

SPOT LIGHT...

ON george bloomfield

by Robert Wertheimer

The ever versatile George Bloomfield still wants to learn more, experience more and expand his many talents. He talks with Bob Wertheimer about his commitment to creating a universal film industry.

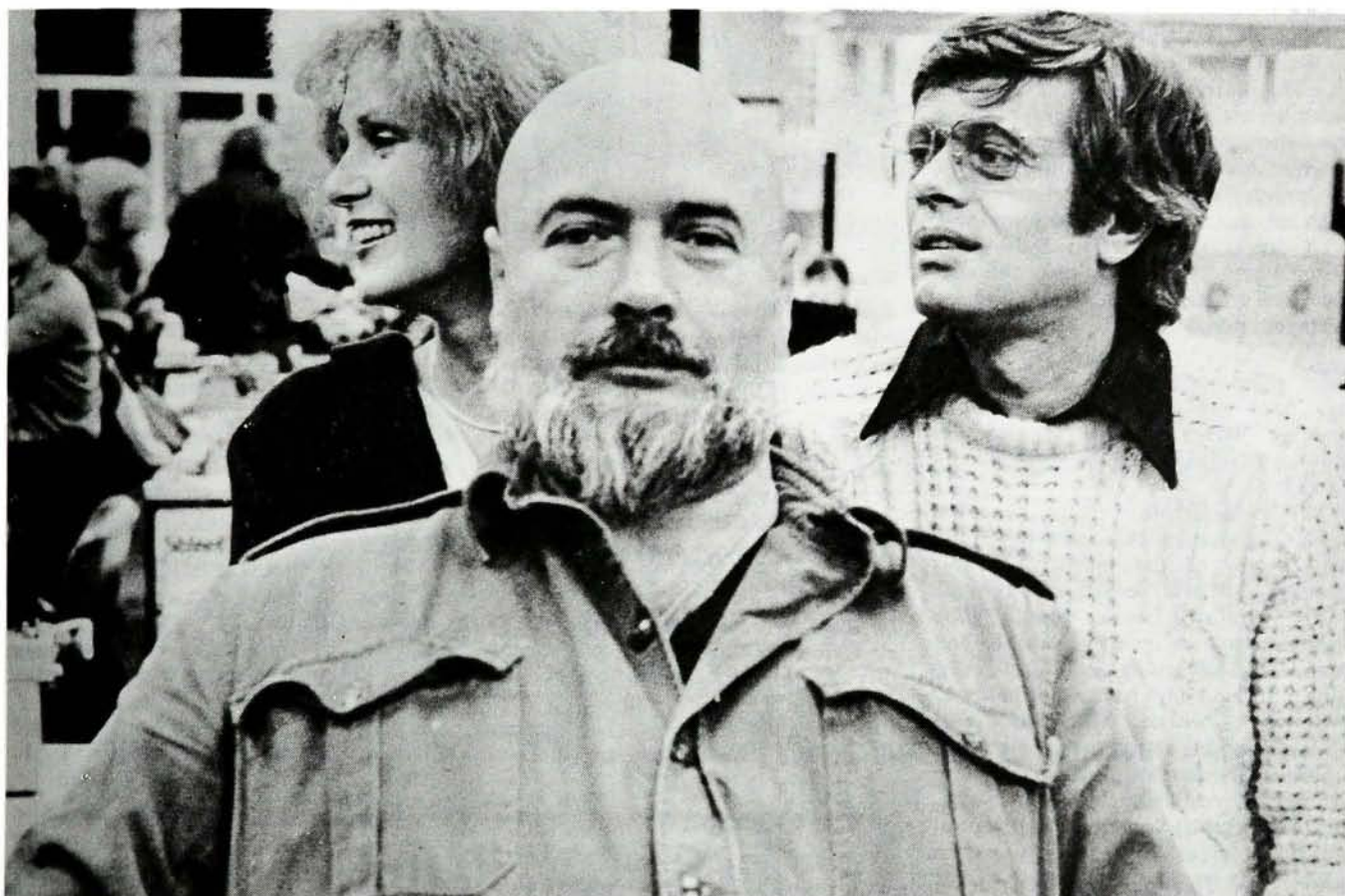


photo: Rick Porter

George Bloomfield posing with *Double Negative*'s two stars Susan Clark and Michael Sarrazin

Cinema Canada: *You entered projects with the motive of working with certain artists. Kate Reid and Susan Clark come to mind. Do you consider yourself an 'actor's director' or do you derive more satisfaction from technical filmmaking?*

George Bloomfield: I'm going through a phase now where I'm becoming more

and more fascinated with the technique of filmmaking. Yet, I think I am an actor's director, or so actors feel. I love working with actors. That was my beginning, I started as an actor, and I feel that is where it all ends for an audience. If the audience is looking at the technique, you haven't done anything. If they are looking at people on that screen and getting

involved in their lives, then you have really succeeded.

Directing is my love right now because it gets me close to actors, close to an area I really envy. My wife is a painter, and I watch her hold a brush, choose a color, splash it on a canvas and work it around. Now, I envy her, and she can't understand that, because she thinks that I'm earning

SPOT LIGHT...

more money than her. Yet, what she is doing is putting her feelings right there, directly onto a canvas. The colors are there and the feelings are there.

For me, an actor is able to do that. An actor through his voice, through his body, through his whole means of expression, is able to interpret a life, interpret a soul, express it, and it comes right out of him. I watch them, and the really good ones seem to have it oozing right out of their pores.

You've experienced T.V., film and theatre. You've written and directed. Which do you prefer and feel more confident in?

Film. I'm starting to feel frustrated by the confines of a television studio. We did *Double Negative* entirely on location, and that was a very exciting experience because we were able to use the city, explore the freedom of the camera, and have the whole world to shoot instead of the confines of a set. I don't think we ever chose a location where you couldn't see the outside. Everything had depth, and there was layer and layer of life visible.

Your relationship with Susan Clark goes back many years. You're both planning moves to Los Angeles. Is there a future collaboration in the works?

That's inevitable because we love working together. We are from the early stages of the industry in this country, and have been trying to make a film industry work, having gone through all those pains and aches and frustrations of trying to make something work and have not seen it happen.

So, we've worked with people who are really good, and some who are not experienced enough, and some of whom are not very pleasant to work with. We feel that if you find a group of people to work with that you can enjoy and love, and that can share the creative process — because the work is so hard — those are the people you should stick with through life.

God knows, it is easy to be doing something other than making films. If they don't give you pleasure in the process of making them, it is about

Bob Wertheimer who received a B.A. in Communication Studies at Loyola in Montreal is presently working as a freelance film technician in Toronto.

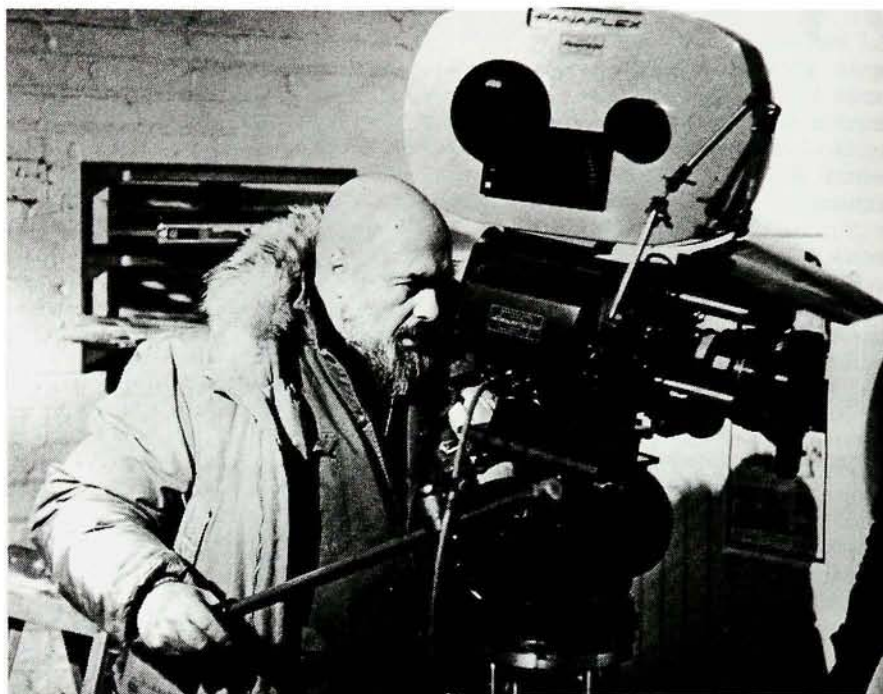


Photo: Rick Porter

Bloomfield taking a bead for the *Double Negative* shoot

the toughest thing you can do. If you enjoy the people, then it is beautiful and stimulating. But if you work with a bunch of people you do not like, it has to be the ugliest experience you can have. You are in a position to be humiliated in so many ways with selfish people who are on ego trips. They do not give a damn about other human beings and do not belong in this business.

Double Negative is a mystery, Riel a historical adventure, and Second City all comedy. Which do you feel more comfortable working in?

It is hard for me to say, because for me the process is exactly the same.

The reason I do *Second City* is because I have tremendous respect for the talent involved in that show. The fact that it is comedy, well, comedy is drama with far more precise timing, precise shooting, interpretation and understanding. Visual interpretation of comedy is far more precise than drama. If the camera isn't in the right place it is not funny.

I think directing is the ability to be a great audience more than once to the same material. If you can be a spontaneous audience to the same material, over and over again, then you have the main qualities of a good director.

Most of the actors I work with are beyond needing instruction on how to

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act. They are in need of selection, help to channel inventive outpourings that are so extravagant, that one must select those inventions from them that help feed the material that you are directing. That is the process. It is not instruction or flaunting my ego or making them do it my way, because if they did it my way, at best they would only be as good as me! And that would hardly be satisfying, because if being as good as me was what I was after, I would probably have remained an actor.

Did you enjoy the making of Double Negative?

Well, I made the precise picture I set out to make, that is no comment on if it is a great picture. I don't know. Nobody knows. We all hope. I do feel it is better than what we started out with. And if it were not, it would not have been just my failure, but everybody's. That is the excitement about film. It has got to be better than any one of us. Better than Jerome Simon, better than George Bloomfield, better than Susan or Tony, better than any one of us. That is when you get it

all together, it is all of us. I enjoyed René Verzier and his camera crew, and the great production crew we had all the way down the line. The best crew I have ever had in this country...

A non-union crew?

Yes, a non-union crew, which is an interesting observation. It is not because the people in unions are not as good as the Toronto non-union community, I think it has to do with attitude. I have worked with a lot of union crews and as individuals, they are superb, some of the best individuals in this business. It is just that there is something about their collective attitude. That happens with every union.

Are you a member of the Directors Guild of Canada or the Directors Guild of America?

I am a member of DGA, and I'm contesting my membership in DGC. When I say contesting, it is because I've been having battles with DGC from the time I realized that they were a rather useless organization. I have gone to their meetings and always

felt that it was like going to a bowling club! I do not have time for that.

I've worked in this country as a director a long time, and I have seen a lot of my shows being repeated and re-run. So, I sit back and see all the creative people, the actors and the writers all getting residuals for the extra showing. Every other country pays directors residuals, not this one! Now, that is Directors Guild. If they were going to establish themselves, it seems to me that that should be about the first thing they should accomplish. Otherwise, for me, it doesn't exist.

Don't you feel that the organizers and the Executive would beg to differ?

Listen, the members of the Executive are people I know very well. They are the ones, as well as myself, that want to do what I am talking about. The reason they have not is because of the membership. The membership is made up of people trying to find a job who are too afraid to upset anyone by taking a joint stand. It might mean that they all go out of work for



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photo Rick Porter

Bloomfield (third from right) oversees the Double Negative crew

a while, but they are too frightened. They do not think they are good enough, and that is a Canadian thing! They do not think highly enough of themselves to demand respect as artists. Right now I am talking about the membership of the Directors Guild a lot more respectfully than they think about themselves! I'm saying that they are good enough, and that they are needed, and have the right to demand that respect. We all want to earn a living in this profession and that is what I am talking about!

You have said you enjoy the freedom and variety of working in Canada, yet you plan on leaving for the U.S. Is America still the Land Of Opportunity for you?

Yes, it is essential at this point. I want to go there to learn more, experience more, share more, and I want to be working with people who are better than me, who have had more experience than me. I have been around this country for a long time, and I figure I have seen and done just about as much as anyone.

At this point, I can make a pretty good living up here, so that is not the motivating factor, just to expand myself. I have no illusions or hang-ups about Hollywood... it is a place to make movies.

With your leaving, do you have any advice or suggestions to the governors and producers in Canada?

I would open the doors to American producers and creative people. I believe American co-productions have positive aspects. It would bring to this country what I am leaving to find. And not just from the U.S., but from everywhere in the world. We are all too nationalistic. Here we are today, excited about the Egypt/Israeli peace pact, the separation of two nations coming to an end, but we are ignoring the true leaders in the world, and that is the artists! We have to get together. I am not interested in Canadian film... I am interested in film.

What about the U.S. domination of available Canadian investment, with big budget 'Sure Thing' projects squeezing out Canadian ones. Do you think that is a possibility?

No, I think it is bullshit. It is insecurity from lack of confidence and know-how. A very Canadian idea, pure paranoia. The ones who are not good enough will be affected, but those who are won't be stopped. We have to move away from being amateurs and try to be as good as the best.

How does this apply to the annual feeding on the CBC that is shielded by government funding. How would you improve the CBC?

I have a long relationship with the CBC. I'm talking family. It is special. They gave me a hell of a lot. I would hate to suggest any change that might deny that same opportunity for someone else. I have a positive feeling about the CBC.

They are sitting ducks for criticism, as they have that government civil servant label. Yet, they have done things that the private sector could not take the time to do. A lot of people have had bad experiences with the CBC. But, if you are in the private sector you say you have had a bad time with John Doe or Adam Smith. To say you had a bad experience with the CBC has a different meaning. If you attack a general government concept you feel courageous. That is all bullshit. The CBC overall provided me with a great deal, they offered me the opportunity to learn my craft.

What's ahead for George Bloomfield?

Work in several different places. Mobility. Thriving on receiving as well as giving back. To open the U.S. and Europe and experience. To perpetuate my craft across borders, helping to create a universal industry. The obsession with the Canadian industry as solely Canadian is absurd.