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I love it when
a plan comes
together...

Thank you to everyone who participated in *FilmPrint's* Direct Mail Movie. We received many creative and beautiful submissions. The Direct Mail Movie was optically-printed by Alexi Manis and screened at LIFT's Ward's Island Picnic and Screening on July 22nd, 2007.

Image: Alexi Manis' Direct Mail Movie submission



NEW GEAR

LIFT News Summer 2007: The Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto has upgraded the Pro Tools suite to the recently released Digidesign 003 Factory. The 003 features powerful tools for composing, recording, editing, mixing, and mastering, as well as an integrated control surface for hands-on control of Pro Tools LE 7.3.

Rates: \$10/hour Full Members:
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For more information please contact the LIFT technical staff at 416.588.6444.



Still from Noel Mitrani's *On the Trail of Igor Rizzi*

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filmprint



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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



Read between the lines

FilmPrint has changed quite a bit since I joined LIFT four years ago. I've been editing the magazine for two years and one of the first things I did when I started was look at the back issues of LIFT's magazine in its various forms.

Twenty years ago, the magazine was simply photocopied sheets of paper, featuring news on what was going on in our small community. It eventually evolved into a 'zine that was hip, bohemian and truly representative of LIFT's free-spirited, "artsy" personality. From 'zine, the publication grew up even more as it took on the form of magazine, which was available on newsstands and was gaining a solid reputation as a magazine that would cover the artists that you wouldn't necessarily see in the mainstream media. That said, we were able to pull in some big names too: Bruce McDonald (p. 18), Clement Virgo, Robert McKee, Anne Wheeler and R. Bruce Elder. This latest incarnation of *FilmPrint* was further evidence that the independent filmmaking scene was a vibrant and formidable force.

I was constantly being pitched great ideas. Many wonderful writers, artists and filmmakers approached me, wanting to learn how they could be part of *FilmPrint*. Of course, LIFT volunteers and friends of LIFT made the current format of the magazine possible.

Sadly, just as we are gaining momentum, the LIFT's Board of Directors has decided to put the magazine on hiatus for the time being as part of their deficit plan. This, my last issue, has been the hardest issue that I have ever worked on (harder than putting together the *Film is Dead! Long Live Film!* special issue, harder than pulling together the

issue during the chaotic time after LIFT's Executive Director Roberto Ariganello's death.)

This issue was hard because as I read the various articles and talked with the writers, and worked with Michael Barker, who has diligently and expertly art directed the magazine for three years, I know how much this magazine has evolved and how much the magazine still had to grow.

This issue also made me stamp-my-foot-on-the-floor, pump-my-fists-in-the-air proud. Learning how newbie filmmakers took the plunge and made their first films (p. 4 and 30), dissecting the importance of great dialogue ("What!?" p. 8), and seeing students get seriously inspired by the going-ons of the co-op ("F is for Field Trip, p. 12). I've learned so much about film with each installment of the magazine. Most importantly, I was encouraged by the stories, determination and persistence of the many people that make up this community. I hope you have felt the same way.

Bunmi Adeoye
Editor

Contributors



David W. Scott is a LIFT member and Toronto-based producer/director. His first feature film, **The Behaviour of Houses**, recently premiered at the Slackers Film Festival (p. 6) and opened its theatrical release at the Brunswick Theatre in Toronto.



Elle de Champagne is a graduate of Humber College's Theatre Performance program and GIFTS's Media Intensive Program. She has created four short films donning the hats of writer, director, producer, editor, composer and actor. She has written four features and will be producing her first feature in 2007. Read about her search for a mentor on page 4.



Ryerson grad Christopher Ball CSC began his film career at the age of nine when he discovered a home movie camera in his parent's attic. Several hundred feet of film and some years later, his work as a Cinematographer and Camera Operator has taken him to Europe, the Caribbean and across Canada. He has produced, shot, assistant directed and directed award winning dramas, TV series, documentaries, commercials, short films and music videos. Christopher's body of work has toured numerous festivals, aired on HBO, TMN, CBC, VISION TV and several foreign broadcasters and played in theatres worldwide. His feature "What?... and other bad dialogue writing" is on page 8.



Independent producer and filmmaker **Josephine Massarella** has a BA in film from UBC, and a postgraduate certificate in Advanced Film and Television from Sheridan. Josie is currently editing a documentary. Read her interview with Bruce McDonald on page 18.



It's summer, and if the sun is up, the chances are **Forbes Campbell** is sweating. Forbes is working at Lenz Entertainment and recruiting a commando film crew in his spare time. Forbes wrote this issue's Super 8 (p. 24) and a review on this year's Images Festival (p. 22).



Renee Cox talks about making her first film, the **Final Thought**, on page 30.



David Whillans is a Ryerson University film student, who has written for the Calgary Society of Independent Filmmakers newsletter. His profile on Noel Mitrani appears on page 16.



"On my second last field trip, in July 2006, our tour at LIFT was with Roberto Ariganello, our late Executive Director and more preciously, my dear friend and first film teacher," says **Eva Ziemsen** who wrote "F is for Field Trip" on page 12. "I dedicate this article to Roberto, whom was by far the most passionate and knowledgeable tour guide to the world of independent film and working with celluloid one would ever meet. I contemplated filming our trip, and to this day, I agonize over the fact that I did not bring a video camera along that day. Instead, what I treasure are still images that capture Roberto's enthused poses and my memories of what he said. I will forever have to reach for these, as I now embark on tours and filmmaking without Roberto to guide me, which he loved to do for so many of us."

(From Top Left): David W. Scott, Elle de Champagne, Christopher Ball, Josephine Massarella, Forbes Campbell, David Whillans, Eva Ziemsen, Lucas Martin

Lucas Martin is a regular contributor to *FilmPrint*. This issue he snapped shots for the Bruce McDonald interview (p. 18) and one of this month's "The Super 8" subjects Jeff Rohrs.

THE MENTORSHIP OF

ELLE DE CHAMPAGNE

One filmmaker finds several helping hands

BY ELLE DE CHAMPAGNE

This year has been all about taking things to the next level. My ambition is to make feature films for worldwide theatrical release. Films that wildly entertain, touch, move and inspire people.

So I've been working hard on the script that will catapult me into this realm partially by getting heavily involved with the scriptwriting group at LIFT.

The group is a highly positive, creative and effective environment where we critique each others work in order to create effective and entertaining scripts. The group is varied and vocal and I wouldn't give it up for the world. What a blessing it has been. In fact, it works out to be a mentorship of sorts because you have an opportunity to have your script read and commented on by members that support each other greatly. I've learned even more by reading other scripts and discussing them.

The most valuable lesson I learned was with regards to the original ending of my script. I had created a compelling story and at the end I resolved it by alluding to the fact that it was all a dream. They made me realize that the audience would definitely have a reaction, which is what I was looking for, but it wouldn't be

a good one because they would feel cheated. Thank God I realized this before it was too late!

In 2006, I set off on a personal development journey. I felt I had come to a place where I was being stopped. So I took several seminars and out of one of them I had an opportunity to work with a life coach. I had to answer a seven-page questionnaire and at the end of it I was assigned a coach who was perfectly matched to me. Her name is Morgana Rae. The added benefit is that before becoming a coach she was a professional actor in Hollywood for several years so she knew all about the business and she's been steering me in the right direction since day one.

To tell you the truth, I wasn't convinced of my need for a coach at first, but then I realized that even the best sports figures in the world all have one. So if I am serious about my ambitions at all, I realized that a coach certainly wouldn't hurt. In fact, I've found that since I've been working with Morgana that I am much more focused. Right from the get-go, she understood me and I knew she wouldn't let me get away with any excuses. Not only that, but she is a very effective cheering section. One can never have too many cheerleaders!

I speak with Morgana on a regular basis. During these conversations we talk about how to get to where I want to be. She also helps me to clear any obstacles that may stand in my way, whether it's an outside force or, even, me getting in my own way because of my experiences I might have. We celebrate my victories and she guides me on how to get energized by what I feel are my failures. Someone asked me what is the difference between having a coach and having a mentor. The best way I can describe it is that a coach is like a sports coach. They give you direction from the sideline. They are able to see the big picture when you cannot because you're on the field playing the game. A mentor, on the other hand, is someone who gives you direction from having done it before. They have a wealth of experience that they can draw from in order to guide you in your own journey.

One of the first assignments that Morgana gave me was to find myself some mentors. Mentor? What a great idea! Did you know that Francis Ford Coppola mentored George Lucas? Why didn't I think of this before? I guess this is why I have a coach.

Mind you, this is not your typical mentorship. Although, if I do come



Life coach Morgana Roe

To tell you the truth, I wasn't convinced of my need for a coach at first, but then I realized that even the best sports figures in the world all have one.

across someone that is willing to mentor me in the truest form that would be a true blessing. This kind of mentorship would not only give me some guidance, but it would also place my blip on the filmmaker's community radar. It involves setting up a series of interviews with filmmakers that have more experience than me.

So far, against my coach's coaching, I've gone for the cream of the crop. You know, the Sam Raimi's, Steven Spielberg's and George Lucas's. You might say I have big dreams!

My biggest break so far was meeting Al Magee while I was taking one of my personal development courses. Al is producer in the TV specialty channels, but had his beginnings in feature film. He has also most recently been heavily involved with the making of the **Trailer Park Boys** television show and the feature film.

Over the course of three phone interviews, Al and I spoke of a variety of experiences he's had both in film and television. He talked about how he first got involved in film and his journey.

One of the things that Al and I talked about was pitching. Pitching is a big part of getting any film made. Then and now, anything can be made on a great pitch.

What I didn't realize is that not only do you have to pitch your idea, but you have to pitch yourself as well. Duh! You see, these are the little things that come with experience or with a great mentor!

The thing about pitching is knowing your material inside and out, which goes without saying. Not only that, but you have to take the first few minutes to get to know your audience. Who are you pitching to and what are they looking for? It goes without saying that you should do your homework in advance, but once you're there and face-to-face with your "pitchee", you've got to take the time to know who they are.

Any great salesperson will tell you that you have to connect with your customer and that we feel most comfortable with the people that resemble us. So you need to reflect their intonation and attitude as well as their body language.

But the most valuable piece of advice Al gave me is stay true to yourself. Write a script that only you can write. Don't try to be someone else because when you're being someone else then you've lost. You've lost because you're now behind the wave instead of being in front. You're a follower and not a leader. No one wants to follow a follower. We all want a strong leader.

I'm really excited about what the future holds for me in terms of who will be my next mentor and what great bits of information they will pass on. Life is fabulous and you just have to go looking for those nuggets that will prove it.

My experience with Al was so inspiring and I only hope one day that I can do the same for someone else.

As I continue on my journey to becoming a worldwide caliber filmmaker, I hope to be able to continue sharing my experience in order to inspire you in your own journey. ■

slackers

NEW FEST CELEBRATES REAL-LIFE MOVIES

BY DAVID W. SCOTT

The Slackers Film Festival opened in Toronto for its inaugural run this past April. The festival marked another first—the premiere of my feature, **The Behaviour of Houses**. It seemed like a good match—Slackers is a festival dedicated to movies without car chases and serial killers; my movie had neither, and I loved the thought of seeing my work alongside other character-driven films that take their drama from real life.

The Slackers Film Festival arrives at an auspicious time. Twenty years after the rise of a new DIY ethos in American cinema, the echoes continue. Since **Sex, Lies and Videotape** and **Slackers**, the democratization of filmmaking has taken root. Whether you call them slacker movies, mumblecore or micro-cinema, the resulting films are fiercely personal. Movies like **Mutual Appreciation** and **The Puffy Chair** are gaining acclaim in the United States. The Slackers Film Festival is providing a Canadian showcase for similar films.

I knew the festival would be an intimate experience. The venue was Cineforum, Reg Hart's legendary institution on Bathurst Street. Intimate isn't a strong enough word—Cineforum is home to a cinephile so dedicated that he hosts the entire city in the front parlour of his house. Arriving on the first day, I was greeted by festival organizers Jason and Brett Butler on Reg's front porch. Tickets in one hand, beer in the other, I was ready to experience the world of slacker cinema circa 2007.

No Substance Necessary directed by Courtney Sell opened the festival and set the tone with themes of isolation, absence of responsibility and idiosyncratic characters. **No Substance Necessary** describes a life in transition, on a road trip that manages to avoid any picturesque scenery as the characters move through a series of profoundly unstimulating settings.

Directed by Anesty and Spiros Carasoulos, **Drop Box** is a rare accomplishment—a low budget feature film that captures the alienation of both working class and “leisure class” characters. When a teen pop idol accidentally returns her homemade lesbian sex tape to the local video store, worlds collide. The contrast (**Clerks** meets **Glitter**) provides the grist of the drama and neither party come out unscathed. Like many mumblecore films, the satisfaction of **Drop Box** is watching characters make it through the day, travel nowhere, but learn a lot.

Sex, Love and Z-Parts, made an impression as big as its director, Marcus D. Russell. Watching the 10-minute short was like entering “Marcus's world.” It's a crime drama set in the aftermath of a scam gone bad. The titular Nissan 350Z spends most of the movie broken by the side of the road and our hero travels in a taxi with two incredulous acquaintances. **Sex, Love and Z-Parts** is too personal and dreamlike to become the action-thriller that it pretends to be.

Rick's Canoe, a collaborative feature produced in workshop by Rick Schmidt,

yielded a surprisingly tender portrayal of men on the fringe. Centred on their experience at a self-help group, a motley collection of men find companionship with each other despite the sometimes silly and unethical efforts of their female group facilitator. A packed house greeted Thursday's final feature, Chris Remerowski's **Sixty Days**. It's an unflinching look at the rough lives surrounding a privileged yuppie in downtown Toronto. Strong acting yields sympathetic portrayals of a girl slipping under the tide of her bipolar disorder, a young man lost to too many drugs and too little motivation, and a hooker with a heart of gold. **Sixty Days** offered the festival's harshest view of a personal hell.

Seeing the truly original and offbeat cinema from day one, I was excited to return for day two. **Buried in Tucson** by Jeff Gallea, began the day with a retro 90s feel—complete with a cast of drifters, a buried McGuffin and a Mexican standoff. Ross Munro's **Brewster McGee** gave us the quirkiest character of the festival. Brewster is a prickly fellow who spends most of his time in his dilapidated car outside a fried-chicken joint. Brewster's inability to behave sociably plays out with an old friend and their attempts to befriend a Chicken Hut employee. The failure of Brewster to recognize his own damage resonates in many of the other films in the festival. **Wasted Life: The Musical** used comedy and song to celebrate the trials of being young, finishing school, and being marginally employable. It was the perfect

Wasted Life: The Musical
directed by Ana Hurka-Robles



short to set the mood and get people laughing before my film unspooled. My film, **The Behaviour of Houses**, is the story of Melinda, a struggling artist living in Toronto with her PhD-candidate boyfriend. Melinda is escaping from her wealthy Windsor-based family who develop suburban real estate. When her brother comes to town for the Home Builders' convention, Melinda has to confront unfinished family business and struggle with her artistic aspirations and family obligations. The theme of change, and finding your own voice in your twenties, was taken up again by Rafal Kowalczyk's short **Quarter Life**, which played the festival after finding success online. The festival closer was the debut of Brett and Jason Butler's latest feature

Confusions of an Unmarried Couple. In the aftermath of a lesbian one-night stand, the titular unmarried couple, Dan and Lisa, reflect on their relationship and confront Dan's inability to deal with the situation. **Confusions of an Unmarried Couple** features the director in a lead actor role like many of the films in the mumblecore scene.

Many of the films selected for the inaugural Slackers Film Fest are from Toronto and wear that identity clearly and comfortably. **The Behaviour of Houses**, **Confusions of an Unmarried Couple**, **Drop Box** and **Sixty Days** all speak to the depth of talent emerging in the Toronto scene right now. Given the challenges that Canadian cinema faces—including access to less than 2%

of our own screens—the emergence of new talent would seem unlikely. But, rather than giving in to institutionalized paralysis, new films are being made and audiences found without relying on the American-dominated multiplexes. The Slackers Film Festival is playing an important role in making these films available. Here's hoping the Butler brothers avoid the slacker lifestyle and keep making movies and programming festivals! ■

INFORMATION ABOUT FILMS FEATURED AT THE SLACKERS FILM FESTIVAL

Alive and Lubricated

dir. Brett Butler
www.subprod.com/alive.html

The Behaviour of Houses

dir. David W. Scott
www.behaviourofhouses.com

Brewster McGee

dir. Ross Munro
www.filmakerrossmunro.com/brewster.html

Buried in Tucson

dir. Jeff Gallea
galleafilms.com/Buried_in_tucson.html

Confusions of an Unmarried Couple

dir. Jason Butler and Brett Butler
www.subprod.com/wall.html

Drop Box

dir. Anesty and Spiros Carasoulos
www.dropboxthemovie.com

The Idiot Boxer

dir. Scott Balzer and Damian Dunn
www.myspace.com/theidiotboxer

No Substance Necessary

dir. Courtney Sell
www.slumlordproductions.com

Rick's Canoe

dir. Jonathan Grossman, Barry Norman, John Reed, Stephen "Jules" Rubin, Jonathan Skurnik, and Rick Schmidt
www.lightvideo.com/films.aspx#canoe

Saturday Morning Blues

dir. Deniz Berkin
www.awakeatdawn.com/saturday_morning_blues.html

Sex, Love & Z-Parts

dir. Marcus D. Russell
www.sexloveandzparts.com

Sixty Days

dir. Chris Remerowski
www.myspace.com/sixtydaysmovie

Wasted Life: The Musical

dir. Ana Hurka-Robles
www.anahurkarobles.com/wastedlife.html

INT. BEDROOM DAY

Jeremy and Emily lie in bed. It is late morning.

JEREMY

It just seems that you never loved me.
Ever since you finally left Jamie after those first few years of secrecy,
you've been really hard to connect with...
and I keep wondering why you've been so cold.

EMILY

Well, you're not so easy to connect with either.
When I met you the first time,
and we went on that cruise down the St Lawrence that was so boring
and you spent all night doing emails
on what was to be a romantic evening together,
I thought there might be a problem.

JEREMY

So you don't love me?

EMILY

Of course I do; it's just that...

JEREMY

What?

EMILY

It's just that, I've been thinking. It's time for me to move on.
We had fun together, but I need something new.

JEREMY

You're joking right? We've invested a lot in this relationship

EMILY

I didn't want to tell you before, but...well, I've been seeing Jim

JEREMY

What!?

EMILY

I've been seeing Jim... and I think I need to move on.

Jeremy looks at Emily, unbelieving

JEREMY

I can't believe this.

“What!?” ...and other bad dialogue writing

BY CHRISTOPHER BALL

When I see a script with the inevitable “What!?” in it, I know that there are going to be dialogue problems.

YIKES!!! Bad dialogue or what!?

*

Scriptwriting is a tough go and good scripts take a great deal of time to master. There is the structure (beginning, middle and end), the motivations, the character arcs, the reversals, the point of view, the settings, the details and the dialogue, all of which have to dovetail into one grand masterpiece where every component makes organic sense and where ultimately, everything flows to a masterful, logical conclusion.

What makes structure good? A coherent story arc with strong motivations for the characters and plot points that organically relate to the narrative and lead inexorably to the conclusion. Everything must be there for a reason.

What makes characters good? Interesting, dynamic personalities we can relate to, that have clear motivations that grow organically out of the narrative and lead them inevitably to the plot's conclusion.

What makes dialogue good? Minimal, dynamic, unpredictable verbal communication that is an element of the larger picture, but doesn't supersede it.

“As little of it as possible” might be another good answer. I have read a lot of scripts, from short films to small-budget independents to multimillion-dollar

Hollywood blockbusters where frequently, the dialogue sucks! Why? There is simply too much of it!

Screenwriters, especially inexperienced ones, often use dialogue as a crutch to get information out, to reveal back-story, to make sure “the Audience” knows what the characters are thinking and doing, and to make sure “the Audience” knows what the storyline is. Good dialogue does NOT do any of the above.

Dialogue should support the story, but not tell it. Dialogue should reveal character, not describe characters. The unspoken is much more important than what is actually said! Dialogue should only be one part of many clues that make up a complete picture. Dialogue almost always fails when it explains, describes, gives answers or repeats known facts. Whenever I look at dialogue or edit scripts, I spend a lot of time slashing the dialogue, trying to find its absolute essence. I try to think of an action that could replace it or, even better, a sound effect, piece of music or image that can substitute for the spoken word.

Dialogue should be only one part of the whole structure. The dialogue alone without the image, sound effects, and music should not have any meaning. Conversely, the sound effect, without the dialogue should have no significance and the image without the dialogue shouldn't tell you everything, either. It's the spe-

cific combination of all the elements in concert that imparts the meaning. If you can remove one element and it doesn't change anything, it shouldn't be there in the first place. If you can watch a movie with your eyes closed, and you know exactly what's going on, it's time for a rewrite. It's not a movie any more; it's a radio play with pictures.

It takes pretty good actors to make bad dialogue work, and even then it's sometimes hard to rise above it. Watch most ongoing series television dramas carefully and you'll see what I mean. If it weren't for the caliber of the actors, the dazzling special effects and the slick cinematography, most TV drama would be unbearable because, generally speaking, the writing is not particularly stellar, and incredibly dialogue heavy.

*

So, what do I mean by the “What!?”, which is the title of this article?

It's the classic moment when one character says something (usually a piece of back-story or a blatant plot point) that shocks the other character, at which point they look incredulous and say “What!?”. I have never, absolutely ever, seen an actor of any caliber, master the “What!?” without it sounding just plain bad. It never works, yet it is rife in screenplays.

If you were to drop a bombshell in real life, the reaction is far more likely to be speechlessness.

I started to think about why that exclamation never works and I realized that it is a classic example of what dialogue should not be. First of all, it is the character telling us what they think and feel and they should be showing us, not telling us. It crudely expresses or highlights a plot point, which we as an audience should already understand (If we don't, then the story is not working and dialogue won't help us). Finally, it is something people never say in real life (another thing to think about when writing dialogue). The only time people say "What!?" is when they didn't actually hear what you said and want you to repeat it. If you were to drop a bombshell in real life, the reaction is far more likely to be speechlessness, a counter-attack, a deflection, or an attempt to make a joke of it, to ignore it or to move on. When I see a script with the inevitable "What!?" in it, I know that there are going to be dialogue problems. Re-read the scene above and try to imagine that "What!?" working performance-wise, without making it sound like a soap opera. I can't.

The sample scene, which relies entirely on unnecessary dialogue and is chock full of back-story needs to be mercilessly slashed! Why would Emily talk in detail about the first cruise they took, telling him that it was on the St. Lawrence, that he ignored her and typed emails on their first romantic encounter? He knows all this. Why does Jeremy blab on about their illicit relationship and her split with Jamie? Well, the screenwriter thought it necessary to get all his care-

fully planned back-story on screen, but it isn't. Back-story is a useful tool that helps the writer formulate and flesh out the characters and figure out what motivates them emotionally, but it rarely needs to be revealed in the script. The only thing that's important is the character's current motivations, feelings and desires. What happened in the past (unless it's an actual plot point within the organic structure of the story itself) is irrelevant to the audience.

The characters also repeatedly say exactly what they are thinking, and a character should never say what they are thinking. In real life, we don't do that. We always hover around what we are trying to say, but we are very rarely direct. In fact, we usually don't realize what it is we're trying to say, or work up the courage and presence of mind to say what we want to say, until it's too late. That's real life! That's interesting, unexpected, and dynamic! That's what we should be aiming for in scripts.

So let's re-write that scene, and see if we can get it down to its essence. This will only be the second draft, so several more drafts beyond this would probably get it to something that's actually ready to shoot, but have a look at the re-write on the following page.

*

It's pretty minimal, but it encapsulates what needs to be told. It's an icy, unfriendly relationship. It's not exactly bright, happy times. They are in the

autumn of their relationship. They're evidently not getting along and may not have been for some time (how long doesn't really matter). Jeremy is focused on his computer not on Emily and it irritates her. Emily is probably seeing someone else, though we're not 100% sure. In the end, Jeremy's reaction tells us that she is. The art direction will give us clues as to how long their relationship has lasted. (They obviously live together, there could be some photos on the walls and other mementos. Maybe of their St. Lawrence cruise). The actors will put a lot into this scene, in terms of how they react, their looks, their posture. There's no need for back-story. The narrative plays in the performances, in the sound effects, in the mise-en-scene, in the lighting, the editing, and in the four brief lines of dialogue!

Close your eyes and listen to this scene, and you wouldn't really get it. Turn the dialogue off and you'd get the gist, but not the nuances. Turn the sound effects off and you wouldn't know she's talking to another man and you wouldn't hear the cheerfulness in her off-screen voice. The lack of keyboard tapping tells you that Jeremy's focus is on Emily, without him saying anything or looking at her. All the elements are necessary to tell the complete story here so it works much better than the first draft! It's gone from verbose to visual, from a radio play to a film.

Keep it simple: Everything in the scene must be necessary or it goes! ■

[Scene re-write]

INT. BEDROOM DAY

It is cold, rain spatters on the window. The trees outside are bare. Jeremy sits cross-legged on the floor, tapping away on a laptop. It is late morning. Emily lies in bed awake, facing away from Jeremy, staring at the wall; there is quite a space between them. There's a chill in the room. A cell phone rings. Jeremy hesitates on the keyboard. Both sit there for a moment, neither making a move.

EMILY

It's mine.

Jeremy focuses on his computer screen, but his fingers are still. Emily grabs the phone from a pocket in her clothes.

EMILY

Hello?

Emily glances at Jeremy, who does not acknowledge her. The muted male voice on the line is cheery, bright. She grabs her clothing and walks out of the bedroom, trying not to look as if she's rushing, and closes the door.

EMILY

Yes... Yeah, sure...

Her voice gets muffled. Jeremy sits unmoving, looks up towards the window. The patterns of water make intriguing designs on the glass, but Jeremy is focused on Emily's voice. Laughter intersperses her brief exchange.

A moment later, Emily opens the door.

EMILY

I've gotta run.

JEREMY

(unmoving)

Yeah

She closes the door.

A black and white illustration of a young girl with a bob haircut, wearing a dark dress and a dark hat, sitting on the ground and clapping her hands. A black cat with a white patch on its chest and a bow around its neck is standing on its hind legs, also clapping. The illustration is positioned above the title text.

F for Field Trip
The **ABC**'s of Filmmaking

BY EVA ZIEMSEN

A IS FOR *Animation*

B IS FOR *Bulletin Board*

C IS FOR *Community* * **D** IS FOR *Direction*

E IS FOR *Experience* * **F** IS FOR *Film*

G IS FOR *Guest Speaker* * **H** IS FOR *Human Interaction*

I IS FOR *Inspiration* * **J** IS FOR *Jokes*

K IS FOR *Knowledge* * **L** IS FOR *Lift Out Loud*

M IS FOR *Mentoring* * **N** IS FOR *Narrative*

O IS FOR *Out of the Box* * **P** IS FOR *Passion*

Q IS FOR *Questions* * **R** IS FOR *Real World*

S IS FOR *Special Events* * **T** IS FOR *Trim Bin*

U IS FOR *Unity* * **V** IS FOR *Volunteering*

W IS FOR *Workshops*

X IS FOR *eXhaustion* * **Y** IS FOR *Yawns*

Z IS FOR *Zzzzzs*

The lesson of the day begins with directions: get off at King St. or St. Andrew Station, take the westbound streetcar to Atlantic Ave. and then cross south of King and walk towards Liberty, turn left and you will hit Hanna Ave. Wait there for your teacher so that we can all enter LIFT, the first stop of our field trip together.

Field trips are a tool in teaching that I have incorporated into my curriculum for several years now, after seeing the tremendous impact it has on my students. The very nature of a field trip is geared to experience and the real world, and therefore perfectly in line with my goal as an educator: to deliver practical and innovative education.

Field trips function on multiple levels: one, they provide students with an experience and applied study of the subject of film and the industry; two, they are an opportunity to bond with my students, and share with them, my own community; three, they train students to continue their education beyond their initial schooling. It is a practical example of the importance of actually getting out in the world, going somewhere to learn something new and to meet and network with other filmmakers.

The field trips I have organized included visits to LIFT, the Director's Guild of Canada (DGC), the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), the Canadian Filmmaker's Distribution Centre (CFMDC), attending a panel discussion at the Worldwide Short Film Festival (WWSFF), The Film Reference Library, various production and distribution companies' offices, Deluxe for a live-looping session and watching matinee screenings of Canadian films at local movie theatres.

The most recent field trip I organized was with my current students from the Advanced Filmmaking Program at Fanshawe College in London, Ontario. While some students will pursue careers in other parts of Canada or abroad, many will migrate to Toronto upon graduation and therefore this trip was geared

as an introduction to the independent film scene.

INT. CHARTER BUS MORNING

The bus ride provides the first chance for our group to bond in a different way than we would in the classroom. Since our trip occurs well into the semester the students were already friends from having worked together. I tell students to document the trip and thus a camera is rolling throughout. Despite their tired eyes at the 7:00 AM pick up time on the drizzly grey November morning, there's excitement in the air on our ride to Toronto.

INT. NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA WORKSHOP ROOM—DAY

Our first stop is the NFB, located at 150 John Street, where we participate in a claymation workshop entitled "Animate the Issues." The friendly and helpful NFB workshop contact is Merrill Matthews, who is also our instructor for the day.

"Animate the Issues" teaches students what a Public Service Announcement (PSA) is by providing video clip examples, facilitating a discussion on what constitutes an effective message, and through a practical exercises of creating five-second long claymation PSA videos. The NFB provides all supplies, including clay and their animation set up: a video camera and a "Lunch Box" (which enables frame by frame photography onto a hard drive).

In groups, my students develop ideas, draw a short storyboard, consult with Merrill before going ahead with their "model creation" and then, they begin to play with clay!

This exercise is by far one of the most effective learning experiences I have encountered in teaching film thus far. On past trips, I have received comments such as "I only want to animate from now on" or "This is the most fun I've had making a film ever." I attribute these

reactions to the fact that adult students like to be given the chance to play.

While the exercise is similar to many film projects, its childlike nature causes any anxieties of learning to disappear. It is amazing to witness how creativity starts to pour out of students when they are encouraged to literally play and experiment. Our semester entailed much production planning and development, as this is oft the lacking ingredient amongst student films. Therefore, the idea of making a film in less than two hours, from beginning to end, is a refreshing and complementary way of working. Additionally, we receive one output tape of our completed claymation PSA's to take home.

INT. NFB MEDIATEQUE—DAY

After the workshop we conveniently head downstairs at the NFB, to the Mediateque. Like a film oasis, the Mediateque consists of pod-like viewing stations, each of which connect to over 10,000 NFB production titles in all genres, including documentary, animation, narrative and experimental. It is all one could ask for. At a minimal cost of \$2, anyone can come into the Mediateque and watch Canadian films of high caliber. I encourage the students to freely watch what they desire, with the exception of two mandatory films: **Begone Dull Care** by Norman McLaren and **Ryan** by Chris Landreth. My intention is to ask questions relating to these films on the final exam.

EXT. STREET QUEEN AND JOHN—DAY

Our lunch hour in the heart of Queen and John provided another opportunity to bond with students on a more human level, out of the classroom.

INT. LIFT—DAY

Renata Mohamed, the membership coordinator, welcomes us at a large table with the latest issue of *FilmPrint* and

*"I've always wanted to make a claymation short
and now I had a chance to do it.
I really enjoy hands-on projects like this.
I've always walked by the NFB
and had no clue about what they do or offer.
So it was wonderful to see first hand what they have.
I think more instructors should incorporate field trips in their courses.
It allows students the opportunity to see
that there is a whole world of possibility available at their fingertips."*

— Kevin Clark, student and field tripper



Photos by Eva Zimeson

membership brochures. She speaks to us extensively about LIPT's services, resources, community and membership, followed by a tour of the facilities. Often when students first see the equipment, they have no idea what it is and it appears ancient to them. I try to stop them from perceiving LIPT as a museum, by giving examples of films that have recently been made with the gear. Part of the foreign experience is due to the fact that many film students do not shoot films on celluloid anymore. I point to a trim bin and ask, "Who knows what this is?" No one knows. I start to explain, and get blank stares in return. Then I say, "You know in Final Cut Pro, there are bins where you can organize your files..." Eyes light up. "Well that is where this term comes from." I explain, "Back in the day" people had to literally hang clips and pull them if they needed them. Some people continue to edit this way,

including some LIPT members. I remind them that the world has changed so much with recent technology and that we now don't think twice about trying out an edit, as we can just hit Apple-Z (undo), but before, it took a good few minutes to make the change. This is when I start to feel very old.

Roberto [Ariganello's, former executive director, who passed away last year] passion on these tours was so heartfelt, that I believe he could convert George Lucas to working exclusively on celluloid on the Oxberry camera. He used to say, "If you want your work to stand out, to really look different, you should shoot on film and use some of the techniques available at LIPT, as it cannot be done with video." I would always jump in and tie it in to my teaching mantra, "Form equals Content". I'd say that there might be a time when you make a film where working on actual celluloid will perfectly

serve your message and artistic goals, and that is when you will remember LIPT. You may also decide to begin experimenting with the medium and discover the right content for the form.

Roberto and I used to tag-team the tour. He knew every piece of equipment like it was one of his children. I will never be able to do this, but I try to inject what he "used to say" where possible.

By now you would think we were exhausted, but were not yet done for the day. With only one day in Toronto and a rented bus, I squeeze as much as possible into this opportunity.

INT.—CFMDC—DAY

Again, conveniently, we headed downstairs to the Canadian Filmmaker's Distribution Centre (CFMDC), where Larissa Fan, the Educational Development and Outreach Coordinator, kindly pro-

"We got to see various equipment, like cameras which were very old, but still give good results and different kinds of editing equipment. I liked LIFT because it is the best place to learn, get experience and meet people from the film industry. Also there are so many flyers on the notice board... We had the opportunity to see the sound room with all the sound recording equipment."

— Anita Pillai, student and field tripper



grammed a screening of short films from the collection for us. Larissa informs the students of the CFMDC's role in the independent film community, locally and internationally, letting them know how they could possibly approach the CFMDC with completed works in the future.

By the end of the screening, I sense the low blood sugar amongst my students, but from the comments on the bus, I know they valued every last minute of the screening.

We board the bus and our driver is ready to take on rush hour traffic all the way back to London. As soon as we sit down, I hear a few, "Thank yous" along with exhausted smiles. That's my cue that the trip was a success. There's no better feeling as an educator than when students really value what you laid out for them. I know they will not forget this experience too soon, unlike for example,

PowerPoint lectures on budgeting and financing. Nothing sticks like a truly visceral, participatory, *real* field trip.

One of my students has prepared a huge container full of fruit, cheese, nuts, and other healthy items, which she passes around the bus. Some students sleep, some talk amongst themselves and to me.

EXT. PARKING LOT—NIGHT

We arrive back in London safely. Tired and fulfilled, everyone scatters into the night parking lot.

I believe field trips are an essential complementary ingredient of film education, as much as all other components of a rich and applied curriculum. Field trips are well worth the substantial extra time, effort and energy they require to plan and conduct.

As one student wrote on her exam, "I think going on field trips should be mandatory at least once for every course because some people grasp things through actually going out and doing it or actually seeing it, rather than just talking about it in a classroom." Another wrote, "Field trips allow the student the opportunity to see that there is a whole world of possibility available at their finger tips."

FADE OUT.

NOEL MITRANI'S FIRST FEATURE:



BY DAVID WHILLANS

If you haven't heard of the Canadian director Noel Mitrani then you will probably hear it soon enough. Having left France to return to his native Canada to shoot his first feature film, **On the Trail of Igor Rizzi**, Mitrani garnered the award for Best Canadian Feature Film at last year's Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF). On top of that, he has now received exposure by being on the 2006 Canada's Top Ten, a list of significant Canadian directors compiled by TIFF.

On the **Trail of Igor Rizzi** is a story about a lonely ex-soccer player from France who ends up down and out in Montreal after losing all of his money. He is in search of a woman he loves, although he never told her how he felt before. Broke, he reluctantly accepts a job to kill an unknown man named Igor Rizzi. He then gets caught up in the mysterious death of an unknown woman, whom he buries in the fear that he might be accused of murder. Soon after, a pesky police detective turns up at his door, and he is forced to think again about killing Igor Rizzi. This is a film that is meditative, subtle and funny at all the right times.

Filmmaker Noel Mitrani was born in Toronto, but has lived most of his life in France, where he studied and worked until his mid-30s. He worked as a writer on four short 16MM films, and directed three of them, before packing his bags and moving to Montreal to shoot his first

feature film. Looking back at his earlier years in film, he says, "Each time I was directing a short film, I was frustrated because I wanted to tell a long story."

Canada was chosen as the location for the film because of the difference between the cinema that is produced in France and North America, and also because of the difference in funding. The themes that are dealt with in French cinema, Mitrani says, are usually about social issues, whereas North American cinema is more open to different themes. For funding in France, he adds, "We have a system to finance the cinema. It's great. But it's always for the same guys." In Canada, Mitrani found that it was easier to produce good, independent films even on a low-budget. "For me, Canada was my land of freedom."

For a feature film, **Igor Rizzi** was very economical. In February 2006, the crew spent twenty-three days in Montreal shooting on an old Arriflex 35 BL4, which worked well in the cold weather,

unlike the video camera they used to shoot the behind the scenes footage. Mitrani put together a cast and crew that deferred their payment so the budget was kept down to only \$50,000. All of this was out pocket from Mitrani who says, "I put all the money I had on the table." And he quickly adds, "You know, I have two kids and a wife."

Before going into production, Mitrani likes to be prepared. The first version of the script was written over one month, and then reworked during the three months when he practiced with the actors. Instead of storyboarding **Igor Rizzi** frame by frame, Mitrani preferred to videotape his shots. "Seventy-five percent of the film was shot in video during the two months before the real shooting in 35MM," he says. With this preparation, he felt comfortable shooting two takes for most shots and in some cases only one.

An interesting feature of **Igor Rizzi** is also the shot direction, which is very sub-



Still from *On the Trail of Igor Rizzi*

tic and simply expressed. Mitrani says on setting up a shot, "My first reaction is to say, 'Forget the camera'. I say to the actor express what you have to express in this place, and after I will decide the position of the camera." Considering this style of camera direction, it is no wonder that Mitrani opts for single frame shot so that the audience can focus on his characters.

When asked about independent filmmaking versus the Hollywood system, Mitrani does not want to be labelled as one or the other. For him, "bad cinema is in between" the two types. Mitrani says he would be willing to work in Hollywood, but it depends on whether "it is possible to express something smart and artistic." He is not impressed by the big-budget filmmaking of Hollywood, but adds, "I'm not an independent director. I am a director."

The decision to shoot *Igor Rizzi* on 35MM was made early on by Mitrani. Digital video for him was not a format he wants to use right now, but he says he is

not against it. He points out that when digital music first started to be recorded in the 80s, the sound quality was very poor; but today, digital music has improved to a new standard. For now, Mitrani will continue to shoot on 35MM, and after improvements have been made, he might shoot digitally.

Mitrani is already keen about his next feature, which he has already written. He plans on shooting next summer in either the USA or Canada with Laurent Lucas (from *Igor Rizzi*) as the lead again. When asked about whether he would shoot in the winter again, he says that he would prefer to shoot in another season—not because of the difficulties in cold weather—but because, like the city Montreal, he already expressed those themes in *Igor Rizzi*. "Each project for me has to be something different."

Now that Mitrani has received acclaim for his work at festivals around the world, it's a matter of getting recognition here in Canada. *Igor Rizzi* was first submitted

to the Cannes Festival last year, but it was not accepted because it was still being edited. Cannes, however, recommended it to the Venice Film Festival, Mitrani says. "So Venice called Telefilm Canada to say, 'Hey, you have a very interesting film. Can you send us the DVD of *On the Trail of Igor Rizzi*?' And Telefilm Canada said, 'What?'" Mitrani laughs. Well, now they know. ■

"I'm not an independent director. I am a director."





**BRUCE
McDONALD**
PIECING IT TOGETHER

BY JOSEPHINE MASSARELLA

You just got back from Berlin, where you screened your feature *The Tracey Fragments*.

Bruce McDonald: It was the opening film of the Panorama section. We had just finished the film and we were all pretty excited about the screening. There was a really big contingent of us there: our editors, writer, producer, executive producer, camera man, even our effects guy. We were really proud of the film. Berlin was a perfect place to show it. People were quite amazed by the film.

We won the Manfred Salzgeber Award for films that “push the boundaries of cinema”, films that “expand the language”, so we were like, “wow!”

It is a pretty radical visual approach. The whole movie is like a moving comic strip, with many, many frames—split screen and multi frame—sometimes twenty images on the screen, sometimes four, sometimes twelve, so it’s always shifting, always changing. It’s visually quite elegant and sophisticated.

And it’s all about memory. It’s about a young woman looking for her little brother. So you follow her on this journey into the night. She kind of goes into her head a lot of the time and remembers little fragments. She’s kind of complicit in it—there’s guilt—she’s not telling you something at the beginning. She slowly tells you little bits and pieces, or fragments, and things start to come together... So it’s literally like a puzzle, as

The split-screen process was so intense that one editor had to go away to the woods for a few weeks because his brain had started short-circuiting.

though she’d dumped her life onto the table and we, the authors, slowly put the pieces back together. So it’s pretty cool and it looks great on a big screen.

Was there an emotional response to the film?

BM: It was very emotional because the actress is so fantastic. She’s “out-of-the-park good”, you know. So it’s a nice balance of complete formal craziness and really strong emotion. You really get her story, and you really care for her.

So, the main character is a teenager?

BM: Yeah, she’s fifteen so I’m very curious to see how fifteen-year-olds respond to it. We’ve had mixed press, like, “This is the greatest thing ever” and then, a few people said, “This is just too much, you know it’s too much on the screen.” Then

they qualify it by saying, “Maybe I’m just too old. It’s a very young person’s film—I just don’t get it.”

What inspired you to make the film?

BM: It’s based on a book by a Vancouver writer, Maureen Medved. There’s enough of a story to get you through it, but it’s really not about that—it’s really a portrait of her life, of her school, her home—of what it’s like to be that age. And what attracted me to it was her voice: she was so rough spoken and plain, a bit of a liar, full of opinions, and kind of hilarious. And it’s cool that she’s fifteen—it’s a really powerful age.

So Maureen, the writer, wrote the screenplay. I didn’t have money at the time to option the book so I just sent her my boots in the mail.

Seriously?

BM: Yeah. I said, “Listen, I wanna get going on it and I don’t have the money right now. Eventually, I’ll find some, but could I maybe secure the rights? I’ll send you something in the mail.” So, I took off my boots, sent them to her. She thought it was hilarious. She’s still got them. Maureen came to the Berlin Film Festival and said, “Dude, this is, like, the best day of my life.”

Did you try and shoot the film primarily on location?



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(Above and opposite) Stills from *The Tracey Fragments*

BM: Yeah, we shot in Hamilton and Toronto, on a Panasonic 24P camera. We had four days in a studio, so there were some lights in there, but everything else was natural light—night interiors, night exteriors. We shot in bars, donut shops and high schools and we said, “Don’t close anything. Let’s just work around the rhythm of the place.” We were the smallest unit we could be, so we didn’t close off four city blocks just to get a shot. We could literally walk in, shoot and walk out; they barely knew we were there. It was a really fun way to shoot, not dragging half a city around with you.

And everybody was really involved. The inspiration was, “Let’s have fun, let’s experiment, let’s play.” That was the genesis of the film: to be as original as possible and still have a heart and soul and story and melody. My job was to keep the four/four time, keep the back beat and invite people to experiment.

How did you finance the film?

BM: The money came from Telefilm. They had this small budget deal where they would give you up to 250 grand if you could match that. So we matched it with some tv cable money. We pitched this multi-screen idea. And it was a very conscious thing: present our story in a brand new way and get the best actress we can. So we got Ellen Page—a young actress who had done some independent films and had recently played Kitty Pryde in *X Men III*

Could you comment on the editing process and multi-frame technique?

BM: We knew it would be multi-screen. Jeremy Munce, who is the main editor, and I had done two or three things before using this multi-screen technique, but just for transitions, so that’s why I knew it was going to be at least six months to cut it. I really liked the technique, so I said, “Hey Jerry, how about we cut this film using this split screen all the way through?” He was like, “I don’t

know—that’s pretty intense.” I said, “We’ll give you lots of time.”

So we had three editors—these amazing design geniuses—for about six months. One guy had to go away to the woods for a few weeks because his brain had started “short-circuiting”.

We weren’t sure if the technique would overpower the emotion or the drama, but it actually enhanced it. The style became a way to see into this girl—the way she sees the world, the way she sees herself. She’s basically having a nervous breakdown, so you literally see things breaking apart. So the style or form really served the content. It’s extreme, but so is being fifteen, so why not just go there?

Are you planning anything special to promote *The Tracey Fragments*?

BM: Since the movie was an experiment, we thought the promotion should be as well. So we’re creating a website where anybody can download rushes



from the film and cut small scenes or short films. We'll pick four or five shorts that will go on the DVD or the trailer.

And since we cut the film on Final Cut Pro, we're asking Apple Computer to sponsor this, and put up three or four prizes—maybe a G5 computer or laptop and to set up a panel of judges for judging the best short.

So we're encouraging people to keep an eye out for these sites, sometime in May, and just make short films out of the fragments—Tracey's Fragments. So that's where our experiment continues.

Have you started working on another film since Berlin?

BM: Yeah, we're working on something called *A Love Supreme*, based on a novel by Ken Nussey. We're shooting black and white still photographs, and our crew is just two people—the photographer and me. We've been shooting for about a year and a half, and it's really gorgeous. It's a neighbourhood, jazz, love

story. We were inspired by *La Jetée*, a really beautiful Chris Marker film.

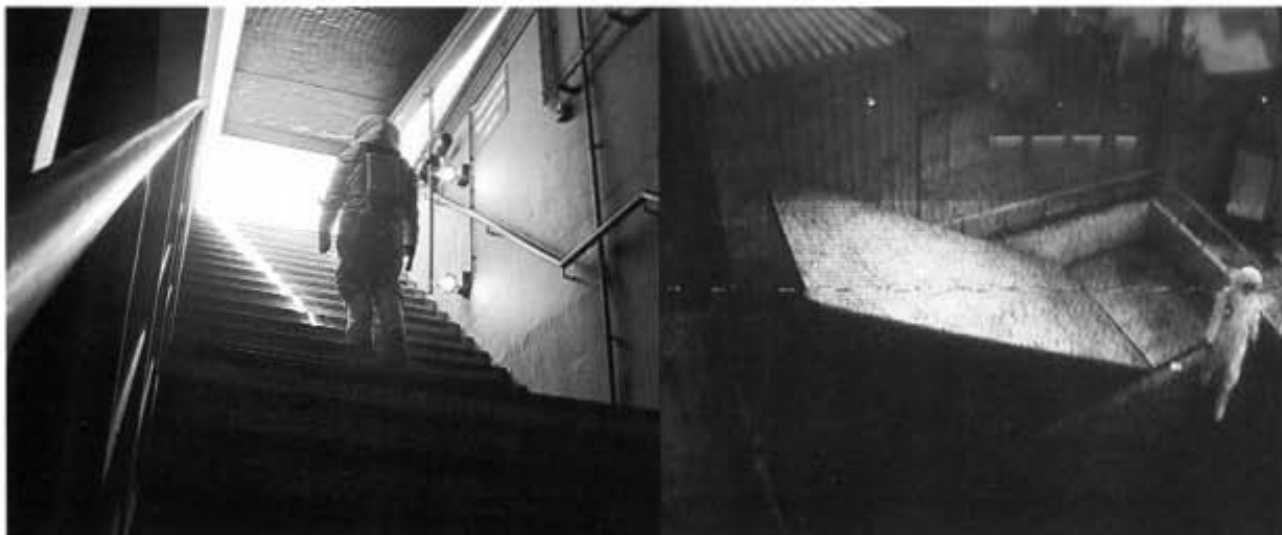
I'm also working on other projects with some really great writers. I direct a lot of television as a "gun for hire" and I use about ten percent of that money to invest in writers... But I'm still working on my own stories as well.

You've made a few films. Has the production process changed at all?

BM: Not really. You know a bit more, you anticipate things a bit more, but the structure, the approach doesn't change all that much. It doesn't get easier; it gets more complicated, more fascinating and more fun. If you're lucky enough to continue moving forward, your work can introduce you to some fascinating people; people you wouldn't ordinarily meet, and for me, that's the pay off, because, when the film's done, I want to get the next one going. You want it to make lots of money, you want to win prizes, but that's not really the pay off.

As a founding member of lift, and instrumental in its creation and early development, did you have any idea that it would expand the way that it has?

BM: No, I'm amazed. LIFT is amazing—it's like a studio now. There are all kinds of talented people, resources, gear, workshops. LIFT is an incredible resource. When we started there was really nothing—this was the early 80s. It was me and a bunch of people that would meet at different places. There was a woman, Jaxis Lundman, who for two years, hammered away at the Canada Council until somehow, we finally got this space on Niagara Street, which basically was an empty room with a set of rewinds and a splicer, and that was LIFT. We were so thrilled. And I was sort of instrumental attracting a few people and helping out as much as I could. I've always like the idea of a community of people. I've always thrived on that. ■



Stéphane Gilof's *Cineplastic Station* [Canada, 2006-07]

LOOKING BACK AT IMAGES

BY FORBES CAMPBELL

The first programmers of the Images Festival Marc Glassman and Janine Marchessault stated that back in 1988, organizers never imagined the level of success and importance that their little festival would attain. To Glassman and Marchessault, what made Images possible was the unlikely collaboration between artists and organizations in the face of funding structures, which encouraged competition for scarce funding. Indeed, growing out of the burgeoning 1980s Queen Street West arts scene, Images has become one of the most important media arts festivals in the world. • Named as homage to the innovative festival Canadian Images,

which ran for several years at Trent University, Images became a multimedia window on the changing culture of Toronto and Canada. And because it has retained an outsider sensibility and never rested comfortably with government officials or commercial media culture, Images continually attracts a diverse community of artists. So, after the frenetic atmosphere of the 20th anniversary had cleared a little, Scott Miller Berry, Images's Executive Director and Pablo de Ocampo, the current Artistic Director for the festival sat down with me at the Image's office to swill a beer and talk about this festival which continues to gain momentum.

EVOLUTION OF THE FESTIVAL

Scott Miller Berry: After 20 years, outwardly, Images remains the same as it was. It is the ideas behind each edition of the festival that are continually changing. This is both the beauty and difficulty of the festival: that in any given year, you may be dealing with a completely new vision brought on not only by the people who organize the festival, but also by those who are contributing to its content.

Pablo de Ocampo: The mandate forged when the festival was born was so beautifully vague that it doesn't really matter what happens. There are no limitations or firm conventions for the festival to abide by so you don't have to be afraid to re-think how or what you show.

* THE US SCENE *

PO: In the USA, it's a struggle to get people paid for their independent projects because it's a product-oriented market. So, if you aren't making what people want, there is little or no money for you. Therefore the recourse of artists is either to secure grants from small local arts councils or, ideally, a patron. Images is unique in that all artists are paid a fee. This is made possible because we have a relatively stable funding base.

* ARTISTS AT IMAGES *

SMB: There isn't much that we have shied away from. This gives artists a huge comfort zone from which to create fresh ideas. By this we don't necessarily only attract emerging talent, we also attract established artists because they feel Images still has something to offer them. For example Tom Sherman exhibited his work in 1988, and this year he was back again. In 2007, Images showed works by artists with ages ranging from 18 to 60.

* IMAGES SCOPE *

PO: Images is unique in Canada, if not all of North America. And while in its first year, it showed only works produced by Canadians, every year it becomes more international. Coming from the USA, I know that Images is known because of the broad spectrum that is exhibited. We still show a majority of Canadian work, but this isn't a limitation. There's no reason why a Canadian festival can't show local works. It just seems like the right thing to do because it serves to encourage production within the local landscape.

* DIGITAL DILEMMA *

PO: Images is not afraid of embracing new technology, it is committed to indie-media in all its forms. In 1988, no one was showing video, but Images did. Now, there is concern over the proliferation and dominance of DVD. This year more submissions than ever came to us on DVD because people just assume that's what we want because it's easy. But, DVDs are problematic because of compression and playback issues, and those little things called scratches.

SMB: As digital becomes increasingly standard, it is important that spaces are flexible so that we can encourage and support people shooting on different formats.

* COMMUNITY *

PO: The turnover of Images staff is generally pretty high. Yet, this never really seems to matter because when we are looking for help there is a community of experienced and knowledgeable people close at hand to help the current staff take the festival wherever we want to. These people have worked with or exhibited at Images. They understand what it's about and, furthermore, are committed to seeing it continue.

* FESTIVAL FOLLY *

SMB: I suppose a big pitfall for any festival, and one that Images has thus far managed to narrowly avoid, is taking on more than we can handle. For example, there was talk at one point about getting involved in Camera (Atom Egoyan's film space and bar), while that would have been great, I think it was obvious that such an endeavour would stretch the resources of the festival beyond their capacity. That said, finding and maintaining a multi-purpose venue that will permanently accommodate parts of the festival remains on our wish list.

* STAYING TRUE *

SMB: For the future, Images has to retain the ability to surprise and keep people on their toes by constantly challenging the pre-conceived notions of media arts and making sure that there is always a place for work that are more documentary, more artistic, and more experimental. ■



SUPER 8: **JEFF ROHRS**
AND **DANIEL ORON**





Jeff Rohrs (writer, co-producer)
Photo credit: Lucas Martin



Daniel Oron (director, co-producer)

Jeff Rohrs and Daniel Oron make a connection
and create cautionary tale **Look Both Ways**

Questions to Jeff Rohrs (writer, co-producer)

1. You said that **Look Both Ways** is not meant to be a commentary on the pervasiveness of the video gaming culture among today's youth. Can you explain further?

Jeff Rohrs: Things like the Internet, PS3, Xbox, Wii, along with their games are blurring the lines between reality and virtual reality. It is wrong-headed to argue that gaming is "bad" because gaming is so many different things. It is, however, appropriate for us to acknowledge and discuss what these things mean to our humanity, our ethics, and our relationships. My hope is that the film encourages those who see it to think and talk about these subjects.

2. Has the experience of seeing your work realized on the big screen changed your approach to the writing process at all?

JR: Yes. If it's something like a live action piece, I'm much more mindful of the size of the cast, the set pieces, and the likely budget. It makes the work much easier to produce. At the end of the day, if a producer can't see the economics of how to make it, there simply won't be a film no matter how good it is.

Questions to Daniel Oron (director, co-producer)

- 3.** You posted your screenplay for *Look Both Ways* on an internet site, which is where Daniel Oron came across it. How important is the internet for writers like yourself?

JR: In the two years since we began production, you now have instant, worldwide distribution at your fingertips and amazing, viral social networks that can spread the word quickly. Furthermore, you have low-cost, high-quality digital HD production tools. The internet isn't just a place for writers and directors to connect; it is a place for creative people of all stripes to share their work without middlemen. This is simply revolutionary, and I think we've only scratched the surface of what it will mean for filmmakers and writers alike.

- 4.** You came across the screenplay for *Look Both Ways* on the internet. There must be a voluminous amount of work posted out there, so how did you know what you were looking for, or rather, how did you know that you had found something?

Daniel Oron: There are many resources for screenwriters and filmmakers, but I primarily use Inktip.com. It's a wonderful site with a fantastic set of script searching parameters to help focus on finding the right projects. I searched under the "science fiction" category and used a low-budget parameter to narrow down the results. Jeffrey's project came up in the search results. Once I read the logline, I was hooked to find out more.

- 5.** Talk about the internet's potential as a tool for independent directors and producers looking for projects to work on.

DO: One of the greatest things the internet allows in the initial search stage is anonymity. You can browse at your leisure without worrying about being shut out by high-powered agents who may not think you can get their client's projects done, or a writer getting over-excited and "stalking" you with more projects. You can log on and sift through many projects without any commitment. Once you've found a project that interests you, a more formal and personal relationship can be established. The web search also allows a faster way to sift through the volumes of material that is out there in the world. You can tap into talent from all over the planet without being restricted by time zones, language barriers or representation challenges.

6. What kind of message did you want audiences to take away from *Look Both Ways*?

DO: The message is: ask questions about our future! We live in an era where technology is running away from us at lightning speed and we are scrambling to catch up. I believe that we fail to ask the hard questions about the place of technology in our lives. Do we use it to babysit our children instead of spending time with them? In allowing access to the wealth of knowledge the web offers, do we underestimate our kids' exposure to danger? Are we any closer to each other as people now that we're connected by Bluetooth, PDAs and the web, or have we simply retreated into a techno shell? All are important questions, and each presents a fascinating topic to explore.

7. Some groups had expressed an interest in using *Look Both Ways* as a teaching aid. Was this something you had thought of being possible before you had finished filming?

DO: We thought the film had educational value, but only realized the potential after doing a few test screenings with a mixture of adult and younger audiences, and after the Miami Short Film Festival screenings. Now, we are looking to put together a package that would offer *Look Both Ways* as a teaching tool for various groups from police to school boards.

8. In *Look Both Ways* you look at how children are affected by the virtual environments of computer games and online pursuits which they engage in. Can kids understand why older people are so concerned about this? What did the young actors you worked with on the project think about the subject matter?

DO: I think they totally get it, but it depends on how you approach them. Kids are a lot brighter than we give them credit for. If you respectfully discuss the fears you have or the challenges you foresee they may be more open to the conversation. They are aware of adults' fears, and have their own interesting opinions. I spent some time discussing these issues with the kids in my cast. They seemed to understand the line between virtual and reality. In the end, I feel it's a parenting issue. We must ask ourselves if we're doing enough to create a balanced society where kids can get the benefits of technology, while maintaining their social skills and desire to do simple things like play outside. ■ — Forbes Campbell

THE MAKING OF FINAL THOUGHT

BY RENNE COX

My main objective was to capture how inspirational DJ Sun (aka Jason Fraser) was to a whole community. Jay, who passed away from cancer in May 2000, will be remembered as the smiling DJ who never let death stop him from focusing on his passion for the music.

I was a coat-check girl with Atomic nightclub in Ottawa and Jason DJ Sun was a resident. After Jay's passing, I saw change in my friends. DJs, producers, promoters, *everyone* had changed style—at least in my eyes. I saw them work towards a positiveness and a philosophy of living towards your goals. I needed to capture this moment.

I choose to film with 8MM, Hi-8, DVC-Pro, Mini DV and Beta. Because I didn't own a camera at the time and grants had turned me down, I used whatever I could get a hold of. I used black and white film for the interviews and color video during the live events. It was nice creative contrast.

For two years, I was dedicated to communicating with as many people as possible in the club scene. I taped at shows and I chased artists for interviews. I went on xvi.com [a club networking site] and posted ads asking people if they had music, artwork, pictures, artwork, and poetry that they could contribute to the film. Anything that was submitted was credited. I featured a wide range of material, so the film itself speaks in genres of hip hop, house, techno and features all types of talented professionals like promoters, label reps, record store owners, DJs, artists, poets. I wanted this to be a vision collected together to create a tribute for DJ Sun. A film that truly captures the Ottawa music scene's final thoughts.

Once I had done all the filming I needed to do in Ottawa, I decided to

move to Toronto. In Toronto, I felt that there would be more opportunity to progress with the project. When I first got to Toronto, I was on welfare for a month. I worked at various temp jobs until I finally got a job as a coat check girl, which led me to another position at a prop factory. This gave me the opportunity to work in an environment where I would be communicating with major players in the entertainment industry and be allowed to focus on my film project on the condition that I complete my regular responsibilities with the job.

Once I had a steady job that allowed me to once again focus on my project, I started my search for an editor. I interviewed seven people before I found someone that I thought I could relate to. I found Allen Wyllie of Shadow Pictures who worked with me right to the end to make sure the vision was brought to life.

After we completed editing the movie, it went through a couple of screenings. One screening was in Ottawa, for people who had been directly involved in the making of the film. I had another screening at Toronto club 8 Below. I am planning my next screening for Ottawa. I also have copies in stores in Toronto's Play De Record, Metro Groove Music, 2 The Beat, and also in Ottawa at Normal Clothing and End Hit Records. ☺

For more on **Final Thought** or to view teasers, check out myspace.com/sunshotvideos.



Jason Fraser aka DJ Sun

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