Ron Hallis has also done things his own way and has become independent of others. He, personally, has the best lab facilities for black and white film in town, it’s said. Then why does no one notice and why is he off to Mozambique?

by Lois Siegel
Ron Hallis is probably the most self-sufficient filmmaker from Montreal. He owns his own film equipment and laboratory and is able to shoot, process and print film stock, record and transfer sound.

His "jack-of-all-trades" ability goes back to his student days when Ron used to haul around a big, black, leather satchel full of tools, copies of Popular Mechanics, a Ham Radio Operators Manual and all sorts of paraphernalia and was known as "Oil-Can Hallis"... teachers who lost the keys to their desks merely had to borrow Ron and his black bag for a few minutes, and they were sure to come up with some kind of solution to their problem.

Ron worked as a sound recordist for a CBC documentary program called "Focus." Then he began writing scenarios. As a construction worker he saved enough money to buy a wind-up Bolex.

His first film was a surrealist short entitled Hollywood Cut. "I was never able to finish it because Quebec Film Lab lost the original negative. That's what really got me thinking about processing my own film."

Ron's second film, Toni, concerned a transvestite dancer. The 20-minute, black and white production cost only $350 because Mont-Royal Laboratory gave him a 50% discount when he paid cash.

"The guy there would throw the bill in the garbage and put the money in his pocket."

"I knew absolutely nothing about distributing at the time, so I took the yellow pages and Peerless Films struck my fancy. I went to them with my film under my arm. Lottie Roher, director of Peerless, thought my film had potential. She set up a screening with Famous Players, and they said they would show it as a short on a double horror show program at the Strand if it was blown up to 35mm."

Lois Siegel writes, photographs, teaches and makes experimental films in Montreal.