

up and coming

Patricia Thompson chatted with a few of the people in the newer film companies in Toronto, and gives us a glimpse of their goings-on.

by Patricia Thompson



Paul Saltzman aboard ship in Zanzibar shooting *Journey From Zanzibar* for the "Spread Your Wings" Series

Let's muse for a moment on the astronomical expense of producing a 35mm feature film skyrocketing cinema admission prices, brought about by escalating costs of wages, equipment, upkeep, repairs – not to mention pricey popcorn and pop and distributors with outrageously greedy demands. One is tempted to predict a new "trend" towards the more economical 16mm film being used within the commercial framework.

Canada has an enviable world reputation for 16mm documentaries, via Grierson and the National Film Board. Young filmmakers, eyes sparkle with dreams of feature films cannot, these days, really hope to 'practise' on 35mm.

Speaking as a veteran film society organizer and a member of the trio who started the Ontario Film Institute and Theatre, good 16mm facilities, intelligently used, can rate with 35mm in the smaller, intimate cinema. At the Ontario Film Theatre in the Science Centre, Toronto, I often turn and check the booth to find out if the superb image on the screen is 35mm or 16mm.

The following small sampling of 16mm filmmakers, alive and well in Toronto, serves to display them – gutsy, feisty, professional – lots of energetic survivors, all more than ready to take up a challenge.

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Bill Dunn of **Artistic Productions** — interviewed in his coach house studio/residence — had an orange visor clamped to his brow proclaiming “Nude Florida Pageant.” Don’t be fooled — he’s not in the porn business!

His partner is Tom Taylor, formerly an illustrator, and their company has been around for eight years. Bill started in advertising and photography, and continues to maintain a business association and *rapprochement* with clients from those days.

Artistic Productions makes sponsored films. Recent ones were for Hertz, Sangamo and Famous Players: also commercials shot in 16mm (contrary to the usual practice around town) which are edited on film and released on two-inch tape only.

“We always have script approval and we are not in any film unless we own part of it,” says Bill firmly.

For the past month or so, success seems to be coming at them: a network sale to CBC for one telecast of **Normandy Dream** on November 11 this year, a distributor in Munich, for European deals, who has a contact in Canada; and a



Scene from a Schwarzkopf commercial, *La Méthode*, produced by Artistic Productions

separate approach to the BBC any minute now. “We’ve got 2 1/2 hours of programming altogether — including **Street Music** and **The Game**... all the films we’ve made have always sold in Canada, sometimes to both the English and French TV networks, plus print sales.”

Normandy Dream is the first of a mini-series of war stories relating to the *individual* rather than the history. The second is about a Spitfire pilot, is pre-produced, and at the ‘talking to investors’ stage. They’ve just finished a 90-minute, 16mm feature, in color, with Burg Productions and Tony Kramreither, working title *Nude World*.

Bill Dunn joined associations “when I was young” for education purposes, but is convinced that, to be any good, you have to break away from the basics and do what *you* want to do. “I’m still a member of CSC (Canadian Society of Cinematographers) where I meet people in my own craft.”

He is also convinced that 16mm filmmakers shouldn’t be tame! “I had to call Al Johnson in Ottawa to get the CBC contract for **Normandy Dream**. You have to do anything — talk back, go over people’s heads.”

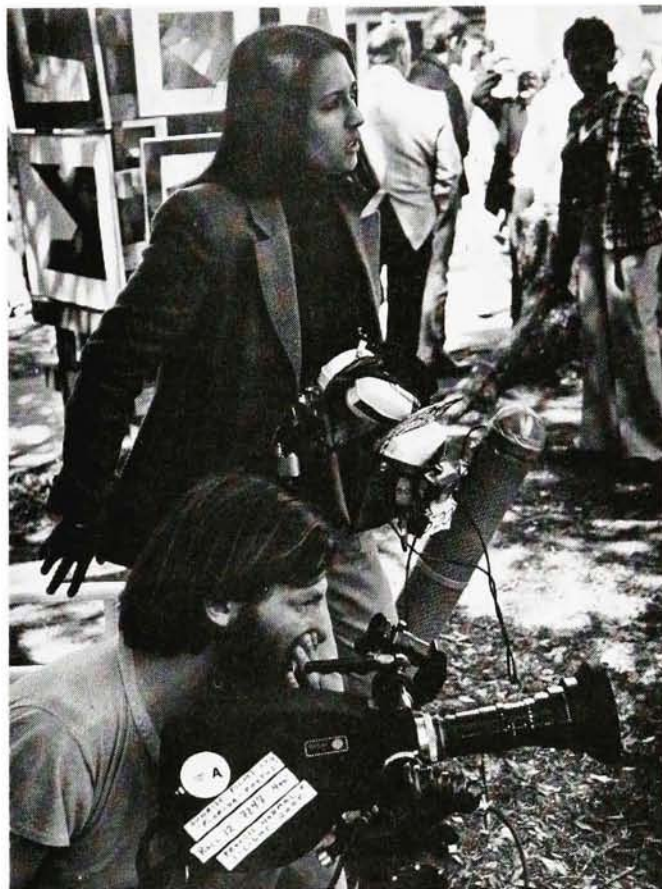
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Sunrise Films makes people-oriented documentaries. A prime example is **At 99: A Portrait of Louise Tandy Murch**,

winner of a Canadian Film Award in 1975 and a Red Ribbon at the American Film Festival. “We’ve never made a sponsored film, and we don’t want to,” says Deepa Saltzman, who directs, writes, works on sound — and is now learning camera.

The company’s films are made by three, or so, people. A small working group is best for them. Everyone knows his/her job and does it without interference from the others. After five years in business, Deepa says with pride that documentaries such as **What’s the Weather Like Up There?**, **To Be a Clown** and **Indira Gandhi: State of Power**, sell to TV around the world, and in the educational print market. With two distributors in the U.S., one handling print sales and the other TV rights, the company is busy all the time and “moderately successful.”

In Canada, the company projects are offered to and discussed with CBC, and usually accepted. Distribution and sales here are handled by Viking Films.



Paul and Deepa Saltzman on location in Florida to shoot the **Spread Your Wings** Series

Sunrise’s big undertaking is a series of 13 films for children in the 10-16 age group, and nine are already completed. Filmed all over the world, these docu-dramas show a child learning a craft and a tradition, and relating to friends, family life and the instructor, with narration by a child. These CBC co-productions, to be shown on the English and French networks, cover countries and crafts from Chartres, France (stained glass), Germany, (violin making), Peru (gourd carving) and to India (carpet making).

The Sunrise group is now filming in South East Asia — Japan, Bali, Singapore, Thailand. Be a 16mm filmmaker and cover the world!

To talk to Cabbageroll Productions is to meet with Clay Borris, his partner John Phillips, and *entourage* — Clay's aunt, Pauline Maltais, and *protégé* Doris — all crammed around a tiny table in a downtown Greek sidewalk café on an extremely warm day.

Clay Borris and John Phillips have been in business since 1969 and, as John puts it, "I would say we are not financially successful — but artistically, yes."



John Phillips mans the camera while Clay and Julia Borris handle the sound equipment during the shoot of *One Hand Clapping*

The company's 'take notice' film is *Rose's House*, a study of, and tribute to, Clay's redoubtable mother, and his relatives — "people tell me I'm obsessed with my family." It was sold outright for \$30,000 to the National Film Board, who furnished post production. But, as Clay says, "The film cost \$34,000 to make, including money from The Canada Council, and no one got paid for acting, so it was about an \$80,000/\$90,000 film really."

Clay and John spent two years (1975-77) at Browndale, a treatment centre for emotionally disturbed children. With Clay directing and John as cameraman (their favorite mode of working) they travelled around Ontario to about 60 houses where up to five children are housed in small "treatment" groups, and made eight half-hour training and publicity films for the organization.

"The Odd Couple," as Clay insists they are known, have written a feature film script with Steve Klys — *Gift of Gab*. It's in the hands of Don Haig at Film Arts, for consideration by

Allan King when he has a reading space. Planned as a 16mm feature in color, the terrible twins are thinking positively about starting a shooting by the end of the year.

According to David Springbett's wife and partner, Heather MacAndrew, *Asterisk Film & Videotape Productions* is a company specializing in international development themes — Third World countries and foreign aid, UNICEF, OXFAM, developing countries and developing ideas.

This specific interest has its roots in Bolivia in 1973, where David crewed on a BBC/OXFAM production. It led to India in 1974 with the same combination, and then to work with OXFAM in the U.S. for a couple of years.

David then raised the money, produced and directed *Guatemala Camp Vivo* around Christmas 1976. It was aired on CBC's *Man Alive* during 1977.

All a far cry from David's start with *And No Birds Sing*, made at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg in 1968. Of fond memory, the film trickled gently around the film society circuit, and aroused a minor flurry of publicity and interest.

The latest twist in the Springbett career came a few weeks ago when the National Film Board offered him a one-year contract as Regional Producer, Ontario Region — formerly Beryl Fox's *niche*.

Heather MacAndrew Springbett is continuing to run *Asterisk*, and the company has several proposals lodged with various levels of government. "We'll just see what happens during the year of David's contract."

Gunter Oldenburg's company, *Complete Film Services*, specializes in commercials. About 90 percent, in fact, plus a few industrial films designed to show off clients' products and businesses.

Only about 25 percent of the shooting is in 16mm, so perhaps Gunter doesn't strictly fit in here, but he's been the CFTA representative on the Committee of the Canadian Film Awards for 1977 and 1978. A dedicated member of the Judging Group in 1977, his expertise (and staying power!) was of great value in the craft judging, where the majority of entries are on 16mm.

In business for seven years, with four employees (including himself), plus free lancers when needed, Gunter assesses his venture as "medium-stable" since its start.

Contacts are really important. Business is nearly all through Canadian agencies, with about 15 percent in the U.S. We use Canadian talent mostly — except perhaps for a special spokesman identified with a brand or trade name. However, sometimes a client fixes on a particular 'face' which may be U.S."

Recently, in a small breathing space between assignments, Gunter Oldenburg announced an agreement between *Complete Film Services* and a British company, *Cinema of The Seventies*. His company will supply facilities and assistance with contractual negotiations with Canadian union artists, for not less than three features to be announced soon. *Cinema of The Seventies* is headed by Roy Millichip, an independent producer/writer whose feature credits include producer and co-producer respectively of *I Was Happy Here* and *Smashing Time*.