

film schools



Frank Koos

Cross light key film study from a student portfolio

Humber

— Frank Koos

Recently, I was talking to some members of the Canadian Society of Cinematographers and found that many professionals don't really know what is happening at the present time in Canadian film schools. The idea occurred to me that it would be really great to write an article about our film course at Humber College.

Humber, one of the largest community colleges in Ontario, started a film course in 1969. After the first two years, the initial difficulties had been solved, and we presently have a three-year diploma program. Prerequisites for admission include Grade 12 and a personal interview. In order to qualify for the second year camera option, the student has to prepare a portfolio during the first year.

When we started in the fall of 1972, we went through the problems of trans-

ferring the course from the South to the Main Campus. After that, everything ran smoothly. The first year serves mainly as an introduction to the different aspects of film. Students are faced with the basic elements of direction, film composition, camera operation, art direction, photography, etc. One year is sufficient for everyone to decide which option will be their choice. It also provides an opportunity for those students who were not able to satisfy the demands of the course to leave the school. Approximately 80 of us started in first year, and now there are 29 of us finishing the second year.

Besides teaching at the college, Tom Gregor works mainly for the C.B.C. and was nominated for an "Etrog" in the 1973 Canadian Film Awards. When asked about the program, he said: "In my opinion, our students are competent and a few of them are talented. But I also have to say that in some aspects they lack discipline. That is the reason why some projects are left unfinished. I think their hopes about future positions

in the industry are a little bit too high. With their present attitude, they won't be able to fulfill their hopes. They have to realise that good film is the achievement of team work and they have to face that. In my thinking, most of the second year people already realised the seriousness of film, and they are moving in the right direction."

When we finished the first year we had to make our major decision — which specific option will be our future line? The three choices had been directing, cinematography, and production management. The directing group, which presently has 14 students in the second year, is concerned with the theory of film and TV directing, scripting and editing. The CINE group, with 12 members, emphasizes camera operation and maintenance, lighting and sound. The 3 people who chose production management are studying the organization of film business. Even though we are studying different subjects, there is a great deal of cooperation between the groups. Besides individual assign-

ments, we also do faculty projects. What is a faculty project? It consists of every student in direction submitting a short script on a predetermined subject. The scripts then go to a jury of 8 members (not directors) who choose the three best scripts. The three are then shot on colour stock, while the rest are shorter and shot in black and white. This is when the groups work together. Shooting crews are organised and everybody gets involved in the productions. We have gone through that experience in the first semester, and it has proven to be a successful method. One of the shorts thus produced has been sold to the C.B.C. Right now, we are in the process of shooting the second faculty production. This time we are more confident that we will be able to complete exceptionally good shorts and are hoping to offer them to our local TV stations if they show any interest in our work.

Our individual assignments in the CINE group serve specific aims and are devised by George Fallada, cinematographer. The short "uncut" "untimed" films we made at the beginning of the school year show our work with lights in a studio atmosphere. We've also shot films for our portfolios demonstrating camera skills such as over-focusing, zooming and panning. Having realistic ideas about our employment possibilities, we spend a great deal of time practicing as assistant cameramen. Loading different magazines and cleaning camera equipment are always part of our weekly work. Sound is included in the option, and after getting several lectures from Patrick Spence-Thomas, we are now practicing with single systems for news and double system for our faculty projects.

One has to understand that this doesn't mean there will be hundreds of students coming out of the school, all of them competing for jobs. There will be only a few qualified people who will have the strength and energy to finish the program. Even within the separate groups, different and specialised interests emerge. For example, in our camera group of twelve, two people are working mainly in animation, two are interested only in sound, and one definitely wants to be an editor.

Jim Peddie, the program coordinator, explains the future plans of the college, "At the moment, we are trying to improve our abilities to work with what we have in terms of curriculum facilities and equipment. We look forward to refining what is being done and doing it better. In the future, as equipment and facilities expand and improve, we hope to be able to come up with students who qualify at an even higher level at graduation. We are proud of our students now; we hope in the future to be able to give them more in the way of preparation."

Every one of our instructors came to teach at the college with professional backgrounds, and most of them still hold positions in the industry. Through their connections, they have invited professionals to lecture about their work. Besides Patrick Spence-Thomas, who was invited by Tom Gregor, we have also had occasion to meet some great people invited by our scripting teacher, Ed Rollins, who used to be an executive producer at the C.B.C. Christopher Chapman and David McKay were recently guest lecturers, and we are expecting Graeme Ferguson and Julian Roffman in the near future.

Finally, an introduction to our third year program which is still in the experimental stage. This is the first time in the history of Humber College's film course that we have a third year. So far, there are just a few people in it, but we are really proud of them. Besides holding full or part-time professional jobs, they are presently working on their diploma film. The production is being coordinated by Ron Sawdy, Bruce Sefton is directing, Bob Kowalski is the director of photography with George Martincek on camera.

Master of the project is Tadeusz Jaworski, Canadian Film Award-winning director. He has also been nominated for an "Oscar" and is presently a member of the faculty as Resident Director. The following are his views on the film.

"I think this is a great opportunity for my third year and second year students who are also involved in this production. The film is a feature - stylized social political drama. It is mostly concerned with racism, humanity, and fascism in 1930's Germany. This is a text which requires actors of virtuosic quality and skill in techniques. We are really fortunate to have actress Dana Wolfson from the Buffalo Theatre Workshop with Professor Richard Blau from the State University of New York, who is the director of the Workshop, acting as Theatrical Advisor on the production. I'd also like to mention Adam Fisher, a Toronto actor, who is also donating his time, as are all the rest of us, in cooperation with the making of this film. The editing consultant is Mrs. Dagmar Taborski and the soundman is from Conestoga College. I am very happy to see all these great people who have such an understanding of film as an art form, cooperating on such a worthwhile project. It is, I think, a very good example of what a few people can do; and I think it should be followed by others."

In closing, I would like to express the wishes of my student colleagues by forwarding our thanks to Humber College for financing the basic expenses of the production, and making it possible for us to have the great opportunity of making this film.

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