

FILMPRINT

LONG LIVE FILM September/October 2006 \$5.00



REMEMBERING ROBERTO ARIGANELLO
DOCTORING THE SCRIPT: **Interview with Robert McKee**
ALL TALK: **Voiceover Artist Q & A**
25 FILM FESTS FOR YOU AND YOUR FILM
TWINKLE OF THE FEMALE EYE: **Film Fest Review**
MOVIE-A-DAY **Midi Onodera on p. 30**



Volume 26 Issue 5
Display until 31 October 2006





Andy Warhol

October 6 - 14

Inextinguishable Fire:
The Vietnam War

October 13 - November 1

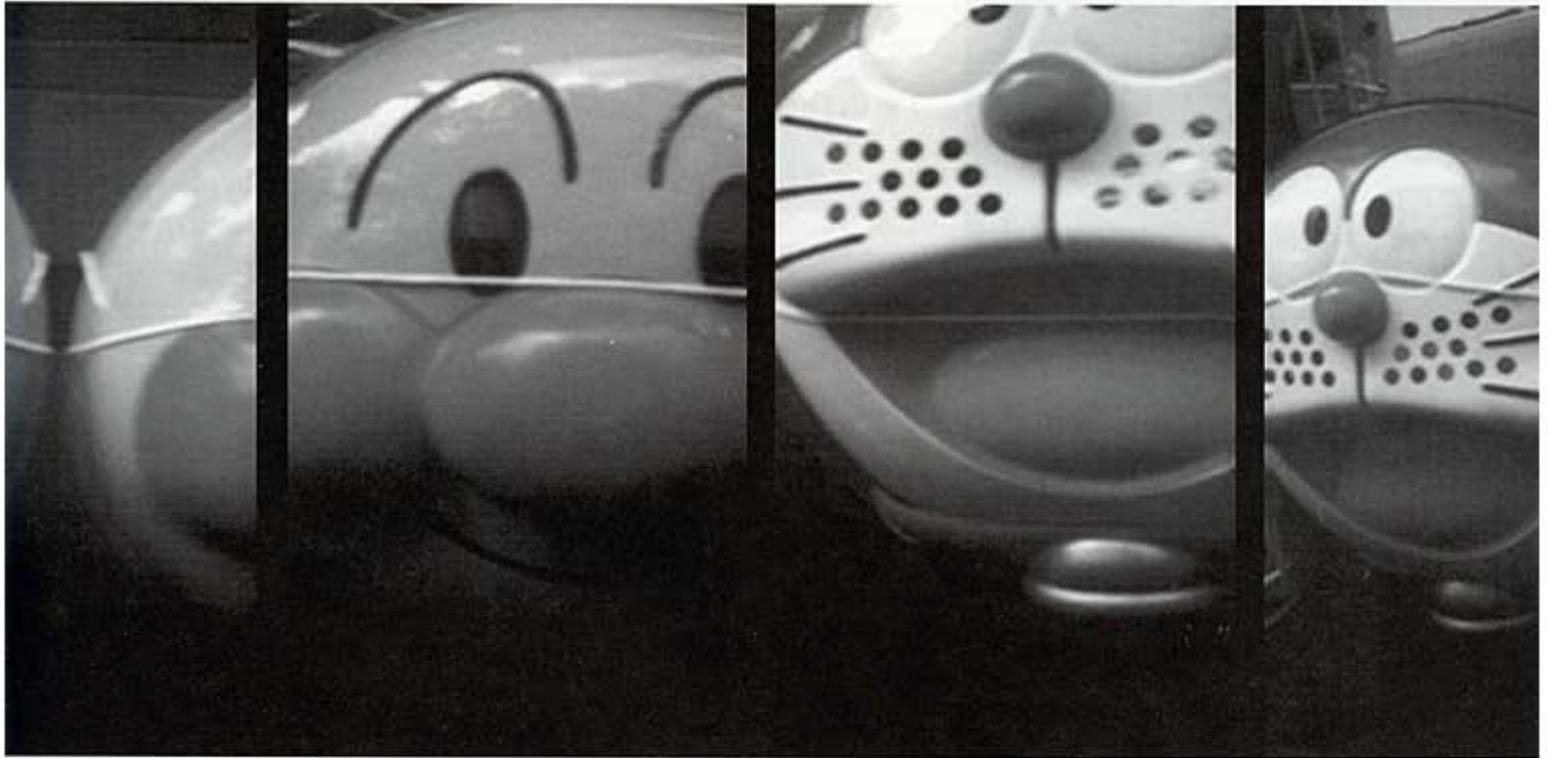
The Free Screen

October 11 - November 29

The Cinema of Intelligence:
The Films of Roberto Rossellini

October 27 - December 10

Fall Season on sale September 25!



(Cover) LIFT's Executive Director Roberto Arigonello with his Bolex 16mm camera in Chichen Itza Mexico, c. 1997, photo by Elida Schagt, (Above) Image from Midi Onodera's *I have no memory of my direction*

- 4 **Roberto Remembered**
- 6 **All Talk: Voiceover Artist Q & A**
Kathleen Olmstead
- 8 **Best of Both Worlds: Profile on Geoff Bottomley**
Lucas Martin
- 12 **LIFT 25: 25 Film Festivals to Attend and Enter**
- 14 **The Script Doctor: Interview with Robert McKee**
Aron Dunn
- 22 **The Woman Who Walked**
Sue Kenney
- 28 **Twinkle of the Female Eye: Film Fest Review**
Ana Barajas
- 30 **The Super 8: Midi Onodera**
Bunmi Adeoye

FilmPrint



The magazine of the
Liaison of Independent
Filmmakers of Toronto

September/October 2006
Volume 26, Issue 5
Display until 31 October 2006
ISSN 1710-0127

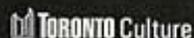
Editor: Bunmi Adeoye
Designer: Michael Barker

Contributing Writers: Ana Barajas, Cait Cantillon, Aron Dunn, Heather Richards, Sue Kenney, Lucas Martin, Kathleen Olmstead

Errata: The photo of John Porter that appeared in the July 2006 issue of FilmPrint should have been credited to Blaine Spiegel. FilmPrint regrets this oversight.

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.

LIFT is supported by its 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 magazine do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor, the LIFT membership or the board of directors. Letters to the editor can be sent c/o LIFT, 171 East Liberty Street, Suite 301, Toronto, Ontario, M6K 3P6, tel: 416.588.6444; fax: 416.588.7017; www.lift.on.ca; email: office@lift.on.ca. Our readerships' feedback, suggestions and ideas are always welcome, please call the LIFT office or email: magazine@lift.on.ca.



EYE WEEKLY

Editorial

I wish I had a better memory.

I went to the pub a few weeks before Roberto's death. This was after a magazine committee meeting. I remember laughing a lot and feeling giddy and slightly drunk. It was warm and we sat outside on the patio. We talked about housing prices. Would it be better to rent or buy? And if you bought, then that means you can't travel and do all those things you really want to do, but then at least you would be on the "ladder." The ladder to what... I don't know, but he said that he wasn't in debt and I think I spouted something off about "if you're not in debt, then you're a rich man." It was past the dinner hour and we shared a salad and some sweet potatoes fries and something else, but I can't remember what else exactly. As I'm writing this, I know I am forgetting other things about that meeting. I know memories are slipping out of my mind. Other encounters are melting into one and I'm wishing that I had paid more attention. A soccer or softball team poured onto the patio and it looked like they were going to ask us to move to make space for them. I was comfortable and I said as much, "If they are going to ask us to move, I'm not going to move." I think Roberto laughing said that I was hardcore, but he wasn't going to move either. In the end, they didn't say a word to us. I talked about what I wanted to do with the magazine. I would always say to him, "Roberto, this issue is going to be even better than that last one!" He would say something like, "That's what you said last time." And I would say, "I know, but it's true!" He reminisced about how he used to go to the pub weekly with other LIFTERS. He named names, but I can't remember...

We talked about life after LIFT. "What are you're plans?" I asked. "What are you going to do next?"

Bunmi Adeoye
magazine@lift.on.ca

Roberto Ariganello



I write this letter to the membership during a moment of great personal grief. My good friend and colleague Roberto Ariganello passed away on August 13, 2006, accidentally and at the prime of his life. His presence was enormous; the void left in the organization equally great. I first met Roberto in 1995, at a dinner party, and one of the first things he said to me was "Let's go to the zoo tomorrow and make a film," which we did, with a Bolex under a sunny fall sky. He wanted to make a film convert out of everyone, wanted to share his passion for film because he knew that once you tried it, you would be hooked for life!

How to describe a giant in a way that would do him service? Roberto spent the last nine years fiercely defending the viability of film and its deserved place as an art form. He was always willing to help out, willing to

teach you something new, and always had an answer. A loyal friend with an easy smile. We need more film champions like him.

The last time I saw him, we talked all business. He was so excited about LIFT's 25TH anniversary and our most ambitious commissioning project "Film is Dead. Long Live Film" a Manifesto made up of 25 Films by 28 artists working solely in film. We are presenting the films at the Cinematheque Ontario on the 22ND and 29TH of November as part of their popular Independent Series. After each screening, everyone is invited to Supermarket in Kensington Market for the presentation of the "Long Live Film" performances.

The 13TH annual "Shine It On" fundraiser and the "Salon des Refuses" screening took place in early September at the Gladstone Hotel. After much thought the board decided

to go ahead with the event as planned taking into consideration how much Roberto enjoyed the event and how important it is for the vitality of LIFT. Thanks to all those who came out to support his vision.

Be assured that the Board of Directors is making provisions to support the staff, Roberto's family and each other. We are committed to LIFT and its growth, knowing fully how much it meant to Roberto and it is our privilege to serve you all through this transitional period.

Roberto, you were loved and respected by all, we will do our best to fulfill your dream of making lift the best place in the world to make films.

Ana Barajas
Chair of the Board
LIFT

IN MEMORY OF ROBERTO ARIGANELLO BY DEIRDRE LOGUE



Roberto and Deirdre

I am writing this in the agonizing wake of Roberto Ariganello's sudden death.

I am writing this in the hopes that I will be able to articulate something of his impact on all of us. I am writing this to ease myself more gently into the reality of his absence. I am writing this for the magazine Roberto was so very proud of. I am writing this for an organization Roberto really, truly loved and a community to which he dedicated his life, a community now stricken, reeling from his loss.

Except for writing this, everything is on hold.

For those of you who knew Roberto, my thoughts on him will likely be familiar. For those who hadn't yet had the privilege of knowing our man from IFT, you will be terribly jealous of those of us who did.

He was a really beautiful, handsome, charming man who wanted only the best for all of us. And so I want to write something inspirational, something full of the same lust for life and love that Roberto had. I want you to finish reading this and jump from your

seats with the same vitality that Roberto had. After reading this I want you to get up early, stay up late, say yes to everything, waste nothing.

Roberto and I were the best of friends. He was also my champion. Roberto not only believed I could do anything, he also made me do whatever 'anything' was. He made me work hard, and fight even harder for what I believed in. He encouraged me to be the fast-talking scrapper that I've become.

Roberto and I were the best of friends. He was also my co-conspirator. I loved a good session with Roberto where we would have a drink or two, put our heads together and plan, strategize, complain, leave no funder untouched. He was fearless and tireless, bold and brazen. And at all the really important meetings, we would write notes back and forth, all of us, a cheeky bunch.

Roberto and I were the best of friends. He was also my brother. He told people I was right when he knew I was wrong. He gave me the benefit of the doubt even when I probably didn't deserve it and in exchange I took all the advice he provided, but hadn't asked for.

But you all know of this, because if you knew Roberto, he was all this to you, too.

And I worry that I should be writing something more about Roberto's immeasurable influence on the media arts community across the country, around the world, his rare dedication and commitment to his community, big or small, writing more about how he changed us all, changed us as individual artists, as colleagues, and how he will be so terrifically missed by

almost every single person I know. But I still can't believe I'm writing this.

I am looking through boxes filled with his films, some notes and tapes. His works were accomplished and sophisticated and complex and brave and curious - all these things made Roberto an amazing filmmaker. But it was something else too; it was how much he absolutely loved making films, how excited he was with a camera beside him, how he was filled with anticipation at the thought of starting, making, finishing - it didn't matter. Unlike so many of us, Roberto was patient with his filmmaking, he knew these things take time. He still had so many plans for films, now quiet, unfinished.

I remember he had just got new glasses.

I know if Roberto were here and it was someone else we loved this much, lost below the surface, he would tell me that this is part of life, he would help me move on. He would photocopy flyers, set up the projectors and pick up the food and booze. He would grab my shoulders, squeeze almost a little too hard and make me get through this.

Deirdre Logue
Executive Director, CFMDC



Roy and Roberto

It is two days since I received the news of Roberto's death and two days until his funeral. Tomorrow is the visitation and the reality of it is sinking in.

I know now that this was not some kind of practical joke. Roberto will not pull up on his bike under my window. I won't yell, "You idiot" while simultaneously being in love with how he could get me going.

I'd sometimes step back and listen to us talk to each other. He made me talk with my hands like no one else. We talked with the same bravado that I remember seeing in my Italian male cousins. Roberto brought out a side of me that I had thought I had escaped — working class, Italian, loud.

Roberto could make me laugh so hard I would squeal like a girl in public school. It would embarrass him and between his laughter, he'd tell me to calm down, like I was blowing some cool image he was trying to maintain. My big, macho chum out with his big girl of a friend.

I'm sure people saw how much I loved him. I'd watch him talk at meetings and control the room with his presence. We'd be sitting there at some

event and I'd be thinking, "Please say something, say something to make me laugh, say something to make me think," but also, "Say something to make my heart swell with how much I love you." What a wonderful love it was: this admiration, amusement, and near-disbelief that I could be such close friends with such a dude.

And Roberto loved me. How privileged I am to be able to say that. We went to see *40-Year-Old Virgin* together and he spent more time watching me laugh than watching the movie. He told me later that he went to see it a second time and it was still funny. I think he went a second time so he could see the whole thing.

Roberto was an inspiring and lovely man. I first knew him when I rented equipment at Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto (LIFT). When he became LIFT's Executive Director four or five years ago, our friendship deepened and he became one of the closest friends I have ever had. We all work so hard at what we do, and Roberto always made it easier for us. I know so many people that have finished a project because Roberto pushed them to complete it. Nothing was impossible. With Roberto there was always a way to do it and a way to get it done. Sometimes I would have to tell him to lay off. He would sit in my house and tell me that I should do this or do that. He volunteered what he thought I should do all the time. Finally I told him to stop using "should". Then it became, "If I were you, I would do this." I learned that when Roberto told me what I should do, or told me what he would do if he were me, or made rules, I should just agree. "Sure, I'll dig up the backyard and level the cement slabs so that little puddle won't collect every rainfall."

This strategy only exasperated him more, but that was the way I would get him going.

Words fail me and I fear this will not convey the loss of Roberto, and the love so many people had for him. There will surely be far more eloquent things said and written about Roberto in the future. I'm finding it difficult to write and tear up every few lines. People have been calling and dropping by to see how Eugenio and I are doing. We live in a world where our colleagues become our friends and lovers and, if you're lucky, you find a brother like I did in Roberto.

I leave you with this. Two days ago, we gathered at Allyson Mitchell and Deirdre Logue's home. We called everyone we could and had them come over. As I sat there, I was struck by how a man of Roberto's luminosity brought together all these people. In our busy world, there aren't many occasions for such congregations. These last few days, though, the world has stopped for us and we have been gathering and calling each other, all because of a man we love and will deeply miss. And with everything stopped, there are moments between all the tears and laughter when I see what a beautiful small world we live in, and how the world is this way because of people like Roberto.

Roy Mitchell
Executive Director,
Trinity Square Video

ALL TALK

Two voiceover professionals spill the be



Brandi Ward

How did you get into voiceover work?

I worked on camera as an actor for several years and it happened that my agent had a voiceover department. Over time I began auditioning and getting work.

How long have you been a voice-over artist?

I have been a voice-over artist for five years.

What was your first professional job?

I believe my first commercial voiceover job was for Tim Horton's and my first cartoon was *Sailor Moon*.

How do you find an agent?

Most voice-over artists would find an agent by submitting a demo reel, but I signed on with my agent as an actor and branched off into voice work.

Did you receive any voiceover training?

Yes, I did. I took my first class through ACTRA. It was an absolute necessity. There is a lot to think about at first and having experience in a recording studio is essential.

What can you expect during an audition?

The scripts for auditions are rarely available in advance so you must go early to review it. Individuals are usu-

ally called in one at a time to audition unless it is a multi-voice spot. In that case, you audition with one or more people. You begin your audition with a slate, stating your name. Direction is usually given as to what they are looking for. You are generally given two or three takes. When you're finished, you leave the recording studio and the audition is then sent off to the client.

How long should a demo reel be?

I would say absolutely no longer than two minutes. Some demo reels are as short as 20 seconds. If presented properly, it doesn't take long to demonstrate a wide variety of voices and/or essences of your voice.

Do you need to be an ACTRA member to get professional voice-over work?

There is work for non-union voiceover artists, however, union performers inevitably make more money because there are set fees and rates that are governed by the union.

Brandi Ward

Peter Windrem

How long have you been a voice-over artist?

I began doing voice-over work about 9 years ago.

How do you find an agent?

There are many ways to skin a cat, but the two methods that I think work best are being recommended by someone: This will get you to the front of the line quicker. Also, in terms of voice work, having a really well put together demo reel of material showing some range and versatility.

What happens during an audition?

When you arrive, you usually check in with someone and they will let you know what part you are reading for if you don't know in advance. You will be given some sort of direction in order to take the copy and then you go over it a few times if you can. This can include marking the script, taking notes of anything you might not understand or words you're not sure on the pronunciation. Then you step into the booth once you are called, make any necessary adjustments, i.e. mic stand and music stand levels, headphone levels, choosing whether to sit or stand, placing script so it won't rattle because the mic will pick up everything. And then you are asked to slate your name, agency and character you are reading for. You will usually get a couple of passes at it, and they

might try to tweak you in a certain direction or pursue something all together different than what you thought. The key is to remain open and be directable.

How do you put together a demo reel?

The best thing to do is find material that is going to work for you. Know your voice and become very familiar with it and where it sits best. Listen to the radio, watch television, documentaries, cartoons, commercials. See what is out there. Who is getting the work and why? Then gather material from what you've seen by taping it or writing your own material, find appropriate music, get some studio time and perhaps someone well-versed in the business to help you along. Record a bunch of material, but don't be too precious with it. When it comes to the editing process, a lot of it will disappear. Finally, choose the pieces that best show off your voice and sequence them to sound alive and vibrant, something the listener may want to hear more of.

Do you need to be an ACTRA member to get professional voice-over work?

No. There is non-union work and union work available and good agencies will represent both.

Visit www.lift.on.ca to hear Ward and Windrem's demo reels

Peter Windrem



THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Ryerson's School of Image Arts is home to one of the only fully functioning in-house film labs dedicated to 16mm black-and-white in any North American educational film institution.

By Lucas Martin

The Ryerson University film lab is a well-balanced space. Some sections may be narrow, spreading out into several rooms, all looking out of earshot for anyone. Yet, throughout it all, Geoff Bottomley has maintained a calm control over it all. As with any place left to the guidance of one person for a length of time, Bottomley has shaped and built the lab to meet with his sense of function and passion for film. At once clean and efficient, as any lab worth its salt should be, it also feels welcoming, much as one would expect from an artist's home. For anyone who has worn out their elbows on the ledge of his half-door, Bottomley's lab has come to set the bar for which all others are compared to. Truth be told, any filmmakers – aspiring or otherwise – who walked up to Bottomley's door were spoiled. On this day, the atmosphere was noticeably heavier. "I remember the year-end rush for awards night," says Bottomley. "Students being in there, editing right down to the wire. I'd come in on my own time, often nights, trying to provide their answer prints for them. You'd get to know many of them on a first-name basis. It was the respect from them that meant a lot to me."

Although officially having retired two years previously, his commitment to the future of the lab caused him to remain until a solid replacement could be hired. June was Bottomley's last month running the lab, concluding his 34-year tenure as the senior technician and chief of Ryerson Film Lab. Ryerson's School of Image Arts is home to one of the only fully functioning in-house film labs dedicated to 16mm black-and-white in any North American educational film institution. Bottomley's vision and commitment brought the lab longevity and a stellar reputation.

The magic combination behind it all? A recognized industry-standard quality of work at a consistently main-

tained reasonable price with an eye-blinking two-day turnaround, and most of all, a direct and helpful line of communication with the senior technician himself. Lack of effective communication is a problem with most labs, with Bottomley, there were no go-betweens, no running lines of interference, all questions were answered and advice freely given.

A true a lover of film as one can be, letting it carve out the path his life has followed, Bottomley was himself a Ryerson Film Program graduate. His first professional position taken up was at Best Film Industries, a production company whose business was in news-

In the 34 years service, Bottomley recalls only three times where he missed the six o'clock deadline. In the busiest year on record, the lab put out roughly 3 million feet of film.

reels. Having left there as production manager and with a wealth of technical knowledge from 10-12 years in the industry, Bottomley's happened to be in the neighbourhood of his old school. The film lab, in its initial condition, was running at a minimum. Students were primarily going elsewhere for their printing, as the turnaround at the time was a week long. A faculty member ran the lab, handling the processing end of things, while another person, Pirooska Hollo, took care of the printing. "Just the timing was right," recalls Bottomley of his decision to take on the role of technician at the lab, "because there was the one guy

processing once a week and Pirooska printing once a week. People were waiting for stuff. They didn't have any system in place. One of the instructors learned how to run the processor and gave me his notebook, which I immediately discarded."

As with everything, improvements came slowly then eventually students were all coming to the lab for both processing and printing. Bottomley and Hollo developed a mandate for the lab: provide quality work that matched industry standards, maintain a consistent level of service, create a vastly reduced turn-around time, and develop a reasonable price list. The working relationship between the two continued for 15 years, developing the lab into an efficient, well-oiled machine.

Not one to suffer from a denial of progress, Bottomley read the movements of the industry and adapted the lab to meet them as best they could. It was under his direction that the lab established a film transfer operation; it was clear the need for work prints was ebbing. He also realized the importance of the lab with the overall industry decline of the use of 16mm black and white, while the lab itself was experiencing an overflow. In the 34 years service, Bottomley recalls only three times where he missed the six o'clock deadline. In the busiest year on record, the lab put out roughly 3 million feet of film. Weathering the storms that came with the changes in an educational institute and more importantly, with the unavoidable changes to the medium, Bottomley has stood by his belief in the strength of film.

In the last few years within the school, the overarching problem has resided in the conflict between teaching film in an environment where digital video is pervasive. From a teaching perspective, the obvious dilemma comes in the immediacy and convenience of the digital process. The average student's reaction upon the necessary shift from the simplicity of digital video to the complexity of film

is clear. Knowledge of the fundamentals – composition, lighting, editing – becomes inconsequential. Bottomley has heard it and seen it all from the students' reactions: "They figure it's the end when they look in their little screen and see a perfect picture. They figure, 'What do we need the work print for? What do we need all this cutting for?'"

Bottomley believes emphatically in the practical applications of learning methods of filmmaking on town film. Reflecting this belief, Ryerson's first-year film students continue to be taught on film. In a two section program, the first half of the year focuses on processing and work prints with one group, while the other is concentrating on processing and transfers. At that halfway point in the academic year, the two sections switch. In an ideal world, this is getting through for all the right reasons. "The students get the hands-on, and maybe the respect [for film] by doing it that way," Bottomley hopes.

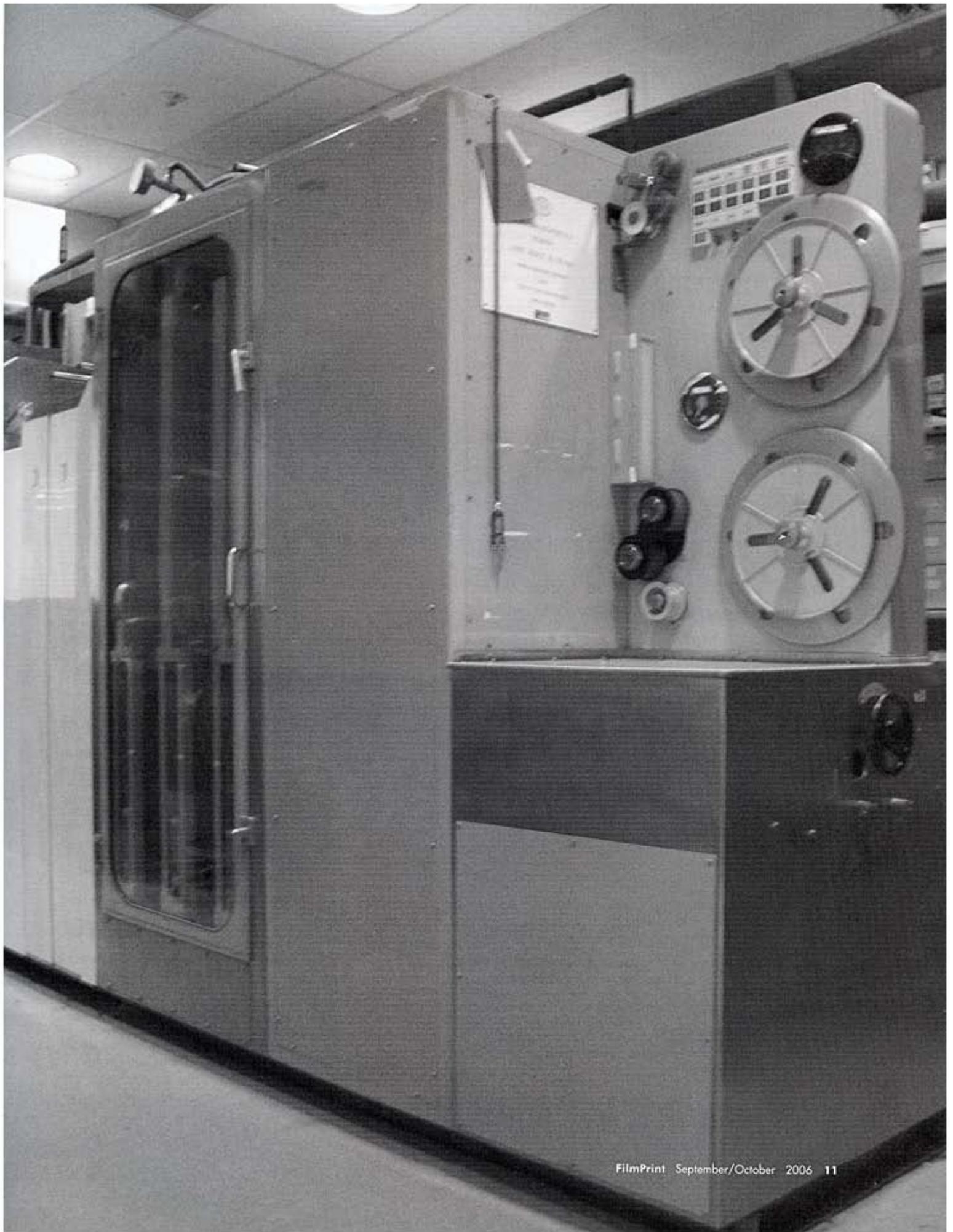
But change is part of life, no argument there. That's the problem with biases, we see things as we wish to end those same changes can appear to the eye as either an improvement or as an unrepentant long walk off a very short pier. So is a reduction in the instruction of film in a film school simply progress or a wrong turn? "To say that it would be depreciating, in a sense, would be the wrong word," says Bottomley. "I'm depreciating. I'm getting older, but I'm still a film person. And I'm so happy that we're finally able to get a replacement who has a tremendous amount of interest and skill, technical skill. I'm very happy there's a good chance this means this place will continue for a little while longer."

Never having had to teach or instruct a replacement before, he admits the new technical operator, Suzanne Naughton, is the perfect person to take over. It's a daunting task, but it clear why Bottomley feels confi-

dent. With the lab that he built and a new person at the helm who possesses a belief in the preservation of the medium, it's safe to say this is not going to be another example of a film student going quietly under. For those in the film community, the retirement of Geoff Bottomley will come as a loss, as it does when any group no longer has easy access to a skilled and knowledgeable member. For Bottomley, however, his love of film, his lifetime of knowledge and his drive will carry him further. The fact that the film faculty supported his beliefs in the value of the medium gives Bottomley hope. "We've had to accept the move towards digital is irreversible. What took me a long time to accept was the wisdom [that it's] the best of both worlds. They're respecting all of that by keeping the history of film alive and what we had to go through to produce all the work."



(Left) Bottomley in the foreground with student at work in the lab. Photo by Suzanne Naughton. (Right) view of Ryerson's in-house film lab, photo by Lucas Martin.



25

FILM FESTIVALS FOR YOU AND YOUR FILM

Whether you want to see good movies or submit one of your films, here's a listing 25 popular festivals. Rip out and stick on your fridge!

ONE

Inside Out

Toronto Lesbian and Gay Film and Video Festival

17th annual celebration of Canada's preeminent exhibition of queer film and video from around the world.

Submission deadline:

January 2007

Next festival date:

17-27 May 2007

Phone: 416.977.6847

Web: www.insideout.on.ca

TWO

World Wide Short Film Festival

The largest of its kind in North America, the WWSEF is dedicated to celebrating and exposing audiences to the exciting world of short films.

Submission forms available:

5 September 2006

Next festival date: June 2007

Phone: 416.445.1446

Web:

www.worldwideshortfilmfest.com

THREE

Yorkton Short Film and Video Festival, Saskatchewan

Canada's longest-running short film festival and one of the country's top film and video festivals.

Submission deadline:

Mid-February 2007

Next festival date:

24-27 May 2007

Phone: 306.782.7077

Web: www.yorktonshortfilm.org

FOUR

Toronto International Film Festival

Canada's largest and arguably one of the world's most important film festivals.

Submission deadline: June 2007

Next festival date: September 2007

Phone: 416.967.7371

Web: www.tiff.ca

FIVE

Atlantic Film Festival

The AFF Association is a non-profit organization committed to promoting and building a strong film industry in Atlantic Canada and presenting the best films from this region and around the world to our community

Submission deadline:

Early-June 2007

Next festival date:

Mid-September 2007

Phone: 902.422.3456

Web: www.atlanticfilm.com

SIX

Vancouver International Film Festival

VIFF's purpose is to encourage the understanding of other nations through the art of cinema and to stimulate the motion picture industry in British Columbia and Canada.

Canadian Submission deadline:

Mid-June 2007,

International submission

deadline: Early-July 2007

Next festival date:

September-October 2007

Phone: 604.683.3456

Web: www.viff.org

SEVEN

Ottawa International Animation Festival

The largest festival of its kind in North America and one of the most respected animation festivals in the world.

Submission early deadline:

June 2007

Next festival date: September 2007

Phone: 613.232.8769

Web: www.awn.com/otawa

EIGHT

Whistler Film Festival

The WFF dedicated to being a catalyst for the viability and sustainability of Canadian and world cinema. It strives to support artistic innovation, to profile new technology and to provide a stimulating and enriching cultural experience.

Shorts deadline: Mid-July 2007

Features deadline:

Mid-August 2007

Next festival date:

November 2007

Phone: 604.935.8035

Web: www.whistlerfilmfestival.com

NINE

LIFT's 13th Annual National Salon des Refusés

Each year LIFT presents a non-curated selection of Canadian films that were passed over by the Toronto International Film Festival. The Salon is programmed through a lottery draw.

Submission deadline:
August 2007
Next festival date:
September 2007
Phone: 416.588.6444
Web: www.lif.on.ca

TEN

Sundance Film Festival
Sundance Film Festival is held in Park City each January and is considered the premier U.S. showcase for American and international independent film.
Early submission deadline, shorts: 1 September 2006
Early submission deadline, features: 11 Sept 2006
Late submissions deadline, shorts: 15 September 2006
Late submissions deadline, features: 25 September
Next festival date:
18-28 January 2007
Phone: 801.328.3456
Web: www.sundance.org

ELEVEN

Cinefest Sudbury International Film Festival
A favorite destination for industry guests following the hectic pace of the Montreal and Toronto Festivals, Cinefest brings its patrons an exciting and eclectic selection of domestic and international cinema.
Submission deadline: July 2007
Next festival date:
Mid-September 2007
Phone: 705.688.1234
Web: www.cinefest.com

TWELVE

RESFEST
Resfest is an annual, global film fest and multi-media event that hosts audiences in over 30 cities and on 6 continents.
Submission deadline for Cancan program:
30 September 2006
Next festival date:
27-30 October 2006
Web: www.resfest.com

THIRTEEN

Rendezvous du Cinema Quebecois
For the last 24 years, the RVCO has been promoting Quebec cinema in all its variations, pushing forward works that represent mainstream movements (thematic, aesthetic, or social) as well as more marginal works, or works that have not

received appropriate diffusion.
Submission deadline:
October 2006
Next festival date:
15-27 February 2007
Phone: 514.526.9625
Web: www.rvcq.com

FOURTEEN

Victoria Independent Film & Video Festival
Presenting more than 160 features, documentaries and shorts.
Late submission deadline:
1 October 2006
Next festival date:
2-11 February 2007
Phone: 250.389.0444
Web: www.vivf.com

FIFTEEN

Tribeca
The Tribeca Film Festival was founded in 2002 by Robert De Niro, Jane Rosenthal, and Craig Haskoff as a response to the attacks on the World Trade Center. Now in its fifth year, the Festival's mission is to create platforms for filmmakers to reach the best possible audience for their work
Early submission deadline:
17 November 2006
Final submission deadline, shorts: 8 December 2006
Final submission deadline, features: 15 December 2006
Next festival date:
25 April-7 May 2007
Phone: 212.941.2400
Web: www.tribecafilmfestival.org

SIXTEEN

Images Festival
Toronto's annual spring celebration of independent and experimental film and video, featuring ten days of screenings, installations and performances.
Submission deadline:
October 2006
Next festival date:
5-14 April 2007
Phone: 416.971.8405
Web: www.imagefestival.com

SEVENTEEN

Ann Arbour Film Festival
This competitive event specialises in art films and videos, and in films that explore the possibilities of image and form. As such, it presents independent and experimental films, all lengths.
Early submission deadline:
1 October 2006

Late submission deadline:
15 November 2006
Next festival date:
20-25 March 2007
Phone: 734.995.5356
Web: www.aafilmfest.org

EIGHTEEN

Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival
Held in Toronto, this is North America's largest documentary film festival.
Early submission deadline:
15 December 2006
Late submission deadline:
15 January 2007
Next festival date:
20-29 April 2007
Phone: 416.203.2155
Web: www.hotdocs.com

NINETEEN

Female Eye Film Festival
A film festival in Toronto which promotes films made with a distinctly female point of view.
Submission deadline:
February 2007
Next festival date: June 2007
Phone: 416.276.1304
Website: www.femaleeyefestival.com

TWENTY

Rendezvous with Madness Film Festival
An annual film festival held in Toronto celebrating film and video that attempt to shed light and explore issues surrounding mental health and addiction.
Submission deadline:
Mid-August 2007
Next festival date:
Mid-November 2007
Phone: 416.583.4339
www.rendezvouswithmadness.com

TWENTY ONE

Moving Pictures Festival
All films that highlight the magic of movement through dance are showcased in the film festival held in Toronto.
Submission deadline:
Late-June 2007
Next festival date:
November 2007
Phone: 416.961.5424
Web: www.movingpicturesfestival.com

TWENTY TWO

aluCine Toronto Latin@ Media Festival
Latino filmmakers showcase their work at this film festival in Toronto.
Submission deadline:
1 December 2006
Next festival date: June 2007
Web: www.alucinefestival.com

TWENTY THREE

Jewish Film Festival
Films which explore the significance of Jewish culture. Festival held in Toronto.
Submission deadline:
1 February 2007
Next festival date:
May 5-13 2007
Phone: 416.324.9121
Web: www.jfff.com

TWENTY FOUR

ReelAsian
Description: Film festival held in Toronto showcasing contemporary films from Asian and Asian diaspora filmmakers.
Submission deadline:
Mid-July 2007
Next festival date:
Mid-November 2007
Phone: 416.703.9373
Web: www.reelasian.com

TWENTY FIVE

ImagineNative Film and Media Arts Festival
Films and new media projects by the indigenous people of Canada.
Submission deadline:
Early June 2007
Next festival date:
Mid-October 2007
Phone: 416.586.2333
Web: www.imagineNATIVE.org

Compiled by **Coit Centillon**
with **Heather Richards**
and **Bunmi Adeoye**.

GLORY OF THE STORY



INTERVIEW WITH SCRIPT GURU
Robert McKee

By Aron Dunn

Any screenwriter worth his weight in brads and three-holed paper knows the name Robert McKee, author of screenwriting Bible/Koran/Torah/Tao/what-have-you: *Story – Substance, Structure, Style and the Principles of Screenwriting*. When I heard McKee was bringing his now infamous three-day seminar back to Toronto in November, I started looking at which assets I could liquidate to raise the \$600 price of admission. His workshop – of which the alumni are a veritable who’s who of Hollywood A, B and C-listers – is basically “everything you ever wanted to know about screenwriting, but were afraid to ask.” I’ve read *Story* numerous times and have found it equally inspirational and infuriating so the opportunity to see McKee put his money where his mouth is and back it up with clips from classic works seemed too good to miss.

I got an opportunity to have a conversation with McKee before his Toronto arrival. We touched on the value of bad screenwriting, the difficulty of having a good conversation, the Middle East, Broadway musicals, the writer as philosopher, and why we need story now more than ever before.

What is the enduring appeal of your seminar?

[Laughs] It's a kind of amazing to me, as well. I been doing this now for over 20 years and the interest never diminishes. The interest, if anything, seems to grow. My book sells more copies now, because it's now in 14 languages, than it did eight years ago.

So the answer to the question, I presume, is: the need and desire to understand the art of story is perpetual. The students who take the course now are almost evenly distributed between screen and television writers and novelists, and then there is a certain percentage of playwrights.

It's really not a matter of misunderstanding; it's a universal kind of ignorance. It stems from the assumption that "Because I've seen movies, I know how to write one" or "Because I've read novels, I know how to write one." That's like thinking, "Because I've heard symphonies, I know how to compose one".

People [who take the seminar realize] that even though they have been to university and they studied literature and film or whatever, they were not taught the principles that a writer needs to underpin their imagination. I'm just filling in a gap in knowledge, that one would have thought people would have gained being to university. But because it's ignored or, even worse, fallaciously taught at universities, I have a career.

Why do you think that is? Why do you think we aren't taught this?

Well, there are trends in criticism and trends in teaching creative writing. What's imperative for a professor is tenure and promotion, and that hinges on publication. [The professor] will not get published unless [he or she] is following whatever intellectual trend is current. It is unfortunate, but this is how it is. [The professor has] to speak the language of whatever is being spoken. And so, for example, in a post-modern world there is a notion afoot

that there are no principles, that everything is relativistic and that anything can work. There is also a tendency not to take story seriously. [The story] is thought to be a form of entertainment, where style is more important than substance. There's a whole a postmodern attitude towards literature and film, which in many ways is a sneering attitude. And consequently, to take these [storytelling] principles seriously would be the antithesis of being a hip, contemporary professor. And so, that's the choices they have made.

Let's put it this way, criticism is not creativity. When you go to university you are not taught the nature of the art

"I've seen the same thing where you go to so-called art movies and you come out discussing the qualities of the photography, not the meaning of what you watched, not the feelings involved."

form as an artist, you are taught after-the-fact criticism of preexisting art. That is all very interesting, but useless to the writer. We can't really blame the professors because their interest isn't in creativity; their interest is in criticism. But you cannot nourish a culture on criticism. Art is there to help us feel deeply, to make some kind of profound emotional sense out of life. Criticism is to explain the "hows and whys" of that happening.

Right, so speaking of the "hows and whys" and nourishing creativity, what do you think are the most difficult aspects of storytelling for

a new writer to grasp?

That you are in a war. That you are trying to win the war on clichés. And to understand that even though you think you are being instinctive or creative, all you are actually doing is recycling everything you've ever seen. You become a participant in propagating clichés.

The only way to free yourself and find really deep inspiration that is not off the top of your head. The top of any person's head is full of everything that they've ever read or seen. When you take an idea off the top of your head, inevitably, it is a cliché. The writing comes from deeper, tougher stuff than the first idea off the top of your head. The only way to get to the really deep creative resources is to master the art form so that you are then free to play with the form in whatever creative way your instincts take you.

It's very difficult for beginning writers to understand that difference between true originality and cliché. I don't think they consciously think this, but some how they unconsciously assume that if it looks and sounds like everything that they admire then it must be good. One of the worst aspects of this is people who imagine themselves to be in the avant-garde. They are just copying every non-Hollywood movie they've ever seen. They think that because what they do is not Hollywood-ish, it must be original. But of course it isn't, because they've just imitate their favourite films in the avant-garde.

It's funny that you mention the avant-garde, when you look at your triangle of story telling, your Classic Design reaches the widest audience and Minimalist and Anti-Structure reach the smallest audience. I think, particularly being someone in Canada seeing the writers and directors who make it big here, we are stuck in the minimalist and anti-structure. I want to read you a quote from a

recent *Globe and Mail* article, in which filmmaker Clement Virgo comments:

"We don't excel at genre films, which the Americans are great at doing: horror films, romantic comedies. I don't think we do that very well. We make idiosyncratic films - Kissed, New Waterford Girl - ones that are specific, but which can be universal stories. You know what it is? We as Canadians don't do well when we chase the audience. We do better when we lead the audience."

Audience is essential to storytelling and it's one of the first things you write in your book.

You need to find an audience, to be really clear in terms of being a professional, all right? You need to find an audience that is appropriate to your budget! If you are trying to reach an audience that loves minimalist work or absurdist work or whatever, then you must make the film on a budget that is appropriate to that. If you are trying to reach the mass audience then you can't use minimalism and anti-structure as forms.

But you see, implicit in what he just said is a value judgment. "Minimalist, anti-structure are better films. They are more artistic, they are more creative or whatever." That, in my judgment, is snobbery. Many of these minimalist, anti-structure films are frankly boring to any audience, no matter how intellectual. On the other hand, many commercial films, a film like say *Collateral*, would be very satisfying to the most intellectual of audience. So saying "what we Canadians do well" is ignoring all the Canadians that went to Hollywood and found success.

Right, this is also a contentious issue.

Sure it is! As it is in any country. Because people not only leave Canada, they leave England. They leave Australia. They leave France. Holland. Turkey. Wherever. People come from

all over the world to Hollywood to make commercial films. And this annoys the people back home who wish those talents would stay at home. But if the country in question doesn't offer the talent an opportunity to make commercial films... I mean, one of your greatest filmmakers is David Cronenberg and he has been denounced in Parliament with "Why in the world are we giving money to this ham-handed horror filmmaker, this schlock, blah blah blah, and so forth." A Cronenberg film like *Dead Ringers* is one of the most sensational and important films of the decade, by any filmmaker anywhere in the world.

When I teach in Australia and New Zealand, even, I hear the same arguments. Canada in particular, anglophone Canada, specifically, has a serious identity crisis. Always has. You don't know what a Canadian is whereas the Aussies do. Okay? Aussies know who an Australian is, even if it is based on a completely fictitious identity, okay? The vast majority of Australians live in the suburbs. This whole outback, *Crocodile Dundee* character is bullshit. But the Aussies believe in it whereas Canadians are often unsure. The way in which you define your identity in Canada is not what you are but what you are not. Who are you? What's a Canadian? Well you say, "We're not an American." Okay. That's fine. But neither is a Mexican. What does it mean to be not American. You have an often fictitious sense of your identity that you are gentler, kinder, loving people and well-mannered compared to the crass, cruel, ill-mannered Americans. This is a fiction. And a writer with insight and a filmmaker with insight would realize that Canadians are just as cruel or generous or loving or caring or barbaric or civilized, mannered or ill-mannered as anyone else in the world. This sense of a kind of cultural superiority causes you to stop thinking. It causes Canadian writers and filmmakers to assume facts not in evidence. And so,



Regularly screened at the seminars, McKee calls *Casablanca* "a model of excellence."



"If I were a young writer my ambition would be to create the next *Six Feet Under*, the next *Sex and the City*."

in order to please yourself and the powers-that-be that granted the money to make movies in the first place, you have to reinforce the Canadian stereotype of sensitive, generous, well-mannered people. As a result, it's very difficult to be authentic when you question everything you write. "Is this Hollywood-ish?" And if it is, eliminate it. That is not creative freedom when you are deliberately destroying your creative choices because you think they echo of some other culture, you know?

What I try to do in my teaching is free writers from all that shit. Stop making movies about movies. Stop making movies that reflect other cultures, other forms. Just knuckle down and tell a story about life. If it ends up having a classical structure, then do it. If it doesn't, then don't. But not based upon your efforts to please the film funding agencies or your sense of the critic's intellectual whatever. So I just try to give them the power to create based upon their mastery of the underlying principles of the form and then I wish them to simply react to life as they will, idiosyncratically and create what seems to be true to them, without this constant looking over your shoulder. Does it look like a French film? Is it not Hollywood? Whatever.

Who are the screenwriters working today that really impress you?

You know, I resist answering questions like that. For this reason: if you want to peg somebody, the first question you ask them is what films do you like. When you start saying I admire X, Y, and Z and dislike A, B, and C, it causes people to immediately make assumptions and judgments about who you are and what you do. My taste and my sense of excellence versus dreck is mine. Ask yourself what's your favourite movie or favourite movies of the last few years? I am not of the opinion that anything matters, and that all taste is equal.

I guess by that same token, reading as many great screenplays and reading as many poor screenplays is equally educational.

I think it's more instructive to read bad screenplays.

So as a freelance script reader here in Canada, I'm doing myself a big favour by reading every terrible script that's passed around.

Yes you are. If you do this. If you are teaching yourself to write, you look at these badly written things and you say, "How would I fix it?" Because at some point, you are going to be sitting in front of a draft of your own writing that is badly written. You are going to have to figure out what works and what doesn't. Watching bad movies and reading bad screenplays – not just to criticize them, but to sit there and *really* put the glove at your feet and say, "If I was this writer, how could I make this thing come to life?" – trains your mind to think critically of your own writing and creatively in terms of solutions.

We are going to watch, in the lecture, *Casablanca*, which is a model of excellence. The Writers Guild of America did a survey, one of these little lists making things that annoy me, and *Casablanca* was voted the best screenplay of all time. And so we are going to watch this as a model of excellence. When you look at something and go "It's perfect. I wouldn't change a word," [you learn so much from that]. So you do both. You look at masterpieces and study why their so successful and that gives you a model of excellence. You also read bad works and figure out how you can fix it.

I wanted to ask you about your thoughts on writing for television these days versus writing a theatrical feature?

Oh, my answer to that is simple. If I were a young writer today, I would not bother writing a screenplay.

"I think that by the year 2050, film as an art form will be no more important to us than ballet is today."

You wouldn't write a screenplay for a feature film?

Yes. To me, what we are watching in film everywhere in the world, with the exception of the Asian film culture, is the death rattle of a dying institution.

How long have we got, doc?

I don't know. But if the trends that I see now do not have a real revolution, I think that by the year 2050, film as an art form — it will always be an entertainment — but film as an art form will be no more important to us than ballet is today. In the 19th century, it was the novel. In the Elizabethan time, it was theatre. And in the 20th century, it was film. There will always be a dominant art form for story. Stories are going to be told. Period. One way or another. The form that I see taking over now, clearly is television. The finest writing in America — dramatic writing, comedic writing — is on television. If I were a young writer my ambition would be to create the next *Six Feet Under*, the next *Scr and The City*. It's long form. You've got a huge canvass. It can go on for years. On a series like *Six Feet Under*, you are dealing with unreliable realities and subjectivities galore. Even in *The Sopranos*, half the time you didn't know whether you were watching a dream sequence or something else.

One of my students is a fine writer and he is working on a series at HBO. He told me that when you go to HBO with a draft, the reaction that you typically get from the executives there is "Not dark enough." And he would just jump up and down, "You want dark,

I'll give you dark." Where else in the world — and I mean publishing, theatre, film — where else in the world can you go where the people who are producing this work will give you a note like "Not dark enough." This is becoming truer and truer, not only at HBO but at Showtime and, even occasionally, on the networks.

Right, like something like *Last*.

Last, for example. What's that series set in the hospital — *Grey's Anatomy*. And *The Practice* was another one.

***House* is another good example.**

Yes. There's so much competition in television. You got 100 channels, 99 of them are full of shit. The answer to all of this, by the way, is TVo. You want to watch quality material whenever you please, you just set your TVo and that will record everything that you love. It's going to be more hours of quality work in the week recorded than you could possibly see. You don't have to watch the crap. It just eliminates the crap and you get to fast-forward through all the commercials.

My feeling is that unless filmmakers demand higher standards of themselves and unless the funding agencies, private and public, demand higher levels of excellence then film is just going to deteriorate into a bunch of tracking shots with voiceover narration.

As great as the writing is on television these days, what you are saying about the decline of film as an art is a sad thing.

It is a sad thing, no doubt about it. But it is a conspiracy. It's a chicken and egg question. Does the decline in the level of civilization and culture cause the corresponding decline in the arts? Or does a corruption of the arts lead to the decline of civilization? I don't know. But I do know this: When the quality of storytelling in the world declines, the result is decadence. If you look around the world today, you see the uncivil and ill-mannered people, alien-

ation.... You can't get a good conversation anymore. Anywhere! The New Yorkers used to sneer at L.A., "You know, people don't talk there." I have a home in New York City and I'm hard pressed to get a conversation. What you get are prepared monologues from people. There are sort of interesting monologues. That's not conversation. The fact that people cannot listen to each other and react freely to what someone else said is a measure of the decline amongst all the other horrors in the world. And so, yes, it is really sad to watch this great art form of film become so grotesque.

It's funny that we are having this conversation because LFT is celebrating its 25th anniversary with a theme event called "Film Is Dead, Long Live Film."

In many ways, this is true of both Hollywood and the avant-garde. When you say, "Long live film, film is dead" what you mean is "Story is dead, long live spectacle"; the spectacle of either painterly photography in the European sense or special effects in Hollywood.

I sit in audiences that applaud special effects. **Superman Returns**, okay, loved it, but the story's irrelevant. I've seen the same thing where you go to so-called art movies and you come out discussing the qualities of the photography. Not the meaning of what you watched, not the feelings involved. As if you would actually freeze one of these pictures and hang it on your wall. What the hell do they mean? Beautifully photographed? This is decorative photography because it is not expressing much of anything that is happening in the lives of the characters. So you have glistening dewdrops falling off petals in the garden, and whatever the hell, versus explosions. It's all style and no substance. So when you say, "Long live film", I'm afraid you don't really mean that, unless you mean film is becoming a form of plastic art.



"I sit in audiences that applaud special effects. *Superman Returns*, loved it, but the story's irrelevant. When you say, 'film is dead, long live film' what you mean is 'story is dead, long live spectacle.'"

And maybe that is the future. Film will become literally motion pictures. It will be a plastic art. It will be photography in motion. And it will all be about decorative picture making.

It is premature to count film out. There's an old expression in Hollywood: "There's nothing wrong with Hollywood that a few good pictures won't cure." I don't think there is anything wrong with film as an art form that some great storytellers can't cure. But the inspiration for all of this is life. The difficulty in the 21st century is that life has become so complex in many ways; not in an interesting way, it's just complex in a confusing way. To turn on tv to see the endless slaughter is so disheartening that you lose faith in life. And even the notion back in High Modernism that life is absurd was a powerful and fascinating assertion when Luis Brunel was making films. But even the notion that life is absurd is not even interesting anymore. It isn't absurd, unfortunately. It's real. What the people in Lebanon are experiencing is not an absurdity, but a reality. It's horrifying and you can't escape it by saying that life is absurd.

So what do you do? The poor writer has to become a philosopher of a kind that no period in history prior to this required. You have to have an insight into life and an ability to express that insight even in the hardest of times.

So, we are seeing this decline in story, but really it's the worst thing that could happen. We need story now more than ever.

Exactly. Somebody has to make sense out of this madness even if the sense is that it's tragic and that there is no way out. One of the most important aspects of storytelling is discovering that you are not alone. You are not the only human being that sees this or feels this. To realize that there is a community of intelligent, sensitive people out there, who sense the tragedy and dead end and who don't see a way out either is a comfort. To realize that there is no

light at the end of the tunnel, but lots of us can understand that is a comfort.

Often those kind of movies break through. I think that is why some films connect with people.

It's a very important thing. You don't have to offer solutions. Hollywood thinks they have to offer solutions. I'm not saying you have to offer solutions. They just need to tell us "what is" in an honest and beautiful way and we'll find our own way of reconciling ourselves to "what is". But they have to have the guts to express "what is".

And that takes us back to what we were talking about earlier that in Canada writers can't be blinded by their own innocent stereotypical Canadian life. They really have to answer the question "What is?" and tell the truth and express what it is to be a human being. You see, one of the problems you have anywhere, but especially a place like Canada, is governments are not interested art!

Especially today with our current Prime Minister, Stephen Harper.

Exactly. They never have been. They are only interested in propaganda. They only want to fund that which flatters them, their party and the national culture. Hollywood doesn't give a shit. Hollywood only wants money. So you can write very dark films in Hollywood and they'll get made. A masterpiece like *Seven* gets made and that filmmaker will keep working as long as he makes money. If I have a choice between propaganda and the commercial imperative, I'll choose the commercial. It's more honest. When you have government funding, it's a corrupting influence.

I've had this discussion with a few directors. There's no incentive to make better films. Our films don't make money and yet directors and writers keep getting to make films. There is an incestuous circle of the artist, the government funding and the

critic. The critic says, "This is Canadian art, therefore you must support it." The artist goes to the government and says, "Look my little film didn't draw flies, but the critics say I'm an important Canadian artist so you have to fund me." The government then gets to stand around at posh cocktails parties congratulating itself on how it is supporting Canadian culture. You have this little unit of government funding, insular artists and critics who need something to say, who need to fund artists so they'll have something to write about. This little circle excludes the population, but it goes on and on because it is self-perpetuating. It takes tax money – from people who would never go to these films – to fund these films. I say that is corrupt.

Well, it's a funny little country that we live in up here.

You know, you are not alone. When I lectured in Switzerland, I asked them, "Where are the hard hitting Swiss films about your corrupt banking industry? About how Swiss banks supporting tyranny and criminality from the Colombian Drug Cartel to Nigeria?" Their faces go blank. I said, "You are never going to make that movie because you are never going to get a Swiss franc to make that movie, right? Because the government is not going to put up with that. And you think you are superior to Hollywood?" At least Hollywood would say, "Shit, a movie about the corrupt banking industry? Will it make money? Is it well written?"

Or can you get Tom Cruise in it?

Or George Clooney and it's called *Syriana*. It gets made and it makes money.

There is a certain democracy to market-driven story telling.

Consequently the films like say *The Big Chill* don't get made very often because there are no stars. I mean, they all became stars, but how can you

make a sensitive film in Hollywood today without stars, unless you get a star. Jack Nicholson wants to do *About Schmidt* and it gets made. And how corrupting is the influence of the star? Now Jack Nicholson is too smart a guy to mess with Alexander Payne's beautiful script. Tom Cruise went along with *Collateral* and wanted to play a bad guy and did so brilliantly. I thought it was one of the best performances he's ever given. Brad Pitt protected the writers of *Seven* to get that down ending past the studio. So the star can help you like that. Or you get the wrong kind of star and they can be just as egomaniacal and corrupting of the writing process as any producer. But all that whining aside, try and get a novel published. Try to get something on Broadway or off-Broadway. I went to see *The Drury's Chaperone*, which came out of Toronto.

Yes, Don McKeller one of our better-known actor/writer/directors was one of the principal creatives behind that.

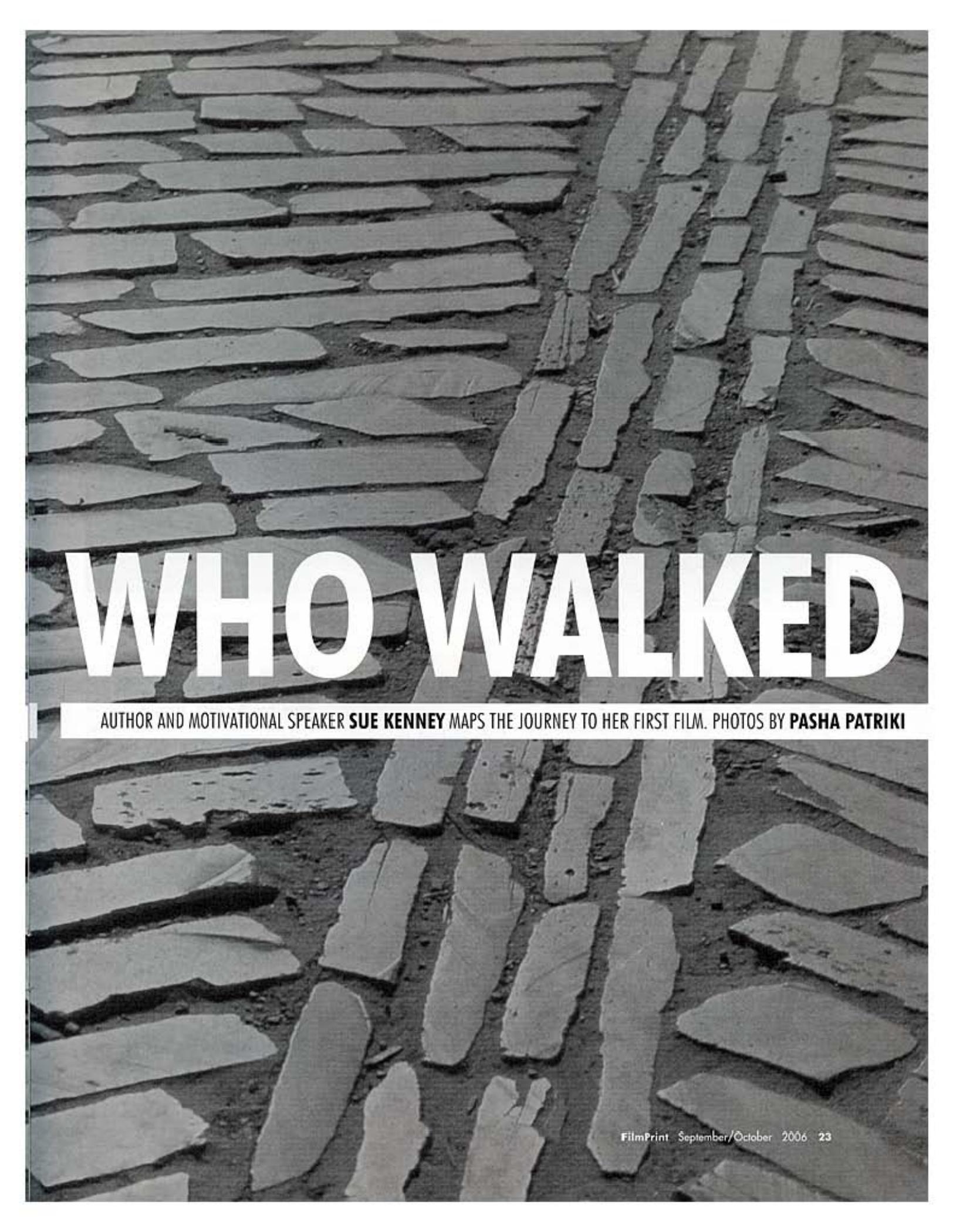
Fucking brilliant! BRILLIANT! My wife and I laughed until we couldn't stand up. And the music was wonderful. It's a satire too and all the rest of it you know, but it was done with such creative brilliance. And it started locally in Toronto and finds its way to Broadway. And those successes, you know, little novels that become big novels, workshops that develop into a Broadway success.

So no matter how miserable life becomes, no matter what you know, it is not unrealistic to think that you have a real chance. You do if you produce something of surpassing quality. If you are really, really good and you bust your ass, you know. There is light at the end of the tunnel. ■

"Just knuckle down and tell a story about life."

Robert McKee's STORY seminar takes place November 17th to 19th at Northrop Frye Hall of the University of Toronto. For more information on Robert McKee's seminar visit www.whitedogseminars.com

THE WOMAN



WHO WALKED

AUTHOR AND MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER **SUE KENNEY** MAPS THE JOURNEY TO HER FIRST FILM. PHOTOS BY **PASHA PATRIKI**



Hand in hand on the paved passages of the Camino.

Just before I left to film my first documentary on location in Spain, a good friend sent me a postcard that had a picture of the Spanish artist, Pablo Picasso, dressed in a black and white striped shirt. The quote read, "If you know exactly what it is you are going to do, what is the point in doing it?"

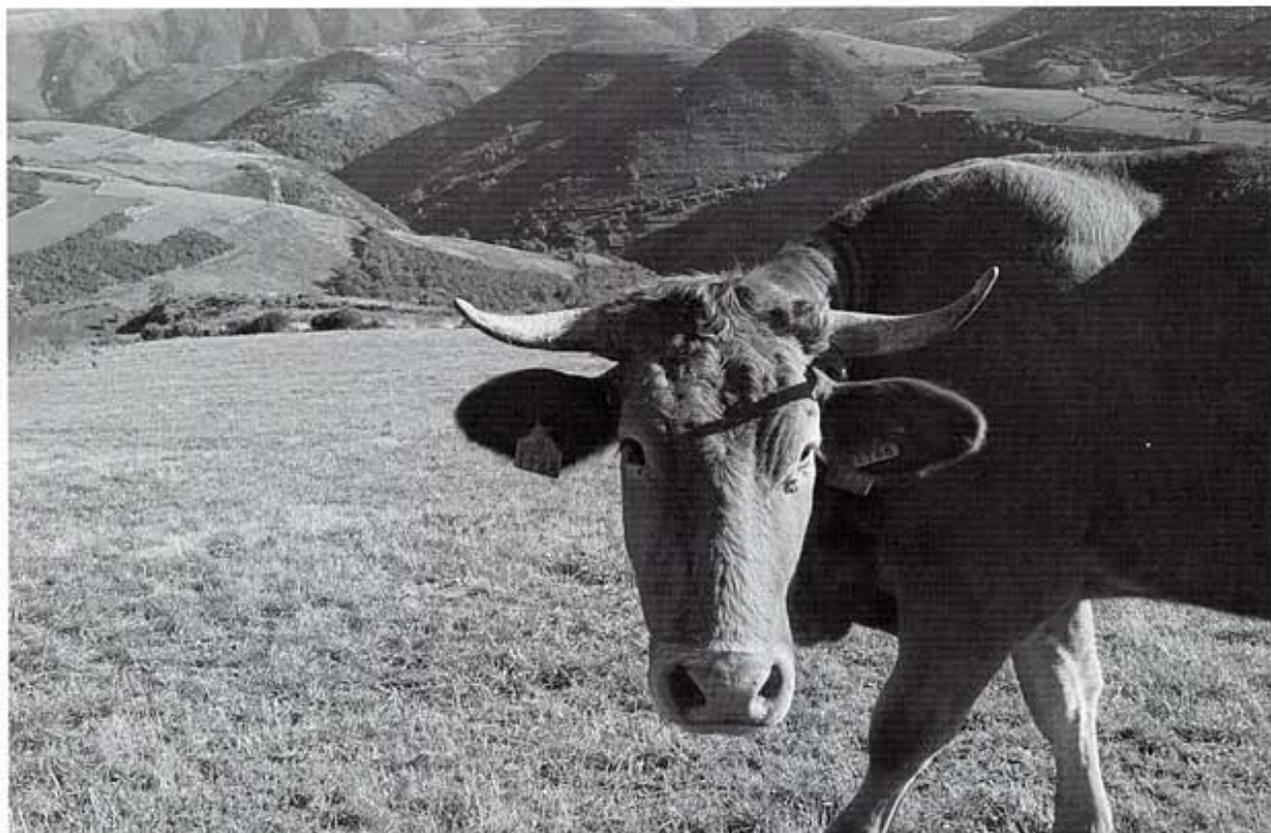
In November 2001, after I was suddenly downsized from my lifetime career in the telecom industry, I decided to embark on a journey to find more purpose in my life by walking 780 kilometers on a medieval pilgrimage route in Spain known as the Camino de Santiago de Compostela. Pilgrims have been walking the route for over 1000 years through forests, over mountains, along Roman trade routes, paved walkways, stone paths and along the shoulders of modern day

**I decided to
embark on a journey
to find more purpose
in my life by walking
780 kilometers on
a medieval pilgrimage
route in Spain
known as the
Camino de Santiago
de Compostela.**

highways. Famous for its legendary power to transform, modern day pilgrims join the path, arriving from all over the world with various religious and cultural backgrounds, often in search of spiritual enlightenment.

When I returned from this life-altering experience, I shared anecdotal tales about the pilgrims I met and experiences I had along the way, and found out that people were inspired. The Camino became the story platform for my artistic creativity and after a couple of years of telling the stories, I wrote my first book *My Camino*. Now an author and motivational speaker, this year I went on to perform a one-woman show at the Drake Hotel and the London Fringe Festival. All of this happened because I went for a long walk.

About a year after my book was released, I received a call from a



Makin' a moo-ovie? Curious bovine gets in on the action.

woman who read it. Her name was Elizabeth Joyce. She had terminal cancer and asked if I would walk the Camino as her guide. She was afraid to walk the path alone. Inspired by her courage, I contemplated the idea of filming a documentary based on her desire to walk and face her fears. I felt so strongly that this was a story that needed to be told. Even though I had no professional film experience, I completely trusted that if I was committed to sharing my vision, the Camino would provide me with the people, insight, intrigue, conflict, adventure, mysticism and whatever else I needed to share this story.

A friend referred me to cameraman Pasha Patriki. He was available and willing to carry all of his equipment on his back while he walked the entire way. He had been working on a num-

ber of commercial projects and wanted to work on something more artistically challenging. When he heard about the history of the pilgrimage, he was immediately captivated. This project needed someone who was passionate about the subject and I knew as soon as we met, he was the right person.

Elizabeth would only be able to walk 10 kilometers a day, and would need assistance carrying her backpack because of her weakened state. Mony Dojeiji, a Lebanese-Canadian former business exec in the software industry, was invited join the group as a caregiver. Mony was also an experienced pilgrim. She had resigned from a lucrative position in 2002 to walk a 5000-kilometer pilgrimage from Rome to Jerusalem for peace. I had been working closely with her and her husband Alberto, coaching them through

the process of writing a book about their journey. Mony jumped at the chance to contribute. She believed in the project. Since she spoke fluent Spanish, she agreed to conduct interviews with experts, other pilgrims and locals along the way. Within a matter of weeks it was all set, I was confident and excited about the possibilities of this artistic endeavor. I was also nervous. I had no idea what the Camino would deliver and on top of that, I had the responsibility of directing this film without applied experience.

The first thing I did was to create a conceptual checklist. By defining some of the high level concepts for consideration, I created a direction for the story to unfold. I reviewed the themes, style, and potential dramatic events with Pasha. Since the route is mapped out by yellow arrows painted along the



Hangin' Out: Often boots are hung out to dry. A pilgrim gives her trainers an airing.

way I wanted to include this symbol as well as other Camino iconography. I planned to capture the architecture, shells, stones, and animals, as well as anything that aligned with music, history, women, culture, language, religion, spirituality, emotion and ritual. Since I wouldn't be able to stay with Pasha all the time, I gave him creative license. The checklist provided him with a guide without telling him exactly what to film.

Unfortunately, Elizabeth's health deteriorated and her doctor advised her to cancel a couple of weeks before we left. My main story idea was gone. I felt like I had failed before I started. I questioned whether there was a point in continuing with the documentary. However, weeks leading up to the pilgrimage, I received requests from two women who wanted to join me as the

walk. Laura Cooper, a single mother of two children, had read my book and decided the Camino would give her a chance to face the physical challenge of walking. Anita D'Amario had heard me speak at an event. She was a successful career woman in her early 40s. She was single and without children. She had acquired material success, yet longed to find some sense of purpose in her life. I could continue with the film by shifting gears creatively. I could explore what compelled these women to choose to endure both the joys and anguish of walking hundreds, sometimes thousands, of kilometers on a medieval pilgrimage route. Before leaving, I conducted interviews with the neophyte pilgrims to capture their personal background, characteristics, intentions for walking, and fears.

Once in Spain, we decided to start

each day by filming individual video diaries. This way we could track their personal inner journey through to transformation. As the leader of the group, I adopted a hands-off approach to managing both the creative process and this diverse group of women. I considered myself more of a guide. I found the dual responsibility of shepherding the pilgrims and directing the documentary exhausting. I couldn't sleep at night, often staying up late tracking impressions, reviewing story structure and making travel plans for the next day. We shot 35 hours on Mini DV capturing rarely seen footage of the pilgrim's mass in Santiago: interviews with priests and monks, opinionated Camino experts and multinational pilgrims providing controversial insight to the allure of the Camino.

After 12 days of walking across the



Take Photo Here: Sign indicates that this would be a good spot to take a picture.

north of Spain with only two days of rain, we had filmed a character study of the group and its individuals, depicting a complex feminine inner journey. On the longest day we walked 35 kilometers through rough terrain. Many times the pilgrims wanted to give up walking. In the film, we are privy to the struggles and epiphanies of the women who walked.

When I got back to Canada, I put together a five-minute DVD sampler along with a one-sheet to show to prospective funders, distributors and broadcasters. The footage was breathtaking and the stories were moving. However, the feedback was disheartening: From the National Film Board to private television broadcasters, they felt it didn't have the conflict required for a good row. There were no fights, no wars, no political conflict and no

blood shed. No one got eaten by a bear. No one even broke a heel. I was worried that I wouldn't be able to use the footage.

During public speaking engagements, I had the chance to show the sampler to my audiences and get direct feedback. The response was overwhelming from everyone who saw it. They identified with the women and embraced their choice to experience the simple life of a pilgrim as a message that needed to be delivered to others; they saw it as a story of empowerment and choice. There were several requests to buy the DVD sampler from me. Many offered to organize small group screenings in their home, church basements, women's associations and more.

Immediately after getting this feedback, I decided the feature length docu-

mentary would be released at a grass roots level, beginning with the people closest to me. I have been writing a newsletter about the Camino for a couple of years and I have a list of over 2700 people.

Now in post-production, **Las Peregrinas (The women who walk)** is in the final stages of the editing process and it will be authored to encourage a discussion among the viewers following the screenings. It will be released at private gatherings on the weekend of 3-5 November 2006. Even though the film didn't turn out the way I expected, I couldn't have imagined it any other way. ■

female eye

festival to watch for

In its fifth year, the **Female Eye Film Festival** draws big films, but not the crowds... yet

By Ana Barajas

The Female Eye is an intimate festival where it is easy to approach the participating filmmakers and where professional and personal connections are effortlessly made. Leslie Ann Coles, founder and director of the festival, creates a supportive, welcoming and inspiring environment for filmmakers and audiences alike. The festival's youth mentorship program proves just that. Seven high school students from Woodbridge College took part in a Super 8 workshop mentored by established filmmakers with the support of LIFT and the Ontario Arts Council. The films produced by these young women had tremendous heart, dealing with issues that examine their world in an honest and straightforward way. While not all of them, by their own admission, will continue to make films, the process and experience has given them an irreplaceable platform to speak about themselves and their concerns.

A thoughtful script and compelling performances made **End of Silence** by Anita Doron a festival favourite. It is hard to take your eyes off Sarah Harmer and Ekaterina Chutchekanova in this story of friendship, disappointment and new beginnings. The short documentary **A Conversation with**

Lars Von Trier by Eva Ziemsen encapsulates the spunk, drive and quick thinking needed to thrive in this business and gives us a lesson in how to bring your projects to fruition straight from the mouth of this influential director. Australia's **Call me Mom** by Margot Nash grabs you immediately and doesn't let go. A winding narrative and strong performances make it impossible to dismiss this story of familial heartbreak caused by racial tension and homophobia. Equally haunting, Heesoo Kim's **Reminiscent** takes you into a fragmented made up world, reflective of the artist's frame of mind with a soundtrack that will stay with you long after the film has ended.

In the five years since its inception, the Female Eye Festival has come a long way. It attracts international filmmakers, prestigious and generous sponsors and an ever-growing line up of high-quality films. Then, why is it not as well attended as it should be? Can we blame it on the nice weather we had during the four-day festival or the myriad of events happening at once in the city, or do people stay away because mistakenly equate the word female with chick-flick? Whatever misconceptions exist, the participating

films deserve to reach a wider audience and the festival needs the support from the community to achieve this. Don't think that you will only see romantic comedies at this festival, but rather it is a balanced program of hard-hitting documentaries, intelligent drama and challenging experimental films. The Female Eye Film Festival is just getting started. Keep it in your line of vision and plan to attend or participate next year. ■



Clockwise from Top: *Call me Mom* by Margot Nash, *End of Silence* by Anita Doron, and *A Conversation with Lars Von Trier* by Eva Ziemsen .



MIDI ONODERA

“At one point, I seriously considered Cordon Bleu school in France, but the pressure of working in a restaurant is unbelievable. It’s like working on a film every single day.”

1 What kind of films do you make?

I would say artist-driven, which means films and videos that are generated by my own thoughts and ideas. They are not usually commissioned work. My films are rooted in what they used to term as new-narrative feminist filmmaking.

2 What are you currently working on?

I am working on making 365 films in a year. So that's a movie a day. And right now, I am going to be doing 243. [date of interview was 18 July] And people can look at the films on my website, which is www.amovieaday.com. Some days are better than others, but it has been incredibly challenging and I think that it has really taught me to think in a different way in terms of my relationship to taking an image and then putting a story or an idea together in a very quick way.

3 What medium do you use when you're making these films?

Mostly I use toy cameras. A toy camera is a toy that is specifically marketed to children. One of my favorite cameras is one called the VCam Now. And I don't think you can get it in Canada, but you can get on Amazon.com in the States. I think you can get it off eBay too. The format is probably smaller than your hand so it can go anywhere. It's very easy to whip out of your bag and start shooting. The quality is almost like webcam. It's got the very textural feel and quality to it that is reminiscent of Super 8, except of course it's the digital version because it records onto a memory card. It's quick and accessible. This particular camera doesn't even have a zoom lens so it's quite rudimentary, but the quality is incredibly beautiful. It's very lyrical.

4 How do you finance your work?

[With the movie-a-day project.] I'm just doing it on my own because the films are anywhere between 30-seconds and a minute. It's not very expensive. It's only time-consuming. The larger video that I finished called **i have no memory of my direction** was funded both by the Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Arts Council.

5 What is the best advice you've received as an artist?

Lately, the best advice that I've received is from a shodo [Japanese calligraphy] artist Noriko Maeda. I just recently purchased one of her works and the piece is called *Asobu*, which means "play like a child." She says that this is her personal motto. So the concept "play like a child" really means seize the moment and enjoy life. This is the best advice I've ever received because when you're an artist, you can get too serious about your work. It's incredibly healthy and invigorating to play like a child again and to remember that always. It's a matter of not taking yourself so seriously.



6 Which artists or filmmaker do you admire?

I would still say people like Chris Marker, Chantal Ackerman, the more classic, experimental filmmakers. Their work still touches me after so many years. It inspires me, influences me, makes me think. They are like guide posts so I can mark my own development. Because I've seen some of those films 20 years ago – and, of course, one's own views and ideas change over that time – it's interesting to revisit old films and see what you think about them now.

7 If you weren't an artist what would you be doing?

I'd probably be a chef. I really like to cook. When I was in art school, I put myself through school working in a restaurant. At one point, I seriously considered Cordon Bleu school in France, but the pressure of working in a restaurant is unbelievable. It's like working on a film every single day. Because as a head chef, you have a crew that you're constantly working with and constant demands. It's a very difficult job. I think I just got burnt out.

8 But you're working on a film a day. How do you keep motivated?

Yeah, but this is something that I don't get paid for. There's no pressure on me to produce something amazing every single day. Some days I know, I'm just filling in the time and other days I think, "Yeah, that's not bad." It's my own internal pressure of trying to achieve the goal. ■

Watch for the screening of **i have no memory of my direction** on 28 October 2006 at The Workman Theatre (1001 Queen Street West) as part of UFT's New Directions in Cinema program.



TAIS

TORONTO ANIMATED IMAGE SOCIETY

60 Atlantic - Studio 102 - Toronto
www.tais.ca - tais@bellnet.ca - 416-533-7889

New Directions in Cinema presents

**i have no memory
of my direction**
by Midi Onodera

28 October 2006
at The Workman Theatre
1001 Queen Street West



LIAISON OF INDEPENDENT FILMMAKERS OF TORONTO

FALL INTO FILM



**SUPER 8, 16MM AND 35MM
WORKSHOPS AND COURSES
IN FILMMAKING — FALL 2006**

For a complete schedule, and information
on how to register, please visit:

WWW.LIFT.ON.CA

or call us at 416.588.6444.



torontoartscouncil

Canada Council
for the Arts

EYE WEEKLY

FILMPRINT

Ad Rates

1/8 Page	(3 1/8" x 2 1/8")	\$80.00
1/4 Page	(3 1/8" x 4 1/8")	\$150.00
1/2 Page Vertical	(3 1/8" x 10")	\$200.00
1/2 Page Horizontal	(4 1/8" x 7 1/8")	\$200.00
Full Page	(8 1/2" x 11")	\$280.00
Inside Back Cover	(8 1/2" x 11")	\$400.00
Inside Front Cover	(8 1/2" x 11")	\$400.00
Outside Back Cover	(8 1/2" x 11")	\$450.00

Block Booking: We offer a 15% discount on block-ad purchases of a full volume worth of advertising (6 issues).

Mailing Inserts: We will include flyers or other inserts (such as 1-sheets, small brochures or postcards) in our magazine mailings for a flat-fee of \$250.00.

For more information, please contact Michael Barker, Communications Coordinator at 416.588.6444, or by email at communications@lift.on.ca.

**FILM
IS
DEAD
LONG
LIVE
FILM**

WWW.LIFT.ON.CA



torontoartscouncil

Canada Council
for the Arts

EYE WEEKLY

GEMINI G21

ONE GOAL, ONE PASSION FROM COAST-TO-COAST.
CELEBRATING CANADA'S BEST TELEVISION.

Join the industry at the 21st Annual Gemini Awards

OCTOBER 16, 17 & 18, 2006
Liberty Grand Entertainment Complex
Exhibition Place
Toronto, Ontario

NOVEMBER 4, 2006
River Rock Casino Resort
Richmond / Vancouver
British Columbia

Contact
the Gemini Ticket Hotline

Direct **(416) 366-7616**

Toll Free **1-800-644-5194**



www.geminiawards.ca

The Gemini Award statuette was created by Scott Thornley.

CALL FOR ENTRIES

"My film has screened in over 85 film festivals and no other film festival can top the perks and response that my film received at the Festival-at-Sea. Do not miss this unique experience!"

— Sam Chen, filmmaker
ETERNAL GAZE

Illusion Photo courtesy of
Michael Goorjian
Eternal Gaze Photo courtesy of Sam Chen

*"Absolutely the best
film festival I've ever been to."*

— Scott Cervine, filmmaker, 2006

The 3rd Annual Spiritual Cinema **Festival-at-Sea**

Sailing to the Caribbean! March 31- April 7, 2007

Do you have a short or feature film that explores the depths of the heart and the human experience? Do you want to screen it with like-minded filmmakers in front of a full house? Then this is your festival!

Join veteran Hollywood producer Stephen Simon (*Somewhere in Time*, Academy Award-winning *What Dreams May Come*) for a wonderful week of inspired films. If your film is selected, you'll cruise for free!

ILLUSION (pictured above), starring Kirk Douglas, written/directed/starring Michael Goorjian, won First Place Feature and the Audience Choice Award in 2005. Our lineup also included the animation triumph ETERNAL GAZE (pictured above) by filmmaker Sam Chen.

ACCEPTING FILM SUBMISSIONS
Final Deadline is December 4, 2006
Submit your film today!
www.SpiritualCinemaFestival.com

SPIRITUAL CINEMA

Festival-At-Sea
Celebrating
inspiring, transformational films