

## The Saran Wrap strategy

With reference to your review of *A Rustling of Leaves: Inside the Philippine Revolution*, your reviewer credits cinematographer Kirk Tougas with keeping the camera rolling as an ambush by the guerrillas of the New Peoples' Army fails, and the film crew and guerrillas must flee for their lives. Reliable sources report however that Kirk Tougas was actually in Vancouver at the time, drinking cappuccino, while cameraman Jojo Sescon and Nettie Wild were on the edge of the precipice.

A young Filipino photographer, Jojo was trained by Tougas as a camera assistant, and then as second unit operator for the final behind-the-lines shoot. His commitment to this dangerous project simply reflects the bravery of many Filipinos who were at risk while assisting in the making of this film, young people who are forced to continually stake their lives to achieve even the most basic social and economic justice. Jojo learned his lesson well, particularly the five basic points for documentary cinematographers:

1. Stay cool
2. Hang loose
3. Admit nothing
4. Dodge all bullets
5. Talk before torture.

The fifth point is considered contentious among the politically committed, until it is made clear that lies, semi-truth, confusion and forgetfulness are all acceptable in equal proportions.

If truth be told, Tougas was also observed dodging bullets. In this instance, while investigating the beheading of a labour leader by machete-wielding religious-fanatic vigilantes, the crew arrived unannounced at an army outpost where a young man was being "interrogated" by the army and the same vigilantes. The captive took advantage of the momentary diversion to bolt and run, followed by a hail of machine-gun and rifle fire; about 200 rounds.

As the pebbles were bouncing and ping pinging around the crew's feet, reports place Tougas in a hollow, developing the "Saran Wrap" strategy for cinematographers: ground clinging, very thin, very transparent. Nettie Wild, on the other hand, was seen crawling around, uttering "picture... sound... roll camera". The young man escaped.

This, to set the record straight. Credit where credit is due.

Kirk Tougas  
Vancouver

## Fowl-ed off by Dowler review

In regards to Mr. Fowler's (sic) review of *Dead Ringers* in *Cinema Canada* #157, I hope that Mr. Fowler has recovered. It appears that viewing *Dead Ringers* has upset his critical faculties, but not his idealization of David Cronenberg.

Fowler doesn't quite come out and call this film a "masterpiece", as he says so many other

critics have labelled it. Instead, he opts for the safer stance: it is merely "a terrific, original movie".

Unfortunately for those of us who need a little more than this on which to base an opinion, Fowler spends only two paragraphs describing in rather general terms (i.e. "funereal mood" and "new Treatment") why this is such a "terrific" movie. He spends nearly all of the remaining critique, however, describing in explicit detail the film's "problems and weaknesses all over the place."

I suggest that Mr. Fowler should abstain from future attempts at reviewing films, at least until he can successfully separate his preconceived idealizations from his critical abilities.

I also suggest that whomever is responsible for letting this sort of "journalism" into print should also examine his or her biases. Whether or not the film is any good is irrelevant. What is relevant is an honest, consistent appraisal of both the film itself, and of the resulting review.

John C. Corry  
Toronto

Andrew Dowler's review appeared in the November issue - ed.)

## Why Grierson '88 was Nix'd

Referring to the article entitled *Grierson Seminar Scrubbed*, appearing in the *Cinema Canada* November 1988 issue.

Thank you for giving the Grierson Seminar

publicity in your magazine. We are, however, somewhat concerned about the tone of that publicity.

The article was correct in saying that there would not be a Grierson Documentary Seminar in 1988. This came about through careful and responsible evaluation by the Executive and Board of the Ontario Film Association. This non-profit association of media users, buyers, and distributors began this evaluation by commissioning a research project completed during the summer of 1988. The resulting report familiarized present Executive and Board members with the originally established objectives as well as the subsequent history of Grierson. After discussing this report in depth, and evaluating the current financial realities facing the organization, the OFA Board agreed that we continue to develop Grierson Seminars on the firm basis on which they were begun. The updated objectives for the Grierson Seminar are as follows:

To encourage dialogue among film users and filmmakers by...

1) Providing a forum for in-depth state-of-the-art discussion among film users and filmmakers working in documentary film production.

2) Supporting excellence in documentary film production through encouragement of continuing evaluation.

3) Providing Seminar participants with an opportunity to explore current trends and techniques with experienced documentary filmmakers.

4) Evaluating how documentary film communicates with its intended audience.

The Seminar will encourage a Canadian emphasis.

(Note: In the above, the word "film" is intended to include film and video in all instances in which it is used.)

Mr. Pevere stated that "The program Grierson '87 was more political, representing marginal kinds of viewpoints, gay viewpoints, non-white viewpoints, left viewpoints. The films were selected for their ability to stimulate discussion." ... "However, it seems that the people of OFA were taken aback by the intensity of the arguments in the crowded atrium of the ROM theatre." On the contrary, OFA is not afraid of controversy. Controversy has always been a part of Grierson, and we hope that it will continue.

Now that the original objectives for Grierson have been updated, the Grierson '89 committee is moving ahead with a solid foundation and a clear future direction. We are looking forward to an exciting Grierson '89, tentatively scheduled for November 1989. When the dates and place are confirmed, the information will be made public.

Margaret Nix  
President, Ontario Film  
Association Inc.  
Toronto

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