



The Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto  
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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 it's membership, the Canada Council (Media Arts Section), the Ontario Arts Council, and the City of Toronto through the Toronto Arts Council.

Articles published in the LIFT newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors or the Co-op 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: 416.588.6444; Fax: 416.588.7047

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<http://www.lift.on.ca>  
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# LIFT FOREVER

## Editorial

BY JASON ROMILLY

As some of you may know, I used to edit and layout this very newsletter with Franci Duran from 1994 to 1995. These were the grunge years: holes in my jeans, dreadlocks, rock music was still relevant and filmmakers were cramped together editing on flatbeds in small rooms at the old LIFT space. Since then I've gone on to accept five MTV awards for directing music videos and had a secret affair with a double platinum gangsta rapper (the breakup was messy and now I have a hit out on me but that's another story). After internet stocks crashed early this year and mountains of cocaine were seized from my palatial Hollywood estate (it wasn't mine, I swear), I decided it was time to move back to Toronto. I can't say I miss the parties with Giselle and Leonardo because once I stepped back into the LIFT office, I was home again. Larissa Fan contacted me about filling in as guest editor of the newsletter due to her busy schedule with the Images Festival. I jumped at the chance and was lucky enough to get Franci Duran to design this issue. I am finally ready to leave my sordid past behind and make a fresh start.

This issue is not about the past but about the future of LIFT and the future of film itself. What will film look like in the future? Will Digital Video replace film? Will film stock even exist? Will increasingly complex programs used for filmmaking be available for your home computer?

First we have a review by new member Marcus Robinson of some of the films in the Future section of the twentieth anniversary celebration along with some of the thoughts on the future of celluloid film stock by the filmmakers involved. Then we look at the photos that are going into the time capsule to be buried and not opened until the year 2021 (LIFT's 40th anniversary). Digital Video will play a very important role in the future of film and LIFT. We have two perspectives on the digital video revolution, one from Christopher Ball about the problems of shooting on DV and one from Victor Fan who argues that the use of DV opens up a whole new spectrum of aesthetic possibilities. Next, there's a review by Kate Miles of "Blueprint", a screening of future themed films made through Pleasure Dome. Finally, there's my article on special effects (don't worry, it's not that technical). I almost forgot the list of every single member of LIFT near the back (try to find your name in the microscopic type).

The next issue will have plenty of festival coverage so keep your eyes open as Larissa returns to work her magic.

Bye, it's been a blast.



The Canada Council  
for the Arts | Le Conseil des Arts  
du Canada



# Executive Director's Report

BY BARB SNIDERMAN

The last couple of months have buzzed by with the success of the Christmas party, the completion of fifteen new works for LIFT's 20th Anniversary celebrations, and our successful winter workshop session coming to a close. By the time you read this, our four celebratory screenings at Cinematheque Ontario will have presented LIFT films that look to the past, present and future of independent filmmaking. The Symposium and Distribution Panel will also be presented at The Images Festival of Independent Film and Video on April 14th to 15th. The panels will explore the use of film in a digital age and how to best get your work out and seen by the public. This spring, LIFT workshops are gearing up to match the variety and scope of our winter session and we are once again introducing our longer, more in-depth film course that takes a member through the entire filmmaking process. Upcoming events to look for on the horizon include: our May Artist Talk, LIFT's Annual Garage Sale, and our illustrious Silent Auction, all to take place in the coming months.

# LIFT FOREVER

## DEPARTMENTS

### FYI:

UPCOMING FESTIVAL DEADLINES  
CRITICAL DATES AND DUBIOUS DEADLINES  
CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS 4-5

LIFT NEWS  
NEW MEMBERS  
FUNDING AND GRANT DEADLINES  
EQUIPMENT NEWS 6-7

WHO/WHAT 8-9

AD RATES 23

## FEATURES

Time Capsule 10-11

JASON ROMILLY

20th Anniversary Program: The Future

MARCUS ROBINSON 12-13

Digital Video Anti-Hype

CHRISTOPHER BALL 14-15

The Aesthetics of Digital Video

VICTOR FAN 16-17

Blueprint Review

KATE MILES 18-19

Special Effects: CGI and Compositing

JASON ROMILLY 20-21

# F.Y.I.



## UPCOMING FESTIVAL DEADLINES

### TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Country: Canada  
Date of Festival: 09/06/2001-09/15/2001  
Shorts Deadline Date: 04/27/2001  
Features Deadline Date: 05/11/2001  
Telephone: 416.967.7371  
Fax: 416.967.9477  
Address: 2 Carlton St., Suite 1600 M5B 1J3  
Website: [www.bell.ca/filmfest](http://www.bell.ca/filmfest)

### TORONTO ENVIRONMENTAL FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL

Country: Canada  
Date of Festival: 09/28/2001-10/01/2001  
Deadline Date: 05/01/2001  
Telephone: 416.537.7742  
Email: [piffest@hotmail.com](mailto:piffest@hotmail.com)  
Website: [www.planetinfocus.org](http://www.planetinfocus.org)

### ON PARKS (SONDRIO)

Country: Italy  
Date of Festival: 10/15/2001-10/20/2001  
Deadline Date: 5/15/2001  
Telephone: 39.0342.52.62.60  
Email: [sondriofestival@comune.sondrio.it](mailto:sondriofestival@comune.sondrio.it)  
Website: [www.provincia.so.it/comunesondria](http://www.provincia.so.it/comunesondria)

### VALLADOLID INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Country: Spain  
Date of Festival: 10/26/2001-11/03/2001  
Deadline Date: 06/30/2001  
Telephone: 983.303700.77.88 - 305899 - 902044  
Email: [fetsvalladolid@seminci.com](mailto:fetsvalladolid@seminci.com)  
Website: [www.seminci.com](http://www.seminci.com)

### DENVER INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Country: USA  
Date of Festival: 10/11/2001-10/20/2001  
Deadline Date: 07/15/2001  
Telephone: 303.595.3456  
Email: [dfs@denverfilm.org](mailto:dfs@denverfilm.org)  
Website: [www.denverfilm.org](http://www.denverfilm.org)

### 32ND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL OF INDIA

Country: India  
Date of Festival: 10/10/2001-10/20/2001  
Deadline Date: 08/31/2001  
Telephone: + 91.11.4615953 - 4694920 - 4697167

### STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Country: Sweden  
Date of Festival: 11/08/2001-11/18/2001  
Deadline Date: 09/07/2001  
Email: [program@cinema.se](mailto:program@cinema.se)  
Website: [www.filmfestivalen.se](http://www.filmfestivalen.se)

### MOSTRA CURTAC CINEMA

Country: Brazil  
Date of Festival: 11/29/2001-12/09/2001  
Deadline Date: 09/15/2001  
Email: [producao@arproducoes.com.br](mailto:producao@arproducoes.com.br)

### INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL (BRATISLAVA)

Country: Slovak Republic  
Date of Festival: 11/30/2001-12/08/2001  
Deadline Date: 09/15/2001  
Email: [iffbratislava@ba.sunnet.sk](mailto:iffbratislava@ba.sunnet.sk)  
Website: [www.iffbratislava.sk](http://www.iffbratislava.sk)

### FESTIVAL DEI POPOLI - INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF SOCIAL DOCUMENTARY FILM (FLORENCE)

Country: Italy  
Date of Festival: 11/09/2001-11/15/2001  
Deadline Date: 09/01/2001  
Email: [fespopoli@dada.it](mailto:fespopoli@dada.it)

Guidelines and application forms for this list of festivals are on file and available for photocopying (10 cents a page) at the LIFT office. As much as we'd like to, LIFT staff cannot take the time out to fax forms to members. Please do not ask. If you are unable to make it into the LIFT office, you will have to call the festival directly to request an application form. The 1996 edition of the AIVF Guide to International Film and Video Festivals is an invaluable resource for planning your festival entries for the upcoming year. It's available at the office as an in-house resource to all LIFT members.



Photo: 2000/00 by Philip Hoffman



## CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

### NEW YORK ANIMATION FESTIVAL

The International Biennial Festival Of Film, Video And Digital Animation is back. The 2001 festival will focus on independently produced short works and takes place September 14-20, 2001 at Cinema Village in New York City. International, student and experimental entries are encouraged. Visit their new web-site for more information and to complete an entry form: [www.nyaf.org](http://www.nyaf.org).

**Deadline:** May 15, 2001

### THE FIRST ANNUAL NICKEL INDEPENDENT FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL

is now accepting submissions. This festival is open to all filmmakers and formats — film, digital video, web imaging, etc. Awards will be offered for best feature, short, web film, horror, and more. The Nickel is a festival run by independent filmmakers for independent filmmakers.... Come on, it'll be fun. For an admission form and more information check out <http://www.homestead.com/thenickel/nickel.html> or e-mail: [Upskydownprods@hotmail.com](mailto:Upskydownprods@hotmail.com)

**Deadline:** May 15, 2001

### THE FIFTH ANNUAL MADCAT WOMEN'S INT'L FILM FESTIVAL

MadCat showcases avant-garde, experimental and independent films and videos of all lengths and genres directed by women. MadCat is currently touring across the country with a portion of last year's festival and our Fifth Annual festival will take place in September in the Bay Area of Northern California at El Rio Outdoor Cinema and the Pacific Film Archive. MadCat is seeking films and videos that challenge the use of sound and image and explore notions of visual storytelling. We accept work of all genres and lengths directed by women. Films can be produced any year and about any topic. Please go to our web site for an entry form at [www.somaglow.com/madcat](http://www.somaglow.com/madcat).

**Early Deadline:** April 30th, 2001

**Late Deadline:** July 5th, 2001

Previews on VHS only

**Exhibition Formats:** 35mm, 16mm, Super 8, Beta SP, 3/4", SVHS, VHS

**Entry Fee:** \$10-\$30 sliding scale.

Pay what you can afford.

International Entrants Disregard the Entry Fee.

**Further Info.:** Ariella Ben-Dov Festival Director

MadCat Film Festival  
639 Steiner Street Apt C  
SE, CA 94117 USA



Still: Red Butler by Colin Strayer

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### SPECIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE MEETING

The special events committee helps to organize and run the various events LIFT hosts each year. The SEC organized our 20th anniversary celebrations and are in the midst of organizing our Spring Garage Sale and Silent Auction. Members receive 20 volunteer hours for working on this committee. This is a great way to gather volunteer hours and get more involved in the co-op. The SEC meets on the last Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. Contact Jesse at the office for more information.

### NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Join the Newsletter Committee if you are interested in the direction of LIFT's Newsletter or in writing for the Newsletter. Members receive 20 volunteer hours for committee service. Call Deanna at the office to RSVP. The committee meets the first Tuesday of every month at 6:15 p.m. in the LIFT office.

### PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE

LIFT's Programming Committee is looking for new members. Join the committee if you are interested in the direction of LIFT's Artist Talks. Members receive volunteer hours for each meeting they attend. The committee meets on the last Thursday of every month at 6:15 p.m. in the LIFT office.

### LIFT'S MEMBERS' LIBRARY

Drop off a copy of your latest opus for your fellow LIFT filmmakers to view. This is a great way to get your name and your vision out there for the rest of us to see. What are you waiting for?! Drop off your VHS copy today!

### LIFT'S SPRING GARAGE SALE

is happening on Saturday, May 5th. If you have anything that is of no use to you but you can't bear to throw out, give it to us to sell at the sale. All proceeds go directly to LIFT production grants! We will also need volunteers to help with the sale, so if you usually can't volunteer during regular business hours, this will be a great opportunity for you to accumulate some hours. Even if you aren't volunteering and you have nothing to give, come down anyway. There will be plenty of quality items going at rock bottom prices!

### LIFT'S SILENT AUCTION 2001

is approaching quickly! This is your chance to gather film supplies, equipment and more for ridiculously cheap prices. Look out for mailings and postings on our web site about the auction. If you have a project coming up, this is something you do not want to miss!

## LIFT NEWS

**LIFT MEMBERS IN FILM/VIDEO SHOW AT THE POWERPLANT  
CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERY**  
Substitute City  
March 23 thru May 27, 2001

This exhibition examines how artists incorporate Toronto as the direct or oblique subject of their work. The show looks at how Toronto artists use and experience the city through the images they objectively or subjectively make of it. Some of the images are documentary in emphasis; others map out private experiences in which the city itself, through the artist's infiltration, figures as a factor of desire. The exhibition of 15-20 artists includes a wide variety of media including photography, video, film, multi-media, music and narrative comics. The exhibition includes: Michael Awad, Adrian Blackwell, Karma Clarke-Davis, Robin Collyer, Danny & Reid's Motion Machine, Atom Egoyan, Mike Hoolboom, Vid Ingelevics, Geoffrey James, Rose Kallal, Istvan Kantor, Peter MacCallum, John McLachlin, Leslie Peters, Seth, and Kika Thorne.

The Power Plant  
@ Harbourfront Centre  
231 Queens Quay West  
Toronto 416.973.4949  
<http://www.thepowerplant.org>

## FUNDING & GRANT DEADLINES

**ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL**  
416.961.1660  
<http://www.arts.on.ca>

Artists' Film & Video: October 15, 2001  
First Projects: December 15, 2001

**CANADA COUNCIL**  
1.800.263.5588 ext.5060  
<http://www.canadacouncil.ca>

**Grants to Film and Video Artists**  
Creative Development Grants  
October 1, 2001 & March 1, 2002

Production Grants  
October 1, 2001 & March 1, 2002

Travel Grants  
Anytime

**Grants to New Media and Audio Artists**  
Research and Production Grants  
October 1, 2001 & March 1, 2002

New Media Residencies  
October 1, 2001 & March 1, 2002

**TORONTO ARTS COUNCIL**  
416.392.6802 ext.208  
<http://www.torontoartscouncil.org>

Grants to Visual Artists:  
September 17, 2001

Grants to Media Artists:  
November 20, 2001

**CANADIAN INDEPENDENT FILM AND VIDEO FUND**  
1.888.386.5555  
[www.cifv.ca](http://www.cifv.ca)  
September 21, 2001

**TELEFILM**  
[www.telefilm.gc.ca](http://www.telefilm.gc.ca)  
Feature Film Fund  
Various Deadlines

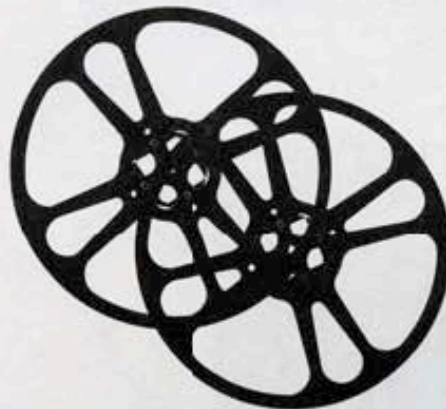
**HAROLD GREENBERG FUND**  
[www.tmn.ca](http://www.tmn.ca) (go to corporate info)  
Quarterly deadlines

**BELL BROADCAST AND NEW MEDIA FUND**  
[www.bell.ca/fund](http://www.bell.ca/fund), [bellfund@ipf.ca](mailto:bellfund@ipf.ca)  
May 1, 2001, June 1, 2001

## LIFT ORIENTATION

LIFT's orientation sessions are for individuals who are thinking about joining LIFT and members who haven't familiarized themselves with the co-op's facilities and resources. The Office Coordinator will go over membership structure and policy and answer any questions new members may have about the co-op. Equipment rental procedures and policies will also be discussed and participants will go on a short tour of the LIFT office and facilities. The orientation is a great place to gain more information about LIFT! Orientations are on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 11:30 a.m. Call the office @ 416.588.6444 for more information.

The next two LIFT Orientations will be on Wed., April 18, 2001 and Wed., May 16, 2001.





## EQUIPMENT NEWS

### NEW OXBERRY 16/35MM ANIMATION CAMERA!

LIFT is in the process of acquiring a fully automated Oxberry 16/35mm camera in early April. We will be setting the camera up in the animation room and eventually combine our Aerial optical printer with the new camera so that blow ups can be made to 35mm. We are looking for volunteers to help set up the camera and reorganize the room. Please contact Roberto or Christina about helping out.

### RECENT EQUIPMENT UPGRADES

The Satchler & Wolfe 150mm tripod was recently overhauled and now provides incredibly smooth pans and tilts. The Petrov Light Weight Follow Focus has been fitted with an extra tightening screw which prevents it from loosening during use. The Petrov Follow Focus can be used with either the Arri SRII or the Aaton XTR Plus. Come in and check them out.

### WORKSHOP COMMITTEE MEETING

Next meeting: April 19

The workshop committee is looking for new members to help design the spring and summer workshops hosted by LIFT. Committee members receive 20 volunteer hours for participating in this endeavor. If you are interested in joining the committee or want more information, call Roberto at 416.588.6444. If you have any interesting ideas or suggestions for any kind of workshop, let us know by email at rariganello@hotmail.com.

### NEXT EQUIPMENT RESOURCE MEETING

April 10 6:00 p.m.

Members are strongly encouraged to participate in the decision-making process concerning LIFT's equipment acquisitions and facility upgrades. The Equipment resource meetings directly affect the direction that LIFT will take in the coming years. All members are welcome to express their views. The meeting will take place in the LIFT office at 6:00 p.m. For those of you unable to attend, please put your suggestions in writing, and send them to Roberto by e-mail (rariganello@hotmail) or by fax 416.588.7017. This way they can be presented to the group and discussed. Volunteer hours will be given for the time spent at the meeting.

### MEDIA 100 TIPS

Keep in mind that each program within M100 must contain clips with a single video standard and a single audio sample rate. Once configurations have been set for a M100 program, only media containing matching specifications can be used within that program (i.e., you cannot mix configurations within one program; if your program is set at 720x486 only media with that frame size can be brought into that program). When combining media from different sources (example: film and DV) it is important to consider the settings you will be using during the pre-production stage. Also note that it is possible to convert video and audio at the digitizing stages, this way you can conform the different media sources you intend to use.

**IMAGE:** Aspect Ratio - M100 programs can be set to either 4:3 or 16:9.

**Frame Size** - 640x480 (square pixel) or 720x486 (non-square

pixel). DV will only support non-square pixel frame formats. **AUDIO:** Sample Rate - 44100 Hz, 48000 Hz or 32000 Hz. M100 uses 16 bit audio data format. 12bit 32kHz audio is converted to 16 bit upon import.

### NEW MEDIA 100 MANUALS

LIFT's Media 100 manual was recently updated and is available as a resource for any member planning to use the Media 100 for their film edit. The manual is a valuable resource providing information on LIFT's system and it's organization as well as tips for basic non-linear editing. We strongly encourage members to read through the manual *before* making their bookings.



Still: Leong from new member Michael Snow

## NEW MEMBERS

Bernard Dew  
Ron Edding  
Cinar Eryasar  
Mike Filippov  
Ray Gould  
Ingrid Hamilton  
Stephen Jones  
Andrew Kohlhammer  
Jack Kwinter  
Abhay Lakhanpal  
Ana Luiza Leibner  
Bonnie Lesky  
Yale Massey  
Riaz Mehmood  
Meline Nadeau  
Carmen Noseworthy  
Adrienne O'Riain-Jordan  
David J. Patrick  
Paulette Phillips  
Julien Poublanc  
Ryan Redford  
Marcus Robinson  
Dominique Russell  
Michael Snow  
John Thompson  
Gary Timmons  
Deborah Verginelle  
Charles Wahl  
Kieran Wilson  
Rhoan Wynter  
Richard Yagutilou  
Paul Young  
Danny Godfrey  
Mark Coster

\*new members since February 2001



# WHO/WHAT MARCH 2001

COMPILED BY MARY MACNAUGHTON



Still: *The Ace* by Richard Strobel

Info for this column can be sent to the Newsletter: by mail c/o LIFT, 37 Hanna Ave., Ste. 301, Toronto ON M6K 1W5; by e-mail to Larissa at fanburke@interlog.com; by fax to 416 588 7017. Have a press release, press package or postcard? Why not send a copy to the Newsletter? (Try it, it's easy!)

## PRODUCTION

**Jonathan Williams** has just begun shooting *The East Trail* on Super16. *The East Trail* is the story of a man, lost in the winter woods, who takes a hat from a corpse he discovers in the frozen snow. Subsequently, suspicion is cast on him for the death of this man.

**Julie Saragosa's** short film, *Parade*, is in post-production. This 6-minute film was shot using both Super8 and 16mm film stock. *Parade* is a hand-processed archival film about last year's (2000) gay pride parade. The sound is a collage of dance music to contrast the scratched and grainy look of the footage.

## POST-PRODUCTION

**Richard Strobel** is entering the editing stage of his short film *The Ace* with only a handful of pick-ups slated for the early spring. Shot in colour 16mm with segments in 8mm and Super 8mm, the film chronicles the final moments of a man's life as pivotal events flash before his eyes.



**Sue Riedl and Mary MacNaughton** have just locked picture on *Head Stick'em*, a 16mm stop-motion animated short made on LIFT's excellent Oxberry animation stand. *Head Stick'em* is a 4-minute comedy whose heroine, Tallulah Bighead, struggles to stop her watermelon-sized head from falling off and getting into mischief. The film is slated for completion in May.



**Michael Caines** and **Keith Cole** are currently putting the finishing touches on their epic *The Boys Next Door*, an 11 minute black and white 16mm film. The film is a trilogy of fantasies shot on Super 8mm and blown up to 16mm by John Kneller. They hope to have the project finished in May.



*Remembrance*, a short film by **Stephanie Morgenstern** selected by the OFDC for its Calling Card Grant and shot on 35mm in Cinemascope, recently wrapped shooting. A wartime romance set in 1942, it is the story of a cautious, haunted man, cursed with the gift of a perfect memory. He is approached one night by a mysterious woman who invites him for a drink, a dance, and an opportunity to train at Camp X as an agent of Allied Intelligence. Stephanie plans to follow up the short with the feature version of the story, to which this film is a short prologue.

**Michael Filice** is currently working on two DV shorts. The first, called *Snake's Den*, is 10 minutes and is currently in post. The plot concerns three office employees at various stages of their careers that are stuck at work. The second short is called *Love By Numbers* and will be 20 minutes long with an early April shoot date. It is about a couple that deals with their everyday reality, comes into conflict with each other and eventually comes to a resolution through the depth of their love.

**Carolynne Hew** is currently editing together hours of DV and Super 8mm footage (shot in Malaysia, Hong Kong and San Francisco) down into her 45 minute film *Big Feet Savage Women*. The film is a personal quest to explore the myth of the Hakka woman.

## ON THE SCREEN

**Zena Bielewicz** has just completed *Girl Drama*, a 16mm, 24 minute colour film. Produced by LIFT member **Sue Georgiou**, the film asks the following question: What do you do when your ex-girlfriend invites you to a party on the one-month anniversary of your breakup? The answer: Show up with a hot date! The film will be screening at this year's Inside Out Lesbian and Gay film festival. The program is called 416-FUN-FOR-GIRLS and it will be showing on May 20th at 7:00 PM.



**Roberto Ariganello's** recently completed film *Shelter* screened as part of Pleasure Dome's Blueprint Project at ArtWord Theatre on March 10th & 11th. *Shelter* is an 8-minute found footage film that explores homelessness, bomb shelters and the nature of filmmaking. An extensive tour across Canada is planned for the Fall.



Eight months of hard work are finally paying off for **Jeff Ashenhurst**. His 25-minute film, *Garage Dreams*, has just finished post-production. In *Garage Dreams*, two film school grads struggle to write their "breakthrough" script while stuck in the suburban void. Watch for it at a screening at the Bloor within the next few months.

**Jeff Sterne** has completed *Scrambled Pornography*, a 10-minute experimental documentary shot on 16mm. What's it about? That trying to perceive the drama from the documentary, the analog from the digital, the fact from the fiction, and the technology from the sexuality will be more perverse in the future.

**Mark Wihak** has just completed his 48-minute documentary *A World Away: Stories From The Regina Five*. The subject of the film is group of painters known as 'The Regina Five'. The documentary will receive its broadcast premiere on Bravo! in the Spring. In other news, Mark's 2000 short film *Autoerotica*, which recently screened at the Victoria Independent Film and Video Festival, has been invited to screen at the Shadowland Festival in Salerno, Italy.

Director **Michelle Messina** has just completed two short animated films. *Falling In Love* is a 16 mm short, stop motion animated film which was hand processed and hand colorized. This film is about two hearts in a circus that are tight rope acrobats. *12* is a 16 mm short, stop motion animated film which was hand processed at LIFT. This film reveals the nature of the twelve animals in Chinese Astrology (dating back to 2637 B.C.) and is written in Cantonese and English.

**George Filtzos** recently completed his 48 minute narrative film *Mechanics* which screened to a packed house at the Bloor Cinema. The film poses the question: "Mechanics: What happens when they break down?".



# 20th ANNIVERSARY REVIEWS

BY MARCUS ROBINSON

Marcus Robinson was kind enough to review some of the shorts in the FUTURE part of the LIFT 20th Anniversary Program.

## NUNCA

What do you get when you cross pills, champagne and a defiant Barbara Streisand? Nyet. Ain't. Don't. *Nunca*.

In acclaimed filmmaker **John Greyson's** birthday present to

LIFT, *Contraria* and *Negativa* contemplate the frontal close up ("that emotional petri dish of truth") and its negative, the "bun-shot" (not what it seems). They solemnly declare for filmmakers everywhere that "we shall not... will not... [insert active verb here]... ever." As is the case in his own work, Greyson's subtle but optimistic vision of cinema's future rests on the ability of the filmmaker to examine both the positive and the negative in direct dialogue with their audience.



exposed filmmaker and an increasingly hectic montage pace. An effective reminder of the combination of frustration, sense of loss and exhilaration in marrying the celluloid and the digital age.

## STAR

A dreamy, sensual homage to the pursuit and birth of a cinematic dream, **Helen Lee's** *Star* takes a seemingly unadorned premise – *When You Wish Upon A Star* sung tenderly a cappella – and places its lyrics in the context of film, giving the journey of the filmmaker a poetic and romantic grace. What amazes is how poignant simplicity and silence can be when used with self-restraint.



## SECRET

In **Michael Hoolbloom's** future, the knowable human universe has been reduced to fifteen different faces with infinite personalities. *The Secret* uses the reassuring innocence of a child's voice and computer generated imagery to imagine a birth in this kind of finite world. Video introductions then show us the "faces" of filmmaking future. The ocean isn't as wide and the horizon not as distant as we might imagine. And although we now recognize the faces, film offers the ability to create a unique personality through individual expression.

## SLIGHTSEER

An open invitation to observe and learn from our past, *Slightseer* by **Midi Onodera** integrates computer technology, an energetic techno beat, and binocular dual irises to ensure that we keep our eyes wide open and our sight fixed on the possibilities. Onodera's requirement of filmmaking's future demands that it lose its vision yet see everything. A passionate narrative poem subtitles and links the diverse imagery, silently telling us the story of a girl who "wanted to see through her soul, not what was in front of her."



## HAND JOB

A man enters a screening room for a private viewing. In a highly personalized work, filmmaker **Wrik Mead** juxtaposes past with present in recreating a turn-of-the-century daguerrotype look and graphic footage to celebrate what film is capable of providing for the observer revealed as participant. Mead wryly observes that what will likely not change each time we assume our seat alone in the darkness, the subjective relationship we engage with whatever presents itself on the screen.



## LIGHT MAGIC

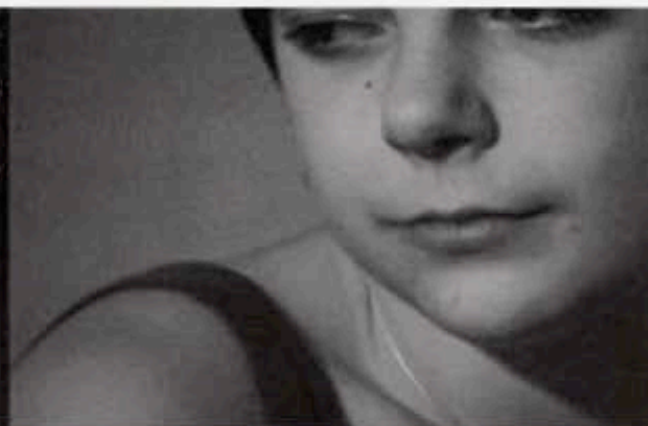
While traditional narratives and moving images representational of the human form will likely always dominate our filmgoing experience, it is a mysterious reality that co-existing with this traditional exposed 'light' are its variations somewhere just outside our viewfinder. This seems to be the kind of light that **Pruska-Oldenhof** seeks to capture in *Light Magic*. She uses the cameraless photogram technique to create "a luminous dance", strangely hypnotic and suggestive. Sound and image relate an unconventional narrative but to a receptive viewer, perhaps also an intriguing change of form and point of reference.



## TECHNICAL DRUNK

If you think threading an antedeluvian 16 mm projector is a challenge, try chugging a six-pack through a gas mask while sitting on the toilet in a bathroom stall with no door... **Jeff Sterne** examines his relationship to his "celluloid-self" through a split-screen narrative of projector and





Still: *The Up and the down* by Kika Thorne

The filmmakers involved in the 20th Anniversary celebrations were posed the following question thought up by the Newsletter Committee: Do you think you will still be using film (celluloid film stock) in twenty years and why? Here are some of the responses:

Celluloid is about creating visual magic. For me, a film is a fantastical interpretation of real life events and emotions which transport us regular Joes (and Janes) to places outside of our often mundane and even dreary lives. Call it escapism, call me escapist but celluloid is my hallucinogenic drug of choice.

**Siobhan Devine**

I won't be using film in twenty years. I'll be dead by then, and so will film. (No relation between the two). In the 1930-40s, radio plays held international attention. But why continue to produce radio plays when you could make movies? New forms of motion pictures will be three-dimensional, and engage all of our senses, not just sight and sound. In retrospect all movies, especially those that rely on a realist style, will appear distractingly flat. Paul Sharits and Gariné Torossian will look like documentary. Alfred Hitchcock will just look ridiculous.

**Mike Hoolboom**

When I think of the future of celluloid in the face of technological advancement, I think of my father who is a big fan of short-wave radio. He likes hearing broadcasts from countries he has visited, used to live in, or would simply like to see someday. The cost of a cheap computer these days makes it a feasible alternative to a good short-wave radio. Via the internet, it would receive a wider variety of broadcasting at a better quality level to boot. He'll probably never make the switch though because he likes to listen to his little short-wave radio as he falls asleep (as he has for decades) and he'll never get comfortable enough with a computer plugged into his ear to do that. I guess the great new options technology provides us with are really only benefits insofar as we are comfortable in using them. Regardless of the options available to me as a filmmaker in twenty years, it's nice to know if none of them suit me as an artist, I've always got good old celluloid to fall back on.

**Chris McKay**

Will filmmaking hold the same context that it does today? Will we be sitting in a theatre for a group experience or solely downloading movies on-line? Film as a viable medium is expensive, aesthetically it evokes a romanticized view

of our past. Within the context of image making, the qualities of film will always hold a place in my work; however, I cannot see being restricted to this vision.

**Midi Onodera**

Yes. Video's easy duplication and dissemination explode the parameters of possible viewing conditions; a film screening is almost always a singular event at which you are forced to gaze. That part of my ego which wants as many people as possible to see my work concedes to that other part of my ego which wants them to give it due attention.

**Daniel Cockburn**

The six year legal battle of Pollution Watch, the environmental arm of the Global Federation of Credit Unions (GFCU) vs. Kodak Dupont, owner of Sony and subsidiaries, faced a complete turnaround after Earth First uncovered the EPA's Toxic Release Inventory, revealed to have produced false documents since 2004.

On November 1st, 2020, Dr. Eric Chambers, former bassist in a Washington, D.C. strait edge punk band, Bioapparatus, and current CEO of Kodak Dupont was sentenced to death under Texas law for representing a corporation causing over 100,000 deaths. Evidence told of irreconcilable damage to eco systems spanning 5 tectonic plates in the Americas and Eurasia. In a trial comparable to Eichmann in Jerusalem, Dr. Chambers was forced to deliver a thin rhetoric on biofilters, carbon dioxide capture and reduced land injection between the deadpan sentiment "we did what we could". In his parting statement after the verdict, a quiet Dr. Chambers stated, "How ironic that the technological infrastructure necessary to diagnose and cure cancer has been the cause of it all along".

Steven Soderbergh, Chairman of the Directors Guild of North America was quoted in the *New York Times*, November 2, 2020, "As filmmakers we used the materials at our disposal to ignite concern for the planet and one another... we had no real understanding of our complicity".

**Kika Thorne**



# 2001 TIME

## DO NOT OPE

The Newsletter Committee came up with the idea to bury some things behind LIFT that items we were going to bury and make it into an article. I thought this article might just run around with a little camera, take pictures and fill two whole pages of the new orange room and begged Roberto to let me bury that incredibly ugly computer in the objects and LIFT staff members. The objects do have some significance because I have photos are so people in the future can look at the photos a



1. The Flatbed.... Will this become something like the famous film shredder The Moviola? Or will there be a revival of using the flatbed in 2021, an underground fringe cult who's aim is getting back to the elements of film, to touch it, and discover the power of making a film by hand?

### 2. EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

Some of you may have been wondering just who is that dashing young man at the front desk of LIFT. It's Jesse (pronounced Jess-ah) van der Schaaf, LIFT's new Office Co-ordinator. Jesse is a Pieces and his hobbies include making forts out of cardboard boxes as well as developing his very own travelling "squirrel circus". Welcome aboard and congratulations, your photo goes into our time capsule.

3. Beta and VHS.... Could you just record on to a computer chip without any tape at all (ummm, yes)? Will you not have to set the timer on the VCR and just download your favourite tv show when you get home (actually, I think you can already do that)?

4. The camera shy yet photogenic Deanna Bowen.

5. A LIFT filmmaker (Carolynne Hew) in technological distress. Will the filmmakers of the future look at the Pink Room's high tech setup and laugh? Will a G4 look to them like an Apple 2 looks to us?



DIGITAL VIDEO ANTI-HYPE

# CAPSULE

## UNTIL 2021

BY JASON ROMILLY

Members of the co-op could not dig up until 2021. They wanted to take pictures of all the items that were too fluffy for the LIFT newsletter, a space filler. Then when I realized that I could not dig up until 2021, I jumped at the chance. I begged Barb to let me bury one of the flatbeds in the storage room but they both said "no" (Where's your LIFT spirit?). So I just took photos of the items that could possibly be obsolete in twenty years. The LIFT staff members said "oh my god, look at that sweater.... it's soooooo 2001".



6a



8



10



6



7



9

6, 6a. Film.... film reels... Will we be in our forties and fifties saying to kids "I used to make movies on this thing called film" with them responding, "man, you're so old"?

7. This is what the LIFT sign looks like in 2001. For 2003, I think we should raise money to have it changed to red neon, it's way sexier.

8. The debonair Roberto Ariganello.

9. This computer in the Oxberry room is so old, it's an *Antique Roadshow* item already. I mean... it takes those big old floppy disks.

10. The charming executive, Barb Sniderman.

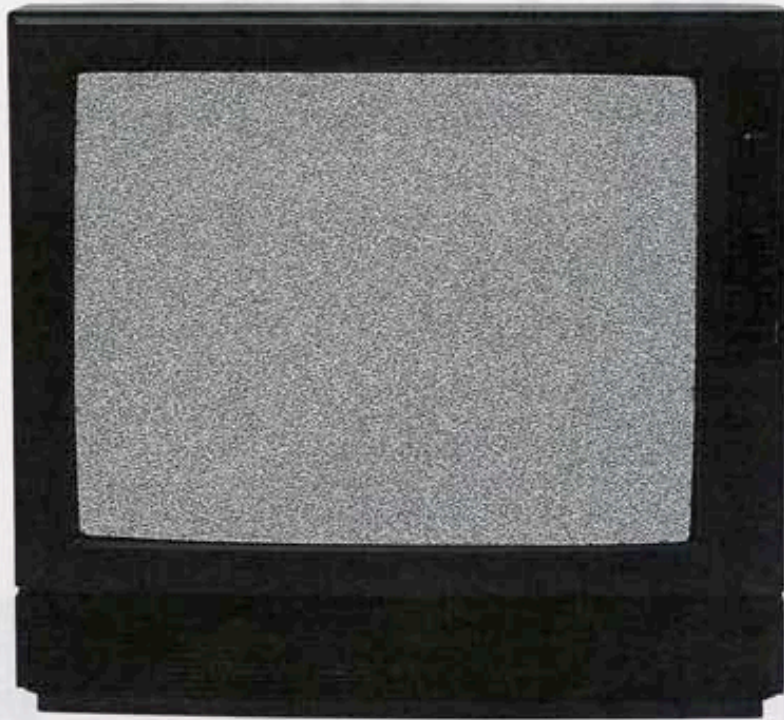
LIFT's beloved technical co-ordinator Christina Battle was unfortunately away from the office.



# DIGITAL VIDEO ANTI-HYPE:

SOME RATIONAL THOUGHTS ABOUT THE DV "REVOLUTION".

BY CHRISTOPHER BALL



THERE IS A GREAT DEAL of hype right now about how the Digital Video revolution is going to take over the world. This may be a bit of an exaggeration but the buzz surrounding DV might make you think so. As video was supposed to be in the mid 1980's, digital video is now supposed to be the medium of choice that is revolutionizing the film industry. Most of the hype has originated from the manufacturers who have a strong desire to sell product.

As a result of this hype, digital video has been avidly taken up by lower budget filmmakers with an equally strong desire to make cheap films. The reality of just how good for the art form and the business this new medium is remains to be seen. Here is some of the hype and some of the opposing realities of using DV.

## "DV is faster to shoot"

It is a complete myth that DV is even one second faster to shoot. All it takes to roll a DV or motion picture camera is the press of a button. The actual shooting time is used up in lighting, rehearsing, blocking and setting up the scene. If you are trying to get a good performance, it takes time to rehearse and block; if you are trying to tell a good story, it takes time to get the proper coverage and establish all the beats; if you are trying to capture a professional image, it takes time to light and set the camera. This time does not change because you are changing the medium. You can "point and shoot" in film or video and both will look equally bad.

DV, in fact, can be slower to shoot because the videotape is cheap and encourages overshooting and high ratios. This is the biggest killer of time and time is the most expensive commodity in the production of a film or video. Every additional take and additional set up costs far more than what you're paying for the recording medium. Even in post production, a high shooting ratio can be a curse as you spend hours of expensive editing time sifting through hours of footage. Video is also more difficult to light attractively which consumes even more production time.

## "DV is cheaper than film"

Most emerging filmmakers make their budget estimations by planning to use a consumer DV cam, like the Sony VX1000. Consumer DV cameras are not HD24p, Digi-Beta or even Betacam SP quality cameras and the results are relatively poor. High-end 24p and Digi-Beta systems are very expensive to rent and not easily available right now. The post production costs go up significantly when working in these mediums.

If the film is intended to be blown-up for theatrical release, then consumer style cameras are vastly inadequate. After doing tests and research on a consumer DV camera, I found that its image quality and lack of controls meant that the end result was going to appear unprofessional at best and downright flat and fuzzy at worst. To capture decent, film transferable, broadcast ready, professional and attractive images, a much higher end, much more



## "I have a new script, and it's a DV project!"

expensive 'pro' camera is needed which drives up those cheaper up-front costs.

If the plan is to finish on film for festival or theatrical release then the final cost is sometimes more expensive when the project originated on video. It is much harder to convince a distributor to take on the costs of a "blow-up and transfer" (which are about 30% more expensive than a super16 blow-up) in order to get a theatrical release.

The film has to be really exceptional for someone to invest the 60 to 75 thousand dollars to finance the completion of the film. There are still many festivals that only take material on film so if the plan is to go to critically important festivals and markets to find a distributor, prepare to budget and invest the blow up money yourself. At this point, you may ask yourself why you didn't shoot on film in the first place.

On a typical theatrical feature film, the *difference* in cost between shooting on DV and shooting on film is roughly equivalent to the cost of hiring a couple of additional crew members. In other words, for a film that is paying for stars, putting experienced crew on the payroll, going for decent lighting and art direction and finishing with good quality sound and effects, the cost difference is so minimal as to be inconsequential. Even on a low budget film, you need the same crew, the same actors, the same location, the same lighting... nothing is different except for the recording medium! All other costs remain the same.

### "DV is great quality. It looks just like film."

Anyone who has seen the results will agree that Digital Video has made great strides forward but it looks nothing like film. It is an entirely different medium which is not necessarily bad. Digital image capturing should be treated as a palette choice, much like a painter choosing between watercolour and oil. The choice to shoot DV should *not* be budget driven; it should be creatively driven, as it suits a certain type of story (i.e. *The Blair Witch Project* and *The Celebration*). If the story suits a shooting style that is primarily close ups, talking heads, interiors, colder, flatter, harder, then DV is an excellent palette to choose. If the story is a sweeping period piece, has a lot of "beauty shots", exteriors, wide shots, is meant to be warmer, softer, richer and more delicate, then film is the palette of choice.

For theatrical feature films, it is generally agreed that DV is not there yet if you want to capture a decent (professional, competitive) image. Recording a beautiful or delicate image on to DV and blowing it up is akin to buying a new Rolls Royce and driving it on a logging road...it gets wrecked.

### "Everyone is shooting DV...Film is dead!"

The hype might suggest otherwise but the majority of producers are still choosing to shoot on film because of the generally accepted (but not equally hyped) knowledge that DV is not really ready yet. Digital Video is still in its prototypical development and most cameras are new and untested by the industry. DV is probably where film was in the 1960's; it's got a long way to go, but one day it will be great.

Many distributors are still quite leery of the Digital medium because smaller budget films (i.e. films without notable stars) are sold internationally based on their story and their image quality. Many buyers won't consider crappy looking films and will often make their purchasing decisions based on viewing only 5 to 10 minutes of the film. If it doesn't look very good, they'll move on. Unless you have a star or a lot of awards to sell it on, you better make a good looking product. Another consideration is that 35mm is still the international standard. The film can be taken to Siberia, China, Africa... you name it, and it can be projected, broadcast and transferred. It will be several years before theatres worldwide will convert to digital projection because they have made huge investments in 35mm equipment. It also costs an estimated \$70,000 additional dollars per-screen to install a digital projection system.

### "I have a new script, and it's a DV project!"

As we all know, films are financed and green lit based almost exclusively on who is in it. It is the star system that really generates funding and the medium has little or nothing to do with it. I hear too many filmmakers trying to sell their ideas because they are DV scripts but what I would want to know (as a buyer) is, "Who is in it?" and "What's it about?" Partly because DV is so easy to shoot, there is not the same amount of time or care put into the script, the casting and the pre-production. The medium is taking precedence over the story which is leading to the creation of a lot of bad product.

Digital Image acquisition is coming and it currently provides filmmakers (with the right type of story) a palette choice that is cheaper up front. It is an excellent medium for TV series and documentaries (but only with the higher-end HD24p or Digi-beta systems) but it will be many years before you see Digital films in wide theatrical release. Don't forget that about 15 years ago Betacam SP was going to take over and never did, mostly for the same reasons. In the near future, DV will kill Betacam technology, not film technology. Let the hype go on but make sure you make an informed and rational decision before you make a considerable investment into your next big film project.



# ON THE PRODUCTION, VIEWERSHIP, AND CRITICISM OF DIGITAL FILMMAKING

BY VICTOR FAN



Still: *Sadness* by Helen Lee which was shot on DV and transferred to 35mm

I HAVE A THING FOR reading reviews for films I have seen (we all have silly, time-wasting habits, so don't ask). Recently, I found myself surprised by what seems to be a trend in the way some of the more widely distributed features done in DV are being written about (or not written about).

Although most have come to accept DV films<sup>1</sup> as a new technological reality, critics I have come across have generally refused to think of shooting in DV as representing anything aesthetically significant or new. We are already seeing examples of recent DV cinema that give us a peek into where this new form can take us aesthetically and politically. To blindly write off a DV film as just a new kind of film format is to ignore a fundamental part of its signifying practice. In order to keep up with the innovators of DV cinema, I think it would be a good idea to take a new look at this approach.

Some filmmakers I have spoken to disagree about whether the new possibilities offered by DV would add or detract from their work. But all seem to understand that the decision to shoot and edit digitally or not is a key consideration affecting every step of their process and result. Beyond the obvious technological barrier, I believe that for many, this decision also involves choosing sets of tools that offer very different possibilities and limitations. Would it not follow, then, that these different tools could also go in new directions in making meaning? I believe a more current discussion and criticism of Digital Video features would require some acknowledgement that it is in many significant ways, a work that is unique from, albeit related to, film<sup>2</sup>.

I would argue that DV's formal qualities help to determine the range of the filmic text. All filmmakers choose, consciously or not, to express their ideas using some point

<sup>1</sup> I will choose not to get into the semantics of whether we should be calling it a DV film, DV production, or whether it is DV-maker, DV filmmaker etc.—all terms will be used interchangeably in the interest of variety.

<sup>2</sup> This statement would also be extended to my ideas with respect to DV's relation to standard video—but this topic is best left to another article.



along the dialectic where completely rehearsed and completely spontaneous sit at opposite ends. By choosing to shoot in DV or film, one is necessarily defining a range of possibilities one can easily have at one's disposal. In other words, because of the relative costs of film/video stock, supplies, and equipment, a filmmaker shooting on film is often required to put together lengthy shoot notes in pre-production and be encouraged to not depart from it, while the DV-artist can approach the shoot more liberally. In turn, more exactitude and restraint in terms of guiding the viewer's attention needs to be present during the DV's post-production process. Mike Figgis' *Timecode* (2000) is one specific variation of the DV production approach where actors received more room to improvise the narrative details in front of the camera but camera positioning, postproduction sound and timing seemed to require more precision. The abilities of the medium also allowed Figgis' project to take a new direction away from linear, causal narrative structures. The final result of the acting, sound, and mise-en-scene contribute to a unique sense of alienation from nature, an unpolished, self-conscious quality, and the composition also seems to give the viewer the illusion of power over the image. Although this sense of control is ultimately illusory (the soundtrack, and thus the attention of the viewer is always being pushed through one door and then another), the effect itself cannot be easily achieved in any other medium.

But who can say that any of these 'innovations' were actually impossible before the introduction of DV technology? If not, can this really be seen inherently as a signifier possible only with DV? There is not much in the shot scarcity, and budget constraints argument that cannot, for example also be said for standard video technology. Also, some early French New Wave *films* have taken innovative, non-linear narratives farther and to more interesting places than Figgis' film would ever dare. It is also true, however, that only digital video could combine all these elements as *Timecode* has been able to do within a reasonable budget.

The first time I saw Wim Wenders' *The Buena Vista Social Club* (2000), I had trouble accepting that it had been shot on DV. Everything I heard and saw about DV told me it was not capable of the saturated colors and textures achieved by this work. For me, the use of DV here allowed a relatively small production to meet the unique budget constraints of documentary production, while allowing a new range of expressive potential on a visual level using new technology. This began to open my eyes on how this new technology can be used to extend the limits of filmmaking and this is when I began to come up empty, looking for in depth discussion in this area.

I read an article some time ago comparing the film image versus the digital image in terms of its advantages and limitations. I think this kind of debate led to my earlier bias against DV and takes the discussion in the wrong direction. Even when such arguments are not influenced subjectively, technology changes daily in both media making a concrete statement of this kind impossible. To fully explore and understand the potential of this new technology in filmmaking, I believe it would be more fruitful to acknowledge the differences and to extend the expressive limits provided by these differences.

Back to *Timecode*, we begin to see how the unique formal qualities are one layer in the film's signifying process. The inability to throw a single digital image in large theaters contributed to the split screen composition and the film's title, pointing to the video post-production process, points to the self-conscious signification of the technology itself as forming a part of the film's own image.

Films like the one discussed above, along with movements like Dogme 95 and more recent work like Lars Von Trier's *Dancer In The Dark* (2000) all go to convince me that formal differences of DV technologies leave room for much more innovation than they have thus far. Moreover, I have no doubt that this kind of open acknowledgement and discussion of the form will help lay the foundation for the flowering of creative activity and formal innovation in this area – as a distinct, but parallel, extension of the aesthetic, political, and technological constraints of cinema.



# REMEMBERING THE FUTURE: PLEASURE DOME'S BLUEPRINT SCREENING OF MOVING IMAGES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

By KATE MILES



Still, *Shelter* by Roberto Ariganello

"What is to be done?" — Vladimir Ilyich Lenin

WHEN THE FOLKS AT PLEASURE DOME faced the millennium in the olden days of 1999, their call for submissions quoted Lenin's famous call to revolution. Canadian artists were asked to speculate on the future of moving images in the 21st century through the creation of short films, videos or new media. The selected projects were given funding to go to completion and screened March 10th and 11th, 2001 at Artword Theatre in Toronto.

The nine works presented were created by Roberto Ariganello (*Shelter*), Judith Doyle (*Fox: Future*), Jeremy Drummond (*Blueprint*), Linda Feeseey (*Sex And Cerebral Palsy*), Helen Hill (*Madame Winger Makes A Film: A Survival Guide For The 21st Century*), Robert Lee (*Capitale De La Douleur*), Maija Martin (*The 100 Greatest Books Of All Time*), Andrew J. Paterson (*Snowjob*) and Ho Tam (*Fine China*). The artists in attendance participated in a lively discussion following the presentation of their work, moderated by Ger Zielinski. Both the screening and the talk raised some provocative questions about the future of moving images and the role they have played in constructing our past and present.

What is a "moving image"? The term itself has gained popularity with the expansion of potential media. We are no longer limited to film versus video. Ho Tam's *Fine China* grew out of a print work of the same title and challenges whether "moving image" could incorporate a still image being moved or a completely static image presented in a time-based medium. Blue and white prints of porcelain vases, plates, and teapots were moved right to left across the screen. Within each piece of "fine china" was historic and ironic video footage of Chinese culture: everything from kung fu films to Mao to dim sum. The evocative music by Ren Yun served to complete a polished meditation on the future of an ancient civilization.

"There's an almost spiritual quality to using old footage...we have a responsibility to mine the past and resurrect it."

— Roberto Ariganello

Self-proclaimed "retro-garde artist" and LIFT Equipment Co-ordinator Roberto Ariganello bought some old Pierre Burton footage by accident when he purchased a \$5 split reel at a garage sale. That lost piece of Canadian history, along with a Cold War public service announcement, an obscure 1930's Hollywood film and recent footage of a homeless street youth demonstration were used to create *Shelter*. Ariganello's use of montage condemns state control in Toronto the Good and questions the political stance



of the film industry within its own medium. A project constructed entirely of found footage, *Shelter* demonstrates a creative use for the millions of feet of archival film being destroyed every day.

"History needn't colonize the future." — Judith Doyle

We live in a world whose recent past is documented on video and film, creating a kind of heightened history of the last 100 years. Some artists see the destruction of our collective memory of archival film footage as a necessary purging in order to make room for future innovation. Can we find clarity in the clutter or is a kaleidoscopic perspective the only true reflection of the post-post-modern sensibility? In Maija Martin's collective creation *The 100 Greatest Books Of All Time*, twenty artists were asked to choose five books for which they created a six second film or video interpretation of each book, for a total of 30 seconds of screen time per artist. The result is a funny, complex and diverse project that demonstrates how the precision of many small truths can triumph over the sprawl of a grand manifesto.

"History needn't colonize the future." — Judith Doyle

This challenge of information overload is a challenge of memory, a word that has taken on new meaning in the digital revolution. The technical dilemma for today's video artists is not "How much can you shoot?" but rather "How much can you store?" Access to drive space creates a gap between those who work on home computers and those who have access to more high-end facilities. And as Andrew J. Paterson pointed out, this new crisis spawns questions about the relationship between mind and machine: If you know information is stored somewhere, do you need to remember it? What are we retaining in our brains and what are we delegating to our hard drives?

Other needs and frailties of the contemporary body in an age of sterile technology were addressed in Jeremy Drummond's *Blueprint* and Linda Feeseey's *Sex And Cerebral Palsy*. Feeseey's documentary sought to confirm and celebrate the erotic lives of the disabled, while Drummond's video examined our society's current obsession with anti-bacterial cleanliness as a route to impossible perfection and purity.

The tools of the trade are also in a state of flux. Judith Doyle's *Fox: Future* was a series of digital images, text and sounds generated in random sequences. The project was made at home on a G4, using applications including Final Cut Pro, Media Cleaner, Sound Edit 16 and Flash 5.0. Unfazed by the learning curve required by such ventures,

Doyle found her creativity enhanced and expanded by the use of technology.

"Using all these high-tech tools together on my desktop became an engine that worked like my brain always had — on intuition and random processes." — Judith Doyle

On the traditional front, Helen Hill's impish instructional film *Madame Winger Makes A Film: A Survival Guide For The 21st Century* explored the wonders of low-budget film techniques including painting on leader, scratch animation, hand-processing and using archival footage, all demonstrated by an animated cardboard cut-out with a beehive hairdo.

Interdisciplinary performance artist Andrew J. Paterson's *Snowjob* presented the artist's body dancing against various computer-generated backgrounds, with a throbbing techno beat and text superimposition. Depicting (in his words) "the strained dialogue between visual and verbal languages as well as bodies, it also rejects market-oriented concepts of happy community and global citizenship".

Robert Lee's *Capitale De La Douleur* challenged form versus function in contemporary architecture through a frenzied montage of surveillance camera footage. Likewise, the future of film includes a crisis of venue. In 2020, will we still gather together in darkened rooms to experience movies together, or will we design our moving pictures for house-bound individuals to download on demand? How do you capture the viewer's attention if you can't hold them captive in a theatre and they can escape with the click of a mouse? The nature and scope of the artistic community must shift as the relationship with their audience changes.

On Sunday, March 11, 2001, as we gathered together in an old-school theatre and looked to the future on screen, I could not help but feel a misty nostalgia for all that Y2K anxiety. It was a kinder, simpler time when the purchase of bottled water, AA batteries and a few fireworks seemed sufficient protection from the impending apocalypse. Now we can look back with our 21st century wisdom and see that the big calendar shift of New Year's 2000 was nothing more than a snow job, a publicity stunt, a hard night to hail a cab. Some might question the need for a Millennium Arts Fund and the subsequent *Blueprint* screening. Others might not. But regardless of where you think we're headed, the future needs to be addressed more than once every thousand years.



# SPECIAL EFFECTS: CGI AND COMPOSITING

BY JASON ROMILLY



IMAGINE YOU ARE about to make a special effects filled sci-fi film. For the opening shot a spaceship lands in a downtown Toronto, the hydraulic door opens and five thousand little bug-like aliens come scurrying out. A crowd of one hundred people run away as the aliens attack. I went to Sundog Films to learn more about the programs I would use to achieve these special effects.

The first thing I will have to decide is whether I'm going to finish my sci-fi film on video or on film. Peter Hunt who works on LightWave, a program that will be described below, explains why finishing on film is so expensive and time consuming:

"The resolution on video is a third to a quarter what film would be. When things are rendering (for film) it takes longer, storage is harder, there's more detail, it's four times the size.... four times the rendering time, four times the image detail, it's four times as large on the screen. People can see flaws four times easier so there is a considerable amount more work."

The other problem with finishing on film is transferring the computer work to film is extremely expensive. So for my project, I'm going to finish on video. Another thing to consider is that moving shots like dolly shots are harder to work with because the subject and background are constantly changing size so all of your elements in your special effects must reflect this change.

Once my film is shot (with consultation from a special effects supervisor), there are some elements that will have to be created on a computer. Instead of building a large spaceship and creating five thousand animatronic aliens, a team of computer animators can create these things for me. The program Sundog would use to make something like a spaceship is called LightWave. LightWave is a computer imaging program where you can build objects and then move them through the frame as Peter Hunt explains:

"It's the same concept as if you were making something out of clay. If you have reference photos or reference

models it's easier and you just mold and add pieces until you have a complete thing. After it's formed you paint it.... With CG the biggest comparison is to stop motion animation where you actually make models and then you can move those models around on a soundstage except (in Lightwave) it's all inside the computer."

In order for your spaceship to look right in your filmed environment certain steps should be followed on set. If you have extensive notes like the lens size you used for each shot and where your key, fill, and back lights were it will make the LightWave artist's job much easier. LightWave has options within the program for lens size and light placement so they can recreate your filming environment on the computer so the object they are creating looks like it was filmed on your set.

At the same time as they are creating my spaceship on LightWave, I want to get started on my bug-like aliens. I travel downstairs to the Maya suite to do this. As I enter the basement, the Maya suite is like a scene out of it's own sci-fi movie with around twenty young people head down in their computers working away. Maya is similar to LightWave but is primarily used at Sundog for more complex things like computer animated characters or whole animated worlds. I would first need to make some sort of sketch, take pictures or make videos of bugs to give the animators some reference points as to how the bugs look and move. As in Lightwave, the animators then plot a course for the animation: to move through my three dimensional space.

Now I have my spaceship and aliens but I want them to look real against my filmed background and I want to add the one hundred people I filmed running away into the mix. If we consider this shot in terms of layers it's not that confusing. I have my filmed background of Toronto as one layer, then my spaceship, then my bug like aliens, and then finally my people running away from the aliens. What we now need to do is called compositing, merging all of these elements together to look like they are from the same environment.



Any of you who are familiar with Photoshop will realize that these programs work with layers in a similar way except instead of a still image, the image is moving and the effect has to be done over time.

The compositing programs used at Sundog are After Effects, Flint, Flame, and the Edit Box. Any of you who are familiar with Photoshop will realize that these programs work with layers in a similar way except instead of a still image, the image is moving and the effect has to be done over time. In all of these programs you can also move the individual layers separately.

After Effects is the easiest to use of these programs and available for home use. They primarily use After Effects at Sundog for replacing a green or blue screen with an image, any moving text, and any effect that can be done in Photoshop. After Effects also has a variety of plugins available for even more complex effects like painting (used for wire removal or painting unwanted things out of the frame like scratches on the negative). Just like in Photoshop, you could change the colour of an object in the room, like a table, by painting it a different colour. The main drawback to After Effects is that you cannot view the effects you've created in real time so you don't have a solid idea exactly what they are going to look like until they've been rendered which is very time consuming.

Flint is a higher end compositing package which renders effects done for video very quickly so you can look at your effects almost in real time. There are a lot more options on Flint, things like sparks and flames can be created here, 3D lighting and 3D text.

Flame is an even more powerful program and four times as fast as Flint. This means that if you're doing effects that are going to be finished on film, you can watch them on Flame almost in real time. This program comes in handy if you have many layers because it is much faster. There are also more complex lighting and colouring options on Flame. At Sundog, they often use Flame for something called rotoscoping. In Photoshop, you can trace around a still image and then manipulate that image (i.e. you could cut it out from the background, change the colour, resize it, etc). Rotoscoping is a similar concept except the image is moving, so you trace the image over time with the computer filling in the frames inbetween. Once you've completed

your trace of the image, you can cut the image out from the background, copy it, resize it, and paste it anywhere you desire. The possibilities of rotoscoping are endless; for instance, you could trace around five people from a highway background, make them smaller and paste them further down the highway to make it look like there's ten people in frame.

The Edit Box is an editing program like Media 100 with the advantage of being a four layer compositor also. Although it can only be used for video, it is extremely handy because you can composite images (like green screen replacement) and edit your project all on the same system. Of course, all of these programs have several other applications that I could not even begin to discuss.

I do, however, think that as programs like Media 100 continue to improve, more and more compositing options will be incorporated into them. With the imminent release of a new version of After Effects, many of these effects will be available for home computers and rendering times will get faster. These programs are not just about special effects, they can be thought of as creative tools providing new options for filmmakers to utilize.

*Thanks to Cisco Ribas, Steve Gordon, Dave Mitchell, Peter Hunt, Earl Parowczynek and Sundog Films for their help.*



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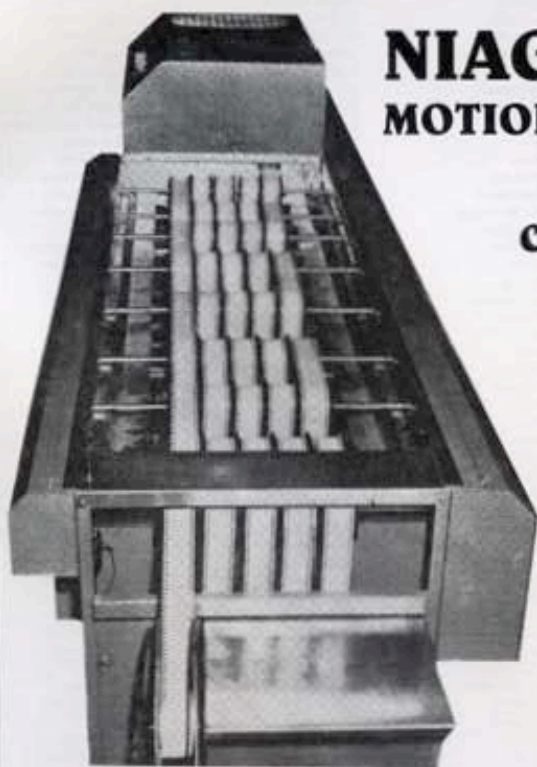
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