FILMPRINT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE LIAISON OF INDEPENDENT FILMMAKERS OF TORONTO March/April 2006 $5.00

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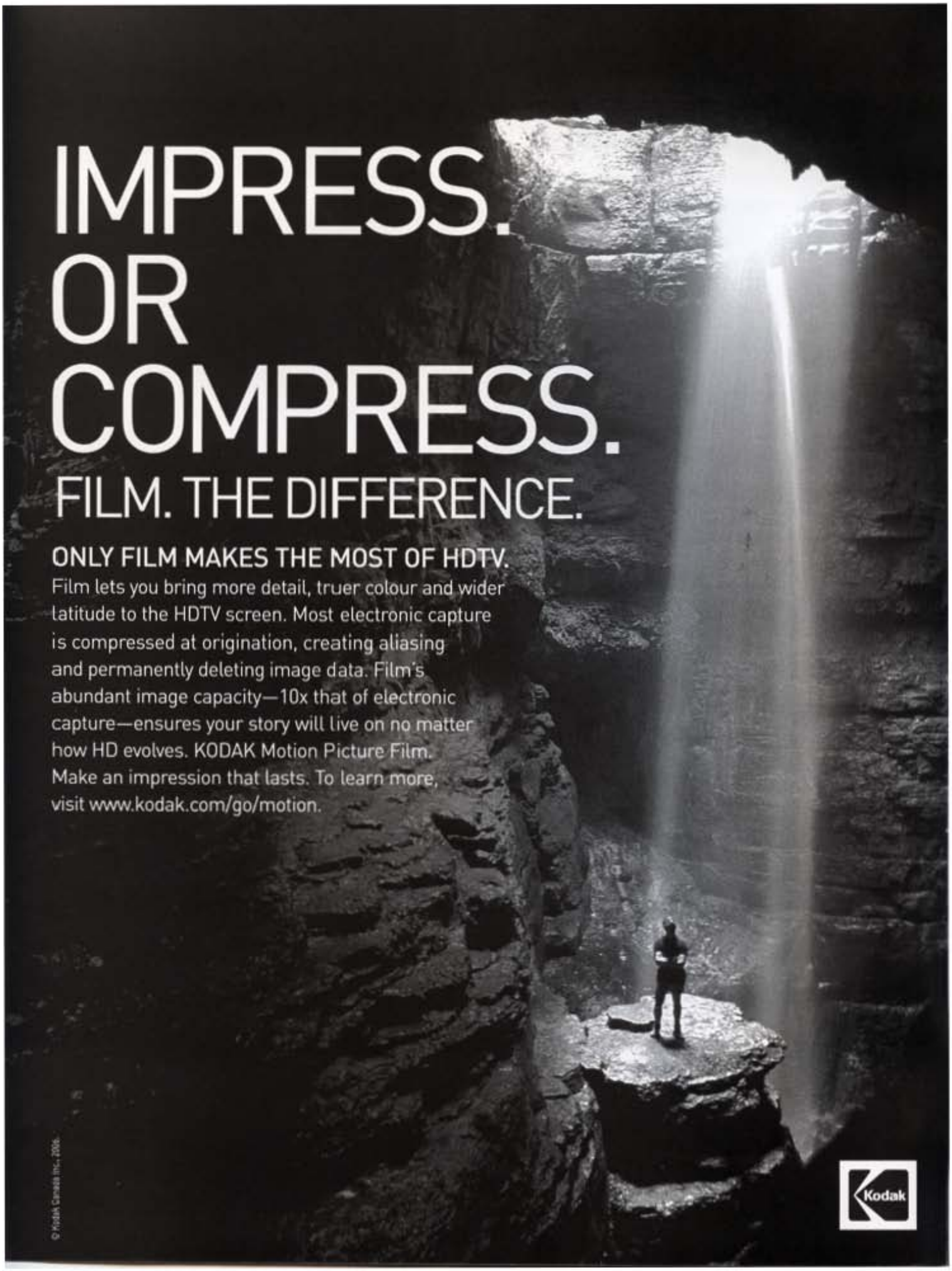
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LIFT 25 YEARS

Masthead

LIFT Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto
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The Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto is a non-profit charitable organization that provides Toronto's vibrant independent filmmaking community with affordable access to production equipment and post-production facilities, educational services, film screenings and much more. For over two decades, LIFT has played an integral part in advancing and promoting the art of independent filmmaking in Toronto.

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Editorial

Norwegian Knut Nordby was born with an extremely rare form of colour blindness where he could only see the world in shades of grey. Declared legally blind, he was sent to a school for the visually impaired. Nordby ran away, refusing to be labeled blind and taught himself how to live a normal life. Nordby became a respected researcher of colour vision and was an assistant professor of psychology at the University of Oslo. In his biography, *Vision in a Complete Achromat*, Nordby describes how colours translate in his monochromatic world:

> *My subjective spectral sensitivity is not unlike that of orthochromatic black and white film. I experience the colour called red as a very dark grey, nearly black, even in very bright light. On a grey-scale the blue and green colours I see as mid-greys, somewhat darker greys if they are saturated, somewhat lighter greys when unsaturated, like pastel colours. Yellow is usually a rather light grey to me, but is usually not confused with white. Brown usually appears as a dark grey and so does a very saturated orange.*

Strange, stunning, surprising, yet you get a sense of his foreign, but visually rich world—a world that most of us will only ever experience while watching an experimental film.

Each year, the Images Festival (p.4) manages to take us out of our visual comfort zones, rarely serving the conventional and forcing us, literally and figuratively, to view the world in new and unexpected ways. More political are *Young and the Restless* star and ReelWorld founder Tonya Lee Williams's wish for total colour blindness in the Canadian film industry. Will it happen in her lifetime? Sadly, she thinks not, but artists like Sedina Fiati ("In Their Words", p.20) and Shelley Niro ("Niro Escapism", p.8) are rapidly writing themselves into the script and into the industry. J.J. Wise gives her account of her sense of displacement. In "The Mazes of Mogodar" (p.18), she serves as a guide, vividly demonstrating the perils and joys of filmmaking in a country where not everything is black and white. With each issue, we work to make our shades-of-grey words and pictures sparkle. Hope you enjoy it.

Bunmi Adeoye
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Message from the Executive Director

Roberto Ariganello

The recent federal election has sent a ripple though the cultural community with many fearing that new Conservative government will respond to cultural issues with the same intransigent reaction it displayed during the campaign with rights to same-sex marriage and abortion rights. While I, like many, have reservations about the conservative agenda, I look forward to a fresh perspective on assessing, one, how cultural revenue is distributed through the Department of Canadian Heritage to institutions like Telefilm, the National Film Board and Canada Council and, two, how these organizations support independent filmmakers and artists throughout Canada.

LIFT is part of a vibrant artist-run community that is indirectly publicly funded by the three levels of government: municipally through the media arts programs of the Toronto Arts Council, provincially by the Ontario Arts Council and federally by the Canada Council.

Unfortunately, the media arts sector is at the bottom of the cultural barrel and receives the least amount of dollars out of all the different cultural sectors funded through the arts councils. The Ontario and Toronto Arts councils go so far as to combine the media and visual arts programs so that their grossly inadequate funding isn't obvious in comparison to the assistance given to other cultural sectors like the performing arts. Canada Council does offer more opportunities to assist media arts organizations, but the financial support represents a tiny fraction of their overall budget.

As a result of our current public (under)funding structure, media arts centres across Canada are known for their remarkable ability of stretching their funding to provide a range of services and programs and, unfortunately, for paying their staff pathetically little in the form of wages and salaries. In fact, almost any entry-level cultural worker at the Royal Ontario Museum or the National Gallery in Ottawa earns more per year than any executive director of any artist-run media arts organization in Canada. Consequently, our community often loses quality staff to larger, more mediocre arts organization because of poor salaries and lack of benefits.

The irony is that LIFT, like so many other film and video production centres across the country, is mandated to support Canadian independent filmmakers. You would think institutions like the National Film Board and Telefilm would help support Canadian productions centres; centres that not only provide access to mid-career and established filmmakers, but also guide many emerging and aspiring filmmakers through the system to more industry-based organizations like the Canadian Film Centre and the National Screen Institute. Instead, neither the NFB nor Telefilm provides a penny of financial support to LIFT's operating budget. Moreover, they don't even have annual grants/programs to assist artist-run centres despite the fact that so many production centres now offer the industry standard in film (Super 16 and 35MM) and video (High Definition) production equipment.

Why are Telefilm and the NFB not adequately supporting media artists in Canada that are served through artist-run centres? Wouldn't it make sense—especially in English Canada—to provide greater support to mid-career filmmakers, considering the relatively small pool of talent that the NFB and Telefilm draw from?

Let me give you an example. Annually, Telefilm spends millions of dollars on training in the film and video sector. However, none of the artist-run centres that provide training and have the industry standard in film and video equipment are eligible for funding despite the literally thousands of Canadians who take advantage of affordable workshops and courses offered at these centres. Wouldn't it make sense for Telefilm to invest in artist-run production centers in order to increase the number of affordable all-inclusive production courses, which then could significantly boost the number of short films made in Canada? In a few short years, there would be literally thousands of Canadians producing work; thousands of new ideas from mid-career filmmakers for feature projects that Telefilm and the NFB could draw from for their feature film programs.

Instead, Telefilm has awarded millions of dollars to organizations like the Canadian Film Centre where only a couple dozen students graduate each year. What a terrible pity. And people (hopefully Minister of Canadian Heritage Bev Oda too) wonder why English Canada can't even reach that coveted 5% goal for Canadian feature films in the commercial market.

Roberto Ariganello
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IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN

25 TAX TIPS FOR FREELANCE ARTISTS

Whether you find them frightening or frustrating, you have to do your taxes. And unlike those who work a single nine-to-five job year after year, you have more than one T4 slip to worry about. Freelance income from several different sources, expenses, grants, membership fees, donations, all add up to a mass of paper you have to figure out at tax time. With the help of Amanda Mills, tax professional and founder of Artbooks Financial Management for the Arts and Loose Change Financial Therapy, *FilmPrint* gives you few ideas to make doing your taxes less taxing.

1. Decide if it's for real. Simply put, a business is something you're trying to make money from. But you can't just *claim* that's what you're trying to do; you have to be able to prove it. To determine if your filmmaking is a business—and not just a hobby—the government considers, among other things, how much you make; the time you spend making films, promoting yourself and trying to get work; and your qualifications, like education, awards and professional memberships.

2. Name every project. "Treat it seriously," says Mills. Not only will naming projects help you organize your files and track your costs, it will help you look at your filmmaking as a bonafide business.

3. Claim all your income. If you're a courier by day, work in a post house weeknights, wait tables on weekends, and your death metal band gets the odd gig—all on top of making the occasional film—it all goes on your tax return.

4. Get a GST number. You don't legally have to have one until you're making $30,000 or more a year from all freelance work, but Mills points out that there are two benefits to having one: The GST you pay on any costs will most often head back your way in the form of a credit. And you may look more professional in the eyes of your clients (if you have one, you must be making more than $30K, right?).

5. Don't spend your GST on a camera. As tempting as it may be, the GST you collect is not your money. Send it to the government ASAP; it's less painful than watching hundreds of dollars that aren't yours build up in your bank account.

6. Count the years. You have three years to turn a profit in a standard business. In the case of filmmakers, revenue from sales, commissions, royalties, fees, grants and awards all count. But we all know it can take years to get somewhere with a project, so Mills suggests two things: Consider going for all your grants and awards every third year so you can relax and focus on your projects for the two years in between. And talk to your accountant about putting the expenses and the income associated with each project in the same year. "If you fundraise for a film one year," says Mills, "you need to include that income in the year that you shoot it."

Corinna vanGerwen

Corinna vanGerwen is a senior editor at Style At Home magazine in Toronto. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Vancouver's Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design.

7. Keep good records. You don't have to itemize and cross-reference all your income and expenses on an Excel spreadsheet, but legally you have to keep a record of it all. Mills says keep it simple: receipts organized by category into envelopes or folders are all you need.

8. Do the seven-year ditch. Keep all your records for seven years then you're free to get rid of them.

9. Know your expenses 101. When you "claim" or "write off" an expense, you reduce the amount you're taxed on by subtracting your costs from your income. The government does not reimburse the entire cost.

10. Know your expenses 102. Of the two types of expenses, consumable goods are the easy part: you subtract the entire cost from your income. Items like film stock and payment to cast and crew fall into this category.

11. Know your expenses 103. The second type of expense, assets, like equipment, is calculated differently. You can write off a percentage of the cost for each year, taking into consideration depreciation.

12. Don't claim your dog's vet bills unless you made a movie about it. This should be a no-brainer. Claim only legitimate work expenses, otherwise you're committing fraud. That said, keep all your receipts—work and nonwork related—so that if you are audited, you can prove you didn't claim your personal expenses as well.

13. Don't be scared of an audit. They're not that common, and if you have all your records, they should be low-stress (unless you cheated, of course).

14. Keep a diary. For all those items you can't get a receipt for, like photocopying at the public library, keep a list. Write down the item description, date and cost; you can still claim items you don't have a receipt for.

15. Claim all your costs. Even if the project never got off the ground, any incurred cost is deductible.

16. Write home often. For those who film abroad, Mills recommends sending your receipts home by mail. For every country you visit, stuff your receipts, along with a currency exchange receipt (so you get the right exchange rate), into an envelope and mail it home. They'll be ready and waiting for filing when you get back.

17. Remember, you're still Canadian. Even if you're filming abroad, you still have to file your taxes at home.

18. Avoid incorporating your business as long as possible. Mills warns, "There are extra costs with little extra payback." And lots more paperwork, as a corporation exists as a separate legal entity. Unfortunately, some grants are only available to incorporated companies, in which case you'll have to file twice—for the corporation and as an individual.

19. Plan to pay. Talk to your accountant to determine what tax bracket you're likely to fall into. Then set aside a percentage of your income throughout the year. You're likely to save more than you'll have to pay, and you won't be struggling to come up with what you owe at tax time.

20. Interview your tax preparer. Mills advises you find someone who appreciates your work, who doesn't judge or shame you, and whose integrity you trust.

21. Get comfortable. You can do your taxes yourself, but, as Mills says, "It's nice to have an ally." A professional tax preparer is best equipped to make judgment calls.

22. Hire a babysitter. Although some tax preparers will add up all your expenses for you, it isn't cheap. Mills recommends you hire an organized friend or neighbour to hold your hand as you tally your receipts.

23. Beg, borrow or steal an adding machine. When the time comes to add up all your expenses, it will be a lot easier if you use an adding machine that will print a receipt. You'll have a paper trail that will make it easier to see if you made a mistake.

24. Make a list of everything you need. Before you sit down to do your taxes or visit your tax preparer, ensure you have all the documents you need. Check out www.loosechange.com for a sample tax checklist.

25. Know when to file. File when (A) you owe the government money and (B) when the government asks you to. If you owe money and you file late, there are penalties. Since you have to calculate your taxes to see if you owe money anyway, you may as well do them every year. Hey, you might even get a refund.

For more information, visit:
www.loosechange.ca/artbooks

IMAGESFEVER

(Clockwise from top-left) **Lasso** by Maia Cybelle Carpenter, **You Don't Bring Me Flowers** by Michael Robinson, **HERE** by Vincent Grenier, and **How Little We Know of Our Neighbours** by Rebecca Baron

According to Punxsutawney Phil, spring will arrive by mid-March. Believe what you will, but in the media arts community, the first day of spring is generally believed to be on the opening night of Images—set this year for April 13. So mark your calendars, as you won't want to miss what has become North America's premiere media arts festival. Images encompasses the best of independent experimental film, video and multi-media installation works from around the world. While Toronto is blessed with numerous internationally recognized film festivals—from CFC's Worldwide Short Film Festival to HotDocs to TIFF—none come close to Images, in terms of the breadth of on-screen and off-screen programming.

I had the opportunity to sample a number of works—sort of an *amuse bouche* before the ten days of feasting begins—and what a banquet it will be. There will be eight international shorts programs, along with the small-gauge-film focussed "Super-8 Late", which this year has a strong showing from Canadian talent. Two programs of Indian experimental films are an exciting addition to the Images line up and will be curated by Shai Heredia from the Experimenta Film Festival in Mumbai. In addition, there will also be a program celebrating the work of the late Cuban filmmaker Nicolás Guillén Landrián and a program curated by local Jon Davies on experimental animation, which will feature a film by Winsor McCay from 1918.

This year, the Canadian Spotlight retrospective shines on Québec-born Vincent Grenier, who is perhaps not that well-known in Canada as he has spent a good part of his career in the US. The retrospective offers an opportunity to see how his work has evolved from the 1970s, when he worked with 16MM, to now, where he uses video. His films in the 1970s are mostly silent, black and white, and play with the optical illusions of creating three-dimensional images on flat screens; today, his work is often in colour with audio.

Two of his later films will screen at this year's festival: **Tabula Rasa** and **HERE**. "Tabula rasa" refers to the philosophy that at birth the mind is a blank slate and that society shapes the individual. Grenier shot **Tabula Rasa** in 1993 in a South Bronx high school. We see images of oppressive hallways, abandoned stairwells and empty classrooms. We overhear students talk about their perceptions of the world

Caroline Avery

Caroline Avery is a Toronto-based writer currently working on a documentary about dementia.

and describe their fantasies about superheroes. In one shot, the camera lingers over a doorway that has "Where law ends, tyranny begins" carved into the facing. **HERE** is more playful. Visually stunning, it was filmed in the playground of Grenier's young son. In the film toy soldiers drift through pools of colour and light. Grenier plays with our eyes, challenging us with what's real and what's not and showing us he is entirely at home working with both video and film.

Grenier's work contrasts with that of the UK's Guy Sherwin. For Sherwin, film is integral to his work. He pushes the boundaries, experimenting with camera mechanisms and photo chemistry. His earlier works are often hand-processed, silent, black and white films. When there is sound, it usually comes from scratchings made on the film's surface. Shot on Super 8, **Views From Home** is bit of a departure from his previous projects. Most of the footage comes from 1987, but Sherwin edited this version in 2005. The result is well worth the wait. Light and shadow in his East London apartment perform a gloriously elegant jazz ballet as apples and limes wither, puddles dry and tea grows cold. The soundtrack comes from recordings made by saxophone player Alan Wilkinson as he rehearses in the apartment downstairs.

Also shot on Super 8 is Francesco Gagliardi's **Short Sentences**. The filmmaker offers a collection of portraits of his friends, filmed over a number of years. Each person says only a few words. Freed from any coherent narrative, we are able to focus our attention on the characters themselves.

Rebecca Baron is a filmmaker familiar to many for **okay bye-bye**. Her latest film, **How Little We Know of Our Neighbours**, is a documentary, which reviews how photography has been used in surveillance. From the first days of handheld cameras in the 1880s, which brought photography out of the studio and onto the streets, Baron's film follows the technological advances that made cameras smaller, more portable, and allowed for more stealth in photography. Such advances inevitably facilitated voyeurism and other invasions of privacy. The film focuses on one project in particular: the Mass-Observation Movement. The Movement began in 1937 and recruited observers to monitor ordinary people in public places and record their mundane actions such as timing the length of a person's laughter during a movie or noting the number of pints drunk in pubs on a Saturday night. The film deals with the group's relationship to surveillance, public self-disclosure, and privacy, and contrasts with present day Britain, which has the most camera surveillance than any other country in the world.

Lesser known filmmakers take creative risks with their works exploring our understanding of moving images and challenging how we interpret the world in which we live.

Lesser known filmmakers take creative risks with their works exploring our understanding of moving images and challenging how we interpret the world in which we live. **Ashes** by Dianne Ouellete captures her grandfather's mourning over a three-year period as he buries, first, his wife and then his son, while waiting almost impatiently for his chance to join them. Despite the sorrow, there remains the joy of everyday life and time spent with family. Some shots are sharp and in focus, while others are a blurred fast forwarding of time. Michael Robinson's **You Don't Bring Me Flowers** portrays the majesty of nature. As much as we try to capture it in the photographs of a *National Geographic*, Robinson's film shows that nature has a power and chaos we cannot tame with the lens of a camera. **Two Hummingbirds** by Mary Daniels is a quiet, contemplative meditation on how over time we adapt to a loss and move on. The film shows ways in which we might not think we are connected to our environment and surroundings.

The aptly titled **Lasso** by Maia Cybelle Carpenter is a rhythmic, free-wheeling exploration of how gravity affects our perception of landscape. The first time I watched this, it didn't stand out at all, but after revisiting it a couple of times it grew on me. Some of the visual effects will likely be more effective at a screening than on a TV.

Lasso underlines what's always a limitation of film festivals for me. As works are often screened only once, sometimes it can take two or three screenings to really understand a complex a piece of work. But, with over 100 films, it's not really possible to take all of Images in.

Ahh… to be so spoilt for choice.

The 19th Images Festival is on April 13–22. For more details, check out www.imagesfestival.com.

NIROESCAPISM

Wanda Nanibush

Shelley Niro is my own personal creative hero. Yes, I just said Niro is my hero. I first gained a sense of complexity in my own sense of identity looking at her photography installations, which were all very cheeky and subversive takes on how Indigenous people are stereotyped and how we stereotype ourselves. Photos portrayed women in Niro's family looking like confident glamour pusses, which consequently made me feel okay with the idea that I would grow up to have a flat Nish butt and a man belly. Hallmarks of Niro's work are humour and historical consciousness. Her latest film is no exception. **Suite: Indian** is a series of vignettes that knit together the many subjectivities encompassed in the misnomer 'Indian'. Each vignette is different from the last in format, style, genre and content. They are conflicted, hard, funny and often beautiful stories.

Niro's first film, **It Starts With a Whisper** directed with Anna Gronau in 1992, marks the 500-year anniversary of Columbus or, more correctly, the 500th anniversary of colonization. It is still widely screened for its compelling story of a young woman who needs guidance from magical persons visiting in the form of her aunties and elders. The idea that we are victims is laid to rest as the woman finds her strength in an almost stolen history. **It Starts With a Whisper** is part of our collective wake up call. Niro mines and documents the past in order to actively reinvent the present and give us all a more empowered and balanced future.

Wanda Nanibush: How do you think living in Six Nations influences you as an artist? Do you think your work is influenced by community, landscape?

Honey Mocassin *by Shelley Niro*

Wanda Nanibush talks with filmmaker, photographer, and painter **SHELLEY NIRO** about breaking stereotypes, comedy and when people don't laugh.

Shelly Niro: I am really influenced by my community. The landscape, definitely. It seems everyone in the community did something. There were carvers; there were bead workers, jewelry makers, rattle makers, drum makers, moccasin makers, etcetera. A lot of that creativity was taken for granted. It was done naturally.

WN: How do you think the community responds to contemporary art made by us? How has your community responded to your work? Do you see a need for our work to be seen by our people?

SN: I believe our people love to see what's going on. They want to be challenged and stimulated. I believe that if their feelings are taken into consideration, they will respond in a positive way. Sometimes I get a little nervous, but in the end it feels fine. I try to be respectful, but I also try to push the limits of imagination.

WN: Honey Moccasin was your first longer length (47 mins) film. It was also narrative fiction. Where did the story come from and what did you hope to achieve with the style?

SN: Honey Moccasin was created to expand the inclusion of other Native personas and characters. At the time, it felt like the Native people were starting to stereotype themselves based on stereotypes. I wanted to get away from that. I wanted to invent characters, never before seen on film, or at least not on Native film. So I played with character, location and motive. I wanted the style to be playful, serious and artsy.

WN: Honey Moccasin has been particularly popular with postcolonial and postmodern theorists largely for its critique of a stable Indian identity and for its use of comedy to destabilizes comfy notions of 'Indianness'. What do you think of this?

SN: I wanted to create strong women characters. I wanted to show a strong community, one that had flaws, but

was trying to rely on traditional beliefs and one that had room for diverse personalities. I wanted it to be funny, as some Native films can be downright depressing. Sometimes the message is very clear, but I wanted **Honey Moccasin** to counteract that downtrodden element and show a different side to Indian reservation life.

WN: In **Honey Moccasin**, the closeted cross dresser who steals and dresses in the women's pow wow regalia is, to me, a trickster moment in the film. I love the way you place a challenging character in the film and so naturally have the community accept his difference. Is this wishful thinking or do you think our communities are that accepting?

SN: I made the character of Zachary John as an introduction to diversity within a Native community. Although we know of the grand scale of diversity within these kinds of communities, we have a hard time articulating their presence. Sometimes we just have to look around and talk about what we see.

WN: Do you think comedy is difficult?

SN: Comedy is like an evil cousin. It taps you on the shoulder. At first, you go "naw" but it keeps tapping. Finally you just give in and go with it. It starts as a small idea… that grows. And it is difficult. You don't want to do stuff that has already been done. Originality is the key but, man, your brain goes on a roller coaster ride thinking about the timing, the audience, "Am I just entertaining myself?" In the end when it works, it's wonderful. But that's the challenge, sometimes they don't laugh.

WN: In **Suite: Indian** you used many formats. How do you make choices about formats?

SN: Formatting is an experimental choice. Sometimes it's done in digital format because of costs and I happen to have it available to me. It depends on the process. **Suite: Indian** was an experimental type film. I wanted to see how [each format] looked against each other. I also wanted to see if it would work with the [vignettes]; if it would add or take away [from the story]. I wanted to see how the DOP responded to working with the different formats.

WN: In **Suite: Indian**, you used dancers for the first time. How did you find filming dance?

SN: We used 16MM for the dance sequences. Dance is a powerful art form and certainly in the Native world we don't see enough contemporary performers doing what they do. This makes it more obtainable and gets it out there.

WN: Given that you are a curator, can you talk about the beginning of Indigenous cinema and how much it has changed. What do you see as significant changes?

SN: There have been great strides taken into creating an Indigenous voice in film. The stories are becoming so diverse and articulate. The range that was covered in ImagineNative this past year was astounding. Every year it changes and grows covers a lot of different realities.

WN: Do you think there are a lot of opportunities for Aboriginal artists who want to work in film?

SN: As evidenced by the ever growing response to Native film festivals, I think we are growing as storytellers in this format. It is a powerful tool, and one that maintains interest; people are film literate.

WN: If you could think of one thing you could change about your work, what would it be?

SN: What would I change? I don't know how to answer that. The process is a long one, especially in video and film. I mull ideas around for a long time and then start putting them down on paper. After an extensive writing period, I start filling out application forms for grants. Then you have to wait and see. If successful, you can start getting the crew and actors. So this is usually three years down the road. By the time the production is finished. I really don't know what I would change.

WN: Do you have any advice for new filmmakers?

SN: Love it, love it, love it. When you put so much time and thought into a piece of work that takes years to make, takes you away from your family and friends, costs you money, you can only love it.

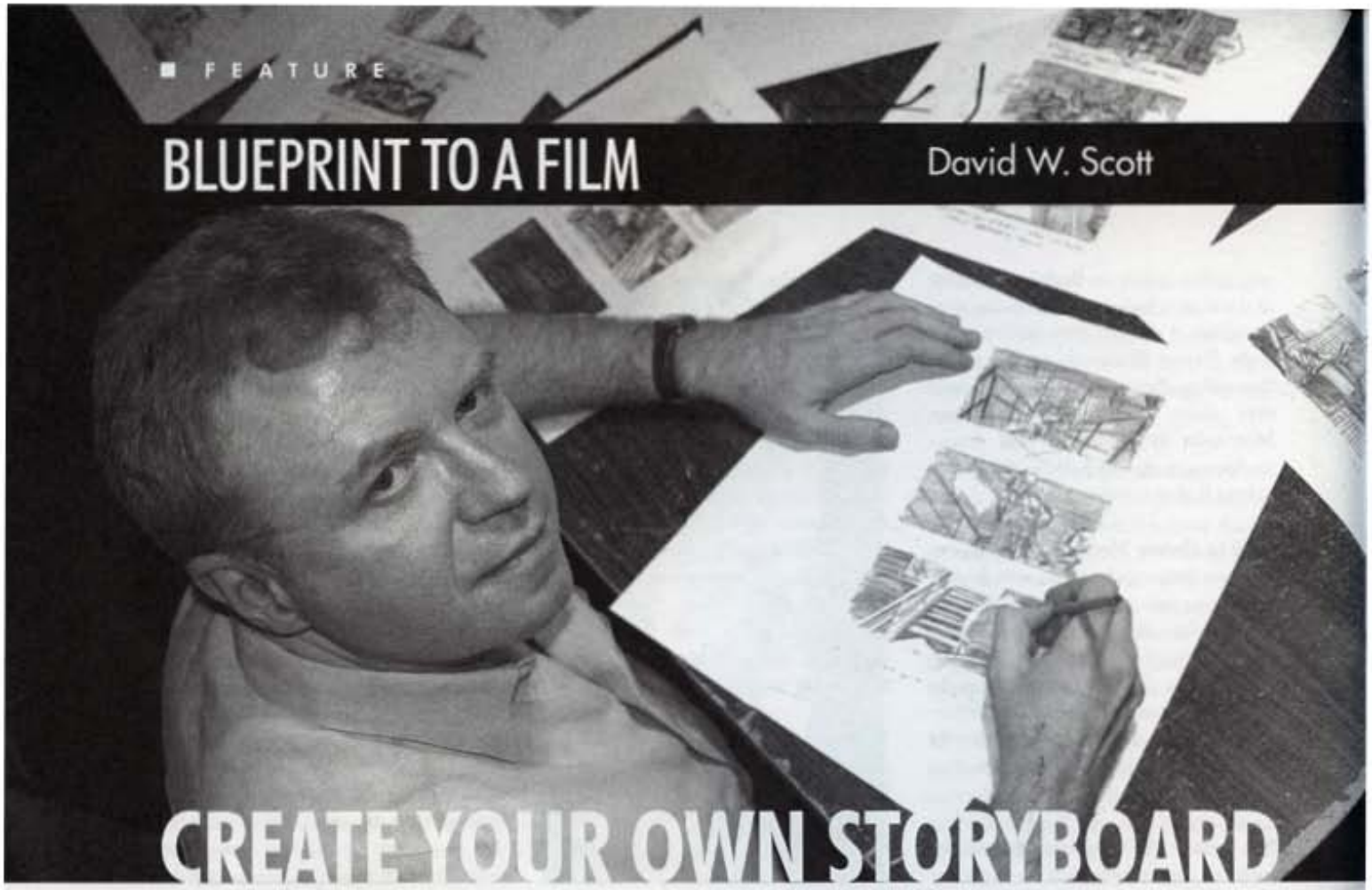
Wanda Nanibush is the Aboriginal Arts Officer at the Ontario Arts Council.

Screening

Shelley Niro's work will screen in an upcoming New Directions in Cinema program.

BLUEPRINT TO A FILM

David W. Scott



CREATE YOUR OWN STORYBOARD

Toronto-based storyboard artist Ron Hobbs has drawn the boards for some of the biggest films shot in Canada, including Pushing Tin, Chicago, X-Men, and Saw 2. In constant demand from both American and Canadian producers, his work is pure visual inspiration. Starting with a script, Hobbs works closely with the director to translate action and locations into a working story. What emerges is a snapshot of a finished film.

Storyboards are primarily a means of communication. "Words can fail very visual directors," Hobbs explains. "Thumbnails and storyboards can help them communicate with their crew and producers." Storyboards can also serve as a safety net on set. When schedules are tight and planned coverage must be collapsed, the director can consult the boards and quickly see which setups and shots must be covered to make the day. The producers often insist on having storyboards. The boards give them a window into the production and help every department coordinate its efforts and know where best to spend time and money. For effects and stunt departments, storyboards are indispensable in defining the scope and budget of every shot. The boards are a common reference point for everyone working on a movie.

A former artist for comic books—a visual medium with many similarities to movie storyboards—Hobbs emphasizes learning the language of film is critical to success as a storyboard artist: "You have to study movies to learn the language of film. Silent movies, German expressionism, classical Hollywood all inspired me. I learned from movies like Citizen Kane, Strangers on a Train, and Criss Cross. Examine great movies frame by frame to learn how continuity works." He also emphasizes the importance of studying films that are similar to what you are making: "If you are drawing the storyboards for a low-budget indie film with lots of dialogue then check out Truffaut and Chabrol not

Thumbnails for **Cold Creek Manor**. All storyboards by Ron Hobbs.

STORYBOARDING METHOD
Storyboards do not spring to life without thorough preparation and preliminary work. Nor are storyboards written in stone; location changes or rewrites at any phase of production mean going back and revising the boards.

(Above left) Shotlist for **Cold Creek Manor** as discussed with director. Later Hobbs created the thumbnails (above right) according to the shotlist. The thumbnails go to the director for final sign-off. (Centerfold) Example of a final board from **Saw II**.

RON HOBB'S STORYBOARDING PROCESS

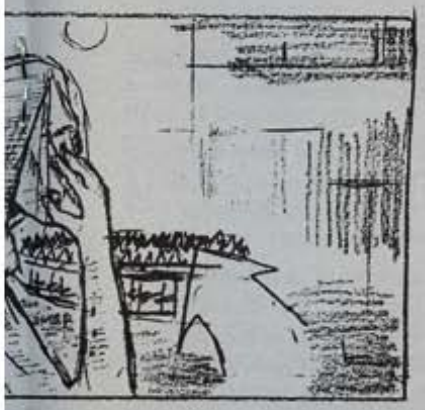
1. Read the script.
2. Scout and photograph locations for later reference when drawing.
3. Work with the director who creates the shotlist. Write the shotlist descriptions onto blank thumbnail pages (Example above on the left).
4. Create plan views for some or all shots. Top-down schematics help the artist and director see which shots are possible with the given blocking and camera placement.
5. Draw thumbnail versions of the storyboard. Fitting six drawings per 8.5" × 11" page, thumbnails are smaller and less detailed than full boards. These go to the director for approval before the full size boards are created. (Example above on the right)
6. Draw full size boards with three drawings per page. (See example on following page).

StarWars. If you are making a theatrical feature, don't study tv shows; they work differently and have a different visual language."

The collaborative nature of storyboarding requires the artist and director share the same technical language. This vocabulary describes different framing heights (a medium shot versus a western), camera movements (trucking versus tracking) and the 'axis' (also known as the 180-degree rule or the imaginary line.)

Hobbs explains a key concern for the storyboard artist and the director is to never 'cross the axis'. Doing so destroys one of the key elements of classical Hollywood movie continuity. "Working directors are fired for crossing the axis," he says. Monitoring the axis is one of the key on-set roles for the script supervisor. Preserving the axis in the storyboards is crucial. Under pressure on set, the director and department heads will fall back on the storyboards to ensure their coverage doesn't cross the axis and will be cuttable. When a director gets into the editing room and the coverage won't cut because the axis has been crossed or an angle has been missed, it is the storyboard artist who will wear the blame. According to Hobbs, "The only time it is acceptable to cross the axis is during an action sequence when you want to disorient the audience."

David W. Scott is a Toronto based director. His latest film is the dramatic feature **The Behaviour of Houses** (www.behaviourofhouses.com).



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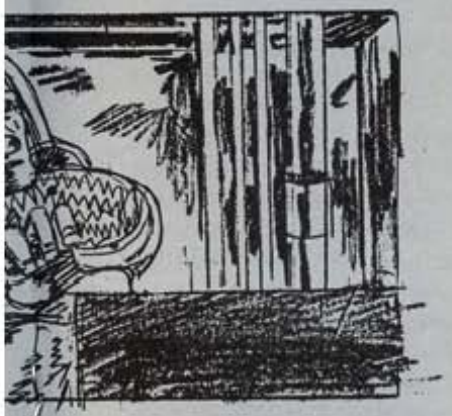

ICHAEL REACHING

(9)

BLUEPRINT TO A FILM

For filmmakers who don't have a traditional fine arts background, picking up a pencil and drawing may be daunting. Here are some of Hobbs's storyboarding tips for the non-artist.

Good enough
"If you are the director, drawing simple stick figures may be enough. As long as you can understand [the drawings], you have a template to work from. If you need to communicate more clearly with producers or department keys, it may be time to brush up your skills or bring in an experienced artist. Drawing classes, which can be a valuable asset for directors, develop an appreciation of depth, proportion and perspective that goes beyond drawing storyboards."

Proportion
"To get the correct proportions of the human figure, remember the average adult male is seven heads high (that is, their total figure is the same height as seven of their heads stacked on top of each other). The average adult female is six heads high. The average child is only four heads high; giving the characteristic 'big head' look immediately identifies children."

Scale
"When drawing storyboards, scale is often more important than detail. Scale helps establish depth in a two-dimensional drawing. Learning one-point perspective technique allows you to place your objects and characters in the appropriate scale for their placement in the frame. Remember that in a high-angle shot, the horizon line will be near the top of the frame, and in a low-angle shot, the horizon line will be near the bottom of the frame."

Foreshortening
"Foreshortening—one of the hardest, but most effective drawing skills to learn—conveys the sense of a 3-D world in your 2-D drawings. Foreshortening simply means you see more of what is closest to your point of view. For example, if a person in your drawing has their head tilted back, away from the lens, then their chin and nose should be bigger in the frame than their forehead."

Use words
Sometimes the written word is a key part of the storyboard: "No matter how good the storyboard artist, some shots can be difficult to convey in a flat, black and white drawing. Moving cameras and characters are tricky—often requiring two or three storyboard frames to describe a single shot from beginning to end." The solution? "It is important to make text notes below the frame, describing anything you think might be unclear. Even obvious notes will help everyone understand the storyboards in the same way."

As a visual blueprint of the film, clarity is the key to understandable storyboards. However, Hobbs also emphasizes the emotional nature of storyboards. "Storyboards should be expressive," he enthuses, "like the movies themselves. Like a good script, storyboards should inspire the filmmaker to create a great film."

Keeping it simple with **Cold Creek Manor**. Stick figures may be enough, says Hobbs.

Opening scenes from **Chicago** show proportion, scale and text.

An example of foreshortening from **Saw II**

REPRESENTIN'

As the **ReelWorld Film Festival** reaches its sixth anniversary, actress, filmmaker and festival founder **Tonya Lee Williams** is proud to see her creation grow and flourish. And while ReelWorld is one way of redressing the balance, Williams admits there is still a long way to go before true racial diversity is portrayed in Canadian cinema.

Stefan Chiarantano: What inspired you to start the ReelWorld Film Festival (RWFF) and Foundation?

Tonya Lee Williams: I had been going to film festivals since the age of 16 and loved the experience. It's a wonderful opportunity to see films that may never get picked up for distribution or to see films that may never come to your country or city. It's also a great opportunity to meet like-minded people and share resources. Filmmaking is a communal activity and to succeed you must build a team of people you trust and admire. You've also got to find these people. I've found the best way to find them is through seeing their films and being able to meet them at film festivals. I've found most of our filmmakers especially our filmmakers of colour in Canada were completed disconnected. They were out of the loop. I would talk to a filmmaker in Toronto about what someone in Montreal was doing and you'd think that I was talking about something from another planet. They would have no idea of whom and what I was speaking. I would mention a film that was playing right in Toronto and filmmakers here would have no idea that it was screening. I knew something had to be done and my thought was to create a place where they could all come together and build relationships to develop their work.

SC: What is the mandate of RWFF?

TLW: To present and help filmmakers of colour and filmmakers whose projects reflect racial diversity.

SC: Now in its sixth year, where to do you see RWFF going in the next five years?

TLW: RWFF may have come from me, but it's flapped its wings and taken flight. It's become its own entity. It's become an adult serving many masters. That's a good thing by the way. We give birth to things and we must release them to sink or swim on their own accord. The success of ReelWorld lies in its having more value to the people it helps.

SC: Congratulations on your appointment to the Toronto Film Board. What does this mean to you?

TLW: It's a wonderful opportunity to do something constructive in furthering our Indigenous filmmakers in Toronto. I also sit on a sub-committee of the Toronto Film Board, which has as a mandate to create opportunities for Indigenous filmmakers.

SC: What barriers do you wish to see removed to level the playing field for all in the Canadian film industry?

TLW: I don't see it happening in my lifetime, but to see the entertainment industry in Canada become completely colour blind would be nice. That's only going to happen when you have people of colour in the position of the decision makers. I'd like to see real diversity in the executive positions of Telefilm, CBC, and other broadcasters, the unions, in all government funding agencies, in distribution, theatrical agencies, agents, managers, and the banks. We need to intensify our efforts across the board. When you are a person of colour and are presenting an idea to decision makers, it's sometimes very difficult to first explain your culture and why you think the story is an important one to tell. In LA, most of the major studios have diversity departments. This allows the filmmakers to pitch their projects to people who get it right away and who go to bat for the project. It makes a big difference. If there were diversity in the Canadian entertainment industry, they'd get it from the start.

SC: Los Angeles or Toronto? Which city do you prefer?

TLW: I like them both for different reasons. I like how quickly things move in LA. Decisions are quickly made and money is immediately released. LA is not afraid of tackling budgets in the hundreds of millions. It's also not afraid to approach the biggest stars in the world. They are also the masters of marketing and can turn a profit even on a bad film. At the

Stefan Chiarantano is a Toronto-based independent, experimental filmmaker who makes low budget short films.

end of the day, what the investors want is their money back and more. In LA, I love that you get a team of managers, agents, unions, talent, marketing agencies, producers' reps, business managers who all work together to make the project the best success that it can be.

What I love about Toronto is that it's a place where independent filmmaking is happening. You can do just about anything under a certain budget. You don't have a million eyes watching your every move and everything doesn't always have to have the vote of a committee. So, for certain types of movies, this is a wonderful place to experiment and take chances. What's funny though is that people in Canada have a conception that people in LA are the divas and can be difficult to work with. However, I've found it's completely the opposite and industry people in Canada are overly sensitive. I find I have to be more careful about what I say and how I approach people here. In LA, you can pretty much say what you like because they're a little more thick-skinned and don't take it personally. Tempers can flare, but everyone makes up later. In Canada, I've found that when tempers flare, people start to quit and the project can become compromised. In Canada, you've got to mind your Ps & Qs. I do think we have more vision and can think way outside the box. We tend to be more creative with what we do with the little money we have to work with.

SC: What was it like to direct the film version of Trey Anthony's play **Da Kink In My Hair**?

TLW: It was a challenge to direct the project because Trey was the playwright and it's always hard to have someone let go of their views and allow others to make changes that they may not always agree with. I like the play, but my vision of it as a television drama was quite different from the play. It was a struggle to balance what the play was with my vision. The next big hurdle was the budget. It was an insane budget of 100K. There isn't much you can do with that amount of money, but that's all we had. So, I had to make a lot of compromises and I lost a lot of the visuals I would have liked to have seen. I had to cram my shooting into six days and many times could only do one take on a scene. The best part was the talent. I had a fantastic group of actors and crew. I couldn't have asked for better no matter what the budget was!

When you are a person of colour and are presenting an idea to decision makers, it's sometimes very difficult to first explain your culture and why you think the storyis an important one to tell.

SC: What film projects are you working on right now?

TLW: I'm working on a feature film **Making Room for Lily**. It was one of six pitches selected at last year's Toronto International Film Festival. I'm working with Erin Faith Young, the producer of the Academy Award-nominated short documentary **Hardwood**. We've received funding from the Harold Greenberg Fund and are moving forward.

SC: What has been your best filmmaking experience?

TLW: Now, I know bigger budgets don't always mean better films, but I have to say working on a project that is properly budgeted and where there are the funds to pay for the best in the business makes for a wonderful filmmaking experience for me. To know you have a wonderful line-producer, your locations manager is the best, your set director can create brilliance out of air are worth their weight in gold. To work with top professional lighting people and with a DOP that somehow gets you "that look" is a wonderful experience.

SC: What has been your worst filmmaking experience?

TLW: I worked on **Captain Power and the Soldiers of the Future** and remember having to run through a set with explosions going on. The sparks from the explosion set my wig on fire.

Catch the 6th ReelWorld Film Festival from April 19–23. For more details, visit www.reelworld.ca.

THE MAZES OF MOGADOR

JJ Wise

J.J. Wise is the writer, director, DOP, editor of **Mogador**. She is currently shooting her documentary **Echo** and writing her first feature drama, **Boomerang**. She is the co-writer and co-director of **Metal: A Headbanger's Journey**.

In November 2005, I shot **Mogador** in Morocco with professional choreographer and dancer Stephanie Thompson, who performed in and co-wrote the film. Shot in the coastal town Essaouira, as well as, the Berber mountain region and the sand dunes of Morocco, this is a poetic travel postcard told through movement with English, French and Arabic voiceover. This 10-minute film, shot using Super 16 and Super 8, captures first impressions of a mysterious place.

The project creatively evolved as we traveled. Stephanie's movement was inspired by the location and setting. I determined the shots and the transitions while the camera was rolling. The local people in the film were not directed and their interaction with Stephanie was not planned. It was spontaneous, organic and intuitive. This experience was thrilling, but not without its tremendous challenges and surprises.

Journal Entries

I have an argument with the security supervisor at the UK airport. He insists that my film must go through the x-ray machine. I request a hand check. He insists the x-ray machine. I insist. He insists. I insist. He refuses. I plead.

"These are the regulations," he says.

"And if the machine ruins my film?"

He gives me his card.

"What good is your card if my film is ruined?"

He writes down my passport number; I think I am officially in trouble. In thirty minutes my plane is taking off for Casablanca. I have to go. The hot pink "Do not x-ray" tape is clearly ineffective and the film is x-rayed.

I arrive at 10 P.M. in Marrakech. The airport is small, only two luggage carousels. I am the only person still waiting. The camera and tripod don't appear. We have no gear. Filmmaking and travel, is it ever smooth? So everything is as I expected. I speak to an airline official about the missing gear and get through customs. It is past midnight by the time I meet Stephanie on the other side of arrivals. Stephanie has been living in Marrakech off and on for over a year.

We are staying at a Riad—a traditional Moroccan house—if you stand in the courtyard you can see the sky; there is no roof. At four A.M., I am awoken by the call-to-prayer. Haunting, it sounds like a mysterious drone. I pray the film is not damaged and that the gear arrives.

* * *

We have to wait in Marrakech for the equipment to arrive before we can leave for the coast. I use this time to phone Kodak. Kodak says the film "should" be fine. There is nothing I can do; I accept that the film stock may suffer fogging.

During the day we ride our bikes through the narrow, cobblestoned alleys of obstacles: donkeys, people, merchants, carts, cats, horses, garbage, mopeds and potholes. We move into heavy traffic where lanes are indistinct and it is random chaos.

It is evening when the gear finally arrives. We get on the road to Essaouira. It's a two-and-a-half hour journey by car. We drive through small, desolate towns on an unlit highway. We don't know why, but other drivers blink their headlights at us as we pass. We arrive safely, make dinner and go to bed. That night, I am awoken by the call-to-prayer. I pray for a successful first day.

She goes over to the gendarme and offers him 100 Moroccan dirhams to buy a permit. He looks at her and says, "What you are proposing is corruption." Needless to say, she starts backpedaling, and fast.

* * *

In the morning, we design the costume (a pair of Moroccan style red pants and a shirt with a brown capuche-style hood), purchase fabric, drop it off to the tailor and find our first location. Off the beaten track, it looks like the area was hit by an earthquake. There's a massive barren courtyard where once stood many homes; a synagogue, on one side, and a thirty-foot majestic, red wall separating us from the Atlantic, on the other side. I witness the thunderous sound of crumbling buildings that continue to break and fall apart. We call this location the "derelict zone". Sites of decay have always been particularly photogenic to me; I suppose it is the idea that on the other side of destruction is creation.

It is here, in the centre of the derelict zone, we decide to wrap Stephanie in white cloth like a cocoon. She is six-feet tall and covered from head to toe in white. She looks like a Muslim woman in traditional dress. I shoot at 1 FPS as she slowly unravels. People begin to gather, kids run around Stephanie, and many are interested in the camera. A fellow dressed in a very dirty pinstriped suit and vest is drooling excessively through his missing front teeth. He presses his face up close to mine. I must keep him away because if he bumps the camera, we have to start the shot over. It feels rather intense. Stephanie cannot see a thing. It takes about five minutes for her to be free. When Stephanie is out, she runs full speed with the cloth flying behind her, past all the bystanders, into a small, distant tunnel. The crowd claps. We have created an impromptu theatre for the people. From a rooftop, a looming shadowy figure casts an ominous finger shake, warning us to stop. Our sense of welcome evaporates. Our first day has officially been called to an end. We pack up and flee.

We attract a lot of attention in this town, for two reasons: the camera and Stephanie's calves. People yell "action" as we walk by or else they point at Stephanie and say, "Wow, big-calves-sporty woman". We have become visible in the town. As we work, small crowds watch. The reactions range from what seems like disgust to full applause. Though many people hold a hand to their face, there are others who literally jump into the shot.

(Facing page) Production still from **Mogador**

* * *

One day, we want to capture the market on film—not the part for tourists, but rather, the market that lay beyond the *Bab* or door, where locals barter furiously; women squat on the side of the road selling eggs from a stash in their laps; live chickens, hens, lizards and turkeys are sold; and decorative testicles and whole mutton hang in the open to whet the appetites of passersby. This is the authentic Moroccan market.

The shot entails Stephanie walking through the crowd making subtle dance gestures. However, we cannot shoot openly so somehow I need to hide. We hire a man and his cart. He will be my dolly. I sit in the cart on a pillow, the camera is on the tripod and I am covered in blankets. We are hardly inconspicuous. The lens is visible and Stephanie dancing is certainly a spectacle. To prep ourselves, we first shoot in one of the hidden alleyways. Young boys mimic Stephanie's dance moves, woman peer from doorways—we capture one of our most dynamic sequences. Then it is time to shoot the bustling market. We are nervous. If we get caught, it is more than just a fine; the gendarme (police) will take the camera and the film then escort us to the airport. Can we really pull this off effectively and safely? I get out of the cart and we walk through the market. We pass a cop every three feet. The consensus is no, this will not happen without provocation. So instead we will remember the market and not be able to show it on film.

* * *

At sunrise, we head to the harbor. Essaouira is a port town. The fishermen work during the night and in the early morning. Their small blue rowboats are tied together in a large cluster and glimmer in the sun. Stephanie decides she is going to climb across the boats. The red pants are a dazzling contrast as she makes a quick dash across the floating convoy. Behind us is a cop station. I can see the gendarme from where I sit. Bold and defiant, we do it. We capture the scene once. There is too much attention so we decide to take a break. A policeman approaches us and he starts inquiring about the nature of our business. We convince him that our project is artistic and that Stephanie is the focus. He believes our intentions and lets it slide. We ask if we can do it again. He says no. Off we go. The sequence is hardly covered. We need to go back.

* * *

I do not sleep at all. I am stressed. We need to go back to the derelict zone,

the boats and the harbour. The thought seems paralyzing. What if the gendarmes stop us? What if they take the camera? Paranoia and fear has set. Do we need to leave Essaouira and go to the countryside where no one will see us? I am awake through the call-to-prayer. I pray we get our day without any more conflict.

* * *

We wake up at sunrise and head back to the habour. Stephanie decides she will use charm and begging. She goes over to the gendarme and offers him 100 Moroccan dirhams to buy a permit. He looks at her and says, "What you are proposing is corruption." Needless to say, she starts backpedaling, and fast. She explains she is doing a dance film and that she is terribly stubborn and she didn't want to go home without shooting this scene. He grants us 5 minutes. And so, we quickly film the pick-ups.

We are done in Essaouira. We pack the car and head for the Atlas Mountains in the Berber region. Past Ouirgane Valley, we sweep up the winding road of the Tiz'n'Test Pass. We stop and shoot scenes as we make our way up. It is night when we reach the summit. We stay in a small hotel, which runs off a car battery and has no heat. It is frigid here.

* * *

We wake up to an exquisite vista of the valley. We have 300 hundred feet of film left. We shoot our last scenes; the camera rolls out in the middle of a shot. It is a wrap. It is a bittersweet moment.

* * *

Beyond the multitude of situational rifts, the paramount problem is a moral one: How does one respect the cultural ideology of non-representation in a Muslim country when your objective is to represent it? We become acutely aware of our own vanity. We chose to shoot here to awaken our senses, to experience the unfamiliarity, yet this is the same reason we are self-conscious. We decide to proceed because our intentions are good; we are coming from a place of honesty. This film is not about religion, the role of women, representation or cultural politics. Nonetheless, we are conscious all these things are connected to what we are doing here. Our experience makes us reflect on who we are as western women, as artists and as people.

The film is to be complete this spring.

(Images above) Production stills from **Mogador**

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

It is possible at one time or another, all those who have attended acting classes, kindergarten or therapy have been told to act like a tree, an island, or a porcupine trying to get through a doorway on two legs. We only have a sense of how difficult it can be to bring a character to life. Actors are the ultimate visceral presence on screen. Unless, the performance is akin to its ambient world and utterly believable, the carefully woven illusion is shattered. Think of all those films where the acting was the deal-breaker. Actors read the script, study the character, fill in the blanks and then metamorphose into a real person, with all their personal idiosyncrasies, sensitivities and belligerence. Without actors, our films would be simply text on paper. An eclectic selection of actors talk about why they are involved in independent filmmaking and what keeps them going back for more.

Jayne Eastwood

THE VETERAN

Tried, tested and true, Jayne Eastwood's career has spanned decades. An original member of the Second City Troupe and Second City Television (sctv), she has brought many characters to life, working steadily on stage, television and film.

"I think the independent film industry is kind of making a resurgence because when I started out in the film business back in Toronto, back in 1969, that's basically what was going on. It was independent films like **Goin' Down the Road** which launched my career. Don Shebib sold his house, took the money and financed **Goin' Down the Road** himself. He made it for, I think, eighty to a hundred thousand dollars. And then Canada kind of moved into Telefilm and films being supported; that seems to be drying up and probably some of the most interesting filmmakers right now, are the independent filmmakers, the young filmmakers... It reminds me of what it was like back in the late sixties and early seventies.

"My very last experience was with Don McKellar, that was an indie film, now I can't remember the name of it, but it was basically, 'Jayne would you mind doing this for three hundred bucks or... nothing?' Because it was Don McKellar, I said yes and obviously everybody else said yes... It was delightful!

"I do these [projects] because film is my first love. I want to see great films made in Canada. Now, they don't have to be big budgets films; that'll never happen in this country because we don't have that type of money. But what we do have is the talent and I think we know how to tell a really good story without having to spend a ton of dough.

"I want to stay in Canada. I want to never stop working. I want to die on the set. I want to die at the craft service table. Oh no! There is no craft service table on an independent film! I want to have that last muffin and keel over!"

THE ARTIST

Theatrically trained actor and dancer Sedina Fiati has recently started writing so she can have more control over the roles she plays.

"I started off as a theatre actor so film's a fairly new medium for me. Independent filmmaking is really interesting because when you do find something good, it's original and different from what you see in the mainstream. I'm interested in how people see the world and in seeing a vision of the world that doesn't necessarily get communicated to a wider audience.

"A big challenge would be finding good roles. As an actor, I think [the industry puts] black women in a certain context, somewhat stereotypically. On 'lower' level independent film, there's a lot of misdirection of the actors. Actors really have to take it upon themselves to [understand the role] because the director isn't necessarily going to be focusing on the acting.

"I'd like to be really involved in the whole process: writing, acting and producing. Ideally, I'd be able to write my own stuff, set up my own production company and produce it.

"My last on-set experience was real-

Radha Menon

Radha Menon is a writer and photographer. She recently completed shooting a documentary in Borneo.

Sedina Fiati

Tony Sciara

Alicia Flaherty

ly good. The film was called **Skankin'**. It's about race relations and Toronto. I had a lot of freedom… to change the script. It was written by a British person, but because we filmed it in Toronto, the [expressions] were a bit off so I was, like, 'I need to change this' so it sounds like what the character would say. I had the freedom to do that, which was great.

"Filmmaking is slow. It requires a lot of patience and it requires a lot of persistence to just shoot the thing. You have to really learn how to break things down at the moment because it's very segmented in moments. It's process oriented."

THE UP-AND-COMER

The face that everyone knows, but is not a household name: Tony Sciara has worked on ***Soul Food*** *and* ***Degrassi: The Next Generation***

"I see the independent film industry as strong and yet weak. It's strong because it has a lot of original ideas and the people behind them are strong because they believe in what they're doing. They're ready to try new ways of filmmaking. It's weak because the funding isn't there.

"I love working with innovative people who like to take a chance. It helps me improve my craft. I get to practice and I think it makes me a more versatile actor. Independent filmmakers allow me to take chances and allow me to go out on a limb with the different things I want to try."

"My last experience was great. It was a short comedy **A Gyro Full of Dollars** from director Vivieno Caldinelli. They painted my bald spot so it looked like I had a full head of hair. I felt like (breaks into song) *singing and dancing in the rain*. I can't ask more than that.

"The filmmaking process is tedious and I have total respect for anybody who tells me they're in the film industry, independent or otherwise. It's very, very hard work and people usually only see the finished product. They don't know what goes on behind the scenes and all the leg work people have to do just to get the shot. And it's always about the shot or at least that's what I've been told, 'It's about the shot! It's about the shot!' So… it's about the shot."

THE NEWCOMER

When an artist finally commits to their craft with the knowledge that insecurity, rejection and possibly starvation await, it's a momentous occasion. Alicia Flaherty has recently chosen this path, although it's hardly surprising she got the bug; as a child, Alicia hung about on the set of sctv with the likes of John Candy, Martin Short, and her mother, Jayne Eastwood.

"Ultimately, I would like to be a working actor. If I could have half the career my mother has had in Toronto, I'd be a happy, happy actress.

"It's either Toronto or Vancouver for people who want to be an actor and the problem I'm finding is that it takes a good seven to ten years to make a name for yourself, to actually have casting directors call you in by name. Another immediate challenge is that I'm twenty-five: too old to be young and too young to be old.

"My father teaches at comedy writing at Humber College and a former student of his wrote a short independent film, the working title was 'Robbed Blind' but I believe they re-titled it **Caper Number Nine**. It was this really dry comedy. I had a great experience and worked with wonderful people for three or four days. It was so much fun and with such a limited budget, they did so much. They made everyone comfortable and nobody had any high and mighty attitude."

ON-SET KNOW-HOW

Daniel Albahary

Okay, so we know there are five basics stages to making a film: development, pre-production, production, post-production and distribution. Let's assume you've developed your project: you have the script, you have a director and maybe some actors lined up.

For a short film you're producing and directing, it's worthwhile to consider keeping your crew small, especially if you plan on paying them. That said, not everybody wants or needs to be paid; there are plenty of people who are looking for some experience and others who are simply willing to help you. I have a number of friends who are filmmakers and often we will trade services on each other's films. In other words, we're collaborators.

LIFT is the same thing—a collective that supports all the individual members; it's a great place to get started if you're looking for cast and crew. The organization is an excellent resource if you need to assemble the people who are going to help you make your film.

Next you need to start coordinating elements of the production: location, equipment, film, shooting schedule. Basically, you need to organize everything you can think of before you go to camera on your first day of shooting.

The director and EP chose locations where interruptions by a curious public would be kept to a minimum. When you find locations you like, ask the owners if you can use them. In one case, the EP walked into a building and asked the building managers if we could use their alley. They were totally cool with it. This cost us nothing and later we learned that producers for a big-budget feature film had paid quite a bit of money to have the same locale all to themselves for the next two days. A funny coincidence that shows you can sometimes have the same thing a Hollywood movie has without the huge price tag.

Ensure you leave the location exactly the way you found it. One of the worst things you can do is "burn" a location: wreaking such havoc that the owner will never allow the location to be used again. This hurts the filmmaking community because independent filmmakers depend on the generosity of others and the more burned locations there are, the worse for us all.

Again, in a collective effort, people contributed whatever equipment they had: the DOP had his own 16MM camera. Another crew member had access to a DAT recorder. Everybody pooled their money and bought film stock, not from Kodak, but on eBay—about five-hundred feet for fifty bucks. According to the EP, this was a big risk because the film was expired and we had to re-can it ourselves. I wouldn't take this risk if you're not ready to gamble on the results. You really need to know what you're doing before you start re-canning film yourself. However, if you're up for it, take a chance; you can find tons of film on eBay that doesn't need to be re-canned. It might be expired, but it might not. Look around. You'll find it eventually. And you'll save a whack of dough.

The crew devised an intense three-day shooting schedule and, voilà, we were pretty much ready to start. Having a tight crew and cast helps a lot. They should be able to get scenes down with no more than two or three takes. Make sure if people are volunteering on your film, they are one hundred percent serious about it. There's nothing worse than an unmotivated or sloppy effort to get in your way when you're trying to shoot a film.

Be cautious of the weather and your lighting conditions. The greatest challenge in producing this film was dealing with environmental elements. Half of our locations were exterior shots close to the waterfront. In the winter, this is nuts. If you can, avoid the cold; you might be able to tolerate it, but sometimes your gear won't. Frigid temperatures can seize up your gear. On top of shorter daylight hours, wind chill, and freezing temperatures, drifting clouds shifted the light from diffused to hard on several occasions.

At some point, you have to know what you're doing. And the only way to get to this level is to go out and do the best you can. Learn from experience. Experiment all you want and have as much fun as possible. There are no rules here. And if even if there were, heck, they were made to be broken.

Daniel Albahary is a Super 8 and 16mm aficionado. He has worked in the production industry, shoots Super 8, and is working on his first 16mm short film. His company Nil Motion Digital produces and distributes motion picture content for the web.

VIEWFINDER

BULLETIN BOARD

Upcoming Funding Deadlines

Canada Council
1.800.263.5588
www.canadacouncil.ca
Travel grants to Media Artists
Deadline: Ongoing

Bravo!FACT
416.591.7400 ext. 5815
www.bravofact.com
Deadline: 17 March 2006
Bravo!FACT awards cover up to 50% of a project's total cost. The amounts vary from several hundred dollars to a maximum of $25,000.

National Film Board
1.800.267.7710
www.nfb.ca
Filmmakers Assistance Program
Deadline: 1 April 2006
Amount: Up to $5,000

Astral Media's Harold Greenberg Fund
416.956.5431
www.astralmedia.com
Deadline: 6 April 2006
Script Development Program:
up to $18,000 may be advanced for a first draft
up to $12,000 for a second draft
up to $10,000 for a final draft and
up to $25,000 for advanced Senior Project funding for costs related to script polishing, packaging, workshopping, etc.

Ontario Arts Council
1.800.387.0058
www.arts.on.ca
Grants to Media Artists: Mid-Career and Established
Deadline: 17 April 2006
Amount: Per-project Basis

Canadian Film Centre
416.445.1446
www.cdnfilmcentre.com
Feature Film Project
Deadline: 28 April 2006
Amount: Per-project basis

Calls for Submission

The 5TH Annual
Female Eye Film Festival
1–4 June 2006.

The Female Eye showcases feature and short dramatic, comedy, documentary, experimental and animated films directed by women! The Script Development Program welcomes screenplays by male writers with the provision that their story features a female protaganist.

Extended Film Deadline:
17 March 2006
Entry Fee: $45.00

Extended Screenplay Deadline:
30 April 2006
Entry Fee: $35.00

For more information and guidelines for submitting films and screenplays, please visit www.femaleeyefilmfestival.com or email info@femaleeyefilmfestival.com

Announcements

LIFT Artist-in-Residence

LIFT welcomes Yuiko Matsuyama from Japan as our 2006 Foreign Visiting Artist in Residence. Yuiko will be working on a new project at LIFT, which will be showcased as a work-in-progress at the Images Festival in April. We look forward to sharing our facilities with Yuiko and learning her unique filmmaking techniques.

Tom Berner Award

This award, sponsored by LIFT and presented each year at the Images Festival, commemorates the late Tom Berner, who for many years supported and nurtured Canadian filmmakers. The award is presented annually to an individual who has provided extraordinary support to the cause of independent filmmaking in Toronto.

It is with great pleasure that we present the 2006 Tom Berner Award to Ray Cook. "Ray Cook is a sound genius and a film optical expert. He has been in this industry for years and is now at Transit Audio Services. While waiting for my film to be completed in his capable hands I would read the hundreds of accolades taped to his walls. Letters and cards from all over Canada, every film school, every independent and established filmmaker, production houses producing companies all from various years—it was like looking at a historical piece of celluloid art on his walls—simply unbelievable! Ray Cook has worked on so many film projects and every card/letter thanks him for his patience, care and terrific work on their films." —Keith Cole

ALISON MURRAY

1 ***What are you working on now?*** I'm working on a film about carnivals called **Carny** using Super 8 and still photography. I also am working away on my second feature script, **Jumbos Clown Room**. And dancing Argentine tango.

2 ***What is your preferred medium?*** I love Super 8. I used it when I was shooting **Train on the Brain**. It's a beautiful photographic format; a format that I am most confident using. I love its immediacy. Seeing that this is my last chance to make film in Kodachrome 40, I'm buying a lot of it off eBay.

3 ***How do you finance your films?*** With grants. Investments. Like everyone else. **Mouth to Mouth** was a German/UK coproduction. **Train on the Brain** was financed by Channel 4 with a completion grant from TV Ontario. **Carny** is being financed by Channel 4 and TVO, but we are still looking for additional funding. I've also had commissions from the BBC.

4 ***How do you get from being a 15-year-old runaway from Nova Scotia, to squatting in London to joining a cult member to getting an MA and becoming an award-winning filmmaker?*** It was a slightly sanctioned running away. One parent supported it and the other didn't. I had intended to change the world by inciting anarchy from a squat in London. However, I became disillusioned with that lifestyle. I went to dance college in South East London and a guidance counsellor urged me to get into higher education. University was free in London in the late-80s and it beat squatting, being unemployed and on the dole. At Darlington Art College, I took a six-week video module and decided this was what I wanted to do. I went to dance film festival in Germany and thought "I can do this!" I made my first and most successful film, Kissy Suzuki Suck, to-date in Super VHS. It was picked up by Channel 4 while I was still a student. Eventually I applied to the Royal College of Art in London.

5 ***Tell us a bit about making your first feature Mouth to Mouth.*** **Mouth to Mouth** was a struggle to make. It took me eight years to make and aged me 10 more years on top of that. Festivals are really important. If you don't have a big festival attached to your project, no one wants to touch it. When it didn't get into TIFF, it was a big disappointment. This was also around the time when I had just returned to Toronto [after having lived in the UK for 18 years]. This was supposed to be a homecoming and, instead, I felt like I hadn't been supported by the filmmaking community. I felt like I didn't belong.

6 ***So it must have been gratifying to get positive media coverage.*** Yes, I'll stop complaining now! There has been some good press. People went to see the film. Atom Egoyen put the film on at Camera Bar.

7 ***How did Atom Egoyen become involved with your project?*** I met Atom 10 years ago at a Moving Pictures Festival. He had seen my films and offered to help with future projects. Later, I sent him my script for **Mouth to Mouth** and asked him if he would consider executive producing it. He said no, he wasn't interested. I kept working on the script and roughly two years later, I sent it to Atom just asking for some feedback. I guess this draft was much better because he said, "I'd really like to executive produce this."

8 ***We don't see your name in the opening credits. How can we tell we're watching an Alison Murray picture?*** One actor picks up another actor and spins them around.

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