Echoes from the festivals

by Connie Tadros

In the beginning, there was the Toronto Festival, called the Festival of Festivals and incorporated by Bill Marshall as the World Film Festival of Toronto Inc. The year was 1976.

Not to be out-done, Montreal's festival was founded by Serge Losique the following year, incorporated as the World Film Festival of Montreal/Le Festival des films du monde. The battle was on.

As if the latent competition between Toronto and Montreal did not suffice, the two directors and their towering egos fueled the fight. The object? To see which would be the better, most important festival in Canada.

The criteria were several. Which would attract the largest public? Which would screen the most North American (if not world) premieres? Which would attract the largest following from the Canadian industry and, more important, the largest delegations from abroad? Which would get the better press? Added up, the criteria would lead to which would have the most paying sponsors and the largest government grants. The stakes were high.

In those early years, the fight was for real, much to the delight of the press. The festivals fought hard for films, and refused to screen any which were already booked into the rival event. Guests were disputed and tricks were played, all for the greater glory of the festivals. Early on, Wayne Clarkson replaced Marshall as festival director in Toronto.

Each city had its advantages. Montreal had 'le fait français.' It's bilingual nature made it a comfortable place for Europeans, who sorely needed a launching pad into the North American market. Moreover, the principal offices of the Canadian Film Development Corp. and the National Film Board were there. Montreal also had the lead in the production of feature films in Canada.

But Toronto was a booming city. Canada's anglophone capital held the head offices of the American Major film distributors, of the national television networks and, recently, of all the national pay-TV companies. Its non-theatrical film industry was stronger, and the presence of all the national advertising agencies in the city guaranteed that it would remain so.

Montreal had its official competition, and its Film Market. Toronto had its Galas and assorted programs and programmers. It developed a Trade Forum.

Now, six years later, both festivals have found their publics, registering 150,000 entries this year, give or take 5,000. Neither are in any danger of disappearing; nor – despite the wishes of many – is there any indication that they might co-operate, finding some way to alternate years.

Cinema Canada talked to many who had attended both festivals this year. Everyone was tired, having gone through one party too many. They offered their thoughts on the two festivals, on their similarities and differences, and on their benefits to the Canadian film industry.

JEAN LEFEBVRE
Director, Film Festivals Bureau
Ottawa

I'm addressing myself to these two festivals in general, as opposed to giving a personal opinion as to how they went this year. From the point of view of the Film Festivals Bureau, there is a difference as to way the two festivals are perceived.

Montreal is a traditional festival of the FIAPF (Federation internationale des associations de producteurs de films), it's a competitive festival, recognized by FIAPF and forced to obey some very strict and sometimes very difficult rules. That has to be taken into consideration when evaluating Montreal. A FIAPF-recognized festival must accept in competition only films which premiere on the continent where the festival is being held. So that makes it very difficult. In other words, all North American films shown at the Montreal film festival in competition have to be not yet released in North America. It's much easier for Cannes or Berlin to obtain good U.S. films (and whether we like it or not, they are the biggest crowd-drawers for these events). So Montreal has a very limited potential because of this very strict regulation. Whereas an invitational festival, such as Toronto, can afford to obtain some very strong films because, once they have been shown in a major festival – in Europe especially – they are eligible for any secondary festivals or for any non-competitive festivals. It's easier to obtain good films once they've been shown elsewhere.

Another point we take into consideration is the quality of services provided by each festival for the development of the Canadian film industry. Now, whether these services are announced as such, like the market in Montreal or the Trade Forum in Toronto, or are simply spin-offs of the festival, is secondary. What counts are concrete results from these two events. The general feeling seems to be that both festivals contribute a lot to the economic development of the film industry.

For the moment, the two festivals are complementary and should remain so. In other words, one should complement the other. Whether they do this willfully or not is secondary again. The worst situation would be to have two major, similar, festivals that would constantly be fighting over the same titles. Right now, of course, there are overlaps. There are moments when they do fight over certain titles but there aren't that many because of the concepts of the festivals, and that has to remain that way. It's useless to have one festival, repeated in two cities. Nobody would lend good films for that purpose. If Toronto started showing exactly the same films as Montreal, or vice versa, it would be useless to think of having two major festivals.

Festivals, whether we like it or not, are feasts of cinema, are happenings; they are occasions to celebrate cinema, and that's the nature of the beast. The great advantage of film festivals is that the more important people you attract to a festival – I mean people in a position to work and to do business – the more they'll work towards the development of your own industry.

Canada is ill-perceived from afar. Ask any European and he'll mention Indians, snow and things like that. He'll tend to imagine a sort of social and creative structure based on these little prejudices. If Europeans do come over, they suddenly realize they are dealing with a North American mentality but one with an original way of thinking... Canadians may be North American, say in attitude and in economic terms, but they are not necessarily American in their cultural trade. Creating this awareness is necessary, and this is the necessity of a film festival. Call it long-term marketing as opposed to short-term marketing, which would be a film market where you go to sell a movie immediately. What you're selling at a festival is an image of the country, and of the country's potential in terms of cinema. What you're selling also is the occasion to come and know this particular place.

In the festival milieu both the Montreal and Toronto festivals are well-known. It's a fairly small milieu, it's a fairly specialized milieu and it has ramifications all around the world. Some favor Toronto, some favor Montreal. I would say it is divided right now 50-50, but both events are regarded as very important North American stepping-stones by Europeans and an important stepping-stone for Europe towards North America by the Americans.

JOHN HARKNESS
Film critic, Now magazine
Toronto

There was an interesting sort of reverse image... If you approached Montreal's festival from behind the scenes, it seemed incredibly disorganized. But once you get into the theatre it was very well-organized ; all the movies started on time, there were no projection problems, most of the pictures scheduled showed up. In Toronto, everything looked incredibly well-organized behind the scenes, but you got out into the theatres, and it was a mess. Someone suggested they call it 'the festival-to-be-announced' because the schedule changed so rapidly and the pictures tended to start late, especially at the Bloor cinema.

In terms of programming, Montreal seemed a little more serious to me. But I could have just been seeing the wrong pictures in Toronto... By and large I liked the programming a bit better in Montreal but I don't think that Toronto has anything to be ashamed of. Its programming was also very good. It's a fact that Toronto has a variety of programs, which Montreal doesn't. So I think that gives an illusion of size because, obviously, each series has a programmer. I didn't notice any programmers in evidence in Montreal.

The main difference – and one that works to Montreal's advantage – is the fact that screenings in Montreal were in one building. If you got bored and wanted to walk out, it was easier than in Toronto. There, if you walked out, you had to walk six blocks, eight blocks... to get a picture that might not even start on time ! Toronto is going to get a five-plex – either the Uptown or the Imperial. That would resolve the many logistical problems. As for the "massive repeat program" in Toronto, it doesn't do you much good if you spend your time in mid-town Toronto because most of the repeats are happening out in the suburban theatres.

From a 'press' point of view, people at Montreal were more accessible but things were less efficient. I was really startled when I arrived in Montreal to discover that if I wanted to do an interview I could track down the person myself and set it up. That meant spending a long time at the press office or whereever, waiting for someone to show up. In Toronto, on the other hand, if you wanted to do an interview, they set it up, gave you the room, etc.

The problem in Toronto was that the two biggest names who showed up – Scorsese – Cassavetes – weren't doing any press or absolutely minimal press so, of course, they were inaccessible, though I should say that Cassavetes was very accessible to the people. But it is irritating when the festival brings in important guests, and then denies the press access. When Wayne Clarkson talks about a "festival for the people," I think there's a danger that Toronto is becoming a festival for the 400 people who get invited to the black-tie parties in Forest Hills.

photo : Ron Levine

• From leader of the band to **Brimstone** – Sting

photo : Ron Levine

• The King and the McKenzie brothers – it must be Toronto !

photo : Lois Seigel

• Punk was prominent as **Liquid Sky** screened in Montreal

• The pleasant Wim Wenders

photo : Ron Levine

LEN KLADY
Winnipeg Free Press
Winnipeg

Obviously, one thing that is different is that the Montreal is competitive, and I think that in itself is going to carve a difference. The other basic difference is that Montreal is a one-man show. Wayne Clarkson very consciously decided to make Toronto a team of people, and as a result, he has got very distinct styles, like David Overby's stuff. Year after year, there's a certain kind of field that Overby has programmed which is very different from the Buried Treasures, which changes every year as the critic changes. And then the Retrospectives, and the Galas...

I don't know that the differing approach to programming makes one or the other more interesting intrinsically. The films are what makes one or the other festival more interesting. Logistically, it changes things. In Montreal, there are fewer people to go through. In Toronto, particularly this year, I found that there wasn't necessarily one person I could talk to to get certain information. There were internal problems between the press office and the guest office and what have you.

Toronto seems to have a heavier emphasis in terms of the social aspect. That's something that it has its good and bad sides. It extends your day, on the one hand, and on the other hand, it's a chance to make contact with a number of people on an informal basis. The problem is usually the crowd and I think that this year Montreal handled its parties better. They were more casual and more geared towards the film community. But there's not much you can do about that. Toronto had more patrons, and they have to be provided for.

LINDA BEATH
United Artists Classics
Toronto

The two festivals are very important. The Montreal festival has a completely different complexion as far as the films go. And the situation with the press, which is of great concern to us, is different. I don't know whether the Montreal press bends more to commercial interests, or is more cognizant of commercial interests, but they tend not to review a film which they know is going to open later. They will give the film a mention, or do an interview, and

save the review until the majority of the audience can get to see the film, so there's not so much of a sense of danger putting a film in Montreal as there is in Toronto.

Toronto is more of a popular festival, and there seems to be less a sense of industry coterie, but that may just have to do with geographic location of the theatres and the hotels. It also must have something to do with the kind of festival each is aspiring to run...

From a distributor's point of view, the two are about the same – 50-50. It's the kind of film that you can pick up that is different. And that is a function of the style of programming. Montreal takes more chances. There are more films from Third World countries and more a sense of the aesthetic coming through the program than there is in Toronto. Toronto is really catholic. I sent eight films back to New York from each of the festivals for possible acquisition.

This year, there was a big difference between Montreal's Market and Toronto's Trade Forum. The focus of the Forum was on pay-TV and what it would or wouldn't do, so the concentration in Toronto was definitely for that window. In Montreal, they were talking about all markets and although pay-TV was a current issue, it wasn't the central focus. Technically, I don't know if you can call the Market in Montreal a success, but deals did get done. I doubt, for instance, if there were as many deals out of London. The sellers seemed quite happy with both festivals. As for me, there were enough people in both places to keep me hopping, and I think it was the same for others.

If I had to recommend a festival to a foreign seller, it would depend upon the film he had for sale. *Identification of a Woman* would do much better in Montreal, and something like *Moonlighting* would do better in Toronto. I think they are both really wonderful films, but there seems to be a real Quebec flavour and a real pro-film stance in Montreal that really isn't reflected in Toronto.

As for the parties, I don't want to see another party as long as I live! In Toronto, they were all huge and crowded, and there was a sense towards the end of the first week of seeing all of the same people over and over again. In Montreal, the parties were smaller and tended to be less frenetic, but there was still a sense of seeing everybody over and over. I don't think there's a solution to that.

I really wish the two festivals would get together and alternate years. I don't foresee that happening, but it's incredible that Canada has two festival of that size.

The real audiences, the people who live in Montreal and Toronto, get a lot out of them. For the moment, Montreal seems to have more potential for the public. The way the Cinéma Parallèle is run, for instance, is more interesting than the way Harbourfront is run. And although The Funnel is doing its job with experimental cinema, I doubt they would show *Lightning Over Water*, which the Parallele will screen.

From a good film festival comes the ability to do good work for the filmmakers. You can get real money and the press to work for them. It creates a climate, and that exists in Montreal. I'm not sure that exists in Toronto at the moment, some films take off, like *Best Boy*, but they take off so big... A feature-length documentary becomes something that can play at the Uptown. That seems to be what everybody aspires to in Toronto. In Montreal, there's more of a grey zone.

LAWRIE ROTENBURG
The Talent Group
Toronto

From the public perspective, both festivals are very, very similar. I think the audiences in Montreal and Toronto are fairly well served... They get to see a lot of things that don't come their way normally or which, in some cases, will never come their way.

The major difference is the way the industry is served. And I think it's ironic that the Toronto festival is more social than the Montreal festival, because all the time I was growing up, Montreal was a more social city than Toronto. But I think that's a function more of the direction of the festival than of the hosting city... I think Monsieur Losique is more inclined to have a much more esoteric kind of festival. It's more European, and it has that kind of an atmosphere around it. There are a number of very private parties but the general business industry or community is not there.

In Toronto we get really tired of the parties after a while (especially when it's the second festival in a row) but the good thing is that because a lot of people only come in for a couple of days, you are going to see almost everybody if you keep going to the parties. Most people are fairly accessible at those functions and, if nothing else, it's the "Hello, how are you? Can I call you next week?" kind of access. Most of the time you can't hear what is being said, so having a business discussion *per se* at a party is almost impossible, but it's an opportunity for everybody to step up and say hello.

I would think that certainly the Trade Forum in Toronto is of much more use to everybody than the Market in Montreal has been so far. If the market was a successful market, you would say that a significant portion of the industry is being helped. My own observation in the last four or five years is that the market has not worked. Montreal tried a series of seminars last year, and I think it was a good start. I don't know why it wasn't continued – perhaps for financial reasons.

I think the Trade Forum is a significant advantage of the Toronto festival and, certainly, this year's attendance was the best ever. As vice-chairman of the Academy of Canadian Cinema (which ran the Forum), I've seen the returns. The degree of satisfaction with the forum is incredible.

As for future benefits to the industry? If you're talking about buying and selling projects as opposed to the kind of buying and selling that's supposed to go on in the Marche in Montreal, I would think that Montreal does have an interesting advantage. Co-productions are going to become more and more significant in the next couple of years and Montreal certainly brings in a more international group of people. If that advantage can be exploited, I think it would be significant.

JAMES BYERLEY
Home Box Office
New York

Our function is to cover every movie that exists for HBO... to try and see everything that exists on films, so we (the various people from HBO) kept in very close touch.

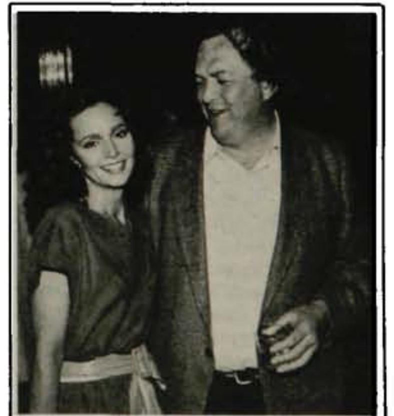
In terms of unseen product, Montreal and Toronto were about even. Walter Malton and I were both swamped with non-stop screenings... We certainly had plenty to keep us busy at both places and I think there were a lot of things we had to miss because we didn't have four eyes.

This is my third year in Montreal and I just have an affection for it. I like the city and the festival is part of it. I didn't really utilize the marketplace this year very much. The market seemed rather inactive, low-key. It seems like the market situation, the more commercial aspects, are shifting to Toronto... It seems like a lot of the filmmakers are going to Toronto. It seems to be the coming city, the most important city in Canada as far as film goes. Montreal, on the other hand, seems to have more of an artistic bend to it, more of a cultural bias, whereas the business seems to be in Toronto. I don't know what social ramifications that might have on what's happening *per se* in Canada, but that's what it appears to be from the outside anyway...

There does seem to be a place for a film market in Canada. The time of year may have something to do with it. Los Angeles is pretty early in the year and then Cannes... You have the whole summer before the Canadian festivals come up, so there is a time period there where things can appear. There were plenty of films to screen. I had seen some of the films in Montreal before but there were an awful lot that I hadn't seen. And in Toronto it was the same way. Steve and I would go down all the list of everything we had seen at Filmex, everything we'd seen in Cannes, everything I'd seen in Montreal, and he still had plenty to do in Toronto! I think there are enough films to go around.

photos: Ron Levine

● There were "Porky's parties" in both cities, but Francis Fox received his mascot from Harold Greenberg in Montreal



● Jennifer Dale and Robin Spry

JOHN KATZ
Film professor at York University
Former programmer at the Festival of Festivals
Consultant to the World Film Festival

At the gala opening, when festival director Wayne Clarkson said that everybody got in without any hassles so the film festival must be doing something strong, one got an idea of the values of the festival. He also claimed that Toronto was the largest film festival in the world, and I think that's indicative of what is happening to the Toronto film festival. I think there's been a confusion between quantity and quality. There are many things one can point to: numerous screenings were cancelled, invariably the Bloor cinema started projections late, projection was frequently very poor, it was often impossible to get between the theatres to see films that were programmed back to back.

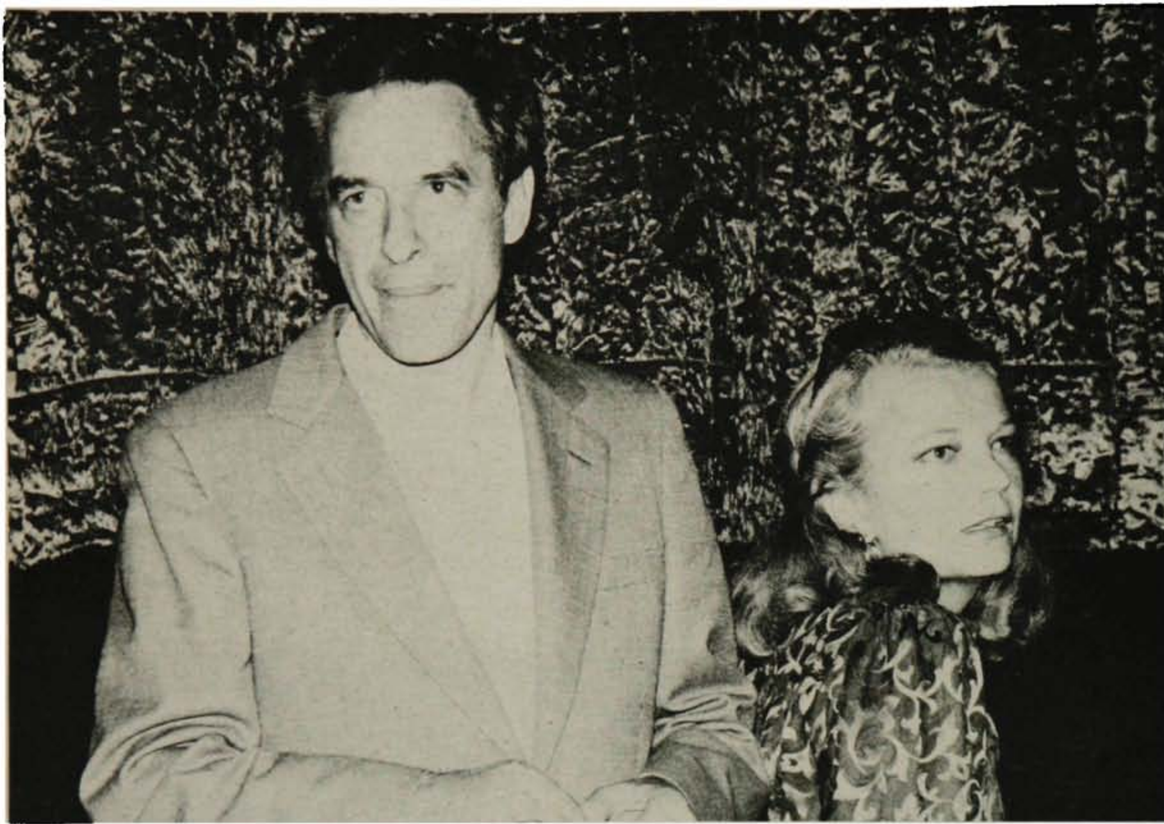
I think these problems arise partially because there's been an attention recently to the hoopla and the glitter – to the things that surround the festival. Less attention has been paid to the projection of the films and to the welfare of the regular movie-goers. There is a growing overemphasis in Toronto on the patrons, the corporate sponsors and the parties.

Still, I think that the potential is there. It's not one of the best festivals in North America, but it has the potential for becoming a great festival if more attention is paid to the meal (by which I mean the films) and less to the menu (by which I mean the glitter and the tinsel).

The Montreal film festival is a smaller festival, without the hoopla and glitter, but with an equal number of quality films. It is more serious about films, and takes place in one five-plex cinema. Very few films were cancelled, every screening that I attended and heard of started on time, and projection was perfect for every film I saw.

The marketplace in Montreal was disappointing, but perhaps that says something about the state of the film industry in Canada. It tended to lack vitality, and perhaps there, the Montreal Market

photos: Ron Levine



● The Cassavettes coming...

could learn something from Toronto's Trade Forum, which was lively and active, even though it reflected the sense of desperation about the Canadian film industry.

In terms of the films, there were a few memorable films from both festivals. Notable in Montreal there were some hidden gems that I didn't see in Toronto, films like *Gospel, Hit and Run* and *Talk to Me.* There were at least 12 films which were shown at Montreal and then at Toronto including *Come Back to the Five and Dime Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean, Veronika Voss, The German Sisters, Scarecrow* and *All by Myself.* That leads me to believe that what's happened recently with the collaboration between the Los Angeles and San Francisco film festivals might be viable for Montreal and Toronto. Perhaps, instead of the competition that presently exists between them, there could be more collaboration and they could learn from each other. Montreal's Market could use slightly more hype – which Toronto has plenty of – and Toronto could learn from Montreal's serious attention to the films themslves, and how they are presented to the public.

RON LEVINE
Photographer
Montreal

Toronto mainly brings in the stars. It's like a paparazzi's heaven. There are a lot of glittery, glamourous people to photograph and they seem to form an elite at the film festival. While in Montreal you still have the glitter and the glamour but they don't cater to the media as much, as far as photography goes.

For a photographer, Montreal seems a little more accessible – quite a bit more accessible actually. There are always people around, very happy to have photographs taken. People this year in Toronto – the actors, and the directors like Wim Wenders, Scorsese, De Niro – did not want to have their pictures taken at parties or any of the affairs. They were present but they declined for photographs many times. Robert Duvall nearly punched a photographer's head in. He was really adamant against it. Others were there at parties, but if you took a picture they would just glare at you or say "no photographs." Wim Wenders was very nice but I didn't see him smiling in one photograph.

Toronto, of course, had parties every afternoon and night. In Montreal you had a party every night but a lot of the stars did not show up. In Toronto, everyone was there. Cassavetes and Rowlands were at every party. They were very gracious with photographers, and of course the hangers-on all wanted their photographs taken. It seems that there are many more hangers-on in Toronto than Montreal. These people love to be in there and pretend that they are somebody when they're really just up-and-coming gaffers. In Toronto, there's that whole "star" thing. They think that once they are in films, they are big stars. In Montreal, there's more of the casual attitude towards the festival. Even photographers are casual about it.

GLENDA ROY
Media Connection
Toronto

I don't think there's much similarity between the two festivals at all. I think they are two complete events in themselves, and are not in competition with each other. One festival is competitive and the other one is just, basically, a consumer, customer-oriented festival. So it's a big difference. Also there is the fact that the Toronto festival runs the Trade Forum while the Montreal festival tries a marketplace. Again, that puts them in different categories. I really don't see that there is very much similarities other than that they show movies...

I think it does a Canadian picture a great deal of good to be screened at the festivals. It's kind of like "you're judged by the company you keep"... and I think that in those kind of settings, it gives the audience some chance to really see where we stand in the world market. I've always said that the problem with Canadians is that they use the United States as a gigantic test market... What happens within the film festival is that you see smaller pictures, pictures not just from the U.S. I think it really gives the people a chance to get some kind of feeling about where we stand in the world, and I don't think we stand up that badly.

From a publicist's point of view, festival screenings can work for or against you. On the plus side, the press are all alerted. During a film festival, film becomes a priority. So you don't have to make your one little picture a priority with the press; they are already interested. Where you run into a problem is if your film is scheduled against something they are more interested in seeing. But, again, in most festivals, that is looked after because of multiple screenings. So I think it does a picture enormous good. I think it gives it a certain credibility right off the mark.

In terms of reaching the press, it would be important to concentrate more on getting to the international press, or to the Canadian press that is respected worldwide, as opposed to just local coverage, but that's a very expensive process... The only people who could afford to do that sort of thing are the large Major distributors who could use the Toronto festival as an occasion for an actual press junket. But there again, that requires a Major with a picture who wants to do that kind of thing... It's far too expensive for any festival to do it on its own unless there was a festival with a great deal of emphasis on Canadian product. Then it would be up to the government agencies to actually bring in that international presence...

JAY SCOTT
Film critic, Globe and Mail
Toronto

I think that overall the Toronto festival is more carefully designed; you can see that just in terms of the fact that there are specific programs, retrospectives and that kind of thing in Toronto. On the other hand, to be fair to Montreal, I presume its organizers see its audience in a somewhat different perspective... I can't second-guess the directors of either festival but Toronto has, in the past, seemed a more serious festival than Montreal. I think this was reversed this year. Whether that's by design or by accident I don't know – I suspect it's by accident. Montreal wound up being, in general, a more serious, more interesting festival than Toronto. In Montreal, a great many movies that very few people knew much about turned out to very interesting, whereas in Toronto, a great many movies that people knew a lot about showed up. In Montreal, there was an excitement I think was lacking in Toronto.

In terms of organization, Toronto really has to do something about the starting time for the films. I really think it's dreadful. As for Montreal, last year there was a tremendous amount of trouble for people buying tickets; there were long lines in front of the cinema and tickets for that day's performance as well as coming days seemed to be sold at the same place. That didn't seem to happen this year, and, as nearly as I could tell with two or three exceptions, everybody seemed to get into everything they wanted to get into.

Speaking of the atmosphere which surrounds the festivals, both have a kind of – "obsession" is too strong a word – a thing about stars that I really don't understand. And there's not much I can say about that since I don't care for the most part whether stars come or not, on a personal basis. I sort of feel the same way about the parties... There's a certain amount of professional concern that I have to take, given the nature of the job that I do, but on a personal basis it's hard for me to talk about it because for a film critic, interviewing stars is not the function of the festival. They become important to me only to the extent that I have to be more than a film critic in covering the festival, so I do other things, but I don't think that those things are important...

Both Montreal and Toronto are good festivals. I think they both have to stop worrying about each other. There's a tremendous amount of energy wasted on worrying on who had what first. I think in general they are both doing a fairly good job... ●

● and going...

● Keeping in tune with changing trends: **Another Kind of Music** from Glen Salzman and Rebecca Yates

Planning to stay alive

by Bruce Malloch

If you believe the myth, Canadian independent filmmakers used to operate a lot like Wild West gunslingers: shoot first, ask questions later. Distribution took care of itself, like the price of food and gasoline. But today, looking to survive in a tough marketplace, many filmmakers are examining the marketability of their productions before they shoot – a less romantic, but certainly more practical, approach.

For an independent filmmaker to achieve any sort of creative freedom, that filmmaker must first survive in the marketplace, and to survive in the marketplace, a distributor must be able to sell that filmmaker's work in high volume. Facts of life in the film business, but, like many other facts of life, it sometimes takes hard times and tight money to drive the point home. Yet Canada's non-theatrical distributors have done a much better job than their colleagues in feature film and television in providing Canadian producers with exposure, adequate financial returns, and continuity of employment: three essentials for a solid industry. They have been successful because distributors and filmmakers in the non-theatrical sector have been able to work together, rather than at cross-purposes.

Bruce Malloch is Toronto staff reporter for Cinema Canada.

Bob Vale, president of Magic Lantern Films Ltd., feels the non-theatrical industry's most positive achievement has been the ability of filmmakers and distributors to successfully respond to market needs through careful planning. "We are producing and distributing a good number of Canadian films by properly pre-packaging projects so that they are assured of a decent return." Frances Broome, president of Kinetic Film Enterprises Ltd., maintains that fewer filmmakers are making films without knowing the marketplace. "They're not as naive as they used to be. They've wisened up in a hurry."

What is the "non-theatrical" sector?

Unfortunately, the term only tells you what the films are not and where you cannot see them; but non-theatrical films generally cover the medium's informational and educational aspects, such as documentaries, training, and instructional films. They are bought by schools, libraries, colleges and universities, businesses, government, hospitals, corporations, religious and cultural organizations – anywhere film might be used more for its learning value than its entertainment qualities. So, for non-theatrical distributors, there is no "box office", no smash hits like *E.T.* or *Porky's* topping $100 million in gross revenues, and no huge failures which poison investment. Instead there is a conservative, relatively predictable buyer group acquiring films often for $500 or less each individual purchase.

The non-theatrical sector is much smaller than feature film. For the entire 1980 Canadian market, according to a market survey prepared by Clarkson Gordon, expenditures totalled $17,857,575. The American non-theatrical market is much larger (an estimated $75 million) but not easily accessible to Canadian distributors, though several have made respectable penetration south of the border. Its small size has made it difficult for the industry to lobby government for support, especially when larger, more troubled industries are also at government's ear. But, as Les Modolo, president of Marlin Motion Pictures Ltd., points out, the non-theatrical sector has not asked government for handouts; rather, like many other small businesses, it has asked only that government stay off the industry's back.

But changes brought down by the recent Ontario budget to the Retail Sales Act have posed an immediate problem for the non-theatrical sector, since many distributors are Ontario-based, and provincial sales account for 36 percent of the Canadian market. Modolo estimates the seven percent sales tax now being applied to non-theatrical films will mean buyers may lose over $450,000 worth of purchasing power, since allocations for purchasing educational materials at most public institutions are already tight. Ontario Revenue Minister George Ashe has exempted books of an educational, technical, cultural, or literary nature from the tax but not audio-visual

● Bob Vale, Magic Lantern

aids such as films, filmstrips, cassettes, and videotapes, a double standard which irritates the non-theatrical distributors. "If that's not discrimination or inequity, what is?" asks Modolo, who has been fighting the ruling ever since it was made with letters to Ashe, Ontario Premier Bill Davis, and other cabinet members. Frances Broome maintains the tax is "silly" since schools and libraries, as end-users of educational materials, are exempt from the tax anyway; now they must pay the tax and claim their exemption at the end of the year, which makes for a lot of extra and unnecessary bookkeeping.

Non-theatrical distributors face another problem: because of budget reductions and tighter spending policies by public institutions, the Canadian market is shrinking. "There has been a steady erosion since federal funds dried up in the U.S. and the tight money problems of the Canadian institutions began three years ago," says Bob Vale, adding that while a good annual forecast for non-theatrical sales used to be 100 prints per film in Canada and 700 in the U.S., those figures have now dropped to 75 and 300. In a report presented to the Educational Media Producers and Distributors Association of Canada (EMPDAC) in November, 1981, Modolo demonstrated how the market, which appeared to be growing in the sixties, levelled off in the late seventies and has stagnated in the eighties.

Modolo feels the market can be strengthened by putting more money into the hands of buyers. Citing American Library Association guidelines which specify that 20 percent of an institution's budget be spent on learning materials, he points out that none of Ontario's 18 public libraries spend as much as 20 percent on new learning materials and that 11 of 18 spend less than 12 percent. He feels Canadian libraries should adopt spending guidelines like the Americans. "If you've got a marketplace, people will produce for that marketplace," he says. "For a strong home industry, the government should offer incentives so that in the medium to long term there will be benefits, instead of short-term solutions which bring everyone back to the public trough."

"Buy Canadian"

But one government directive has helped both distributors and producers: most public institutions and agencies acquiring non-theatrical films have a clear mandate to buy Canadian, making Canadian productions valuable assets to a distributor. However, Canadian independent producers cannot recover the production costs of a high quality educational film within the domestic non-theatrical market alone because that market is too small. A high quality, half-hour educational film can cost at least $50-60,000, sometimes as high as $100,000, but Bob Vale estimates the break-even point for a film made strictly for the non-theatrical market to be $25,000. Vale encourages producers to develop projects which may also be sold to television, though the two markets are not easily compatible. One problem is length: television half-hours (24 1/2 minutes) are often too long for the average 40-minute classroom situation, since some time must be left for discussion. Distributors say films under 20 minutes work best in high school classrooms, films under 10 minutes for elementary schools, which means distributors may want two versions of a production, for the educational market and for television.

Films for the educational market must tie in with the curriculum, of course, but what distributors know, and filmmakers do not often realize, is that some subject areas are saturated. Modolo says there are about 60-70 films available on China, yet asks, "How many curriculum hours are spent on China?" He advises filmmakers to research a production's marketability and to become familiar with the style and content of other films made on that particular subject, so the filmmaker will know the production standards the market will demand. But he admits filmmakers do not like to have their activities regulated.

Bob Vale maintains the biggest problem for distributors is that often they are not involved with a production until it is completed, and feels that "the earlier into production a distributor is involved, the better." He insists that a distributor can give a filmmaker a pretty accurate assessment at the script stage of whether or not a project will succeed or fail commercially, and believes distributors must challenge filmmakers to face the hard facts of the commercial world, where every film must find a substantial audience to survive.

Not all filmmakers would easily agree with Vale. Rebecca Yates and Glen Salzman of Cineflics in Toronto – which has produced several dramas for the educational market and television – say they usually send their scripts to distributors; the distributors generally have not liked them, but they have made the films anyway. Salzman admits distributors know the market, but adds "it's hard to sell them a concept." He feels it is more important to have a top-quality product to show distributors what you can do.

● Stuart Grant of International Tele-Film Enterprises

But Michael McMillan of Atlantis Films, currently producing six half-hour dramas based on stories from Canadian literature for television and the educational market, feels "distributors do know what they're talking about. If a film will sell, he'll know. If it won't, don't make it."

"The educational market is all front-end loaded with a very slow payout," explains Vale. "Investment by the producer is all up-front to get the film finished. Investment by the non-theatrical distributor is up-front to get the picture released." Expenses must be covered against a film whose market response will be over one to seven years, with the best sales coming between the second and fifth years, according to Vale. "A year in distribution is nothing," says Frances Broome, who takes on films for a minimum of two years, keeping really good films for five years or more to reap full benefits. The non-theatrical sector is less complicated and more predictable than feature film, and far less expensive. Says Modolo: "There is no trouble placing a well-developed film. It is easy to break even."

Many distributors feel they have a greater need than before for new product because the shelf life of an individual film is decreasing in today's market. Vale claims 80 percent of Canadian sales take place within the first two years, rather than over five as in the past; he says Magic Lantern adds as many as 100 new titles a year. He also points out the money available in the Canadian market is in the hands of too few buyers. Unlike the U.S., where many schools operate with medium-sized budgets, Canada has only a few large budgets, which doesn't help to spread sales around. Canada also lacks the secondary market of federal and state agencies and private institutions, which are big customers of non-theatrical films in the States.

Almost without exception, non-theatrical film buyers will not purchase a film until they have screened and evaluated it, and many distributors feel these buyers have become more sophisticated and demanding. Liz Avison, audio-visual librarian for the University of Toronto, explains there are two general buying patterns: first for films in immediate, topical demand, which are dropped after three to four years of use, and films acquired for long-term reference purposes; she also makes a list of "must" buys and "maybe" buys. In many films she screens, Avison feels the material has been stretched out to fit television time slots, making them difficult for educational use. "The main thing in an educational film (that buyers look for) is the effective use of time," she says. "If there is enough material for 36 minutes, then the film should be 36 minutes, not 40."

A large non-theatrical distributor must carry a great number of films to attract as many buyers as possible, but they must also offer the quality products that selective buyers demand. Some companies try to acquire as many titles as possible, even those that lack immediate sales potential, hoping that sometime in the future they will become timely items and big sellers. One such large Canadian company is International Tele-Film Ltd., with well over 1000 films in its catalogue in such areas as education, business, health, religion, criminal justice, and industry. Sometimes such size can intimidate filmmakers, who fear their films may become only a tiny cog in a big machine, but Stuart Grant, the company's general manager, insists this will not happen. "We're a large company, but one of the most diversified," says Grant, explaining that the company's organization is subdivided into smaller divisions, each handling a certain market area. "Any film we feel is commercially viable will be given the broadest exposure."

International Tele-Film was founded in 1969 by its president, Murray Sweigman, and has offices in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. The company does not distribute directly to the United States or other foreign markets, but subdistributes its films through a network of international sales agents built up over the years by Sweigman.

The question of sub-distribution

Depending on how you look at it, subdistribution is either one of the best or one of the worst things about the business. Nearly all distributors sub-distribute their films to some degree, which allows them to reach otherwise unavailable foreign markets, though at a reduced percentage of the sale. Dealing with a large company which uses many subdistribution agents can allow a filmmaker to negotiate a film's complete distribution in one deal, allowing that filmmaker to get on with the business of making another film. But sub-distribution brings back less money to a producer than a direct deal: as production costs are largely covered by foreign sales, producers are reluctant to lose any potential share of that revenue.

Since they must produce quality educational films for the international market, several Canadian independents are now making films outside of Canada and North America. The same connections necessary for them to produce

● Marilyn A. Belec of Mobius

these films are often handy when it comes to distributing those films in foreign countries. As producers are becoming more aware of what they can get out of the distribution market, they are becoming more reluctant to give away rights they can better exploit themselves.

Traditionally, distributors have asked for and received a film's world non-theatrical rights from producers, and many still have a policy of asking for exclusive rights. But they are asking, not demanding: the practice is no longer accepted without question by producers. Such an attitude has challenged non-theatrical distributors to come up with better deals for the international markets; some distributors, like Bob Vale at Magic Lantern, will negotiate world non-theatrical rights from a producer in exchange for a distribution guarantee (a guaranteed minimum annual return to investors), which he did with Atlantis Films for their six-part Canadian drama series.

Most distributors don't like to talk about guarantees. Frances Broome says Kinetic doesn't give them, asking "What good do they do anyone? It just puts us under pressure. We want as many sales as producers, maybe more." Stuart Grant admits his company has given guarantees before, but feels "they are hard to give during these present times." Even Vale is having second thoughts, saying guarantees "are becoming harder and harder to justify" in the shrinking marketplace. But precedents have now made filmmakers less afraid to ask.

Vale feels a distributor's biggest mistake is to "overestimate his ability to sell the product in order to secure distribution rights." Adds Broome about Kinetic's flexible approach toward rights: "We want to be fair to producers. We say, if you can find another deal, fine, we will take non-exclusive rights. It's always best to be exclusive, but it is silly to take an exclusive deal in an area you can't handle."

Another problem is that some rights, particularly Canadian television rights, are already committed when producers approach distributors, it being accepted industry practice that producers deal directly with the Canadian networks to recover some percentage of production costs. Even the American television market, with its many "windows" through educational and pay television, is more of a revenue source for producers than distributors. Stuart Grant says the bulk of the percentage for an American television sale goes to the filmmaker, but that the distributor makes up for it in the hundreds of print sales available in the U.S. non-theatrical market. Vale insists he is not looking to make money out of the U.S. television market. "I look at it as a source of money for the producers," he says, reasoning that American television exposure ultimately provides his company with a better product for the non-theatrical market.

Getting involved in production

Few of the Canadian non-theatrical distributors produce films themselves – most claim they simply cannot afford it – though most companies will provide filmmakers with completion money, guarantee lab bills, or act as "packagers" (bringing potential investors together with filmmakers). The Canadian distributor most active in production is probably Magic Lantern: Vale claims one reason he started the company was because the wanted to get involved in Canadian production. "My aim from day one was to build a Canadian collection," he says, noting the company now circulates over 100 Canadian titles, and adding that he hopes to see 50 percent of the company's income derived from Canadian productions within a 10-year period. His approach has been to pre-sell projects to the Canadian and American non-theatrical markets, using distribution guarantees to investors as a means of raising production money; he did this with the highly successful children's drama series *The Kids of Degrassi St.*, produced by Toronto independents Kit Hood and Linda Schuyler and pre-sold to the U.S. educational film distributor Learning Corp. of America.

In 1979, Vale began his own American non-theatrical distribution company, Beacon Films, which began as a mail order business and has grown to a full-service company. One of his objectives with Beacon is to give Canadian productions a higher profile in the U.S. non-theatrical market. "Canada has always had a tremendous reputation for short subjects, and not just the National Film Board," notes Vale; but he adds that, until a few years ago, "Canadian short subjects were getting into release without any recognition as Canadian films." According to Vale, Beacon looks to Canada as its main source of supply: while the company distributes American titles, it only invests in Canadian productions.

The smaller way

Distributors like Magic Lantern, International Tele-Film, and Marlin have large catalogues which offer buyers a wide selection from almost any area within the non-theatrical sector. But some companies are taking a different approach: specialization within a narrower segment of the market. Kinetic has 450 titles, a small number in comparison to the bigger distributors, but they are concentrated in the health and human relations market; the company has built up a strong collection of films about alcoholism, for example. Frances Broome says she looks for the type of film that "improves the quality of life," explaining that for a business film this may mean a film that teaches better communications, sales, or managerial skills. One of her company's biggest sellers last year was *Killing Us Softly*, a satirical look at how women are portrayed by advertisers.

Kinetic has a distribution contract with the Film Arts production house in Toronto, and has over 50 Film Arts titles in its catalogue. Such a deal helps provide the company with the steady flow of new material which all distributors need. Since they rely on fewer titles to cover expenses, smaller distributors like Kinetic must market their films more aggressively, an approach Broome characterizes as "getting the most out of one film, rather than the least out of ten." Broome not only researches new films, but new customers and new markets as well. She says Kinetic re-evaluates the sales potential of each of its films after two years, and discards poor selling films from its catalogue, keeping the numbers down and the quality high. She also has one full-time staff member whose only job "is to see that the films are not sitting on the shelf," ensuring that no production will get lost in the shuffle of the company's organization. Broome is confident that Kinetic's strategy of providing buyers with quality rather than just quantity will continue to bring her company good results in the shrinking marketplace.

Mobius International of Toronto, founded three years ago by Marilyn Belec, is a paragon of the small, aggressive distribution company getting ahead by offering quality films and good service. "I have turned down a lot of films, because either the subject was not well enough covered or the technical quality was not up to the level of our collection. Essentially, every single film we've got is an award-winning film," says Belec. She began as a producer, and her company distributes five of her own educational films; her son Phillip is general manager of the company's distribution wing, which handles 30-odd films.

Marilyn Belec turned to distributing her own films because she felt no distributor could offer her a better deal than the one she could get for herself. She began her company with one film, *Taking Chances*, a half-hour docu-drama about the reasons for the non-use of birth control by sexually active teenagers, which she had produced herself. Needing a high return to cover production costs, unsure of how the controversial subject would be handle through regular sales channels, and unhappy with the deal offered her by most distributors, Belec decided to do the job herself, and took a year off from production to set up a distribution company.

Her gamble paid off. *Taking Chances* sold an incredibly successful 300 prints in Canada, and the distribution operation survived, even though it was a year before the company added a second film to its "catalogue." But Belec admits she would only recommend that other producers distribute their own films with some qualifications. "You have to be willing to take an entire year and do nothing else, and make sure the film you start with is dynamite; it's hard to start without a good film," she says. "You'll make no money the first year. It all goes back into the company, or else you won't keep going. There is an enormous amount of responsibility you can't get away from. It takes over your life, you lose yourself in the business. You really have to commit yourself and not give up." She would not recommend setting up a distribution company, as she originally did, for the sake of a single film, claiming it is too expensive: "You need $10,000 to promote one film."

• Les Modolo of Marlin Motion Pictures

But now Belec can describe her experience in distribution as "fantastic, very exciting," and feels that if more filmmakers tried it, they'd like it. She continues to produce, having recently completed two half-hour docu-dramas, ***Menopause*** and ***Cramps***, dealing with women's health issues, which Belec feels have never been adequately handled in past films. She heavily researches all her productions, and claims that many of her past films have developed in reaction to how poorly previous films had handled the subjects. As a producer, Belec knows her audience will be teenagers, and she says "Kids like the truth, they like to be able to identify issues from where they are feeling things, otherwise it isn't going to work for them." But as a distributor, Belec also knows something else about the educational market: "In order for teenagers to see the films, they have to be bought by adults. It is important for filmmakers to understand that. If people who buy don't like it, the kids don't see it."

Buyers won't pay for what they can't use, which is why distributors now are after well-researched, well-planned, and strongly marketable educational films more than ever. "I can't afford to put thousands of dollars into a film that is not going to sell, or I won't stay in business," says Belec. "Film librarians are buying what they need, no extras. The money available to independent filmmakers is probably less right now (than it was a few years ago)." Phillip Belec points out that quality Canadian productions are valuable to distributors not only because they sell well in the domestic market, but because they allow Canadian distributors access to the lucrative American market. He notes that only Mobius' Canadian productions have really been able to sell well in the States since the company opened an American office last year in New Jersey.

More producers are finding it attractive to deal with smaller distributors.

• The producers roam the world: Heather MacAndrew and David Springbett in Papua, New Guinea

feeling their films will be given more attention, and knowing that if a smaller distributor must market its films more aggressively, that means a greater individual return to the producer. Last year, producers David Springbett and Heather MacAndrew of Asterisk Films in Toronto both sold a production to a large distributor and themselves distributed one of their own films in the Canadian non-theatrical market. They gave a large Canadian distributor exclusive rights to their 13-part series, *The World's Children*, but were dissatisfied when that distributor could not get them a single television sale; the distributor's response was that the 15-minute-length of each segment made them unsuitable for the television market. But having got back some of the rights after winning a breach of contract dispute, Springbett and MacAndrew themselves negotiated a sale to CBC Northern Services.

Springbett says the lesson learned was "before you give away rights, be sure the person is capable of exploiting those rights." Both he and MacAndrew admit there are advantages to going with a large distributor: prestige, security ("no worry about bankruptcy"), and often assistance in raising money; but their attitude now is that less-mainstream productions can get lost within a big company and that filmmakers shouldn't hesitate to be selective as to who will distribute their films. MacAndrew notes that when filmmakers are starting out, "You're so flattered to have anyone pick up your film. Some filmmakers go with the first distributor they talk to. With experience comes more bargaining power."

Glen Salzman of Cineflics agrees that a producer's most common mistake is to give away all of a production's rights; he says that in their dealings with non-theatrical distributors, Cineflics now keeps all television rights, because they now see themselves as primarily television producers. His partner Rebecca Yates feels that at some point, for right or wrong reasons, all filmmakers have felt that their distributors weren't giving them full value, but she adds that producers must trust their distributors and not set their expectations too high. Salzman points out that the perceived "rip-off" of a distributor's small cheque is often a distortion by the filmmaker. "After you finish a film, you always think it's great, but maybe not two years later. Also, you always expect more than you get." But Yates adds, "Sometimes distributors dig their own grave. They talk extraordinary figures." She cautions filmmakers to be aware of how their productions are being marketed by distributors.

Doing it yourself

Producers who have distributed films themselves usually develop a genuine respect for distributors and the work their job involves. Asterisk distributed its 1981 production *A Moveable Feast* in the Canadian non-theatrical market as a means of recovering production costs; David Springbett says distributing his own film made him realize "how much distributors earn their commission. It was a positive thing. We used to think that to make the film was the end of your responsibility – now we are much more aware of the value of marketing and publicity."

Degrassi St. producers Kit Hood and Linda Schuyler used to distribute their own films in Canada but gave it up as production demands became too great. "It got to the point where we couldn't do both," says Schuyler, adding that she found the distribution routine, with its costs of preview prints, reels, cans, jiffy bags, shipping charges, postage, and the price of continually replacing damaged footage, "too nickel and dimey for us." She says expenses for selling a half-hour educational film at $500 per print often totalled $150 or more. Now that Schuyler is out of distribution, she feels the most important things between a filmmaker and a distributor are trust and enthusiasm to sell the film. She claims that as a producer selling her own film, often she could see only the film's weaknesses, whereas she now recognizes how a sales agent can more effectively communicate a film's strengths to a buyer.

Toronto's Lauron Productions Ltd. has distributed some of its films in the Canadian non-theatrical market, but has not yet moved up to a full-scale distribution operation, according to its president Ron Lillie. Lillie feels it is a mistake for Canadian producers to produce non-theatrical and television programs in high volume, believing that if producers selectively create high quality productions, they will attract a good share of the distribution market. The Lauron-produced series on Canada's World Cup downhill ski team, comprised of quality documentaries made during each of the past few racing seasons, has had moderate success selling outside Canada, with sales to the Public Broadcasting System and several cable companies. But Lillie points out that American audiences identify more closely to the American World Cup ski team and its heroes than to the Canadian team, making it harder to sell the films.

Lillie believes that knowledge of distribution and its business realities are indispensible to an independent producer. "Distribution is too important not to learn how to do it yourself – it's vital to the long-term success of a company. You should make it as much of a priority as making good films," he says, maintaining that to simply hand over a film to a distributor without a real understanding of the system is "inviting disaster."

It is ironic then that one of Lauron's most critically successful films, *The Breakthrough* – a documentary about how cerebral palsy victims are able to communicate to the rest of the world through the language of Blissymbols – which won the Canadian Film and Television Award for best independent Canadian production in 1981, has had nightmarish distribution problems. Produced by Peter Williamson and directed by Ira Levy for Lauron, the film was a very personal creation for the filmmakers, yet it has two major obstacles for distributors: its length and its subject matter. At 40 minutes, the film is too long for the television half-hour, too short for the television hour, and an awkward length for the classroom; also many distributors say that the market is already saturated with quality films about disability, which haven't made sales easy. Still, *The Breakthrough* was bought by the Canadian Television Network (CTV) in 1981, though the network has yet to broadcast the program.

Lillie defends *The Breakthrough*, calling it "an act of the heart" by two filmmakers, and saying that the sale to CTV demonstrates the film's value, even if it has yet to be broadcast. But for any other projects, Lillie feels his company would not approach outside investors without a competent understanding of how the project would be distributed. "At the best of times, film is a speculative investment," says Lillie. "Unless you are honestly able to offer that chance of recoupment through your own knowledge, then it's not even a good speculative investment. Ultimately, it's not just the making of good films, but knowing you have a real prospect of distribution."

The future

With the Canadian non-theatrical market effectively shrinking, distributors will have to look for new markets, as well as existing ones more efficiently. One important future market is video, though right now it is not as big as many distributors might like. Les Modolo notes video sales haven't caught on in the educational market the same way they have in the home market. Bob Vale feels customer investment in 16mm equipment remains significant enough to

● Having toyed with distribution, the producers of **Degrassi Street** are now firmly in the production camp

Going the alternate route

"The largest distributor of independently produced Canadian films in the universe," is how Natalie Edwards playfully describes the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre (CFMDC). Founded in 1967 as a collective organization, the CFMDC has over 400 members and over 1000 films in its catalogue, ranging in such areas as experimental and animated film, social documentary, drama, the arts, nature, leisure, travel, and sports.

The Centre was formed "to benefit the filmmaker above and beyond all points," according to Edwards, its current director. It offers filmmakers higher percentages than any other distributors – 60-70 percent of gross revenues, compared to the average deal of 30 percent offered by the commercial distributors. But because the organization is grant-supported, the CFMDC does not compete in the same market as the unsubsidized, commercial, non-theatrical distributors. "It would not be fair," says Edwards.

Also because of its grant support, the Centre will not refuse to distribute a Canadian independent film, though Edwards concedes she cannot guarantee filmmakers any specific return. Membership in the CFMDC costs $12 a year. In return, a filmmaker has his or her film catalogued, indexed, prepared for distribution (affixed with red and green leader and the CFMDC logo), and promoted on the market. As well, the Centre provides information on film festivals and sales events, on how to get educational and Canadian content certificates, plus, if the film merits it, help in getting sub-distribution in the United States, Great Britain, and Australia. The organization also publishes a newsletter five times a year.

The Centre is currently being reorganized, a process which began in August, 1981, when Edwards took control of the CFMDC and learned that its deficit was 50 percent larger than she had been led to expect. She is still working at reducing that deficit by cutting expenses, renting out extra space at the Centre's Front St. offices in Toronto, and strictly accounting for all costs. Edwards feels pay television will offer a great potential market for packages and series of Canadian films now in the Centre's library, and currently is pursuing this project.

Edwards considers the relationship between the CFMDC's national office in Toronto with its British Columbia branch, the CFMDWest, which began in 1979, as "the ideal relationship between a central body and a provincial group." She describes the western body as a "true collective," since its 100 members represent virtually all the province's independent filmmakers, and notes the group's sales are up over 1000 percent since its inception. At its 1982 general meeting, the B.C. group voted for financial autonomy and the right to make its own policy decisions, which Edwards considers to be very healthy for the organization.

An example of the group's collective strength can be seen in its negotiations earlier this year with the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. for 16 half-hours of regional programming that the network wanted for its Pacific Wave series. Since the group represents nearly all the province's independent filmmakers, they were able to set the price at $25 a minute, says Edwards, who maintains the network "wouldn't have paid nearly as much if the Centre was not there." Almost in the same breath, she adds "Of course, the price should have been ten times as much," identifying a familiar problem for independents: getting a higher percentage of production costs covered by the Canadian networks. "Obviously, they (the CBC) should be a major supporter of Canadian independent filmmakers. Now, they're a modest supporter," says Edwards. "I commend what they have done, criticize what they have not done."

One-third of the CFMDC's titles are experimental films, and Edwards figures that her organization is the only one in North America which employs a full-time staff member to handle experimental film distribution. Sales and rentals of these films contribute "a significant amount of the (CFMDC's) gross," according to David Poole, the Centre's experimental film officer. Poole feels the substantial revenue the CFMDC earns from experimental film, influenced the Canada Council's decision to start a 1982 program which helps defray the cost of screening experimental films in artist-run galleries.

Edwards feels that the CFMDC, by offering independent filmmakers exposure within the industry as well as individual advice, criticism, and encouragement, has kept many struggling careers alive within the tough independent production sector. She feels it would be difficult to start up such an organization in the eighties: the Centre's objectives, she says, are not financially lucrative, and at times they are barely feasible. But she is committed to keeping the group going: "We are set up to benefit the filmmaker, and it's hard to stay alive."

photo: Ron Levine

• Natalie Edwards, heading up the Distribution Centre

• Ronald Lillie, president of Lauron Productions

continue its use for some time, adding "there is sufficient evidence to show that the learning experience is more meaningful when motion pictures are used in the classroom instead of the TV monitor." Stuart Grant agrees 16mm use will continue in the near future, but wonders aloud if the large-size, high-resolution video screen being developed in Japan might change the entire future of the non-theatrical market.

Grant feels the future is going to be tough for the non-theatrical distributors. He admits some markets remain untapped, and a share still remains of the present market, but feels that in the next year to eighteen months, it will be difficult for any business to show substantial growth.

Vale disagrees. He claims Magic Lantern recently had its best two months ever, and the company expanded to a seven-person sales force in March. "My theory is that when economic times are tough, this is a very safe industry to be in. Budgets are cut, not eliminated," says Vale, noting that the non-theatrical sector fluctuates with in a much narrower economic range than feature film. "This is the proper time to be expanding in the marketplace. We are not feeling the effects of the recession to the same degree as someone in construction or car sales."

"Everyone should realize the distributor is on the side of the producer. The distributor wants to make just as much money," says Frances Broome, and the comment in many ways signifies the future of the Canadian non-theatrical distribution sector. For both distributor and filmmaker to survive tough economic times, both realize they must work together to create high-quality productions which can make a dent in the marketplace. Filmmakers have always been told how much they need distributors, but Canada's non-theatrical distributors have been shrewd enough to understand how much they also need filmmakers. •

Gearing up for tomorrow

new technologies and film aesthetics

by Carol Rutter

It has been said that there is no such thing as a true invention. An invention is actually the result of combining two or more existing components, creating something that functions quite differently than either of the original components would ultimately suggest. An inventor, driven to satisfy his boundless curiosity, possesses the necessary vision and imagination to keep experimenting with existing materials in endless combinations.

When we examine technological innovations in film history, the term "research and development" refers to a two-part process. First the equipment is invented and developed for practical use. But it is not until some time later that the full aesthetic potential of the equipment is realized. For example, the moving picture camera was invented long before its users realized either camera movement or in-camera editing. It was later still before camera movements were refined enough to be aesthetically interesting and before post-shooting editing was realized.

Even today, when we look at many films that use new high technology, we find tremendous underuse of its potential. Few examples of high-tech experimentation and application seem motivated by a well-developed aesthetic sensibility.

Apocalyptic sound

Although dozens of films have recently been released with multi-channel sound, not even a handful stand out as aurally interesting. Of these few, *Apocalypse Now* possibly heads the list as the film with the most interesting creative development of multi-channel sound.

Just as the invention of the moving camera depended upon and borrowed from still photography equipment, multi-channel sound in film merely applied the audio technology already widely used in both the home stereo and recording studio industries. Although the application of this technology to film was a relatively small step, the aesthetic development by the filmmakers and technicians is evidently a lot more difficult.

Several kinds of prints of *Apocalypse Now* are available for public screening. Here, we focus only on the 70mm print with no on-screen credits and projected in a theatre with multi-channel sound facilities, like Montreal's York Theatre, or the Vancouver Center Cinema.

Apocalypse Now insists on 100% of our attention. Carefully composed images projected on a very wide screen occupy our visual field. Furthermore, the spectator, accustomed to evaluating sound as a secondary consideration – if aware of the soundtrack at all – finds his or her ear titillated beyond the customary screening experience.

The sound in *Apocalypse Now* is broken down into discrete components that variously remain either in a fixed position, or move from one speaker to the next, depending on the intended effect, or on the sound's source position to, or within the image. Each of the six speakers can project mutually exclusive sounds at various points in the film. For example, when Captain Willard and the Chef are in the jungle, preceding the tiger attack, the sound is quite broken down : in one speaker we hear a hyena, in a second we hear dialogue, in a third a bird chirping, and in a fourth wings flapping etc. In this case there is little if any mobility of sounds or significant volume adjustment.

Because of soundtrack manipulation, the helicopters in *Apocalypse Now* are elevated far beyond the status of props. Coppola's attention to the helicopters' sound mix best demonstrates the variables of discrete and mobile sound possible in multi-channel sound projection. Furthermore, he aurally suggests an expansion of depth to the spectator. The following example demonstrates this :

As the Playboy Bunny helicopter descends, the frame is flodded with the helicopter's front light. As the angle of light to camera changes, we see that this is the central of three helicopters – the other two are escort helicopters. As the escorts fly forward to the foreground and move off-screen via the top of the frame, their sound continues, moving to the back of the theatre from one set of speakers to the next. It is as if the helicopters are right in the theatre flying overhead, even though the screen shows only one stationary helicopter. When the sounds reach the last two speakers, the volume gradually diminishes to nothing.

The term "depth of field" usually refers to the illusion of a third dimension measured from the screen inwards, usually conveyed by a subject's placement in the frame. With multi-channel sound, depth of aural field can either be accomplished by adjusting the volume of the on-screen object's sound relative to its changing position in the frame, or by suggesting its presence in the field from the screen outwards into the theatre.

Before the existence of multi-channel sound, off-screen phenomena were usually perceived from above, below, left or right of the frame ; they depended on off-screen glances, followed by an entrance or placed immediately after an exit. So, the perceived amount of off and on-screen space wildly fluctuated within one film, as clearly demonstrated in many Renoir films. Theoretically, with multi-channel sound, a filmmaker can consistently stretch off-screen space through aural suggestion.

A subtle use of this technique is found in the first sequence of *Apocalypse Now*. While we see a medium shot of purple haze in the foreground and jungle in the background, we hear vague rumblings in the back of the theatre. Barely audible at first, these sounds are heard in the midst of much louder music and other sounds from the middle and front speakers. Gradually, the rumblings increase in volume and move forward on the left set of speakers. Before they actually reach the left front speaker, we are finally able to identify the sounds as helicopters. Then, a helicopter enters the frame's left side, travels across the frame and exits on the right. While the helicopter is in sight, its sound is equal in volume to the other sounds. The process is then reversed as the unseen helicopter sounds travel down the right side of the theatre, gradually diminishing in volume and eventually disappearing from the soundtrack.

The rate of the sound's movement is worth noting in this sequence. Before and after we see the on-screen helicopter, its sound travels the distance to and from the screen at what seems to be the exact rate of the on-screen helicopter's movement across the frame. It is as if Coppola timed the helicopter's rate of travel across the screen, figured out the average theatre size and speaker placement, and through some kind of mathematical wizardry was able to guage how fast the implied helicopter should travel to and from the screen. It's also as if this calculation was motivated by awareness of the spectator experience. There are too many examples of this kind of sound aesthetic in the film for it to have been just a happy accident.

According to John Sperdakos, Vice-President of the United Theatre exhibition chain, a Zoetrope representative arrived in Montreal with film cans, weeks before Montreal's opening of *Apocalypse Now*. He was to verify and approve the sound projection quality at the York, before Zoetrope okayed its release to United Theatres. The film was projected for the Zoetrope representative while he moved from one area of the theatre to another about every 15 minutes.

Mona Skagar, the film's associate producer, said that if this test fell below Zoetrope standards the exhibitor would be deprived of the 70mm multi-channel print and be forced to accept another version with conventional sound, only available some time after the other's release.

Apocalypse Now demonstrates the obviously high correlation between the on-screen aesthetic and Coppola's behind-the-scenes experimentation.

High-tech "cut and paste"

A film like *One From the Heart* had to be made to prepare technicians for the complexities of Electronic Cinema. His innovative production techniques were not, however, matched by an identifiable look – the uninformed viewer will notice little on the screen.

Coppola had vivid memories of his days as a scriptwriter and the pressure of writing nearly one script a week. These deadlines introduced him to two established writer's tools, the scissors and the stapler. Coppola reasoned that this "cut and paste" process could be applied to an entire motion picture.

Given the new technology, the pre-production, production and post-production steps, conventionally done sequentially, were now simultaneously possible, and could be accomplished in a different order.

Coppola was interested in linking up each production department with the nine sound stages at Zoetrope, to have the ability "to pump images, sound and data around like hot and cold water."[1] In preparing for *One From the Heart*, some of the desired equipment was so new that only prototypes were available.

A word processor was used as the electronic version of the storyboard. The word processor was so flexible that it became like a drawing board for the film's design adjustments. Virtually everyone from every department was a designer. This adjustment and growth process continued until the result was

• Coppola at Cannes

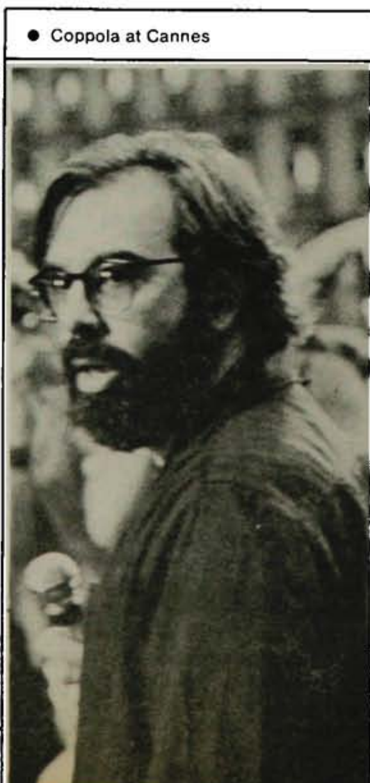


photo : Federico

Carol Rutter in on the executive of the Film Studies Association of Canada and is studying film at Concordia University where she has written film reviews for The Link and The Georgian.

the finished film.

Isolated from the set, Coppola directed via telephone in his Image and Sound Control Vehicle. Built into this 28-foot vehicle's interior were monitors, editors, recorders, a mixing console and timebase correctors.

Videotape rehearsals greatly speeded up the post-production phase. Because of instant replay, adjustments to lighting, make-up etc. were immediately possible before the final and sometimes only take. Then copies of the final film take were available on tape to editors who could immediately begin their work.[2]

Because video monitors can be placed away from the set, the camera can be placed in positions that wouldn't normally allow space for an operator. Instead, remote controls can adjust pan, tilt, focus, etc. Because of the significant time savings, Electronic Cinema is both efficient in general terms and potentially very cost efficient. Since the filmmaker can constantly preview the film, faster decisions concerning additions, deletions and refinements are possible.

Once Electronic Cinema matures by adopting High Definition Video technology, radical aesthetic improvements are promised. When Coppola addressed the Academy Awards audience in 1979, he said:

"We're on the eve of something that's going to make the Industrial Revolution look like a small town try-out. I can see a communications revolution that's about movies and art and music and digital electronics and satellites, but above all, human talent – and it's going to make the masters of the cinema, from whom we've inherited the business, believe things that they would have thought impossible."[3]

So too, Electronic Cinema in *One From the Heart* is a "small town tryout," foreshadowing to film purists the electronic recording of moving images.

Scan lines rival celluloid

The basic difference between photographic and electronic recording of moving pictures is that a film frame is captured all at once, while a video frame's image is recorded sequentially by means of scan lines. The two greatest limitations in current video technology are contrast range and image sharpness.

Simply put, High Definition Video depends on an increase of scan lines which substantially improve contrast range and image clarity, replacing the conventionally flat image with an image registering greater depth.

High Definition Video will be more quickly adapted to theatrical exhibition than to home reception, as the factors surrounding home reception are significantly more complicated. First, there is a direct correlation between the number of scan lines and the bandwidth measured in Hertz. The greater the number of scan lines, the wider the band. As bandwidth increases the number of available channels must decrease. (To avoid a long explanation of bandwidth, this article will confine its references to scan lines.)

Depending on the country, there are now either 525 or 625 scan lines for broadcast, allowing so many channels. The Japanese Broadcasting Corporation has conducted viewer response tests on High Definition Video equipment. Their compiled data indicates that quality improvement is perceived up to 1600 scan lines. Along with other independent indicators, this test has led to a nearly unanimous opinion that between 1500 and 1600 scan lines are the ultimate goal of High Definition Video research and development.

Since 1500 to 1600 scan lines represents a tripling of scan lines now used, only one third of the current number of channels would be available without some kind of conversion hardware. This hardware is presently unfeasible as an accessory for home receivers. Rather, some kind of converson would have to be made prior to transmission.

A second giant obstacle to the speedy application of High Definition Video to home receivers is equipment incompatibility. Today's tapes and recorders may be totally incompatible with tomorrow's tapes, recorders and receivers. Drastic changes in the physical characteristics of tape could mean that they must be played and recorded on equipment totally incompatible with today's equipment. Those concerned with print and tape deterioration warn that the archival life expectancy of tape is disagreeably shorter than film. The current physical properties of tape must be replaced by materials that will stretch the tape's shelf life, without threatening image quality. In fact, regardless of its application, the rate of integration of film and video will be slowed down because of this.

A third small but nagging issue for broadcasting companies is viewer psychology. It seems almost certain that the viewer will first be introduced to High Definition Video through theatrical exhibition. By the time home reception is made technically possible, the market should be receptive.

Those exposed to 1200 to 1500 scan line material mostly agree that image quality is comparable to that in a 35mm film print. The technology now exists to make High Definition Video projectors for theatre use. In fact, two projectors are now available which are capable of a horizontal resolution equivalent to an 1100 scan line image. So, it must now be recognized that an alternative to film in the cinema is around the corner – it is just a matter of time before comparable quality High Definition Video makes its theatrical debut.

Perhaps 10 years from now, the film industry will be renamed the moving picture industry, because by then technicians and craftsmen will probably move from one medium to the other with relative ease. Moving picture production may stay the same, or increase, but the materials and equipment used will vary from one production to the next.

We're also very near the time when film-to-tape and tape-to-film transfer technology will be so refined that high quality images will be possible on transfer copies. In fact, the Japanese Broadcasting Corporation is developing a laser tape-to-film transfer system for High Definition Video that can reputedly produce images sharper than normal 35mm release prints. So, the available options to the moving picturemaker will be even greater.

As explained in the *One From the Heart* example, Electronic Cinema allows for a complete re-ordering of steps in pre-production, production and post-production – an approach significantly different from conventional filmmaking. Considering the accomplishments in *One From the Heart*, we may soon have pre-production mostly devoted to equipment choice and technical logistics. These pre-production decisions will no doubt depend on budget, available personnel and their respective specializations, equipment availability, and the intended uses of the finished product. For example, with a generous budget, the equipment and personnel necessary for a moving picture made exclusively for home broadcast will be quite different from a moving picture with a comparable budget geared towards theatrical exhibition, followed by tape distribution and then conventional network broadcast.

● The helicopters zoom on and off the screen

The potential problems and complexities just detailed merely serve as a simplified introduction for those unfamiliar with the imminent applications of Electronic Cinema.

But, let's step back from the future to the present limitations of video technology. Most aestheticians would agree that the film look is far superior to the tape look of productions to date. This difference is often misunderstood; the blame usually falls on the equipment instead of on its habitual application. Over-lighting and image flatness characterize the tape look. For example, made-for-TV moving pictures are made either on film or on tape. When each is broadcast on a home receiver, we need not check the credits to determine which medium was used, because the look differential is the most telling indicator.

Until recently, the application of video technology has almost exclusively been for TV broadcast. The lighting restrictions are enormous, especially when one considers that lighting decisions are motivated by the need to light for multiple camera set-ups in a video production. But, we must be aware that multiple camera set-ups are more of a common practice than a necessity in video production.

In fact, the results of single-camera video shooting experiments indicate that there is great aesthetic potential with existing video equipment. Two Zoetrope video shorts were recently presented to CBS. As described by Brooks Riley in the May-June 1982 issue of Film Comment, "the Zoetrope shorts had been shot as films, not as over-lighted compensations for film that emerged from Pavlovian familiarity to the old video. The Zoetrope images were underlighted yet clear and deep. Taking their aesthetic impulse from cinema, they succeeded in suggesting the true impact of High Definition Video; that of replacing celluloid with a technological equivalent far easier and cheaper, without relinquishing any of celluloid's value."

●

Further pioneering efforts in creative Electronic Cinema will probably be dominated by Coppola's name for some time to come. For as Garrett Brown puts it: "Francis Coppola is an acknowledged master of the film medium as it is presently constituted. However, he is gifted (or cursed) with the ambition to innovate, to advance the art and science of filmmaking and to drag the medium singlehandedly into the 21st century. He looks ahead to an era when movies will be digitally recorded as high resolution video; edited strictly by a computer juggling trillions of binary numbers, and distributed by transmitting the ultimate numbers via satellite to exhibitors, or even straight to subscribers in the home. Francis will of course direct by satellite from Shangri-La or space shuttle, with actors in San Francisco, sets in New York and lunch in Rome. I believe, as do many, that he is a sensitive artistic human being, but he is clearly here on earth somewhat ahead of his reservation."

●

[1] Brown, Thomas. *American Cinematographer*, January 1982, p. 28 "The Electronic Camera Experiment"

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *American Cinematographer*, January 1982, p. 22

[4] *American Cinematographer*, March 1982. Issue entitled "Electronic Cinematography"

Many points in the present article summarize ideas and innovations which are discussed at great length in the January and March issues of the *American Cinematographer*.

TV NEWS

● What is more reassuring than Knowlton Nash at the end of a long day?

A structure of reassurance

by Joyce Nelson

Watching the recently revised format of CBC's network news show, *The National*, I'm often captivated by the sheer technological brilliance of the production. *The National*, like all other network news shows, is a complex interweaving of disparate elements – filmed reportage, live studio coverage, rear-screen graphics, minicam transmission, satellite feeds – all combined into an apparently seamless whole. Add to this complex collage the sophisticated computer animation which *The National* uses to open and close the show and the result is a sense of television technology taken to its limits.

No other TV genre brings together such a range of technological competence. Arguably, the network news show is a showcase for the latest in electronics hardware and a celebration of television itself. Seen in this light, the recurring structure of the nightly newscast reveals an interesting ideology at work behind the overt content.

Over the past 30 years, the technological goal of television news has always been to achieve more up-to-the-minute coverage of events on location. Each advancement in the television apparatus can be tied to this goal, especially the development of ever more portable, light-weight cameras. By the early 1970s, the introduction of ENG (electronic news-gathering) technology seemed to herald the approach of the ideal. The small minicam cameras are easily portable and produce a sharp image. Better yet, ENG equipment, unlike film cameras, simultaneously feeds electronic im-

pulse back to the studio for immediate transmission or for storage on tape. Film, on the other hand, needs to be processed in a lab, thereby causing a delay of several hours before the material can be broadcast. By the mid-seventies all North American network news agencies had invested in ENG technology, not only for competitive reasons but because the equipment was the latest breakthrough in achieving the technological goal of TV news.

Behind this desire for more up-to-the-minute coverage on location, there is, perhaps, a deeper motivation. As Wallace Westfeld, former executive producer for NBC News, said in an interview :

> "Television people have always been worried and fearful of a comparison with print people. It started really in the fifties when television news became a fact. It was in a 15-minute form on a daily basis and, I think, in those days the broadcast journalists were always somewhat embarrassed. They felt that they suffered by comparison with print... I think this sort of set the mode for broadcast journalism."

It has been common knowledge for decades that TV news does not achieve the depth of analysis possible in print. The verbal portion of a network news show would fill less than half-a-page of a newspaper. Given this unfavourable comparison, TV news has always sought its own uniqueness. In almost defensive fashion, each technological advancement has been an attempt to stake out television's specific terrain in terms of delivering the news. Simply put, the mode set for broadcast journalism was a fascination with the technology of the medium.

We can sense this vividly in a transcript from a *See It Now* program broadcast on November 18, 1951, and hosted by Edward R. Murrow. The occasion was the first TV link-up, through cables and relay stations, of East and West coast USA. Murrow states :

> "We are, as newcomers to this medium, rather impressed by the whole thing ; impressed, for example, that I can turn to Don Hewitt and say : Don, will you push a button and bring me in the Atlantic coast ? Okay, now San Francisco, could you use what you call, I think, a "zoomar lens' and close in on the bridge a little ? We, for our part, are considerably impressed. For the first time man has been able to sit at home and look at two oceans at the same time. We're impressed with the importance of this medium. We shall hope to learn to use it and not to abuse it."

In our present era of satellite telecommunications, the excitement expressed here may seem oddly quaint. Four times Murrow says he's "impressed", revealing a bedazzlement which cannot be masked by the sudden solemnity of his closing lines. But what is of interest here, for our purposes, is the specific object of Murrow's fascination : the simultaneous live transmission of on-location visuals. Had the images of the two oceans been *filmed* images, made earlier in the day on both coasts and then linked-up for simultaneous transmission through the cables and relays, the reporter would certainly have been less impressed. In other words, it was not the link-up of the coasts which so bedazzled Murrow, but the link-up of live on-location transmission in real-time. He proves this by asking that the "zoomar lens... close in on the bridge a little." It is this simple request, followed by an answering change of frame, that established, once and for all, the unique terrain of the medium. No wonder a dedicated TV newsman like Edward R. Murrow was so bedazzled. Television had found its "news beat" – live on-location transmission in real-time : a more impressive terrain technologically than that of either print or film.

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Yet the irony of TV news is that its dictates *as a program* overshadow its prestigious capabilities. In actual fact, the only part of a TV program that is transmitted live in real-time is the image of the anchorman in the studio. Even with ENG technology, we virtually never see an on location item broadcast live. The contradiction between technological potential and programming demands results in several repercussions for the news.

Because the news is a program like any other, it must fit within the broadcast schedule in its allotted time period. Therefore, each item on its agenda must be timed and slotted into the overall rhythm of the show. Reality, of course, is not so neat. As the only part of the show transmitted live in real-time, the studio anchorman, therefore, has certain vital functions. Primarily, he or she is the signifier of live coverage.

A nightly news show is a complex blending of myriad time-space parameters. Of the 20 or so individual news items on the agenda, there may be a filmed item shot six hours earlier in the Middle East, another filmed in Europe, an item using hour-old ENG coverage from downtown Toronto, a satellite feed from another network earlier in the evening, etc. As the signifier of live coverage in real-time, the anchorman must confer the aura of "presentness" on everything else in the show. He or she must introduce each news item and thereby (as the word implies) "anchor" it within the space-time frame that the anchorman represents. Only then can the screen be relinquished to a previously filmed or taped segment. The image of the anchorman brackets every item, conferring upon it the resonance of live transmission in real-time that he/she embodies.

Although reporters are not allowed to usurp the special status given to the studio anchor, their news items must approximate it. As Philip Hilts has noted :

> "Television news annually spends thousands of man-hours chasing officials from cars to courtrooms, from committee rooms to cars. The pictures mean nothing at all ; a still photograph could serve as well. But TV news likes to have 'same-day pictures' of newsmakers."

These 'same-day pictures', whose content is no more meaningful than a still photograph, are necessary to remind us of the special promise inherent in television's unique terrain. Though the promise is fulfilled only by the anchorman, the 'same-day pictures' reinforce a special sense of television as a news organization, that it will give us what Stuart Hall calls the "having-been-there" of news.

The result, as Michael Arlen – TV columnist for *The New Yorker* – said in an interview, is that :

> "There is an enormous variety of events being presented all in a kind of illusion of presentness, as if they all took place this evening. Now and then a television news organization will make an enormous and special effort to connect an item back to something, but it's always a very special effort. The rest of things are just simply floating in the present."

This illusion of presentness, built into the structure of the program through the bracketing function of the anchorman, works to convey an ideology in which the present frames and brackets the past. Individual news items are treated as discrete and separate entities, with little or no relation to other items or to a larger historical context. The illusion of presentness conveys the sense that events take place in a vacuum and are entirely self-contained. An ideology in which the present is seen as presiding over the past is somewhat of a reversal of reality, wherein the past gives birth to the present and explains it. But as an ideology, this illusion of presentness is useful to television's purposes.

Without historical context, information becomes bits of trivia. Viewers may find these bits "interesting," but be unable to connect them to each other or to anything else. Without context, viewers may accumulate information and data, but have no real understanding of why something is happening or what is behind an event. Moreover, without historical context, individual news items will simply be given our own personal contexts : that is, we will anchor the data within the limited confines of our own knowledge, memories, even our fears and prejudices. Another more worrying possibility is suggested by the content inherent in TV's desire for 'same-day pictures.'

The events most amenable to this desire are those which can be planned for in advance : the arrivals and departures of statesmen, press conferences, meetings of heads of state – the so-called "media events" which so characterize much of journalism these days. As Michael Arlen puts it :

> "Basically, I think that network news is almost entirely a news of important people talking to other important people, or about important people. It's a news of institutional events. ... It is bureaucratic. ... By and large, network news goes out of its way to present a pageantry of officials everywhere making official statements about official things."

In place of wider historical context, TV news substitutes an illusion of presentness populated by officials, all "making official statements about official things." In other words, history is replaced by institutions as context. As viewers, in our efforts to understand why something is happening, we may rest assured that, although a particular event might seem inexplicable to us, presumably somebody else knows the necessary background and context for the information : undoubtedly one of the many officials we see arriving and departing, shaking hands and making official statements.

Thus TV network news continually reassures us of the viability of our society's official institutions. Since television itself is one of our most eminent official institutions, it has quite a stake in this reassurance function. Again, let us return to the figure of the network news anchorman.

The studio news anchorman is the official *par excellence*. In the structure of the news program, his role is a mirror image of officialdom in the wider society. That is, his statements carry more authority than anyone else's, at least given the structure of the program. And, as the signifier of live coverage, his presence is vital to the show, whereas individual reporters (and events) may come and go. Interestingly, almost a full year in advance, viewers were being prepared for the retirement of Walter Cronkite as CBS anchorman. Over the ensuing months, we could, in effect, watch Dan Rather take on the anchorman "aura." Presumably, through such advance notice, no undue rupture would occur in our perception of the signifier of live coverage.

Moreover, only the anchorman is invested with the special status that television technology claims for itself : live transmission in real-time. As Arthur Asa Berger has written of Walter Cronkite, "his presence has come to be regarded, by many people, as an indicator of the significance of any event." Before his retirement, Cronkite's presence on a TV special often meant not only that the coverage was important, but also that the transmission was live in real-time. On CBC, anchorman Knowlton Nash has come to signify this same combination of important coverage transmitted live. He, too, appears on special event programming, conferring the status he represents onto the show. In a sense, then, the network news anchorman signifies the institution of television itself. As the only medium which can bring us live on location transmission in real-time, television as an institution seems larger than any and all other institutions. It can show and comment on them all, overseeing and bracketing them within the illusion of presentness which the technology claims as its own.

It has become commonplace for news items to include images of television crews at work covering events. On our screens we see a cluster of camera, lighting, and sound personnel busily pursuing the ostensible subject of the item. On the old 11:00 p.m. format of CBC's *The National*, the program ritualistically ended with the image of a studio camera crew at work in front of the news desk. This reflexive style does more than suggest the "newsworthiness" or importance of a particular figure or event. In a larger sense, this stylistic convention proclaims the institution of television at work and describes its own image within its own process. This reflexive style refers us to the higher-level system of television as an institution.

As president of CBC News, Richard Salant once commented that : "Our reporters do not cover stories from *their* point of view ; they are presenting them from *nodoby's* point of view." Perhaps the "nobody" referred to here is the institution of television itself – that seemingly disembodied, all-encompassing entity which embraces the present, showing us not only the world, but itself showing us the world. As viewers adrift in a sea of information, swept away by a deluge of 'presentness' without historical context, we are meant to find reassurance in the fact that there is one institution which sees and frames all others. Whatever ripple of disquiet, whatever wave of potential disruption may sweep over the status quo of other institutions, we know, by the very fact that television is showing it all to us, that all is well, or at least reassuringly institutional, bureaucratic and official, in the calm and wise visage of the studio anchor.