nm April 16-19, '98 1/15/98 505-751 0637 ttpix@taosnet.com www.taosnet.com/ttpix/

LOS ANGELES ASIAN PACIFIC FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL

Los Angeles, Ca May 14-21, 98 1/16/98 (213) 680-4462 visual@vc.apnet.org www.vc.apnet.org/~vis-com/

CRACOW INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF SHORT FILMS

Cracow May 30-June 3/97 1/31/98 (012) 67-23-40

FILM FEST NEW HAVEN

New Haven, Ct April 3-5, 1998 1/31/98 203 865 2773

ISTANBUL INT'L FILM FESTIVAL

Istanbul April 18 - May 3, 1998 1/31/98 90 212 249 66 10 www.istfest.org

13TH WORLD FESTIVAL OF ANIMATION FILMS - ZAGREB '98

Croatia, Europe June 17-21, 1998 2/1/98 (385 1) 46 11808, 46 11 709, 46 11 589 kdz@zg.tel.hr

ANN ARBOR FILM FESTIVAL

Ann Arbor, Michigan Mar. 17-22, 1998 2/15/98 313 995-5356 viki@honeymen.org http://aafilmfest.org

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DU FILM FERROVIAIRE

Saint-Ouen Cedex April 1-4, 1997 2/20/98

SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

Glebe June 5-19, 1998 2/20/98 61 2 9660 3844 info@sydfilm-fest.com.au

TORONTO WORLDWIDE SHORT FILM FESTIVAL

Toronto, On June 1-7, 1997 3/1/98 (416) 535-8506 twsf@idirect.com

BANFF TELEVISION FESTIVAL

Canmore, Ab June 7-13, 1998 2/23/98 (403) 678-9260 www.banfftvfest.com

8TH INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY, SHORT AND ANIMATED FILMS FESTIVAL

St. Petersburg, Russia July 1-8, 1998 5/1/98

calls for submissions:

SPLICE THIS! Toronto's 1st annual super 8 film festival is looking for submissions.

Deadline is February 15, 1998.

Send a VHS copy, short description and S.A.S.E. to: 423 Shaw St. Toronto M6J 2X4

For more info call Laura and Kelly at 537-2256.

(Courtesy of Arts Wire CURRENT, <http://www.artswire.org>)

LOS ANGELES INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL

- showcases independent full-length feature films, shorts and documentaries completed after 1/1/96, and in 16mm or 35mm format. Submit 1/2" VHS for preview. For information and application, see the LAIFF website at www.laiff.com or contact: LAIFF,

5455 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1500, Los Angeles, CA 90036. (213) 960-9460.

Deadline: Jan 16

THE CANADA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS PROGRAMS

Media Arts Presentation, Distribution and Development Program, Project Assistance to Production Organizations for Media Arts Development, Presentation, Circulation and Distribution Project Grants assist non-profit Canadian arts organizations, festivals and groups to undertake innovative, short-term projects. The

deadlines are 15 November and 15 May. For further information, contact Karen Tisch at 1-800-263-5588 ext. 4253 or e-mail at: karen.tisch@canadacouncil.ca

TWO NEW FUNDING PACKAGES

(Courtesy of CIFC) National New Media Fund. The Stentor Alliance launched a \$2.5 million national fund to encourage new content and technology initiatives in Canada's new media. For more info, call Beth Green at 1-888-826-5706. Bell Fund: the Bell Broadcast and New Media Fund. The objective of this fund is to increase the production of Canadian content for the domestic market place. For guidelines and application, call (416) 977-0694.

critical dates & dubious deadlines

calls for submissions:

The Canadian Film Centre's Feature Film Project is seeking submissions for low budget feature film projects budgeted for less than \$500,000. **New Deadline: December 15th, 1997.** For detailed guidelines, tel: 416 445 2890, website: www.cdnfilmcentre.com

The Sync, an Internet broadcasting company, is giving away free encoding and hosting to independent filmmakers who want to put their works on the Internet in RealVideo and NetShow format. More details are available at <http://www.thesync.com>

LIFT'S NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE IS LOOKING FOR NEW MEMBERS! Join the Committee if you are interested in the direction of LIFT's Newsletter. Members receive 20 volunteer hours for committee service. Call Deanna at the office if you're interested. **Upcoming Newsletter committee meetings (6:15pm @ Pauper's Pub - Brunswick & Bloor): December 2, January 6, February 3 & March 3.**

ISLAND MEDIA offers Post Production grant. Four awards given for a fiction feature project, documentary feature project, fiction short and documentary short. For more info call, (212) 252-3522. Open to Canadian residents. **Deadline: January 31.**

FIRST LOOK is an invitational series which previews new films which do not have distribution. Held at the Tribeca Films Center once a month. To qualify this must be the first screening for the film in NY and LA. All films must be 70 minutes or longer. For more information call 212.941.4011.

SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL - Held April 23 - May 7, 1998. Accepting entries for both its invitational, non-competitive section for recent narrative features and its Golden Gate Awards competition for documentaries, shorts, animation, experimental work and television. For entry forms and eligibility guidelines call 415.929.5014 or e-mail: ggawards@siff.org. Forms also may be downloaded from the festival website @ <http://www.siff.org>. **Late entry deadline: January 10.**

MADCAT INT'L WOMEN'S FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL features independent and experimental works by women from around the world. Last year highlighted works by Barbara Hammer, Su Friedrich, and Lynne Sachs as well as a host of upcoming experimental and indie film/video makers. Held in late March at the Roxie Cinema in San Francisco, CA. Seeking innovative and challenging works by Women for the second annual Film / Video Festival. All lengths and genres will be considered. For more info call 415.436.9523 or email: wemajbd@aol.com. **Deadline: December 22.**

TRINITY SQUARE VIDEO presents The 16th Annual Purchase Collection for 1998. If you wish to submit a tape please obtain and complete a submission form and send a preview copy of your tape by **Friday, January 30, 1998.** Send above to: Trinity Square Video, 172 John Street, 4th Floor, Toronto, ON, M5T 1X5. The winners will receive a purchase award of \$550.00 plus a one year membership to Trinity Square Video. The selected tapes will be presented at the Images Festival in April '98. Only one submission per person will be accepted. For more information contact Stephen Foster at: (416) 593-1332.

EQUITY SCHOLARSHIPS - The National Film Board of Canada's Cultural Diversity Mandate Team is offering a new program that aims to provide career support for aboriginals and people of colour in the film and television industry. Eligible applicants for professional development workshops and courses will be offered financial support to cover the fees of such sessions. Once the applicant is accepted for the workshop, he or she can apply directly to the NFB for the scholarship.

CODES PRO-MEDIA is moving November 3, 1997. Their new address will be **123 Niagara Street, Toronto ON, M5V 1C6.** Tel.: (416) 504-2400, Fax: (416) 504-2847

FILM NITE AT THE COMET LOUNGE - Raleigh, North Carolina. An on-going opportunity for independent filmmakers to screen features, shorts and documentaries on a weekly basis. The North Carolina Independent Filmmakers Association, a non-profit association dedicated to supporting and fostering independent filmmaking in North Carolina, sponsors the film night every second Monday and is seeking submissions. Accepting 16mm, Super 8mm and VHS formats. For more info call 919.828.4019 or e-mail mellisrob@aol.com. NCIFA's website is <http://pages.tico.com/ncifa>. No Deadline

DELUXE TORONTO - In keeping with the ever growing post production demands, deluxe will be greatly expanding its' 35mm services and in turn, reducing its' 16mm services. **Effective January 1, 1998, deluxe toronto will no longer offer 16mm printing services.** However, they will continue to offer the following 16mm services: original negative processing, video transfers, re-recording, screenings, magnetic and optical transfers. For more info. contact Stan Ford (416) 957- 6202, Paul Norris (416) 957-6203, Tom Berner (416) 957-6220

HOMEMADEMOVIES - Currently seeking short films, videos, and animation for new cable TV series. Needs to fill 16 shows. Upon becoming a licensed acquirer, they will pay producers and directors a fee for airing their shorts. Submit amateur/student independent work (less than 13 minutes in length). For more info. e-mail TVPRO2R@aol.com

KOREAN GOVERNMENT PULLS PLUG ON HUMAN RIGHTS FESTIVAL (courtesy of indieWIRE) The South Korean government continued its crackdown on film festivals by cutting the electricity to the building housing The Human Rights Film Festival, September 27, shortly before the opening night screening. This follows the recent cancellation of The Seoul Queer Film and Video Festival, scheduled for last week. In stating their reasons for the ban, the Korean government declared "all 'homosexually-related' materials as obscene and placed in the same category of 'deviant sexual behavior' along with bestiality, necrophilia, and so forth." In retaliation, festival organizers have started an international campaign to convince the government to reverse its decision. Distributed across the internet, the letter calls the banning "a breach of freedom of expression as well as an instance of unjust social discrimination, and that this action will seriously damage Korea's international reputation as an open, developed and democratic society." **For more information on the letter campaign, email: queer21@interpia.net**

EURO UNDERGROUND - A cross cultural arts organization exhibiting works in Europe offers exhibition opportunities in Berlin Germany, Krakow Poland, Sofia Bulgaria and Prague Czech/Republic. Seeking underground, independent and experimental film and video. Categories include: Features, Shorts, Docs, Animation, Experimental. The festivals are designed to showcase work and enable film/video makers a opportunity to sell to TV Markets overseas. For more info. call: 1-888-864-9644 email: cuff@ripco.com

SHORTS WANTED - FOZTARK FILMS AND TELEVISION, an LA-Toronto alliance, is looking for amusing and/or quirky short films or documentaries that run 10 minutes or less and were produced within the last 20 years. The company is putting together a pitch package for Canadian and American Cable TV and is looking to independent filmmakers/videographers for help in developing a show that would shine the spotlight on the largely ignored short film and documentary genre. The program, tentatively titled The Ground Floor, will mainly feature cutting edge comedic, satirical or offbeat "pieces" but the producers hope to develop a forum for experimental filmmakers to work out their material.

FESTIVALS WEBSITE: For those interested in submitting their films and videos to festivals around the world, the Festivals Bureau of Telefilm Canada offers an excellent website which lists the dates and contact information for the festival as well as the format, length, genre and deadlines for selection purposes. Some festival sites are directly linked to Telefilm's site. <http://www.telefilm.gc.ca/en/fest/intern/appels.htm>. If Telefilm provides any assistance for the festival (e.g. shipping of invited films), the details are noted. Telefilm's Festival Bureau can also be reached at (514) 283-6363, festival@telefilm.gc.ca

new members:

Welcome new members
as of nov. 97:

Paula Bonucchi
Scott Brophy
Laura Buckles
Patricio Carreton
Michael Cooper
Jordan Cushing
Strahil Dobreff
Kirsten Douglas
Patrick Duchesne
Mark Ellis
Patricio Garreton
Bryn Garrison
Lucy Grech
Barbra Hopkinson
Matthew Hurst
Karl Jason
Jeff Kostyniuk
Shelley Lewis
Christian Lippett
Sam Nulf
Andrew Oxley
Kirti Paikera
Carmela Palma
Jonathan Pencharz
Sarah Phillips
Emmanuel Pokala
Robin Rhodes
Bruce Richardson
Gordon Sheppard
Michael Soper
Greg Timothy
D. Gillian Truster
Dusan Vojacek
Horace West
Kelly-Ann Woods
Don Young

announcements:

Diversi Film and Video Fund has moved to the friendly offices of the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Center, Suite 204, 37 Hanna. On Friday, January 30, 1998, we will be starting the year off with screenings and a party, so drop by after 8:00 p.m. and help us celebrate! For more information call Tina Hahn, 536-8446.

funding & grant deadlines:

ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL

961-1660
Media Arts Special Projects:
Jan 15
First Projects: Film & Video
Jan. 15
Grants to Visual Artists:
\$3000 Grants:
Jan 15
Visual Arts Special Projects
January 15
Photography Projects
February 1

CANADA COUNCIL

1-800-263-5588 X 4075/4138
Creation/Production Grants to Professional
Artist - Photography
March 2, 1998

CANADA TELEVISION AND CABLE PRODUCTION FUND EQUITY INVESTMENT PROGRAM

(514) 283-6363
started September 9, 1996

MACLEAN HUNTER/COGECO FUND 596-5878

Maclean Television Fund:
Nov. 1, Feb. 15, 1998
Cogeco Program Development Fund:
February 1, 1998

OFDC CALLING CARD PROGRAM

314 6858, x 319
January 5, 1998

BRAVOFACT

Grant deadline: January 6, 1998.

TORONTO ARTS COUNCIL

392-6800
Visual Arts
(Inclusive of Film & Video)
October 15, 1998

liftgear & machinations:

What's new with equipment @ LIFT?

NEED A PLACE TO STORE YOUR NEG? Since Deluxe has quit making 16mm release prints, they are asking everyone to clear their 16mm negs out of the vault to make way for the big \$\$\$ 35mm features. The Cinematheque Quebecoise is willing to store your negs in their beautiful, climate controlled vault. You just have to get your neg to Montreal. To make arrangements with them, call Giselle Côté at 514-842-9763.

EQUIPMENT DONATION

• **PORTABLE CD PLAYER.** Millions of thanks to LIFT member Alain Archambault for donating a CD portable player, which can be used to preview sound effects outside the Sound Suite. If you're interested in using it, contact one of the Technical Co-ordinators.

DELUXE TORONTO IS CLOSING DOWN IT'S 16MM PRINTING FACILITIES!

Join us in a campaign asking them not to Write to Des Henry, Senior Vice President at deluxe to let them know how this will affect the indie community.
Their fax: 348-0104/ tel: 364-4321
Address: 380 Adelaide St. W., Toronto Ontario
M5V 1R7

NEW EQUIPMENT

• **SAFE AND EASY TIE-INS.** Gaffer, DOP, and LIFT member extraordinaire, Jeremy Hudspith, has designed and built a tie-in for both a dryer plug and a stove plug. Since these household appliances use more electricity, they require a 220V heavy duty outlet. Crafty independent filmmakers can take advantage of this additional juice without having to do a potentially dangerous tie-in into the electrical panel. This adaptor has four individually fused 110V 20A circuits, which would allow you to power 4 2K Blondes or 8 1K Redheads or 2 2K Blondes and 4 1K Redheads or any other combination. The rental rate for this amazing new device is expected to be \$10/day for full members and \$20/day for associate members (pending board approval).

• **MOVING UP.** LIFT member Jeff Sterne saved a 6 foot aluminum ladder from the garbage heap and has donated it for use by fellow LIFT members. The production that Jeff was working for was going to throw the ladder out. Jeff recognized that it would be a valuable asset for LIFT, and brought it over to the office. So far, we have used it to change light bulbs in the office, but we are offering it for rental to members for \$3/day for full members and \$6/day for associate members (pending board approval).

MORE SOUND EFFECTS. The first set of vinyl LP's have been recorded to DAT by Tony Morrone, and they are now available for use in the LIFT ProTools suite.

errata....

Cassandra Nicolaou's name was incorrectly spelled in the previous issue.

Last issue this photo was to accompany Edie Steiner's interview with Naomi McCormack, but due to an error only two members appeared... so now we introduce them in entirety.....



The band that dare not speak its name
Steve Gauley, Paul Till, Edie Steiner,
Sage Firman and Naomi McCormack.

MEMBERS IN ACTION:

Pre-Production:

Jamie Phelan is raising money for *Kafka's Meditation*, a ten-minute, 16mm experimental dance animation based on the short stories of Kafka.

Carolyn Wong has just finished shooting on Edwin 'E.J.' Perez's self-funded short film, *Names will never hurt me*. The shoot went really well, mainly at one location, with one scene at another (on na 8th floor balcony).

In Production:

Chris Gehman was hard at work optically printing a film called *The Surreal Detective*, part of a larger interactive/theatre work of the same name to be presented at The 360 on Queen St. W. in January.

Louis Taylor is in continuous production on his first film *Esther, Baby and Me*, a personal film about his partner of 10 years Esther and their new baby. Louis, a professional actor, learned his 'behind the camera' skills in a series of LIFT workshops. To date, he has been shooting on both the Bolex and the Super 8 cameras, and has been experimenting with hand processing.

Owin Lambeck has shot over 4 weekends using LIFT's ARRI BL on his film *Broken Wings*.

This is the third issue of the Newsletter containing this new column on what LIFT members are up to. It is compiled by talking to members who are using a lot of LIFT facilities, and from submissions sent in by members. If you have something you'd like listed in the next newsletter, jot it down and send it to Lisa at LIFT (fax: 588-7017, e-mail: lift@inforamp.net). Please send stills too!

LIFT members have been crazy busy in Production the past few months. But with the early snowfall, most filmmakers have headed indoors to concentrate on Post. With all this activity, I imagine that we'll see lots of completed LIFT films in the spring.

posting:

Cara Morton has headed off to the back woods of British Columbia (New Hazelton to be exact) with LIFT's portable rewinds and viewer, to edit a rough cut of her film *Silas*. Cara spent a few months this summer driving around Western Canada, shooting images on her Bolex, and hand processing it at night.

Clint Tourangeau has the honour of being the first person to use LIFT's new Media 100 Digital Editing Suite to cut his short, *Shades of Black*.

Aline Gilmore's editor Emmy has been hard at work putting together a rough cut of *Silos*. Aline is now busy looking for funding to complete the 22 minute documentary.

Dan Hawke's film *Rosa's Time*, a black and white film about colour, should be complete by the end of the year. In an aura of suspense and magic, *Rosa's Time* is a tale of a mysterious salesman, reminiscent of the "trickster" in native mythology, who encounters and alters a young girl's life forever.

Sky Gilbert's *I am the Camera Dying*, shot in early September is being edited at LIFT by Karen Saunders. Sky hopes to submit to Queer Film Festivals February. Shot in black and white, the film is 45 minutes long and stars Tracy Wright and novelist Todd Clinck, as the soul and body of a sailor, respectively.

LIFT Activity:

More:

posting:

-- If you have any news about your film, please submit them to LIFT, so we can update the membership.

Gaugin's Dreamers Jennifer Bennett & Jerry Getty



Between painting the new Media 100 suite and working as Props Master on a Golf War mini Series, **Derreck Roemer** has found some time to continue editing his film, *Gaugin's Dream*. A one day of pick-up shooting in late October has left Derreck with all the stuff he needs to lock picture and move into the ProTools suite. Look for the completed film sometime in early 1998.

Scott McLaren logged many hours in the ProTools room in November, editing and mixing together a series of radio sketches that will be broadcast on CHRY. Scott hopes that other campus and community stations across the country will pick up the series as well.

Sam Lee is trying to find completion funding for his 90 minute film, *Standard Deviation*. He's picture and sound editing on the cheap, using his own Adobe Premier system and will soon conform the work print at LIFT.

l-r: writer/dir Samuel Lee, Alex Rudder, Pat McGowan and Raf Feldman deviate from the standard in *Standard Deviants*.

On the Screen:

Mario Tenorio has just finished *The Red Window* (16mm, colour, 30 minutes), the second in his trilogy of short films (The first, *The Dark Chamber*, was completed in 1996, and the third, *The Golden Web*, will be shot in May 1998). Tenorio's work is about memories as the raw material of artistic creation. The characters are artists of Latin American background living and working in Toronto. *The Red Window* was produced with support from the Canada Council, the Ontario Arts Council and LIFT.

Keith Cole's ten minute dance video *Toilet* was screened in October 1997 at Gallery Connections in Fredericton, New Brunswick and will be screened again at The Guelph Contemporary Dance Festival in May 1998. In addition, Keith's very first film, *Redd Fischer*, was shown in a loop show at Sissy, held at Buddies In Bad Times Theatre on November 1. The film had been lost for 13 years before Keith found it. (He also had a bet with an uninformed friend who insisted that it was super 8. LIFT's Tech Co-ordinator was called in to officiate the outcome of the bet. Congrats Keith. You won.) Thanks to LIFTers Simone Jones, Hope Thompson and Mark Wihak for helping make the loop work.

New Frontiers also showcased the work of several other LIFT members, including **Shawn Golberg's** *Someone To Love*, **Paula Tiberius's** *BUSK*, and **Lisa Hayes' Grandpa's Fingers**.



Hope Thompson's film *It Happened in the Stacks* had its world premiere in Montreal at the Image & Nation: Montreal Lesbian & Gay Film Festival on October 18. Later that month it played in Fredericton at Gallery Connexion in a queer film festival curated by R.M. Vaughan.



Sarah Stanley as Milley the police woman (left) and Eileen O'Toole as Jane Putnam in Hope Thompson's "It Happened in the Stacks"



Larissa Fan's *Ten Little Dumplings* played last March in the Cleveland International Film Festival, where it won a prize for Best Student Short. It also screened in the upcoming Reel Asian Film Festival. Larissa is also currently shooting a new film in collaboration with Kirsten Douglas, an experimental film focusing on the old industrial port of Toronto.

Ottawa's New Frontiers Film & Video Festival (November 1997) created a special award for **Ruba Nadda**, naming her as Most Promising Filmmaker! Two of Ruba's films, *Interstate Love Story* and *Do Nothing*, both of which were premiered at LIFT's Party of Parties, were shown at the festival. *Do Nothing* has also been selected to show at the Festival Tous Courts at Aix-en-Provence, France in December, and the Rotterdam Film Festival (Holland) has selected to show *Interstate Love Story*, *Wet Heat Drifts Through the Afternoon* and *Do Nothing*. Way to go Ruba!!

Neil Burns's *Grace Eternal* was selected to show at the Festival Tous Courts in Aix-en-Provence, France.



DOC DOXOGRAPHY

A good documentary is like one of those great guests at a bad party. Just when everyone's feeling complacent about how swell they are, in comes a chick who hasn't brushed her hair, a bit drunk, plenty mad, turning over the card tables and insisting we talk about it NOW! It's so closely tied to auteur filmmaking -- come on, you didn't really think you were objective, did you? -- and so much of it is Canadiana wallpaper, that it's also the place in film right now where you can have the most fun (cheap thrills, sister, is what it's all about). Some of LIFT's docmakers talk it out below. (If we missed you, please contact us! -- we always want to hear from you!)

-B J M

Adam and Eve in the Garden of Documentaries

by MIKE HOOLBOOM

When I was in school we were taught that shooting movies was a lot like family, only better, because you got to be really close to this small group of people. And then you never had to see them again. Film genres were also explained to us in terms of family. Mom and dad were the producers. They drove big cars, made up rules and carried the cash. The eldest child, the one that had to go through all the shit first, that had to ease the folks into a brave new world of drugs and free love, would inevitably turn out to be an experimental filmmaker. Broke the rules just because they were there. The youngest kid, the spoiled pampered brat who was given everything - that was the feature film maker. And the middle child? That one made documentaries.

(This is to leave aside, for a moment, two further genres of filmmaking - the animator and the cine-hypnotist, whose images would soon cure gout, rheumatism and hay fever. These applications of the form were considered too sophisticated for our young minds, and so were left unmentioned.)

The middle child is not the first child. They enter a world where diapers have already been dirtied, where there are already pants to grow into and old bottles to be sucked. So they manage to achieve very early on both a keen acceptance and a keener understanding of the world as it presents itself. This thought haunts all documentary filmmakers: someone has been there before you. You are following in their footsteps. Not to go where no one has gone before, but to return. Revisit. The dress code for documentaries is hand-me-downs.

Of course there have been middle children since the beginning of time, some curious rumours have dared to suggest that even Adam and Eve might have

been... But the documentary is a relatively recent expression. How did it all begin?

On this point my memory is vague, my notes obliterated by a storm of spaghetti sauce chewed over long ago. So what follows is at least in part conjecture.

Doc was the first kid in the neighborhood who learned how to throw a curve ball. That made him something special, though his unfailing generosity led him to reveal his secrets to anyone who asked, and pretty soon the whole schoolyard was full of those long, lazy arcs that appeared to be aimed at your head but would invariably wind up in the strike zone. Doc was a middle child, so no one really noticed him much, except during those times when he would spontaneously combust. Always seemed to happen just before math exams. Doc hated math - but who didn't? Mostly he seemed like part of the furniture, like a table that hadn't hit its growth spurt yet, he was someone you could count on. One day he started to get thinner. Not because he wasn't eating, he wolfed down his peanut butter sandwiches with the same relish as the next one, but somehow nothing seemed to stick to his meat. Every day he grew thinner and thinner. Recently spurned in love (Cynthia had returned his valentine unopened), his parents worried his grieving would shrink him from this world entirely, and in this they weren't entirely mistaken. One day, while watching a Marx Brothers double bill, Doc left his chair and walked into the picture. He had grown so thin that he could pass himself off as one of their own, as belonging in this world of two-dimensional folks. He enjoyed wrestling with Groucho and cutting up with Harpo

and went on a safari to find ducks for their soup. When the film was over he could slip quietly from the screen and re-enter that other world, the only world the rest of us knew for sure, but which Doc understood was only a shadow of that world of two-dimensions which was slowly bending us all into its own image. He spent many years shuttling between these two places - between images of reality and the reality of the image - and one day conceived of a new form in film. Because he missed his friends on the team, he would make pictures of them and bring them with him when he entered the world of images. No one had ever seen anything like this before, and when we asked him, he said he'd come up with a name for this new experience in movies. He called it the documentary.

That's about all I recall of the story. My instructors went on, of course, painting a rather bleak life for any who chose the honourable but difficult path which Doc had paved for us. Condemned to a life of well-meaning earnestness, of social responsibilities, documentary meant always having to say you're sorry. Because you could never shoot everything. You would always leave something out. And of course life outside the frame would always be more revealing and beautiful than anything contained inside the camera. They released us then, flushing us out into the metropolis with cameras stitched firmly into our faces, in order that we could continue the great task. To photograph everyone. All the time. In order that these two worlds of pictures and what some cynically refer to as real life, could finally merge. We would preside over this marriage like the anonymous builders of the Chartres Cathedral, knowing that we were no longer aiming for a change in images, but in consciousness itself.



JOY CORION

Our House: A Creative Treatment of Reality

"Subcultures are expressive forms, but what they express is, in the last instance, a fundamental tension between those in power, and those condemned to subordinate positions and second class lives."

Dick Hebdige, author of *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*

The concept of the film *Our House* was envisioned in the summer of 1992 while I worked city-wide as a House Music disc jockey at various underground and commercial dance clubs. One evening while attending a Festival of Festivals party

a friend asked me if I could make a documentary about anything what would it be, I enthusiastically replied - House Music! As I became more absorbed in the local House Music scene I realized that this unique musical subculture had not been fully examined and documented. The seed had been planted -- and boy has it grown!

Our House is a (work in-progress) documentary which will explore the phenomenon of House Music (nightclub music, dance music) from its origins in Chicago and New York to the global underground popularity it enjoys today. The film's primary thematic focus lies in House Music's liberation of, and influence over popular dance music, as well as in how and what the music has progressed to since its birth.

What is House Music? House is a feeling! It is also a continuation of disco. I'm not talking about disco as the defined by groups like the Bee Gees or the "Saturday Night Fever bubble gum tunes" that led to the popular 70's slogan "disco sucks". Instead I am talking about classic black, spiritual, urban, Philadelphia, R&B, style disco.

Seven years have past since that Festival of Festivals party. I have gained some ground with the documentary (all done part-time), but just like rest of the independent filmmakers out there (who I have all the respect for in the world) I am waiting for that one big break. Presently I view the art of filmmaking like a good game of chess; strategy (mixed in with a bit of luck), patience, faith, and persistence are all key factors to winning the game.

MARK WIHAK

Documentaries are such amorphous things. It's impossible to talk about the genre with any precision. That's one of documentaries great strengths. I sort of think everything I do is documentary, even if its finished form is a dramatic film or an installation. They are images, ideas and emotions, documented.

I used to hate them. All the force-feeding of NFB classics in elementary school with their Stanley Jackson voice-overs and tinny piano scores really took a toll. It was only when I started to see the work of filmmakers like Richard Kerr, Chris

Marker, Rick Hancox and Phil Hoffman that I began to realise the potential of documentary form.

I'm working on a documentary about a group of painters who were in Saskatchewan in the early sixties. I'm using a digital 6 video camera. A one hour tape costs about \$25. The picture has 525 lines and 60 fields (broadcast quality). It records CD quality sound. These cameras cost about \$5000 now and they're getting cheaper.

There's going to be an explosion of material and lots of it will be people documenting their

images, ideas and emotions. The (current) media gurus predict that the emerging technologies will give content providers (us) the upper hand over the distributors. We'll see if that's true, middle men always have a way of wedging themselves between the makers and the money, but there's going to be a lot of people out there with their \$25 tapes making "content". I can't wait.

In progress: The Flat Side of the Earth: The Regina Five and the Emma Lake Workshops.

CAROLYN WONG

Some background on my film: the working title is *Ying Ying* which is the chinese name for your father's mother. It is about my discovery of my grandmother after she has died. It will not be a conventional style doc. The visuals and approach are somewhat experimental, reflective and emotional, much like how I discovered things, in fragmented, scattered and fading memories. It will intertwine my story of loss and memories and her story. If I am successful will be a bit of a tear jerker.

I got intial research/development money from the NFB, NIF program. That's gone and I have a bit more research and it needs development. I just

applied to the Canada Council for development funds.

A documentary filmmaker wants to share something with the people that they feel strongly about. The success is in the skill with which they bring the topic into awareness. Sometimes what they are trying to express is purely emotional. It is no simple task to translate (in a cohesive, informative and entertaining way) this through a visual/audio medium.

Documentaries do not have the luxury of a structured script. The way the narrative journeys to conclusion is exciting and totally unpredictable -- you're never sure of where it is going till it gets

there. Thus, more than in a scripted film, the film is a personal triumph for the filmmaker.

I like the soup metaphor for making a documentary: You get a recipe, ingredients and tools gathered. Before you put everything into the pot, you decide what should go in first, last etc. There are many different approaches, and you need to explore these ways to achieve the final flavor you desire. You try, and try again, possibly coming across another way, one you would have never discovered without going through the first process. Before you even began though, you knew in the end it would be a soup. The beauty is in the way you got the flavor.

SEX

WITH A

BELLY

My romance
with
bureaucracy
in 4 short films.

written, directed
& starring
Clint Tourangeau

Lita:

"Do you now what it's like to smell like shit?" she asked me, "To be scared to talk to anybody because you know that they can smell your fucking stinking shit soul." I drove the van up 142nd street. We passed a 7-11. Finally I looked over at her and she looked into me with an expression lathed by pure pain. I just drove, then, past the Edmonton Space Science Centre. It was white and plastic and beautiful just then, I'll tell you. Lita told me a lot of things and we just drove around, taking a break from shooting what ended up being the final project of NFB's Studio One, *Lost Songs*. She told me about her brother shooting his head off, and finding the pieces of him all around the house, and a lot of other crazy things. Sometimes she cried. Mostly she told me about her dreams. She thought we should make a film out of them. I agreed. I suppose it's difficult to understand, but to an Indian person dreams are profound messages - a responsibility - and Lita thought her dreams - of metal-lucid violence - were sent to kill her.

Beginnings

A beginning is much more delicate and mysterious than any end. Everything is fated to end - but how strange that anything should ever begin. In this way, it is often hard to find the true beginning after it has all unwound, though the end is all too obvious. Suddenly, as the '90's dawned, it became OK to be an Indian. Quite unexpectedly, some say as early as June 1989, tears appeared in the eyes of people stuck in traffic just thinking about the ignoble plight of the beautiful, Pacific Natives. It was a real fever, for those who don't remember. No one knew the cause, really. I can only surmise that it was from this epidemic, and the fevered liberal minds in learned NFB circles, that Studio One was born (though economics may have played a part, since it was discovered that 4 of the top 10 consumers of the NFB product were Native organizations.) Whatever the occasion, Studio One did come. And that is one beginning.

Another was November 1993. I sat in the NFB theatre, in the dark, avoiding a crowded reception area where native people mingled and schmoozed. (There was one other person in the theatre avoiding the crowd - Lita). Studio One wasn't yet two years old. The first Executive Producer, Carol Geddes, was already long gone, replaced by the brilliant Six Nations Mohawk Michael Duxtader. Under Michael's leadership and the vision of his assistant Evelyn Poitras, the studio was now reaching out to filmmakers on a grassroots level - pulling in the community. Or in Michael's own words (as recorded by our Star on video tape), Studio One was looking to be the "Rich Uncle" of native filmmakers - since so

few of us had one of our own to help us. This remark echoes hauntingly the words of Sitting Bull who once appealed to The Great Grandmother (Queen Victoria), but we'll get to that later.

It is true that on this day that we had gathered, Studio One had not yet produced a single film (in fact, in the 4 or so years that it was actually in existence, the studio only produced one film, *Tlaweswa Wa*, a co-production with Barb Cranmer, though a few are still straggling into existence, like Greg Coyes troubled documentary on The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People's, Loretta Todd's moving *Forgotten Warriors*, and my own little co-production, *Lost Songs*), but that day was a day of hope. That day was a very real beginning - waiting for an end.

Jesse Tourangeau, Evelyn and the Lost Songs of the Charles Camsell Hospital

[Slap some vaseline on the lens and cue the swelling music.]

I don't know my paternal grandmother, Jesse, though she sought me out as an infant, as people will their lost relatives, for beautifully irrational reasons. She gave up my father for adoption because she was, at the time, and for seven years following, incarcerated at the Charles Camsell Indian Hospital with TB.

I don't know my father, either. He was a creep, which may or may not have anything to do with being an Indian kid raised in white foster homes. This is also typical. I grew up pretty distant from other Indians and my ancestral land has always been the west-end of Edmonton, I suppose. It's fitting, then, that when I got to direct a film with the NFB, the subject was the Charles Camsell Indian Hospital.

Having grown up away from other Indian people, it was wonderful to be working with them every day, to touch them. I owe that to Evelyn Poitras who believed in me. [Violin strains higher...]. Evelyn and I became real friends. We fasted together one Easter in Hobemma, flopped around on the floor of her Uncle's huge house dizzy with hunger. An old woman said to us, "I guess I'll have to start respecting the young people now." Maybe I should not even write that. It is sacred in a way.

Evelyn gave me work (eventually when she became Executive Producer of Studio One she made me her assistant), she encouraged me to do my own stupid films and, fatefully, she asked me to direct the first film of our little grass roots organization - on the 50th anniversary celebration of the Charles Camsell. I said no. And why not. Directing a film is a hassle, man. And, by this time, the Studio was in a state of political apoplexia -- paralyzed by issues that eventually led to the exodus of Michael Duxtader -- and the very end of Studio One itself. But, of course, I relented.

I'm not sure if relenting is a beginning or an end, but anyone who is reading this will know that making a film is just an experiment in putting a bunch of crazy people together, inflicting various tortures on them for prolonged periods of time and seeing what happens.

SEX WITH BELLY *cont.*

What happened was this:

1. Hundreds of indian peoples came back to the hospital. Many of them told their stories, and though they tried not to speak of what was gone, they told similar stories of all they had lost -- their friends, their dignity, their youth. It was all a song, it seemed, to what might have been. We (and I mean my partner, the film's eventual producer, Elaine Brander) did our best to document it.

2. During a break, Lita told me about her loss. I drove around until we ran out of gas.

3. I became irreparably emotionally invested in the complex politics which exists between the NFB and indian people, an investment which has yet to produce a film but which cost me my friendship with Evelyn.

The Point.

Because of my generation, I can't say with any great confidence that there is a point. When I make a film, I don't yell "Point!" baby. I yell, "Action!" But then it is always that kind of attitude that gets me into trouble. By September 1995, we had an assemblage of our film. It was rough, but we were onto something, something quiet and dignified and aching, something that hinted, I thought, at a uniquely Native film language -- and that's where it all ended.

I

If you get me drunk one day I'll tell you about all the pettiness behind the scenes and where and how the lines were drawn and all the ugly things that were said, but really it was just the death rattle of The End -- The Inevitable End. In September, Michael Dostader was gone. Studio One closed in April of the next year (which just made good fiscal sense) and maybe it is a good thing. Our government and its institutions do not see the world the same as the indian people, and that's the point, it anything.

II

Evelyn, who eventually tried to wrestle control of *Lost Songs* from me for reasons that will forever be lost in her heart, had a quote from Sitting Bull pinned to the rough carpet of her corporate cubical walls. I do not remember the exact words (you will forgive me for not looking it up -- that too is the point), but the essence read: "It is not important that I should try to be like a white man. Should a wolf try to be a hawk? The creator has placed different dreams in my heart."

III

To be fair to the NFB they have not cut assistance to Native Films. Their new Aboriginal Assistance Program provides more available funding than Studio One had available. Of course getting that money is not as simple as it seems.

I, for example, have recently been turned down for this assistance. But then I write bad grant proposals, so there is no one else but myself to blame.

Still, there is a point to be made about the relationship of the Native filmmaker to the government which is complex. It's not just that Native people have fewer European centred market skills (if I have poor grant skills, what about someone who hasn't graduated university?) Do we necessarily trust that when we appeal to the government for assistance -- like Sitting Bull himself did on behalf of his people before they were sent, injudiciously, back to the U.S. where they were slaughtered at Wounded Knee -- that we will get it?

The underlying question then becomes, has the government's position to indians essentially changed? Is it not still paternalistic, when they have decided that they know best how to look after the money, baby.

IV

I'm a little afraid of saying these things. Our film has been in post-production for 2 1/2 years. I have become accustomed to thinking that it is a secondary project, an insignificant one, justifiably shifted as a non-priority. I am worried that it may never get done, actually, because I am in a powerless position. It is not a great position to be in, as an artist.

In a related, and sort of ironic way, it leaves me uneasy that Barbara Janes, the heavy at the Montreal head office, recently singled our film out for accolades in a lecture on New Aboriginal Initiatives at the NFB.

V

Working on *Lost Songs*, I was told by influential NFB staff, numerous times, that there is no native Film Language and not to bother to try to find one. This does not make me mad, at all. It is just an honest reflection of perspective. It is a perspective that, I think, accounts for such things as why the CBC has never created a full, beautiful native character. This of course gets to be a problem when it comes to representation. The NFB and the CBC do not just have perspectives on indians, they represent them -- powerfully -- through the media. And they are, as the example of Studio One shows, strangers to who we really are.

In truth, I will forever be a stranger to a country that models its government on the example of a corporation. Of course, it's time to start representing ourselves. And not in images that euro-centric Canada has assigned us. I long for the day when we are able to be frivolous in the media -- when we can be sexy. Until then, to all those at the CBC and NFB, let me plead with you, since you're intent on controlling our images, would you please stop trying to convince the world that indians have souls?

VI

While directing *Lost Songs*, I took great pride in not railing at the government for their role in what happened to the people of the Charles Camsell Hospital. I chose instead to focus on the emotional experience of the people themselves. I want my films to have real people in them, not social constructs. But I think that it is wretchedly ironic that Studio One, our own studio, was shut down, as I was told, because of lack of sufficient leadership in the form of experienced native producers and the omnipresence of political and emotional turmoil.

In our film, the governmental role in the devastation of Indian families -- in the devastation of our communities -- in the devastation of our own inner lives -- was able to be presented as just subtext -- because it was so obvious, and so apparent, and so previously well documented. But perhaps it is not apparent and documented enough, because the government has still not essentially changed its relationship with the indian people. It is still paternalistic. Still patronizing. Still strati-fied.

The NFB set up Studio One to be a Native Studio and that is what they got. Did they imagine that they could have a studio that did not involve Pain? That was not still reeling with disorientation and loss? Did they have no faith that new leaders would emerge to conquer that? By the government's standards I guess Studio One was a failure. Ultimately it did not properly utilize its funding. But its important for me to tell you that there was a time that my friend Lita told me her dreams, because she thought we could make them better.

KATHERINE ASALS

I spent five months in Mexico City in the winter of 95-96 shooting an experimental documentary (the working title is *EL D.F.*). Initiated through the Canada Council Residency Exchange Program, and supported early on by a LIFT grant, accompanied by friends/sound people/babysitters, we took down a Bolex and a Walkman Pro with the intention of exploring the city for as long as we could, to make a portrait film from our wanderings, a mood piece.

The choice of non-sync equipment was obviously economic, and made in favour of simplicity, portability and invisibility. We were as mobile as a still photographer; it was easy to wander, to go anywhere, anytime and focus on events, personalities, facial expressions, voices, daily sounds, interactions, textures, colours, light.

The Bolex broke down, after four months, the Friday night before the beginning of Holy Week when the whole city shuts down for two weeks -- but while we looked for a 16mm cameras, we started taking still photos, which I think will turn out to be one of those accidents that works in your favour, giving segments of the film which will have a very different look and feel to them. Finally we rented a BL for the last weekend before we left, and again, the footage is different from and complementary to the Bolex footage -- not as spontaneous, not as in-the-crowd, but smoother, with a zoom that picks out details.

Equipment safety was always interesting. One day, out at the witchcraft market with our neighbour in residence, Jorge Lozano, who was shooting video, Jorge asked a policeman standing outside the market if it was safe to take out a camera in this area. The policeman looked at

him for a minute and starts to laugh, recommending not filming. Later a Mexican friend told us that that market was known for its chineros, a name given to thieves who use a kind of Vulcan clench on your shoulder to knock you unconscious while they strip you of everything you own.

I managed to leave my knapsack with all my notes and papers and agenda and phone book in a taxi on night, one of hundreds of thousands of independently run green beetle taxis. Two nights later the doorbell rang and the taxi driver reprimanded me, 'How could you have forgotten all your notes?' He refused any gesture of thanks, departing with a "that's what we're here for." One year later, the film is floating through the long fits and starts of trying to scrounge money to give shape to the material and finish up.



LARISSA FAN

I'm staring at the following four categories, trying to check just one:

- Drama/Fiction
- Experimental
- Animation
- Documentary

My hand hesitates briefly beside drama, moves on to experimental, pauses on animation, and hovers for a long time beside documentary. Which one, which one? The words begin to blur and meld together, I feel dizzy with the effort of trying to distinguish them. "Dramamental," I think in a daze, then "documation." Perhaps, "experimental"...

I have been thinking about genres a lot lately, especially that tricky and fascinating one,

documentary. This theoretical issue became a very practical problem when I first started filling out festival entry forms. For most people, my short film *Ten Little Dumplings* fits neatly into the documentary category, but for me it was never that simple (it rarely is...)

When I was making the film, I never thought of it as a documentary, it was just a film. As such, I felt free to shape things, edit things, stretch the truth, and just plain make things up. It has some dramatic elements, as well as puppets and stop-motion animation. All these things mitigated, I thought, against it being considered strictly a documentary. It is also quite deliberately told in the first person, because I didn't feel qualified to speak for anyone else and didn't want to try to. It is hardly the "truth."

At the same time, the film is based on real people and real events. It has those old documentary standbys, family photos. And despite my protestations, I don't think it's fiction. So what is it that pushes something over into documentary? Is it merely a matter of style? If I had taken the same topic and dealt with it in a purely dramatic or experimental form would that make it any less real? But, if it is just a question of style, what do we do with films constructed as documentaries which are purely invented, or experimentals based on real experience, or films that are somewhere in between?

I'm not sure if the categories need to be re-defined, we need all new categories, or if there shouldn't be categories at all. In the meantime, I'm working on a film -- it's sort of an experimental documentary, or maybe a documentary experimental...

MARCOS ARRIAGA

El Barrio, 17 minutes, B&W, Colour, Super 8mm, 16mm.

"El Barrio is the place where you feel secure and where you can communicate.

Aesthetically, I'm looking for movement. At the end there will be images accelerating, while the drums accelerate, until you have a kind of convergence of all the cultures and the sound and the music, creating a new mélange of culture -- the beginning of something new." A collage of images, beautifully shot, optically

altered: Black and white and colour, super 8mm and 16mm. Marcos Arriaga's "El Barrio" is an homage to the people who share the 5 square kilometers he has lived in since moving to Toronto seven years ago. The soundscape is musical. No dialogue because the film is founded on emotion, and one particular voice might reduce the possibility for everyone to relate. The image is a threading together of

footage from neighborhood parades and celebrations, the montage juxtaposes images of festivals -- the Dragon Festival in honour of Chinese New Year, the Portuguese St. Thomas Aquinas procession, the Latin American festival at Christie Pits -- squeedgie kids at Bathurst and Bloor, partygoers outside Lee's Palace -- and the Santa Claus parade; the film moves like a dance.



GLACE LAWRENCE

Glace Lawrence is within singing distance of finishing *Coming to Voice*, producing together with Anthony Brown, which examines the emergence of black film and video in Canada. Glace interviews artists Selena Williams, Clement Virgo, Christene Browne, Sylvia Hamilton, Karen King, Damon D'Oliveira, Claire Prieto, Roger McTair, Steven Williams (with producer Paul Brown), and the Emmy Awardwinning William Greaves, (for Black Journal, the only (American, public televi-

sion) national black public current affairs programme that told stories from a black perspective) who by virtue of location became the first black filmmaker in Canada, interning with the National Film Board's Unit B (also home to Norman McLaren) in the '50's. Also featured is St. Clair Bourne (also a producer of Black Journal, and U.K. director John Akomfrah. The film explores the Canadian scene, and juxtaposes the African-American and U.K. scene as it has emerged in the past

Glace is also working on a labour of love documentary -- *Woman Behind the Camera*, video (Beta and Hi-8) shot in Ghana and Toronto, looking at the personal lives of African Canadian and Ghanian women working behind the camera, exploring the way in which women on these different continents manage the demands of their families and their artistic endeavours.

And as producer-resident is developing the screenplay *Jimmy Lays Sherri* with Selena and Rosemary Williams at the Canadian Film Centre and the National Screen Institute's Features First development programme.

JEFF STERNE

The objective of presenting truth is the one thing that intrigues me about documentary filmmaking. Presenting a story to a given project is easy; it's controlled by a series of events and circumstances. But presenting a concept of truth is inescapably let to a filmmaker's manipulation. Understanding this comes from the knowledge that whatever the project, whatever the approach, there is no escaping the act of manipulating information. At first, understanding this consequence was frustrating but now it's

become liberating to many documentary filmmakers.

Believing in the subjectiveness of truth within a project has allowed various personal and expressionistic elements to encroach in Canadian documentary. The talking head image has almost totally faded away; approaches with time lapse, repetition and editing movement often can be seen working with the filmmaker's narration in the first person. This whole movement ends up empowering an audience, letting them become much more aware of the

filmmaker. The expression of a shot or a filmmaking technique becomes the language of an argument rather than another statistic or expert chosen to give their opinion. Creating this new relationships between audience and filmmaker seems to tear down a project towards its direct point.

As a filmmaker, you end up not having to be as objective. By exposing the character, expressions, emotions of the filmmaker within the realm of documentary, a project can unravel truths and arguments that are seldom found in conventional documentary filmmaking.

LARA FITZGERALD

Lara Fitzgerald's *Memoire Moire des Souvenirs* is a 55 minute documentary inspired from the autobiographical texts of feminist and writer Hélène Cixous premiered at the montreal Film Festival, and FIFCA in Moncton, N.B. Shot in 16mm, D.O.P. Mark Caswell, Produced by Elizabeth Yake, Co-produced with the National Film Board and Associate Producer Jacques Ménard on location in France, Morocco,

Canada and the States. It was a wonderful experience, not simply being in another country, to try and find the traces that informed Cixous writing, but it was also a wonderful experience to meet the writers, like Marie-Claire Blais and Ann Hebert, Jacques Derrida, and hear what they had to say. The film combines lyrical sequences of childhood memories, countryside, to evoke the autobiographical traces that

became the material she expanded upon in her texts. It was tough, communicating between three languages and hand signals to make sure we all understand each other. The Canadian embassy in Morocco, and the Film Board were incredibly helpful.

Fitzgerald is working on another documentary, titled Le Store, about the legacy of the Revillon brothers. Yves Bisailon is producing for the Film Board.


JONATHAN CULP

ACTION! A video collage documentary

So I went to the Metro Days of Action with a Super 8mm camera, and all around me were people with cameras of their own -- hundreds of 'em. By the time the procession got to Spadina, the entire Gardiner offramp was lined with lenses, most apparently amateurs. So I sez to myself -- how can all these stray images be put to work? How could an art project affirm the values of

this social movement? Mr. Found Footage sez: Pool the images -- co-op collage documentary! The initial idea was a completely collective process, which begged answers to the questions: What does an effective and egalitarian pro/amateur creative collaboration look like? and: How do you edit collectively? Plus - who's got the time? Since we couldn't figure this out, I gave up! (TELL me if you know!) I retreated with half a dozen home videos, and - Bain Co-op

having generously donated their video facility -- I spent three days thrashing ten hours of random point-and-shoot into a tight eight-minute polemic, the structure of which was entirely provided by Joan Grant-Cumming's brilliant podium speech. I simply laid it down in real time and embellished with illustrative sounds and images. The final budget was \$14.00 - the cost of one SVHS tape. And it only took nine months to organize! So, everybody make no-budget art about social revolution, OK? It might work.



Lost in God's Country: Musings of a novice nature filmmaker

by David McCallum
photos by Suzanne Reid

The first revelation I had was that the behaviour of insects is remarkably similar to the behaviour of humans. My second was the uncanny similarity between making a nature film on insects and making a dramatic film. There were other, lesser epiphanies along the way. For example, I realized that little of what I had learned at film school was of any value in the real world. I realized that the best shot on the roll is invariably the one cut off when the film runs out. And I learned that who I am and how I feel is inexplicably expressed in each and every frame of film I shoot. But I digress.

It all started when I tired of trying to direct friends in short dramas. I grew weary of explaining to family members at three o'clock in the morning that you press the play and record buttons simultaneously. I wanted an easy film to do. I wanted a film that would actually make me money. I decided to make a documentary. Because I collected butterflies as a kid, I decided to make a nature documentary. Five years later, I am still in production on my butterfly film and I am beginning to wonder if there really is a God.

I chose to film butterflies mainly because they are a visually compelling subject. I also thought their lives were short and simple, and thus would be easy to film. My camera of choice was a used Beaulieu R16 because it was affordable, reliable, and stylish. I am now on my fifth used camera and my respect for the complexity of butterfly behaviour is greater than for that of most of the higher life forms I know.

One of the first things I discovered about butterflies is that they are territorial. Male butterflies will occupy a territory in a prominent location in their habitat and try to mate with females entering their territory, an aspect of butterfly behaviour that struck me as eerily similar to high school social life. At my school the guys would gather at certain locations in the main hallway and hit on passing girls. As with butterflies, the highest status males would occupy the primary territories: sometimes by the water fountain or by the soft drink machine (the human equivalent of a nectar source). The less cool guys would be deployed along the corridor in accordance with their status. All of the males would be interested, but it would usually be into the primary territory, occupied by the primary male, that receptive females would ven-

ture. Today, I board the bus with my usual large-double double and take the same seat I always take, next to the same people in their same seats. The caffeine starts to take effect, and I wonder how much human activity consists of behaviour patterns, what we might attribute to instinct. The basics of animal behaviour have remained unchanged for millions of years. It seems to me that human behaviour is essentially insect behaviour with the added complication of extra neurons and an awareness of our own mortality.

Documenting insect and human behaviour is similar in many ways as well. Of course, sticking a pin through the subject greatly facilitates close observation, but primarily I feel that filming insects requires an understanding of the 'personality' of the subject. Each species of insect has a distinct and varied repertoire of behaviour patterns which reflects the total history of its evolution. Understanding that behaviour and having the patience to allow it to reveal itself (while maintaining an eye for good composition) is, I believe, the key to being a good nature documentarian. I wonder if documenting human nature requires similar qualities in a filmmaker: understanding of the behaviour patterns of a dramatic character and the temperament to allow 'personality' to express itself.

When I came to edit my film, I found it fascinating that the rules of narrative film editing applied to documentary. While shooting my footage I had envisioned a rather free-form style of editing in keeping with my subject matter. Instead, I found myself greatly constrained by the necessities of the TV form -- establishing conventional concepts of space, prohibitions against jump cuts. I found it slightly silly trying to establish a temporal continuity by matching shots done in different years. My documentary, by necessity, began to take on the classical form of a typical Hollywood fantasy product. I felt dirty. I began to question my goals. So I had another cup of coffee, and I felt ok with the world.

The end is inevitable: nature filmmaking, once the preserve of the Bill Masons (Path of the Paddle) and Dan Gibsons (a pioneer of the form) of the world, requiring only a Bolex and a love of the wild, has now become the preserve of the David Attenboroughs, requiring a love of the wild and a twenty million dollar budget. Microcosmos, the nature

Rest in God's Country ..cont



film which has most recently redefined the state of the art, was shot in a studio, and from what I understand about macro-cinematography and depth of field, under lighting conditions many times brighter than the sun. (In my experience, if you're shooting the egg of a butterfly it's almost impossible to shoot it outside. The slightest breath of wind makes it look like your subject is being shot in a hurricane.) The multi-national Discovery Inc. is producing several docs in Imax. The Year of the Jaguar, a film with stunning visuals, was shot on super 35mm, with multiple cameras and dolly and crane shots of jaguars in their 'natural' environment. Are these steps in the Disneyfication, the creation of a virtual reality version of the natural world? Does a virtual bear still shit in the woods?

One of the strongest impressions I have from my years out in the sun is of amazement at the ceaseless energy of nature. One vivid memory I have is of the behaviour of the ovipositing black swallowtail butterfly. A female black swallowtail will fly into the wind, in order to reduce ground speed, and carefully inspect each plant it flies over. Black swallowtail caterpillars can survive only on plants of the wild carrot family, so the female butterfly must correctly identify the plant on which to lay its eggs. When the butterfly locates what looks

to be a suitable host plant, she dips down and tests the plant's chemistry with her tarsi, and if the plant is suitable, lays an egg and continues on. On August days, when black swallowtails are at their peak, one can see processions of females flying slowly through the meadow vegetation from morning to dusk.

As I stand dripping with sweat in an open field, or with my legs shaking from fatigue in a marsh, I cannot help but wonder why animals are so relentless in their activity. Why the hell do they work so hard? It occurs to me that maybe, in anthropocentric terms, birds sing and bees gather nectar not because they are trying to propagate their genes or to win the battle for survival of the fittest, but because they are doing what they were born to do. What we as humans do is not often an expression of who we are. Work is for the most part separate from creativity: why else are their so many unhappy people? Actors who work as waiters, workers who hate their jobs, who live for the weekend. It occurs to me that humans need to express themselves as much as they need to eat or draw breath.

I think that is why, after getting off my midnight shift, I film butterflies dancing in the sunlight. It's my job as a human being. It's kind of a spiritual thing, (or perhaps it's just too much caffeine).

CAROLYN HEW

Big-Foot Savage Women will be a 25 minute narrative documentary, experimental in its visual style. It will examine the cultural traditions that have shaped the lives of Hakka women such as those of my paternal aunts, and tell the vivid stories of the Hew sisters within the historical context of Hakka women in Malaysia.

Originating from the north of central China, the Hakka people were Han Chinese who became a semi-nomadic tribe as a result of political turmoil and were thus referred to as "guest people". Hakka men are known throughout history to be men of scholarship and statesmanship; for example, famous Hakka men include Sun Yat Sen, Deng Xiao Ping, and the Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Kuan Yew (as well as Hong Kong superstar Chow Yun-Fat!) Hakka women were the exception to the

long tradition of foot binding - not (as one might assume) because of the enlightenment of the Hakka men, but because they were left in the fields to do all the farm and household labour while the men sought their livelihood and careers in town. In contrast to the men, Hakka women were known for their industriousness and ability to bear hardship. There is a unusual legend about Hong Xuanjiao, a Hakka women general who fought under the Taiping leader Hong Xiuquan. Often defeated by her female Hakka soldiers, the Qing commanders (Imperial army) cursed them as "big-feet savage women".

The division between the men as scholars and the women as labourers still persists within my father's generation of the Hew family. My father Hew Choy Len grew up in an exceptionally large Chinese family in Ipoh, Malaysia. Grandfather Hew Kiaw Seng had two wives

simultaneously, and my grandmother Lim Nyok Ying (his first wife) bore him fourteen children.

Five of my seven aunts were given away to other families to raise, thus incurring more hardship and poverty than their brothers. The impetus behind the 'unloading' of the daughters was, surprisingly, my paternal great-grandmother Lai Nguen Ying. Exercising her fierce matriarchal power, she insisted that her son rid himself of these burdens. I am interested in examining this engendered tradition and how it has informed the lives of Hakka women such as my seven paternal aunts, as well as myself.

I intend *Big-Foot Savage Women* to be a compelling and unique portrait of the Hew family's 'big-feet savage women'...a personal narrative that is part reminiscence, part travelogue, part family memoriam.



CARA MORTON

To the other side of this film:
a hypnotic suggestion for surviving personal filmmaking...

You decide to do what you have to and you leave. Think of the question "Why?" Write proposals and explanations to back up your answer, but have no expectations. Now pack all those things that you need to survive: some film, and a bolex will do, and go. Away from or towards, it doesn't matter, the thing is that you leave. You have a vague destination somewhere in the near future on the other side of a country.

To the other side of a film or a country, it's the same. You gather impressions, moments, images, objects and from these you create a vision of something: your world and where you exist in it. What kind of film is this? Personal film, I guess.

By the time you actually leave, your creative soul is miles ahead of you. You load your camera on the run, catching up. You're there and you begin filming, moving into the world with your camera. At first you may not know the ending you are looking for, or even the beginning, but have faith that you can find it.

What your so called "topic" is doesn't matter. It can be as large scale or small scale as you wish. The thing is: you have to like it. Your topic will become your world and you will have to live in it for a while. You may want to change it,

slightly or a lot, topics can be slippery like that: there is always process involved.

What I know of personal filmmaking is that it is about getting somewhere, and taking notes, lots of notes on the way, even when you don't know why.

You wander for a while, like a hunter-gatherer. You pick, prey, frisk, frolic, stamp, run and SCREAM your way across miles of celluloid, canning them for winter. Slowly or suddenly, the weather shifts and the leaves start turning. You stop, feeling the weight of your canned miles with a mix of pride, fear, loneliness and excitement. You are full and it is time to go indoors.


You begin unpacking. You are surprised by what you see: miles and miles of surfaces. You start digging, layering, trying to get under, through, above the image. It's dark here for a while until your eyes adjust. The centuries have carved out caves, deposited minerals, built layers of sediment into your celluloid planet. And then, seated at the Steenbeck, you leave again. You follow the currents flowing through your reels and get caught up in the movement, until one day...

You find you have lost your faith. Adopt strategies to overcome this affliction and pray it isn't permanent! You may turn to theory, fitness, God or booze. Or maybe make lots of trips to

the art gallery, slightly stoned. One thing for sure, you struggle too much and you go under. Which way are the bubbles going? They are misleading in the undercurrent. Finally, by an accident that you later take credit for, you break the surface. You laugh, gasping for air, grasping for your film, your beautiful film! Newly in love, you start again, having learned...something...

You start editing again. It's going ok, but you need input. Get your friends involved. They are supportive and full of good ideas, one of which you like too much. Follow it. Take the risk. As you finish the first cut WITH SOUND! You see the dark shadow pass over the monitor. You watch again and this time it is a full fledged dinosaur. Extinct. Whoosh...you feel disappointment... and then relief. You get to start again, and you are not afraid, having learned ... something else.

Once again, the world is full of your film and you are all over it, baby. You move in a trance, totally productive. Things happen, you get invoices because you are getting things done. You start thinking about festival deadlines, you start thinking about your friends. You do your laundry. You sleep sometimes, and sometimes well! Finally, you realize where you are. You found the beginning AND the ending and made it to the other side. Repeat after me: It is in the can! It is in the can, it is in the can, it is in the can...



Poet and
Filmmaker
Marcel
Commanda

Jorge Manzano

City of Dreams

City of Dreams [Gaw Zhe Wap Bung Chi Odenung] is a biography about Marcel "Bambi" Commanda, an Ojibway man from Rama First Nation. He was a poet, performer, drummer and emerging as a film and video maker.

Marcel got funding from REF (now Diversi) and he held onto it for a few years, until finally they said make the film or we'll redistribute the money. We were working on a script together -- (Redskin, Grey Bar Hotel which is now the feature film "This Prison I call Home") and he knew I wanted to make films, so he told me he had this money from REF and asked if it was possible to make a film for that, and if I would help him. I said, "Sure!" It was \$10,000. I've learned a lot since then.

He came to me with a script, and I told him I thought that this was a chance for him to say the things he wanted about his life. I didn't think he liked that, but he did it; he came back with *City of Dreams* and it was great, it was poetic. It was about what it was to come to the city and lose touch with his parents, his grandparents, and his identity. It's symbolic of what it means to lose your language and culture, that is, your identity. He came to the city and he became an urban indian, living in poverty, all that... That became the theme -- what it meant for him to confront that pain -- that part of his life.

He was an addict and an alcoholic. A couple of months before we began filming he took the vow again to stop drinking, but it was too late. I knew he was sick -- you could tell -- but he didn't talk about it. It wasn't discussed. The plan was for him to be in it, (he starts the movie). So we began filming, and he was fine the first day when we shot him, and the second day I got a phone call saying he was going to die. He never made it back to the set.

The film became very real. When it began it was supposed to be a film about survival. We replaced his character with a dream character, so the survival became his words. All the words in the script are his words.

A lot of the events are very fictional. He had been living on the street, and there's a different kind of morality about living there. There

are some people from that part of his life who want to know why they're not there. Some things are not touched upon, things he did to survive. Imagine growing up on the streets; imagine what that does to a person. We wrote together about his life. I wouldn't say the film is always honest; it's about what he would have liked to be. I let it go -- there were things I didn't question.

We shot in a very documentary style. We were shooting to capture the pain and scars the street had left on Marcel's life. We wanted to get the feelings of young people who don't really have many choices in life. Using other characters we touched on things about his life indirectly which meant that his character had honour and respect, the way he wanted it to happen.

I have mixed feelings about the film. It was my dream to be a filmmaker, but I didn't want to prosper from something so incredibly painful. But people feel it, young native people feel it. It makes a difference. Despite everything, these are the things he wanted to say. At the end of the film he said something like "I want to tell my parents and my grandparents what I've learned."

Among other awards, *City of Dreams* has won the Best Documentary award at the New Frontiers Independent Film Festival in Ottawa, Canada, the Award of excellence at the Ebensee [Austria] Festival of Nations, and Best Drama at Videobinge II, the Native Indian and Inuit Photographers Association Festival. Geoffrey Dambutch (Young Marcel) won best actor at the 1997 Dreamspeakers Festival.

Jorge Manzano is also working on a documentary (co-directed with Olivia Rojas) about a group of Latin American youth who were part of a Popular Theatre and Education workshop. "The kids wrote a play, dealing with police harassment, violence, drugs: the things in their world." The documentary catches up with the group three years later, when most are graduating high school -- "They all survived somehow. Some in the group had kids, the main character went to jail, but now he's a father, he's working and has gone back to school. They're all doing all right now." The documentary has funding from the FAPS (NFB) program, the Canada Council and Multiculturalism Canada.

PAULETTE PHILLIPS: You are in the process of making a new film.

BRENDA LONGFELLOW: *The Shadowmaker* is a documentary on Gwendolyn McEwen, a poet born in 1941 who lived most of her life in Toronto. In the 60's she was actually the most famous poet living in Toronto. She published her first poem when she was 17 years old and, like Rimbaud, was this teenage superstar. She just catapulted into the poetry scene at a point when the poetry scene was just starting to coalesce and develop in Toronto. She started hanging out at a place called the Bohemian Embassy, one of the first happening coffee houses in 1960, up on 7 St. Nicholas Street.

She was brilliant. She taught herself Hebrew. She went to Jerusalem, when she was 18 years old, on her own, hung out and met poets over there. She had this amazing desire to enter ancient culture, she felt ancient cultures held the truth of reality - that Canada was too superficial and too young. That is what really drew her in the Middle Eastern Mediterranean cultures. After Jerusalem she taught herself Arabic, got really interested in Egypt, read hieroglyphics herself. She wrote a lot of poetry about Egypt before she had even been there and then she decided to write this major historical novel and ended up getting a grant and going to Egypt.

PAULETTE PHILLIPS: How do you go about making a documentary about someone who's dead?

BRENDA LONGFELLOW: Well you talk to people who know her, or knew her, remember her. When I started the film I wasn't sure what material there was of her. I had two images in my mind; she wrote a lot about Canada and Canadian landscapes and I knew I wanted lots of snowy Toronto landscapes -- she was a real Toronto poet -- then there was the desert, Egypt imagery. That had been the original image idea. Then I started to do the research and found that because she was famous in the sixties there was a lot of CBC interview material.

PAULETTE PHILLIPS: You tend to have an experimental approach to documentary. Are you using those same techniques with this film?

BRENDA LONGFELLOW: The first cut we did I sat and watched and thought, "God this is just a straight story". I was shocked cause it hadn't been my original intention. There are experimental bits because we have her poetry and we illustrate her poetry and there is more emphasis on voice but it's really a film that tells a story. There is this incredible archival footage we have of her which is the best part of the film - footage of her which a friend of hers had taken - where she's in her Egyptian eye kohl makeup. She's stunningly beautiful, 22 years old, she's in this Arabic gown, wandering through the Egyptian gallery at the ROM. We use that in slow motion as a visual motif as she is reciting her poetry which we took from the radio archives, this image of her slowly moving through the gallery. So I don't know if it's experimental but it's trying to be poetic.

PAULETTE PHILLIPS: Does your voice enter into the documentary in the way you inhabit your early documentary work?

BRENDA LONGFELLOW: In this one, I had so much of her voice. The big struggle with this film was that we have her public voice, which is the voice from the radio archives and the voice in the interviews, she's very controlled and she's very conscious of how she creates a public image. But we don't

have the interior voice. I mean what's it like to feel your life falling apart, like to be alcoholic at the end of your life, what's it like to lose a lover and to find yourself at 40 dirt poor in a basement apartment being a boozier. We don't have any of that.

PAULETTE PHILLIPS: So how do you deal with that? Because that's the very gut wrenching emotional tragedy that was her life.

BRENDA LONGFELLOW: That's the struggle. What we tried to do was use her poetry -- certain kinds of emotional poems that represent those emotional stages of her life. We have this poem called Early Middle Age which she writes when she's 30, hardly middle age, but she talks about the way beliefs that you have in your 20's fall apart, when you're no longer worried, when axioms no longer hold true, when cities disappear over night. It's a poem about emotional disengagement. The early poetry is the dream poetry, the sensual poetry, the poetry about love and romanticism and Egypt. Then later, she has a poem that could be interpreted in a number of different ways - we are interrupting it as a poem about the dark side of the unconscious. We are filming images that go with that, that's actually something that we are still filming. I knew it would be a film like that, where you have a story but you don't necessarily have all the images. You have things that you discover -- we had to illustrate her poetry for one thing and we were building this kind of geography. The other theme in the film is Toronto, she loved Toronto. A part of what we are trying to do is mythologize Toronto and give the cultural scene in Toronto a history.

PAULETTE PHILLIPS: What kind of budget are you working with?

BRENDA LONGFELLOW: This is the first film in my life where everyone has said yes. The only people who said no were the NFB. First we got Arts Council funding and then we went to the NFB and they said no and then we went to TVO and they said yes. TVO is the best possible place in the world, they are letting me make the film that I want to make, they're not telling me what to do, they are giving feed back about trying to make it a good film.

PAULETTE PHILLIPS: What about the CBC, did you approach them?

BRENDA LONGFELLOW: They said no. We went to Life And Times because they have their biography series. But it wasn't the right place.

PAULETTE PHILLIPS: Do you consider yourself a documentary filmmaker?

BRENDA LONGFELLOW: It took me a while to figure out but it's the form I like the best. I love doing research. I like working with real stories, I like working with archival material. It presents you with a puzzle of how you put these elements together. You have a structure which is already there, which is resonant and rich like someone's life. I like biographies because you can tell a story about a time, or about a theme, about women, through the filter of a life. You just have to figure out how to fashion [the material] into something that's emotional and tells a story.

PAULETTE PHILLIPS: You're in the edit suite, what kind of challenges are you faced with there?

BRENDA LONGFELLOW: Well I love the AVID. I have always cut on a



AN INTERVIEW WITH **BRENDA LONGFELLOW**



AN INTERVIEW WITH **BRENDA LONGFELLOW** CONT..

Steenbeck before and some editors think that the AVID is ruining documentary filmmaking because it doesn't give you the same time to think, but in fact I have found it forces you to think at a very high level all the time because the mechanical part of it is solved so quickly and easily and so fast that you are always having to deal with the image. I made the decision around digital not just because of time but because I knew I wanted a lot of slow motion digital effects and long superimposition's. We needed to have access to the slow motion and the optical effects that would cost a fortune in film.

PAULETTE PHILLIPS: As someone who has had a career in documentary filmmaking spanning 15 years how do you see the evolution of documentary film over that period of time?

BRENDA LONGFELLOW: There are two things that are happening in documentary -there's what's happening to it as an industry - you have all these new specialty channels that are developing and that are filled very easily with documentary because it is a cheap way of filling airwaves. Television at that level is about selling time, to advertisers, or selling audiences to advertisers. The budgets are coming down and documentary filmmakers are having to cut pieces around commercials. The whole priority of documentary - instead of investigating situations or telling stories or making social issue films about communities that are never represented - is all being manipulated into a commodified version.

You can't exist without TV as a documentary filmmaker unless you can make a film like *BONES OF THE FOREST*. Nobody gets paid and it's a labour of love... and it's a wonderful film. But those are becoming few and far between.

The NFB is also feeling the squeeze of doing stuff for broadcast because there's no theatrical venue for documentary anymore. The only venue is TV and TV can be horrible.

We have been incredibly lucky to have this relationship with TVO. It's the only place in television where you can make a creative documentary that's your signature piece.

Now my next film - who knows. TVO may be around or they may be privatized, I may have to go back to the Canada Council and do very low budget, more experimental film.

PAULETTE PHILLIPS: What's happening with your film *BALKAN JOURNEY*?

BRENDA LONGFELLOW: *BALKAN JOURNEY* went to France and it never came back. It went from one festival to another, and it's travelling all by itself over there in Europe.

PAULETTE PHILLIPS: Are you seeing any money from that?

BRENDA LONGFELLOW: Are you kidding? Not a cent, I mean I was never paid for it, we sold it to WTN and I paid the deferrals back. But that was it. Money! Are you kidding. I keep saying that with this film too, I mean we haven't been paid. And there's a slim possibility I won't be paid, but I haven't done it to be paid, I mean I have a job. We have second windows with Knowledge Network, SCN and Bravo! But we won't see any of that money until 2001.

PAULETTE PHILLIPS: Precisely why there is a dearth of producers in this country.

BRENDA LONGFELLOW: Yea! I ended up working with Anita Hertzog who is fantastic and wonderful. She was working on Hammy Hamster to make a living and she wanted to produce and was willing to take a risk and I have driven her crazy because she's not use to working like that!

PAULETTE PHILLIPS: Well yes, she's used to working with a hamster. Is your film *OUR MARYLYN*, which was made in 1983, still playing?

BRENDA LONGFELLOW: I'm self distributing because DEC went under. I have rentals from universities and here and there -- yea, people still rent it amazingly enough. But this one, I don't know if it will sell, I mean we have images of Margaret Atwood as a young poet and Michael Ondaatje as a young poet but it's about a really arcane tiny circle in Toronto.

PAULETTE PHILLIPS: Where is documentary [the form] today?

BRENDA LONGFELLOW: I think it's wide open in some ways. I also think there have been some incredible documentaries in the last decade that have transformed the form, that mix drama and documentary or mix different types of story telling so there is no set formula for documentary. The Noam Chomsky film [Mark Achbar/Peter Wintonick] was a really important film and they also built that around a lot of archival film with interviews but they had, like Errol Morris (*Thin Blue Line*) a powerful imagistic sense of documentary -- that documentary can't just be talking heads, that you have to create an image and a mood. All the things you do in a dramatic piece, image, mood, lighting, you also need to do in documentaries.

PAULETTE PHILLIPS: What attracts you to a subject?

BRENDA LONGFELLOW: Well, I like marginal characters, and I like Canadian characters, like Gerda Munsinger and Marilyn Bell and Gwendolyn. Canadian women stories. I don't know if I could tell a man's story, I was never drawn to them, and I feel more in tune with women stories and we know women's stories are under told in our culture.

PAULETTE PHILLIPS: Heroic stories, except for Gwendolyn's?

BRENDA LONGFELLOW: Well I think she was incredibly heroic to transcend her childhood, which would have destroyed most of us. She reconstructed herself and created herself out of that trauma, and wrote incredible poetry. I mean in the end it caught up with her, the poverty and believing you could survive as a poet, which is a really delusional belief in Canada. But for 20 years she lived a really incredible life and ventured into territories [where] most of us are afraid to. I guess that's the other attraction: they are way more braver than I am in terms of the risks they take with their lives. I would never swim across lake Ontario for one thing.

I never set out to make documentary film. With *OUR MARYLYN* I thought I was making a David Rimmer film because I loved optical printing. The ideas that always appealed to me are historical. When I went to school my honours BA was in history and I was going to be a labour historian because I liked going through archives and I like unearthing history which hasn't been told. And it has come back, circling: I went into film and went into theory and semiotics, and feminist theory -- and what I went back to was history.

PAULETTE PHILLIPS: History tells us so much.

BRENDA LONGFELLOW: We were having this conversation today about the nineties and its shocking to me that it's 1997 and I feel I don't live in the present. What were the eighties about? I sort of have a handle on what the seventies were but I feel like I missed the eighties and I have no concept of the nineties.

PAULETTE PHILLIPS: The eighties have been packaged for us as an incredibly greedy era that ended when the market crashed in 1987-88.

BRENDA LONGFELLOW: For me the eighties was about feminism, about coming into your own as a woman.

PAULETTE PHILLIPS: The packaging of eras is the least interesting thing that history does.



PHOTOS BY JEFFREY THOMAS



Tina Hahn Interviewed Ali Kazimi about his filmmaking...

Ali's work includes the award-winning (and Genie nominated) *Narmada: A Valley Rises*, *Shooting Indians: A Journey with Jeffrey Thomas*, and his most recent work, *Some Kind of Arrangement*.

I work intuitively. A documentary starts with an idea. It can be viewed somewhat as a "thesis" but it is more appropriate to regard it as a "framework". You need to be really open and allow things to happen. Not that I'm saying the process is unstructured. You are constantly making decisions. You have to use your entire life experience. In many cases there is only one crack at a shot ... there are no second takes.

The entire process challenges you to be completely focused and open. This is important since unanticipated things happen. If you are not too rigid on what you intend to do, you can constantly incorporate things as they unfold. It allows for moments of irony and humour, the quirkiness of everyday life. It is the unexpectedness that differentiates documentary from drama. In order to record the unexpected, one has to be open to receiving it. In drama one can say this is exactly what I want, and get it.

These differences are not that rigid. I have shot drama, and sometimes things happen. A good filmmaker will always seize the opportunity to grab those moments. These moments go towards making a documentary more filmic. For example, documentary allows you to use visual layers in terms of people's expressions and events unfolding.

There is another kind of openness needed as well: the openness to let go. You can spend a lot of time and resources on a sequence that ultimately does not do much for the story. For *Passage From India*, we filmed a poet over a morning, it was a half day in a five day shooting schedule, and we couldn't use it. Even if you have spent valuable resources on a scene, it is the story that needs to come first.

Narmada was a process film about a struggle unfolding. The first shoot was over 32 days, and in the end, I shot 110 hours of footage. Why so much? Well, I didn't know what would happen. But when you shoot so much, you need to factor in the time to screen and search through the material in the editing process.

Any format is just a tool. As long as you know the limitations, you can use it to its maximum effectiveness. *Narmada* was shot on Hi8 which was a untested format in 1990.

The process for *Some Kind of Arrangement* and *Passage From India* was very different. A sense of storyline already existed, but you have only limited time with the subjects. *Some Kind of Arrangement* had 80 hours of footage, *Passage From India* had 12.

Some Kind of Arrangement seems at first that it has no narrative. But that does not make it any more objective or real. Since I am tracking reality creatively, everything is decided from the shots to the juxtapositions. It was a composite story of three people going through the process of an arranged marriage. The three stories work collectively as a whole, even though the people have never met and may not ever meet each other ... but they are organically connected.

In deciding which characters to use, one needs to think of the chemistry between each story and how each story contributes to the other. Where are the redundancies and complimentaries and at times the contradictories?

Documentary filmmaking is a leap in the dark. When you have to go into a situation with all your senses and experiences highlighted and be willing to trust yourself. In some ways a good documentary is about looking at the world with a fresh eye.



strawberry fields



Kwok Wing Leung as Great Great Grandfather
Ann Marie Fleming as herself in "Automatic
Writing"

BY LARISSA FAN

The first Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival took place November 20-23 at the Bloor Cinema and John Spotton Theatre. An initiative undertaken by executive director Anita Lee, Reel Asian is an attempt to establish an annual Asian film festival in Toronto -- a timely event given both the large Asian community in Toronto, and the existence of numerous other Asian film festivals across the continent. The festival brought a mix of dramatic, documentary and more experimental works.

For its first year, the organizers decided to spotlight independent Asian North American filmmakers, bringing a youth-oriented slant to the program from the mostly second and third-generation directors, many of them offering first features. Although more established directors such as Keith Lock were represented as well, the real revelation of the festival was the emergence of a new generation of Asian American filmmakers.

REEL ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL

Of the more traditional dramatic films, Chris Chan Lee's *Yellow* and Quentin Lee and Justin Lin's *Shopping for Fangs* were standouts. *Yellow* follows a group of Korean-American friends on their high school graduation night, a night that starts to go wrong and keeps on going -- reminiscent of *American Graffiti* or, more recently, *Dazed and Confused*. The ensemble cast is strong overall, and the characters are believable and appealing.

Having heard *Shopping For Fangs* described as Tarantino-esque, I approached it warily, but was easily won over by the film's charm and good humour. Directed by UCLA grad students Quentin Lee and Justin Lin, *Shopping For Fangs* follows the intersecting stories of several characters, including an accountant who thinks he's turning into a werewolf, and a blond-wigged, gun-toting waitress. Strong performances, especially by Jeanne Chin in a dual role, and the film looks like (a few) million bucks.

Although I might have my reservations about the term "GenerAsian X", the program of shorts under that name was a fun and interesting mixed bag. Highlights of the program included Gregory Pak's *Mouse*, which manages to combine chasing a mouse with a debate about abortion, and Sunny Lee's *Cowgirl*, in which Sandra Oh suffers an identity crisis as an Asian girl with a Western heart.

There wasn't as much in the way of experimental film, although there were new works by Ann Marie Fleming and Rea Tajiri. I especially liked Ann-Marie's *Automatic Writing*, which confronts the limitations of low budget in inventive ways. It explores her great-great-grandfather's history -- as presented to her by his ghost. The ghost in question is charming but often difficult, and other

members of the family keep popping up to have their say. An engaging look at stories and history, and how they are told or remembered.

Rea Tajiri's *Strawberry Fields* is more traditional in its dramatic treatment, although it does include evocative memory recreations and super-8 footage. It harkens back to themes of her earlier work, *History and Memory*, dealing with a young woman's coming of age in the '70s, and her attempts to come to terms with the history of Japanese-American internment as it affects her family.

The longer documentaries represented in the festival, Dora Nipp's *Under the Willow Tree* and Hiro Narita's *Isamu Noguchi: Stones and Paper*, offered nothing new in the way of treatment or structure, but each covered interesting subjects. The greatest strength of *Under the Willow Tree*, which deals with pioneer Chinese women in Canada, was just being able to hear these women talk. Their tales may be "bittersweet", but they are also filled with the humour and strong characters of the women.

As a filmmaker whose film was screened at the festival, I have to admit to feeling ambivalent about being labelled an "Asian American artist", a label that is potentially confining and ultimately irrelevant to the work I do. I worry that it smacks of political correctness, and that going to such screenings is still considered "good" for you rather than enjoyable. At the same time, I did find that the program my film was placed in added context and resonance to the film, in a way that I haven't seen it before. Hopefully there is room to look at films in all sorts of contexts, including the context of an Asian film festival. Oh, and best of all, the festival was fun.

UPCOMING ISSUES: SUBMIT NOW!

the LIFT Newsletter accepts story ideas on an ongoing basis! Need volunteer hours? Have a great idea? A rant? A rave? Email Barb at Barbara_Mainguy@tvo.org, or phone/fax LIFT.

THE FEBRUARY ISSUE: *FEBRUARY MADENSS*, is full for features, but we have a small amount of space left for first-person, film adventure stories. The LIFT Activities section for February will be supplanted by the Storyboard...

THE APRIL ISSUE: *IDENTITY POLITICS*... Personal essays, ideas, reports -- we are interested in covering all the ground about identity politics as it applies to filmmaking...

ads:

SCREENWRITING BOOTCAMP, nighttimes at George Brown College (intro or advanced), each course 12 sessions, \$137.40 per course, starts Jan. 14 & 15, 1998.
More info: (416) 415-2092 or 699-4209.

The series is called **INCITING INCIDENT**. Its goal is to workshop live in front of an audience, well developed screenplays. We have been able to get out most of the heads of Telefilm, The Canadian Film Centre, and The OFDC, and Fund as well as many development people from Alliance, Malofilm, Cineplex Odeon, Norstar and Paragon. Similarly, a lot of writers and directors have been attending as well.

Our site is at:
<http://www.webspotting.com/inciting.htm>
Michael Souther

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McJOURNEY THEATRE

is a new theatre company that is committed to theatre as spectacle that will speak to people suffering from pre-millennium angst. We are most interested in exploring high impact, inspirational, and socially relevant themes through a multi-media approach. We are excited about finding new ways of collaborating with filmmakers to bring the stage alive for a contemporary audience. If you passionately believe you have something to offer to this process, please submit your resume and cover letter to:

McJourney Theatre - Collaborations
c/o Elise Dewsberry
52 Strathcona Avenue
Toronto, ON M4J 1G8

Due to the Canada Post strike, everyone missed the best news of November.

the MEDIA 100 has arrived!

LIFT's digital non-linear editing system, the MEDIA 100, has been permanently installed in the pink editing suite. The Board of Directors have approved these amazingly low rates of \$10/hour for full members and \$20/hour for associate members. And unlike other places, we will not currently be charging extra for hard disk storage!

Many thanks to LIFT member Grace Channer for designing and building the furniture for the new edit suite and to Dereck Roemer for repainting the room on such short notice.

The Media 100 XS system version 4.0 features 2:1 picture compression; 8 tracks of audio and real time audio mixing; batch digitization; professional audio 44.1 & 48 kHz sampling rates; composite, S-video, and Y, R-Y, B-Y component video input / output; real-time ColourFX, preview Motion FX, preview transition effects, and 24 accelerated transition effects; and much much more! The system runs off a PowerMac 9600 computer and uses Slingshot software to 'matchback' your EDL to a cut list for negative conforming. We have purchased 18 GB of hard drive storage, which can store 14 hours of offline video or 27 minutes of on-line 2:1 compression. You can also mix different resolutions within the same program. The suite will also contain a SVHS machine for input and output, but you can bring in any type of video machine and easily patch it into the system.

Many of you are familiar with this new technology, while others are totally in the dark. No worries. The system is very easy to use, allowing members to cut their own films after a few hours of instruction. With increased technology, we are given an increased number of ways to post our films.

!!! Here are just two ways of how you can use the Media 100 in your post production !!!

A) Have all your dailies transferred and timed to BetaSP (or your preferred broadcast format) and SVHS. Make sure that you get VITC and LTC non-drop frame time code on both tapes at the same time, so that they both have the exact same time code, and have time code burn-in and key code burn-in put on the SVHS tape. The transfer house or lab should also give you a floppy disk which contains all the key code and time code info. Then you will bring your tape materials to the Media 100 Suite at LIFT. You can digitize at an off-line or lower resolution, logging the footage as you go. Do your picture edit. You can make work-in-progress copies of your project as it progresses by simply outputting it to VHS or SVHS, and you can show it to your friends and family, or even possible investors. Then, when you have locked picture, you need to make a film and video master. For the film portion, you run the Slingshot software, which produces a list for the negative cutter to work from. You should always check the key code on the list against the key code burned into your final copy. Once you've verified the list and saved up your money, take the list, neg, and a video copy for neg cutting. For the video master, you can auto-redigitize the material with the clean (no time code burn-in) BetaSP or broadcast format tape. The system will only digitize the shots that are used in the final edit of the program. At this point you will digitize at the highest resolution for the best possible picture quality - 2:1 compression. It takes up more disk space, but you're only digitizing the length of the program, not all the dailies. In order to use a tape format higher than SVHS, you will need to bring in a deck. At this point, LIFT does not have a BetaSP deck. You can rent one for as little as \$100 - \$200 per day, which is plenty of time to re-digitize your material and do several outputs to a master BetaSP. At this point, you will have a broadcast master of your final picture, avoiding the expense of a film to tape transfer of your release print. You can take the broadcast copy to your production to the sound mix, and they can marry the sound on the videotape well before you have a release print from the lab! Make dubs and send them to festivals. Get working on the next script!

OR B) If you don't want to spend the extra \$\$ for a timed transfer, just ask for a one light transfer to SVHS making sure that you get VITC and LTC non-drop frame time code, time code burn-in and key code burn-in. You can also request that they pull a 'clean' copy at the same time, one that doesn't have any time code or key code burn-ins on it, that you can use to make preview or work-in-progress tapes. The transfer house or lab should also give you a floppy disk which contains all the key code and time code info. Then you will bring your tape materials to the Media 100 Suite at LIFT. You can digitize at an off-line or lower resolution, logging the footage as you go. Do your picture edit. You can make work-in-progress copies of your project as it progresses by simply outputting it to VHS or SVHS, and you can show it to your friends and family, or even possible investors, on any VHS machine. If you really want to impress someone, you can auto-redigitize the material with the clean (no time code burn-in) SVHS tape at the highest resolution for the best possible picture quality - 2:1 compression. When the picture is locked and you're ready to move to the sound editing phase, and will require a VHS or SVHS with continuous time code. The system will produce this quickly and easily. Then run the Slingshot software to produce a list for the negative cutter to work from. Check the key code on the list against the key code burned into your final copy, get the neg cutter involved, and move onto sound editing. Since you didn't have each shot timed at the initial transfer, you will have to have the final release print transferred and timed, shot-by-shot, to have a broadcast quality tape.

TECH TIP: Sometimes the key-code reader at the transfer house can go out of wack, which will wreck havoc with your final cut list. Here's a brilliant tip, passed on by experienced Editor and LIFT member, Paula Devonshire. Ask the transfer house to punch the first and last "00" frame on each camera roll, and to record the exact key-code of the punched frames for each roll. Then, when you look at the key code burn-in on your video tape, you can verify that the punched frame's keycode matches with the list given to you. If the numbers match at both the head and tail of each roll, you know that the key-code reader didn't malfunction, eliminating any problems with that when pulling your cut list.

Workshops on the Media 100 are being offered in the new year. See the Workshop Brochure in this mailing.