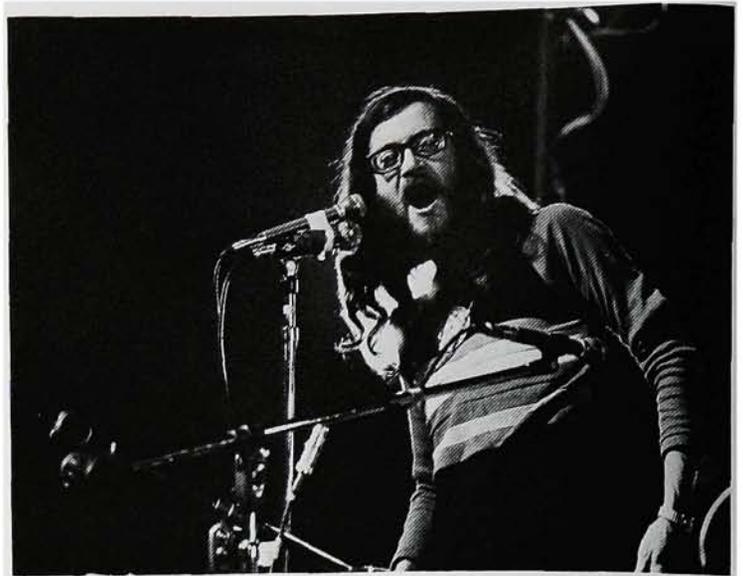




Filming a performance of *L'Infonie*



Raoul Duguay

# Roger Frappier

## L'Infonie Inachevée

— interviewed by Kiss/Koller

— edited by Ibrányi-Kiss

Roger Frappier is a young Québécois filmmaker. His filmography includes two half-hour shorts on Québec poets commissioned by the Ministry of Education (see Issue no. 5 — *Le Cinéma Québécois*) one on **Alain Grandbois** and one on **Gaston Miron**; and two features — **Le Grand Film Ordinaire** and now **L'Infonie Inachevée** (Unfinished Noise). Frappier is very active politically and was a founding member of L'Association Coopérative de Productions Audio-Visuelles. (See Issue no. 6 for a detailed article on the Montréal co-op.)

**L'Infonie Inachevée** is a documentary feature on Raoul Duguay, one of Québec's leading young poets, and the jazz group he performs with — **L'Infonie**; but also appearing in the film are Gaston Miron, Michèle Lalonde and Karlheinz Stockhausen. The film is therefore an historical cultural document on contemporary Québec in much the same way as Don Owen's **Cowboy and Indian** became one for English Canada (featuring artists Gordon Rayner and Robert Markle). The two films are also similar in their avoidance of dry commentary on birthplaces/dates, etc. and choosing to focus on the creative process rather than the 'product'. Owen and Frappier also used one art form to document another.

**L'Infonie Inachevée** is a beautiful film in and of itself, and technically amazing! Frappier shot it in stereophonic sound (when the camera pans — so does the music) and André Gagnon's camerawork is superbly sensitive — intuitively picking up what is important at any given moment. Thus, the film has tremendous impact and a totality of experience involving complete immersion on the part of the audience.

The lush fullness and vivacity of both the sound and visuals combined with fascinating subjects make **L'Infonie Inachevée** a beautiful and very important work.

### How did you happen to make this film on Duguay?

Two years ago I was working for Jean Claude Labrecque making films on poets for the Québec Ministry of Education. The film I was doing was on Alain Grandbois, one of Québec's oldest poets, and he didn't want to be in the film. I asked the ministry if they couldn't change the project, and they didn't want to. So I had to honor the contract and make the film on

him — without him. And it was while interviewing people who knew Grandbois and his work that I met Raoul Duguay. I found him to be an incredible modern poet! Just to frame him — he is very like Allen Ginsberg in Québec — the sounds he makes with his voice, his poetry and even his philosophy are similar to Ginsberg's.

I told the Educational Minister's program that they use us to make films about the dead and dying and the old... It would have been marvelous to see a film about Grandbois when he was young and effectively writing his poetry, but my task was to witness my generation's life.

They didn't accept that, so I decided to do one myself on a modern poet.

### And how did you manage to get CFDC financing for a documentary feature?

I paid for the first shoot. We did that in September of 1971 when Duguay was in Montréal. When we looked at it, we decided to try to get some money since we now had something to show.

I wrote up a proposal for the CFDC and told them that I already had an hour on film, and I wanted to make a documentary. They sent me a funny letter saying that the committee was impressed, but they suggest I go to the National Film Board; since they have an agreement that they don't make documentaries and the NFB does not make fiction films.

First of all, that's not true. Second, it was not a clear answer. There are freelance filmmakers who don't want to work at the Film Board for political reasons or because they have their own crews. So it's ridiculous that the CFDC should stick to only one type of movie.

In the meantime I had no money for rent and had to leave my apartment. I hauled all my furniture into a truck and came back to Montréal with Jean Chabot, who is also a filmmaker. I was very mad — my film had been rejected, I had no home — so I decided to write a letter to the CFDC. Jean said I should go there instead.

So I parked my truck with all my belongings in front of the



Members of L'Infonie



Roger Frappier on set

CFDC and I was so mad – I couldn't lose anything! I talked for half an hour and told them what I thought of them – everything! Maybe they had pity for me, I don't know. But they said they would reconsider.

Two days later they phoned, and agreed to give me \$9,000 to shoot another part of the film. That was on a Tuesday and we filmed a show on Friday and in stereophonic sound!

**That's a fascinating aspect of L'infonie... What system of synching did you use?**

It was a bit creative... We wanted it stereophonic but we didn't have the Stelavox or enough money to rent six tracks in a studio. So we applied six Nagra's to 110 volts and two cameras on Quartz motors. Then, we crossed our fingers and hoped it would be synch. It was, but nobody had done it before in Québec.

So we put the six Nagra's in synch together and rented a small studio console. All the microphones came through that and were redistributed Nagra by Nagra – one each for the saxophone, drums, piano, voice, the audience and the applause. This way, we were able to have all the music without stops or applause.

**The editing job must have been fantastic on all that!**

I had six sound tracks plus two images – that makes eight tracks for one shot. When people came to the editing room they said, "Wow, you shot a lot!" But it was not true, because I had eight four-hundred foot rolls for every ten minutes. My first month and a half of editing was just for synch. It had to be perfect, because otherwise I would have had echos.

**Did you use a Steenbeck?**

For synching – but I did most of the editing on the two-screen KEM. I didn't have a two-screen Steenbeck. I did a pre-mix of all the tracks to edit the picture. Then I put edge numbers on the sound and cut again for the final print.

But what was great about this film was that the same people who recorded the sound did the mix. They knew the problems they had... For example, the sound was terrible in one of the big auditoriums because of the reverberations coming back from the 'witness' speakers musicians use to hear themselves. But this way, the sound engineers knew what the problems were before coming to the mix.

The cameraman did the timing and the sound engineers did the mix. Then you can really put your name on the movie because you did it from the beginning. The same for me. I directed it – which means I was putting the pieces together – the real direction came in the editing and I wanted to follow it myself.

**The quality of the blow-up is amazing – what with all the**

**indoor shooting...**

We were using 7252 Color at 25 ASA, and we shot with the blow-up in mind. Four was the lowest opening we ever used. Sometimes it looks like 35mm. I mean, it's not, but it looks good enough.

**How much was the final investment from the CFDC?**

Their total investment was something like 45 or \$50,000. Which is not that much. They were very scared since it was a documentary and they didn't know what the result would be.

**Did you get your distributor?**

Yes, but I had that at the beginning. That was no problem. Distribution with my movie is special. It would be ridiculous to release it normally. We finally agreed after weeks of discussion that there will be no film if it's not stereophonic. I've worked for stereo for a year and a half. Even if it cost 3 or \$4,000 more, I won't let them ruin that work!

We have the Imperial Theatre in Montréal, which is equipped with stereophonic sound. What I've decided is to have L'Infonie Inachevée play there for six months at eleven o'clock on Friday and Saturday nights. André Link of Cinépix now agrees, in principle. This way his expenses will be paid by regular screenings during the week. People will be able to fill the theatre, since there will be only two showings a week, and they'll have a week to talk to other people. I'm sure the film will make back its money. Maybe it will take a year, but at least they won't pull it after four days. The distributor has to understand that some films have special audiences, and need special distribution.

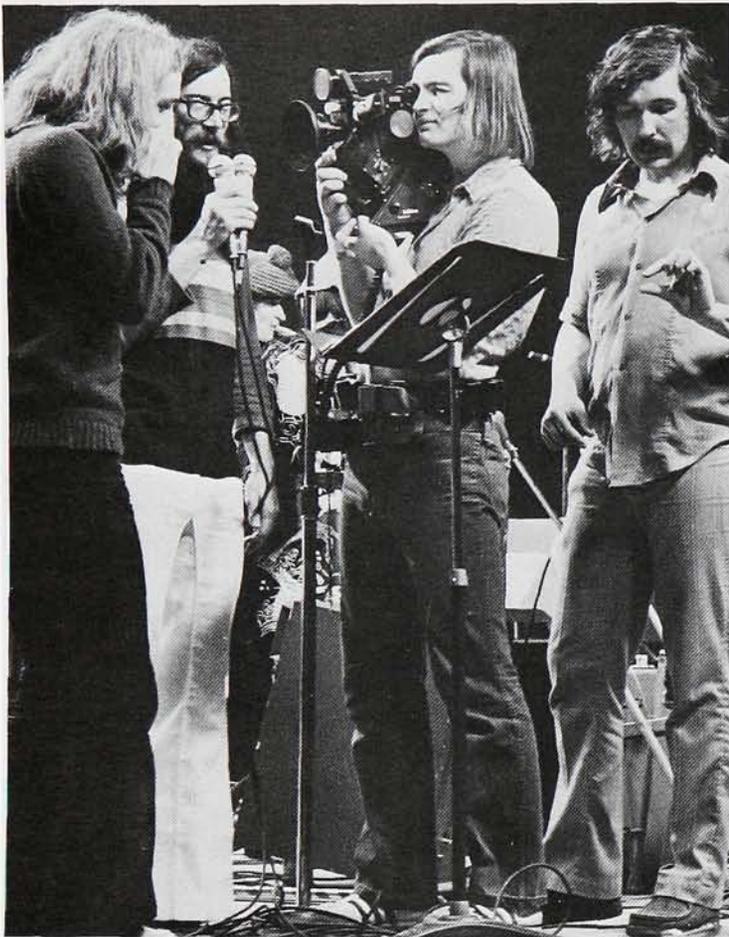
**Did you make this film entirely through the co-opérative?**

Well, since April 3, 1973 I am no longer a member of the co-op.

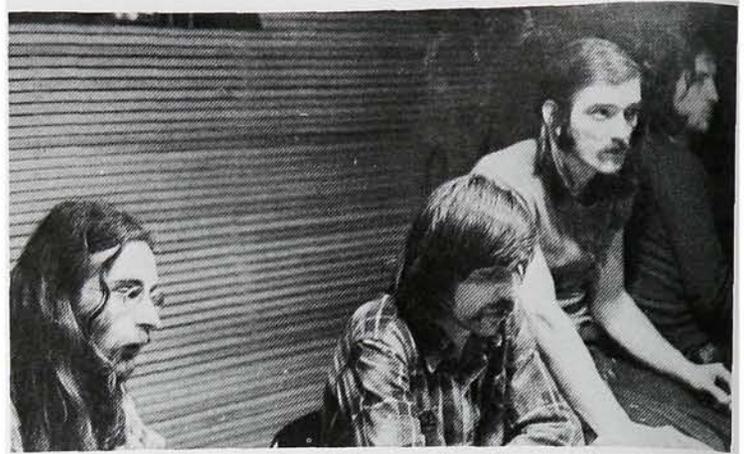
**Why? What happened?**

You see, when the CFDC gave me the money, they didn't give it to me – they said they would accept bills up to \$9,000 – so I had to find a company to lend or give me the cash. Guy Dufaux of Les Films Prisma agreed – without any papers from the CFDC. It was just a gentleman's agreement. He gave me the \$9,000 to produce the second part of the film and he got the production ready in three days. Prisma produced the second part, but since they were engaged in other productions, I did the rest through the co-op. I didn't edit my film there because the co-op doesn't have a two screen editing table. I did that at Prisma. What is great about Prisma is that if they trust you there are no problems. I could work anytime at all for three months. They did this for André Forcier as well – he was editing Bar-Salon in the room next to mine.

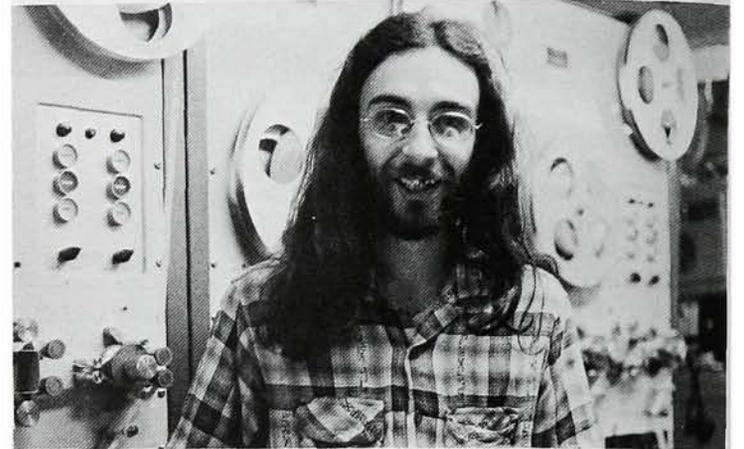
But the co-op is still the only one listed as producer,



*André Gagnon and assistant cameraman Louis de Ernsteed filming Duguay*



*André Dussault, Jean Rival, Roger Frappier and Guy Bergeron*



*Sound Engineer André Dussault*

because I wanted it to be that way. The freedom I had there, I might not have anywhere else. But freedom is expensive.

**In what ways?**

When you want everybody to work in freedom, and you accept everything, you slowly get to the point where you're hindering and not helping. There are too many things going on and not enough facilities to supply all that, so I quit the co-op. I don't know what I'll do, but it's not the answer for me anymore.

The other problem is that there is no definite ideology, or type of production. We didn't think this was a problem in the beginning, because at first glance it meant freedom. When you look twice, you see that this type of institution – a co-opérative of filmmakers – has to do more. Not one type of cinéma, but cinéma in one range of society. The co-op is there to make films you cannot make anywhere else. It's still the place where you can work with more freedom, but you have to work a lot to do it.

**Was your crew from the co-op?**

They are all still working there. I might be the only one who left, but not in an angry way. I just feel that I want to go away from it, think about it, and see how else I can go on making films. If I were still at the co-op, I might use more facilities than are meant for me – you see what I mean?

**Your crew was excellent, though. Technically the film is extraordinary . . .**

You know, we hadn't seen the first show before we filmed. *L'Infonie* split up for a year and were together as a group for the first time that night. We knew nothing about their music and had no time for re-takes. So all the movements of the camera were due only to the intuition of André Gagnon, the cameraman. He is always there at the right time – he pans one second before the guy starts playing flute! It's tremendous. Especially with direct sound.

The average age of the crew was something like 23. We learned everything together. It's good to know that on another

film, you can take the same crew and go on from there. Cinéma is really like jazz improvisation – if the crew members have no feeling for each other, I don't think you can shoot a documentary.

**Does Gagnon have a background in documentaries?**

He has worked for Toronto educational television, and just finished shooting *Blanc Noël* (White Christmas) – a feature for Michel Bouchard. Now, he's getting ready to go to Africa for four months to shoot a documentary. That means I won't be doing anything this autumn – I'll wait for him for spring!

My only regret is that I would have liked more time together during preparations. With *L'Infonie Inachevée* we had only three days to get microphones, six Nagras, six engineers, lights, an assistant cameraman who was free on Friday, the guys with the truck, and everything! We had to pile all the equipment in the truck and shoot in Québec City 150 miles away – it's mad! It's really mad to do that kind of thing.

For my next film I'd like to have at least a week with the crew beforehand. Not just to prepare technically, but for the meaning of the film. If they understand it before starting to shoot everybody is pulling in the same direction and the result is a lot better.

**Have you any ideas about your next film? Will it be a documentary?**

I have to carry this one for another month. I'll see after that. I have many ideas . . . I'd like to do a fiction film if possible. But if not that, I'll do something else. I just like to shoot most of the time . . .

You know, I don't want to do documentaries all my life – but I hope I will always be able to. I feel sad about the CFDC policy when I see people like Don Owen and Allan King saying they would quit because they cannot work in the field of direct cinéma anymore. It's only accepted if you work for the National Film Board – not in the private sector.

History will show that the turning point in Canadian films came with the CFDC who changed our cinéma from an

original way of making films to the American way. Before, we used to have fun. It used to be that cinéma is an art and sometimes an industry. Now the CFDC official policy is that cinéma is an industry and sometimes an art.

**Do you think it has changed that much?**

I was reading what Don Owen said about his next movie – that we don't know what we are but we know what we are not. In Québec it's completely different. Before the CFDC we knew what Cinéma Québécois was. It was obvious. It was so different from any other cinéma surrounding us. All the direct experience, the documentaries, even the first features coming out in Québec! Gilles Carle's *Leopold Z*, Jutra's films and Brault's *Entre la Mer et L'Eau Douce* . . . Films about normal people, the class of workers – without being necessarily political. We had a background in documentaries where the strange phenomenon of normal people talking originated.

Then the CFDC comes along with their script requirements and big budgets . . . With a half a million dollar budget you're not going to film workers! You need plans and beautiful things and glamour . . . and you completely change the view in front of you.

You can see their mentality – they put Gratien Gélinas in charge of cinéma. He is not a filmmaker – he's a man of theatre. It's an aberration. But it shows that they are insisting on dramatization in film – to make the spectator believe it could not happen to him. Can you see a filmmaker in charge of national theatre? They don't consider us competent. They will accept someone from the theatre or a writer as being more competent to direct a film than a cameraman. And that's inside the movie business. In the 'nation' business they don't consider us – Québécois – competent on ourselves. The colonial system is still going on and *they* have to supply us with our self-image.

After the October Crisis there was an hour long film on television about independence and the FLQ – from the very beginning. It was done by Ian McLaren and the CBC. Do you think they would ask Gilles Groulx to make a film on the Québec Crisis to show on Channel 2 to the French-speaking people? Never. We have to go through the English culture to have a reflection of our situation.

The same thing with this fucking series of *Adieu Alouette!* This series done by the English on French Québec to show the rest of Canada, "Look how the guinea pigs have grown up and can walk by themselves!" They had problems with only three films in the series – the three done by French filmmakers. One was by Jean-Pierre Lefebvre on theatre; the one on *Le Devoir* had a sentence of René Levesque's cut out when he said, "We have to change the system now – we have to do the independence now!"; and the third by Fernand Dansereau on union workers is still censored. I don't know what they will do with it.

It proves that our way of seeing our problems is different – but they don't consider us to be competent. Sydney Newman said something very funny, "You can liken our work to a clear mirror, an eye for all to see the turning points in the progress of Canadians – their joy and pain . . ." Yes, but what kind of mirror? Only *his* mirror! One that shows *his* reality! If our mirror shows something different, they break our mirror! They won't allow us to do it. And when I think that his name is Newman it makes me mad because of the meaning of that name . . .

**They even had the section on women done by a man . . .**

Exactly. Exactly. It's like my task is not to do films on Indians but to teach them how to use film so they can make their own. My real task is to make films on Québécois, and this principle has to be applied to all people.

I have nothing against this series – but on the French side Radio-Canada has never asked French filmmakers to do a series on where is Québec now for our audience. *Adieu Alouette* was done for the English and the film on independence was by Ian McLaren . . . But we have nothing on

Channel 2. Nothing.

**It seems that so many new Québec films are about the sweet, quiet and clean bourgeoisie with no problems or blemishes . . . It was amazing to watch these films at last year's Canadian Film Awards . . .**

Yes. Yes . . . The best example of how distorted things are was during the October Crisis. If you looked at the films showing in Montréal and watched television and read the newspapers – you saw a big difference. If a film-goer knows Québec only by the films he sees – well, he misses a lot. Not because these 'international' films should not be made. I don't give a damn! But at the same time we should be making films like the kind Gilles Groulx does at the NFB. But those they don't let out . . .

If a film can be shot anyplace in the world – why bother to do it in Québec? If we do more local films, they will become international. Like the New Wave in England. While here we are doing in Québec what the Americans were doing in 1954!

That's why I'm very pleased with Denys Arcand's *Rejeanne Padovani*. It's one of the best examples of a Québec film that can be international. He shows our everyday life. And he did it with a very low-budget – something like \$150,000 – and it's very well done. Tremendous work on the camera! We need more collective films like this at the moment . . .

**Denys Arcand also wanted to make a film on the October Crisis –**

This is still one of the subjects you can't handle in Québec. It has to do with giving a definition to cinema . . . For example, there is nothing in Gilles Groulx' film that is not in print in Québec. Even professors are teaching more than you can find in his movie. Yet his film was censored by the NFB. You can find all kinds of newspapers on revolution – but it's in print. Even from a purely liberal point of view that film is representative of what people think. And if you want to be a liberal – that's a film that should be done.

I know that there are three proposals on the Crisis that have been refused by the CFDC. One will be in front of them again this month, and we'll see what they will say about it . . .

**Michel Brault's proposal?**

Yes. If Brault's film does not pass, something will happen – if filmmakers have a little respect left for their work and will stick together for once. It's difficult to get people together because of the individual race to get famous.

But we started a union of filmmakers and directors three months ago. Directors from the NFB and private industry and the CBC – we are all putting aside the barriers between ourselves to communicate with each other and be more involved with the problems of features. If a problem comes up inside the NFB, it might be too difficult for the filmmakers inside to do something – but I don't understand this . . . But, if the other filmmakers of the same union can do something . . . If we decide to do one big strike, then maybe . . .

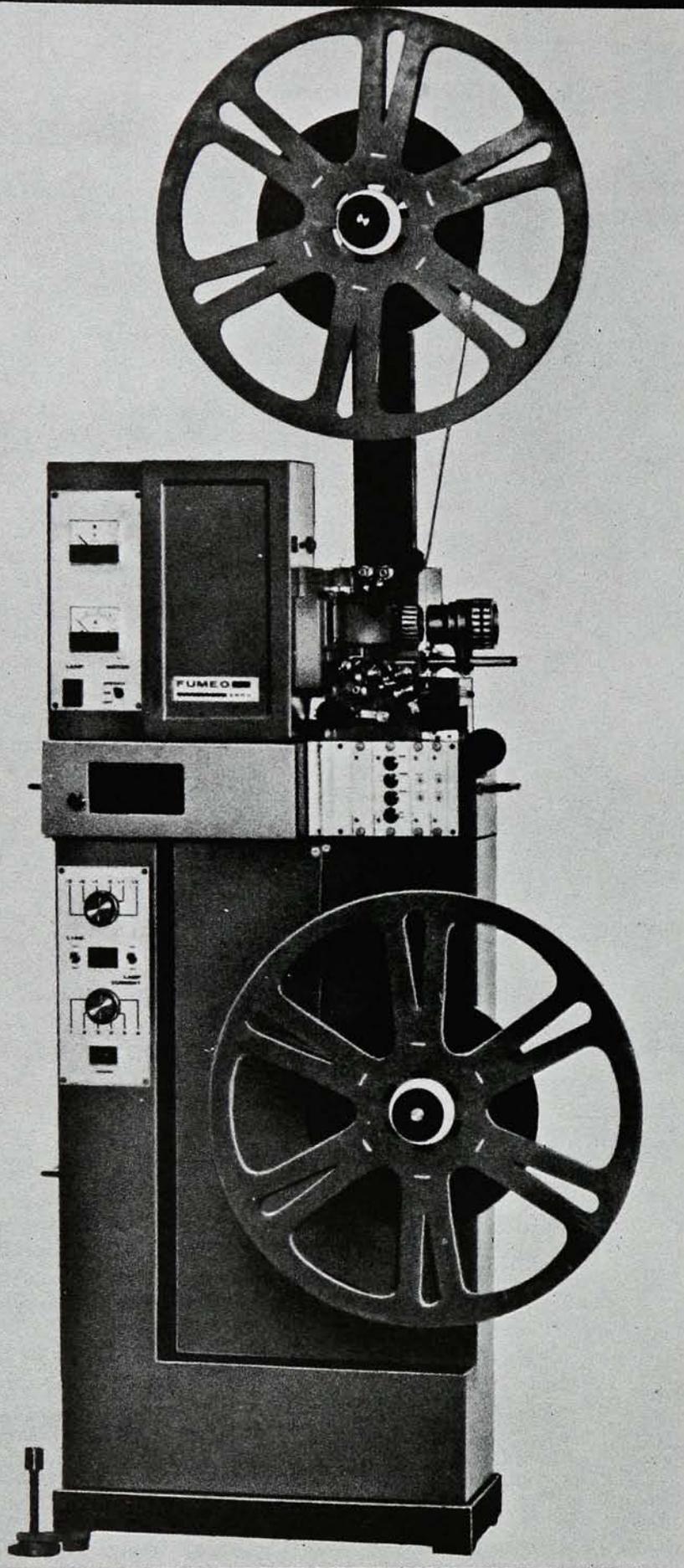
**Maybe we'll even get a film on the October Crisis?**

The film on the October Crisis will be made, you'll see. But probably by a clever Hollywood writer who will buy the rights. And it will be shot in Montréal – in English – to be an 'international' movie! You'll see! ●

**L'Infonie Inachevée**

Produced by Marc Daigle for L'Association Coopérative de Productions Audio-Visuelles; Directed and Edited by Roger Frappier; Director of Photography: André Gagnon; Camera: André Gagnon, Michel Caron, assisted by Louis de Ernsteed; Sound: Jean Rival, André Dussault, Jacques Chevigny, and Jacques Auger; Sound Mix: Jean Rival and André Dussault; with Raoul Duguay, Walter Boudreau and the members of L'Infonie; and participation by Karlheinz Stockhausen, Gaston Miron, and Michèle Lalonde. Thanks to Guy Dufaux of Les Films Prisma and the Canadian Film Development Corporation.

Feature-length color documentary with stereophonic sound.  
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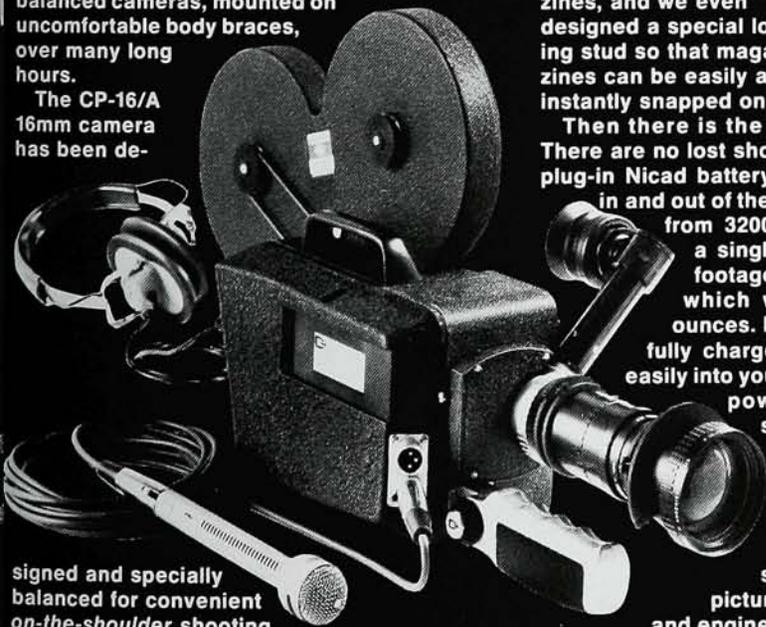


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