

INTRODUCING...

Stephen Zoller

His Quiet Revolution

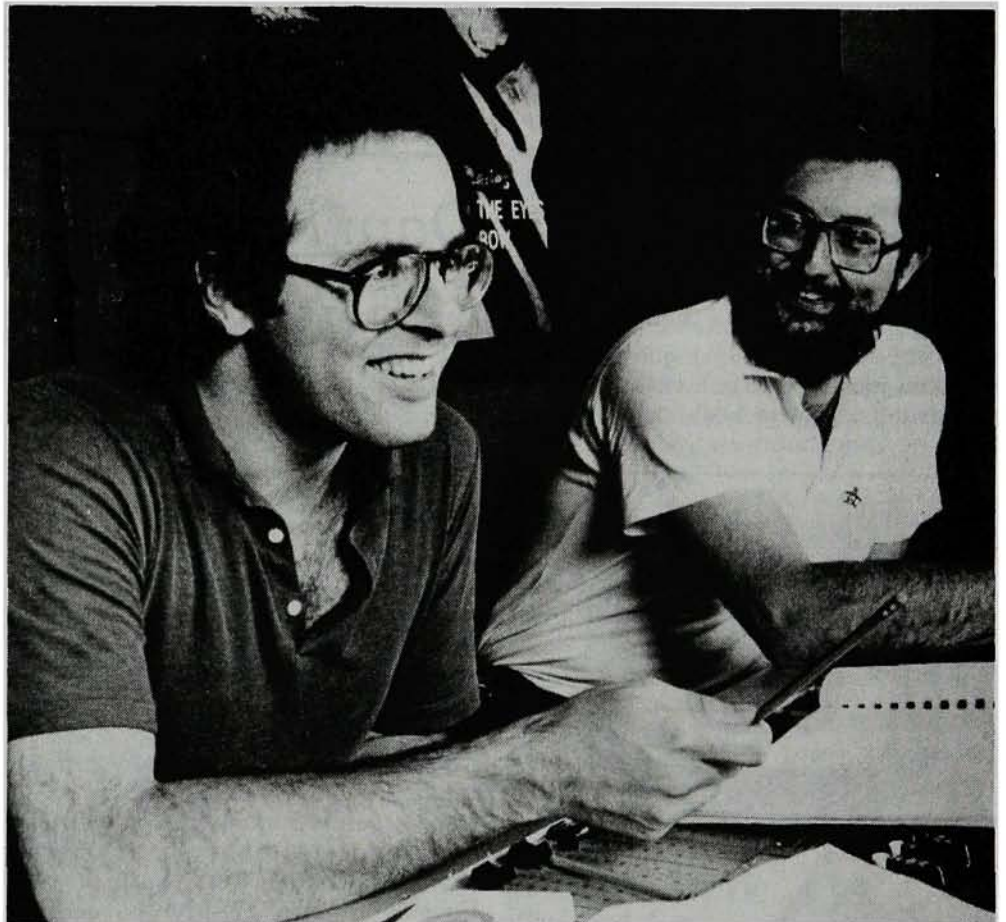
Science fiction writers, over the years, have developed many different styles. The science fiction hierarchy divides these writers into separate families, and they are assigned respective positions according to the plausibility of their visionary prowess. To the individual, unaware of the social strata, these differences would appear slight — if at all. But to hard-core sci-fi freaks, these divisions are as obvious as the differences between the sun and the moon. To them, science fiction almost has a caste structure.

Under the flag of 'speculative fiction', a handful of visionaries (Ray Bradbury, Isaac Asimov and Arthur C. Clarke, to name but a few), departed from the mainstream of science fiction and formed a small elite circle. Their aim was to postulate the psychological and emotional changes that might occur in man as he progressed side by side with the inevitable advancement of technology. To this day, they still battle to win wider acceptance and recognition; but more importantly, to disjoin public misconceptions that have linked them with space fantasy.



Stephen Zoller grew up with the writings of such notables as Asimov, Bradbury and Clarke. And the far-out worlds depicted in the comic-book-like *Astounding Stories* and *Analog* only reaffirmed his belief in the coming of an advanced technological age. But, unlike writers who chose to convey their cosmic thoughts purely through the printed page, Zoller adopted the instrument of film to create his own visionary world — for others.

"Now, since we can obtain rich special effects on film, we should take it one step further. Instead of extrapolating only where technology will be in the future, we should just accept its existence, and from there, look to where the people are; how they live and react in a changing social and political world."



Writer Stephen Zoller (right) consults with Tibor Takacs, director of *The Tomorrow Man*

The Tomorrow Man, Zoller's premier film in an anthology entitled **Through The Eyes Of Tomorrow**, marks his first major attempt to realize his own fantasies. Tibor Takacs directed the film, and together, they created an intriguing story of a crazed and eccentric warden (played by Don Franks), who goads an imprisoned and confused man, named Tom Weston (Stephen Markle), with a deadly cat-and-mouse game of survival. Many of the film's social and political statements are relevant today, but they are transposed into a changed and, perhaps, not-so-distant future.

"We want to create the magic and intelligence that Rod Sterling's *Twilight Zone* captured in the early sixties. We want to move away from the conventional science fiction films. We want to leave the audience with something more to think about than just bug-eyed monsters flying around in elaborate spaceships." Zoller's seven stories are all breakdowns and remedies of people caught in changing times.

In the first half of the seventies, Alvin Toffler's *Future Shock* claimed that, in these rapidly changing times, man must learn to cope with the rising age of

technology. Man must harness it to the best of his capability and use it to his advantage, instead of fearing it and seeing it only as a destructive force. Zoller's looming 6'2" frame carries the weight of a similar message: "One-hundred years ago time moved at a much slower pace. Today, time is racing — we must be constantly prepared. I think 'speculative fiction' will help people to cope, and perhaps, understand the future."

Zoller and Takacs also have their sights aimed at television. "Ideally, we'd like **The Tomorrow Man** to be seen by a television audience; people should be allowed, or at least have the option, to see something different from what they're accustomed to.

"We need more writers and filmmakers who are serious about experimenting with the art of making films — regardless of the contemporary trend or fad. They should create what they really want, and then, maybe, audiences around the world will begin to appreciate them for what they are trying to do."

Zoller glares out from behind his dark-rimmed glasses — he often lifts his eyes when speaking, as if seeking inspiration. He looks forward with inflexible devotion to creating a universal language with his films — understood and accepted not

only by western culture, but also by the global environment (including Iron Curtain countries).

"The message must be in every line of the film." Funnelling his imaginative and frenetic nature into a distilled diplomacy, Zoller's plea to communicate ideas stands at the forefront of his basic desire to make films. He feels that Canadian film in the past was too "parochial" — lacking in scope, designed for a limited audience. And its new facelift isn't without a few problems. "Many people think Canada has finally reached that highpoint of universality in filmmaking that other countries achieved long ago. In one sense they may be right; we do have the 'stars', money and acceptance — but is that all we really want? Are we actually making Canadian films, or are we merely making films in Canada? Are we truly creating a

strong, recognizable film industry, or just pale imitations of films made in other countries?

"Scripts are being built around stars and special effects," the continues. "More emphasis must be placed on the script."

Friend and colleague Peter Chapman will soon be collaborating with Zoller to establish Screenwriters Studio, a service incorporating many varied and talented writers from across the country. This service will offer producers and filmmakers "script surgery" and consultation.

And so, for the most part, Zoller's story has just begun; and no doubt he will continue to thwart any attacks attempted by those armed with fixed notions of science fiction.

Robert Paton

Dani Hausmann

Here's Looking At You

Ambitious people have one thing in common — they daydream a lot. Dani Hausmann is not without dreams.

He recently opened his own casting service for films in Montreal — Casablanca Productions. He specializes in the Montreal scene, where he knows the actors and has a feeling for where they belong. Directors approach him looking for new, promising talents. The producers are involved with casting the stars, but Dani casts everyone else.

He has always been interested in film. While studying architecture at McGill, Dani organized student film showings, was a member of the film society, and ran a film workshop. After receiving his Bachelor of Architecture he began to design stores and build houses, then fell into film by accident.

*Ashley Murray asked him for assistance one day when they were doing video auditions for the actors workshop at the National Film Board. And Dani was hooked. He became involved as an all-around gofer during the beginning of the Board's drama program. One of his first films was John Smith's **Bargain Basement**. Soon he became an assistant director and has been working in film ever since. In the following interview he explains what the work of a casting director involves.*

Cinema Canada: *What exactly does a casting director do?*

Dani Hausmann: First I read the script for a particular film, and then I make a list of the characters and the roles. I discuss the various parts with the director and select the actors I think might be right for the parts. Then I organize auditions.

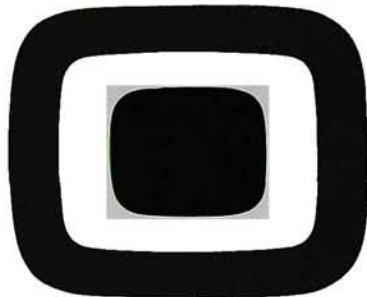
You give an actor the lines of a scene ten or fifteen minutes before the audition, then the actor says the lines and acts them out for me and the directors.

Cinema Canada: *What do you do during these auditions?*

Dani Hausmann: My job is to make sure that (A) a good actor is not overlooked. It's easy for that to happen because there are so many people. I will discuss the actor with the director before and after the audition; (B) I screen the actors, then narrow it down to three or four choices for any one part. The rest is variable. The director picks somebody. Then I call that person and say, "You have the part. It's such-and-such dates, are you available?"

Depending on the situation, either myself or the company will contract the actor, but usually the casting director contracts the actor. I arrange for him to sign, and I work out the fees. The contract is with the film company, and I'm the middleman working between the producers and the actors. I can negotiate, but I negotiate for the producer.

Cinema Canada: *How are you paid?*
Dani Hausmann: I get paid on a fee basis. It varies according to the number of parts and the budget of the film. I make



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Here's looking at you too, Dani!

myself available for the entire production to handle any changes that come up. And believe me, they do!

Cinema Canada : *How do actors reach you ?*

Dani Hausmann : I like to see new people all the time. Actors call me and I then make an appointment to meet with them. They must bring a curriculum vitae, accompanied by an 8" x 10" photograph. But I always take a Polaroid of the actors anyway, because sometimes you wouldn't even recognize the people from the picture

they bring! Ninety-eight per cent of the time the picture is a million times better than the real thing. But that doesn't necessarily mean that when the actor is on camera he won't photograph as well as in the picture.

Sometimes I also cast extras in a film, but basically I'm interested in actors — people who are actors, not necessarily people who *want to be* actors or people who act part-time. If I have time, I'm willing to meet anybody because I believe many people have potential. I believe in the lady whose kids are off to school and

all of a sudden she thinks of acting. And sure enough, she has some talent. But by and large, there's a tremendous number of people who are really very fringe — and who, in reality, are not very good actors at all.

Cinema Canada : *Do you tell them that?*

Dani Hausmann : No.

Cinema Canada : *Are there other casting agencies in Montreal ?*

Dani Hausmann : There are no agents in Montreal except for Constance Brown, and she's mainly concerned with models. What is missing are actors' agents.

Cinema Canada : *Why are there no agents ?*

Dani Hausmann : English speaking actors are leaving this province, which means that an agent really can't make that much money. It's much easier for an agent to just sit back in Toronto and let the actors come to him, than for him to come up here and open an office. Traditionally, French actors do not have agents. In French movies, it's a smaller market, and all the directors know all the actors. In English — the moment you refer to Toronto — there are so many people. It's too hard for one person to know everyone. Agents are then handy for a casting director.

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If you grow up in Quebec and you're French, and you watch French TV, and you see a few of the Quebecois films that come out, you've seen all the actors. English directors are not as exposed to their own actors. They know the American stars much more. If you're French, you stay here, you work here. If you're English, you work all over. If you're lucky, you'll go to New York. English actors travel more.

Cinema Canada: *What unusual situations have you encountered?*

Dani Hausmann: The film *Suzanne*, directed by Robin Spry, called for a half-English, half-French cast. The script was in English, but we discussed at length whether some roles required a French actor or English actor. Originally we were looking for a French Canadian lead, but then we realized that the lead had to be English-speaking for the script to make sense, because most of the script was in English. It didn't make sense to have two actors with French accents talking to each other in English! It was a very rewarding experience, having to mix French and English actors. Jennifer Dale, the lead, was cast out of Toronto.

Cinema Canada: *What makes casting difficult?*

Dani Hausmann: I'm often asked to cast something which is 'uncastable' here. I have to say no to Canadian actors, for example, because the script is set in the States, and I need an authentic American look and voice which doesn't exist here. Or I'm asked to find a beautiful, gorgeous Brazilian girl — who can act!

Cinema Canada: *Where do you look?*

Dani Hausmann: In the woodwork.

Cinema Canada: *What are some of the other films you have cast?*

Dani Hausmann: I just finished casting *The Lucky Star*, set in Amsterdam during the war, with a blend of French and Jewish actors. For *Final Assignment*, a 6.5 million dollar picture, set in Moscow, I cast the film from top to bottom. I searched

in the Russian community to find more than a thousand authentic-looking actors, and I put an ad in *The Gazette* and the *Montreal Star*.

I also did such Canadian classics as *Hog Wild*, *Dirty Tricks* and *Scanners*, and I cast more than two thousand extras for *City on Fire*, as well as collaborating on about sixty speaking parts.

For *Suzanne*, I had to cast a young girl, nine or ten years old, who had to look like Jennifer Dale, the lead star, and speak English and French. Oh... she also had to have brown eyes.

Cinema Canada: *Who are the hardest people to cast?*

Dani Hausmann: Children are the toughest because there's no specific place to find them and because you can't tell when a child will feel natural or shy. Casting is like scouting for baseball. I make connections with amateur acting organizations — contacts for potential talent. I'm doing casting because I think it's important and talents have to be encouraged and developed — it doesn't happen by accident.

Cinema Canada: *What are your plans for the future?*

Dani Hausmann: I enjoy casting. It has allowed me to open my own office and to work on many different films, which gives me a kind of over-view of the industry. I worked very hard as an assistant director, and I suddenly realized that I hadn't yet worked on a movie I would pay \$3.75 to see.

I want to meet writers and establish relationships with directors and producers, as well as actors, to be able to make certain kinds of movies. There's money these days, but producers literally don't know where to go for scripts — either the producer waits, or he goes to an American agent to buy a script. To make good movies — and not just "B" movies, like what's happening now — you have to think in terms of writing, acting and especially, directing talent. At the moment,

the problem is that there is money and not enough talent. Good directors in Canada come from TV — they went in London to work at the BBC. They did TV shows in the States. Daryl Duke and Alvin Rakoff are back because there's work.

I believe very strongly in Montreal as a film city. Here I can see all the French and foreign films. There are an amazing number of repertory houses for a town this size, including the Conservatoire d'art cinématographique and the Cinémathèque québécoise. And, as far as making films, there were twenty-three features shot in Montreal last year. Under normal circumstances, most of these films would have been made in Toronto, but they were not, because (A) the locations are here — they're special, and Montreal's unique; it's more European. (B) the crews are excellent, and (C) it's cheaper. Toronto is a more expensive city. For some reason, producers are here: the Jewish entrepreneurs and the money. A producer doesn't have to be talented. He has to have imagination and drive. A director has to be talented.

Cinema Canada: *Where can someone learn to be a filmmaker?*

Dani Hausmann: One of the big problems is that there are no real film schools in Canada. The Film Board has operated as a film school of sorts. But some of the top American directors come out of schools: there are two well-known ones — UCLA and NYU — which are producing some of the best directors, like Coppola, Scorsese, Lucas.

In Canada you do not seem to have any top-learning centers for film. The vision of the founders is important.

The American film schools are very well organized. Their ambitions are to turn out professional filmmakers. The schools here are simply academic courses. They study film like they study art. If you keep making forty to fifty films a year in this country, and you have all this money invested in it, I think a new kind of training structure has to be created. Now, the possibility exists in Canada for a very young director to jump from a half-hour drama to a low-budget, commercial feature. For example, *Pinball Summer* was directed by George Mihalka who had made a student production *Pizza to Go* at Sir George Williams University just previously. The Canadian scene is changing fast.

Cinema Canada: *And the Hausmann philosophy?*

Dani Hausmann: Life is short! It's not a question of making money... I want to make good films!

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