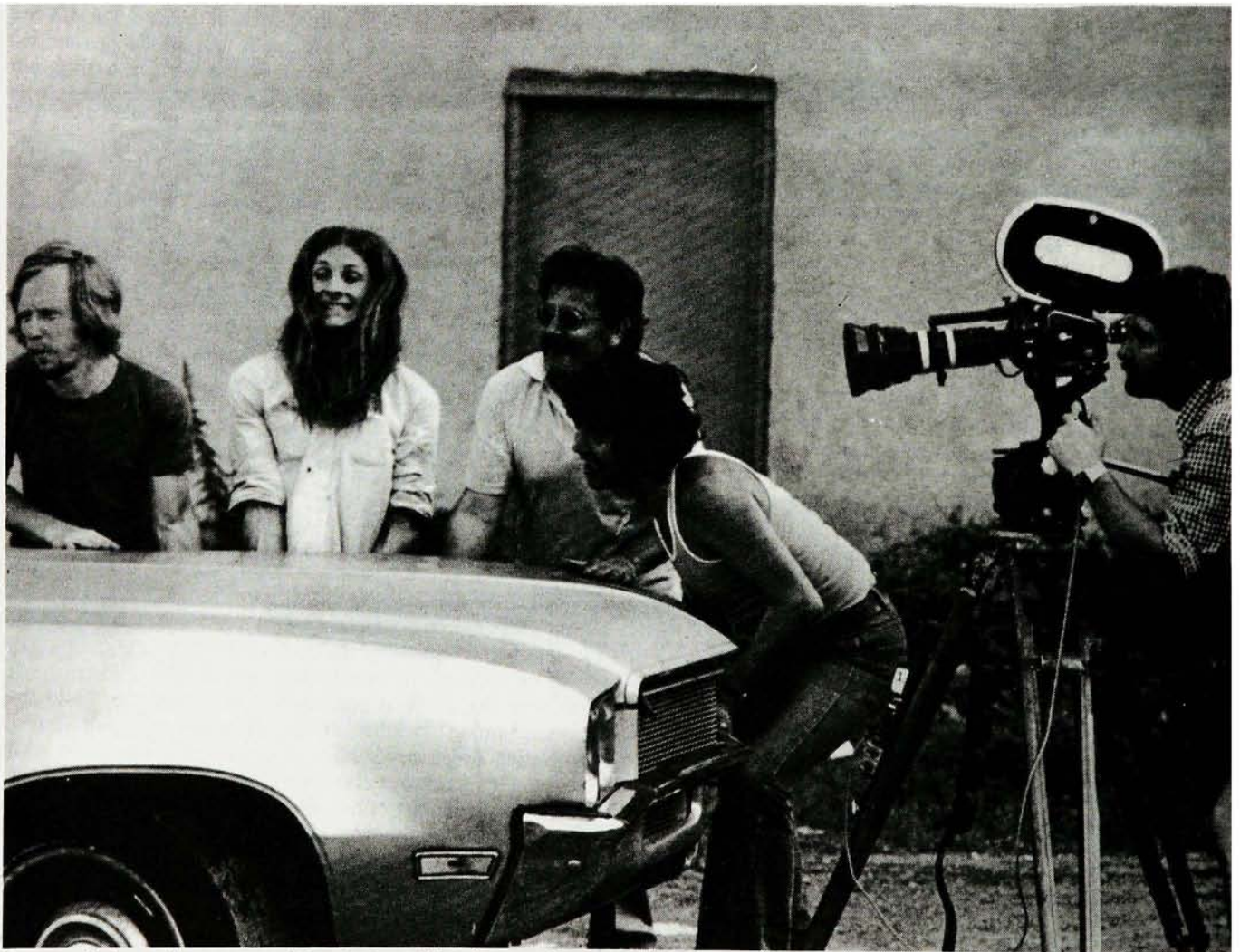

turning pumpkins into cinderellas

(or vice versa)

by lois siegel

Film students aspiring to go professional take note: "After graduation, a student who has produced a good film will be eligible for grants." Lois Siegel reports.



For practical experience you can't beat a Larry Kent feature where everyone assists in creating special effects – Richard Tasse, editor; Ross McAuley, sound; Larry Kent, director; Jorge Ruiz, asst. camera; Tim Lawrence, camera
photo: Lois Siegel

Filmmaking, like politics, is a contact sport. It's not always what you know, but it is most definitely who you know.
Anonymous

As a film student, one has certain advantages. Equipment is readily available, supplied by the school without cost. Budgets are fairly low, therefore financial risk is limited. Crew members work for free. Deadlines for projects are rather flexible. The student can concentrate on the artistic qualities of his film instead of having to worry about all the business hassles of filmmaking in the real world: accountants, insurance, lawyers, producers, rights for literary works and music...

If a film goes over budget, if one is lucky, mom or dad will chip in an extra \$100 for lab fees or an extra 400' of film. One smart kid had his father play the main role in his western which became a very sound investment in more ways than one.

But the "pleasures" of school are only realized after a few years on the "outside." The transition can be rather painful if one doesn't think ahead. No matter what aspect of filmmaking one decides to pursue, it is important that a student or young filmmaker have examples of his work to show to a prospective producer, distributor or financier. No one in their right mind is going to give a kid \$60,000 to make a half hour film on an idea alone.

The student in a relatively leisurely 3-4 year program should be able to produce several projects showing his capabilities during that period of time.

First year students are not included. All it takes is a little ingenuity. For example, many small companies or schools would be happy to financially support a super 8 project advertising either a company's product or a school's new technological program to show to prospective clients or students. Health associations have been known to back short 16mm documentaries that have eventually been sold to television. One company sponsored a student commercial and paid for the film and added \$2,000 for the filmmakers' efforts. Unfortunately, the filmmakers were unaware of the fact that they had

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

to pay royalties for music lifted directly from a record and spent their \$2,000 to obtain music rights.

After graduation, a student who has produced a good film will be eligible for grants.

Production

The **Canada Council**, for instance, stipulates in their Application for Film Grants that the filmmaker should have directed at least one film or have established a professional reputation in the visual arts. The Film Grant covers production costs up to \$25,000. It is rarely advisable for a beginning filmmaker to ask for this amount. Don't be too greedy your first try. Application deadlines occur four times a year: March 15, June 15, September 15 and December 15. Announcements of grants are three months later. But applications for \$10,000 or less are adjudicated within 6-8 weeks.

Project Cost Grants include script development and writing, research and advanced studies. The grant does not cover film production costs. The maximum grant is \$2,400.

The brochure Aid to Artists and application forms are available from the following address: The Canada Council, Arts Division, Box 1047, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5V8 (613) 237-3400.

Other resources are the various provincial councils or institutes.

The **Ontario Arts Council** has an elaborate program to aid artists. It offers special assistance in the areas of film, photography, video and screenwriting.

Film grants are available in two categories: **junior**: for short films (less than 20 minutes) of an experimental or self-expressive nature; up to \$7,000 to initiate such a film or up to \$3,500 to complete and **senior**: for dramatic films or docu/dramas (over 20 minutes) which are scripted and employ actors; up to \$20,000 to initiate or up to \$10,000 to complete.

Deadlines occur twice a year: February 1 and August 15; and once a year for the scriptwriting competition, December 1.

Write: Ontario Arts Council, 151 Bloor St. W, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1T6 (416) 961-1660.

The **Manitoba Arts Council** also offers grants to artists. A Major Arts

Grant totals \$7,000 and is awarded to professional creative and performing artists in all disciplines showing exceptional quality or accomplishment who wish to concentrate solely on their art for a period of time to carry out a well-defined program.

A Visual Arts Grant of \$2,000 is awarded to professional visual artists.

The Project Grant which provides for a part of the actual costs to the artist on a specific project awards a maximum of \$1,500 in film.

Address: Manitoba Arts Council, Centennial Concert Hall, 123-555 Main St., Winnipeg, Manitoba (204) 944-2237.

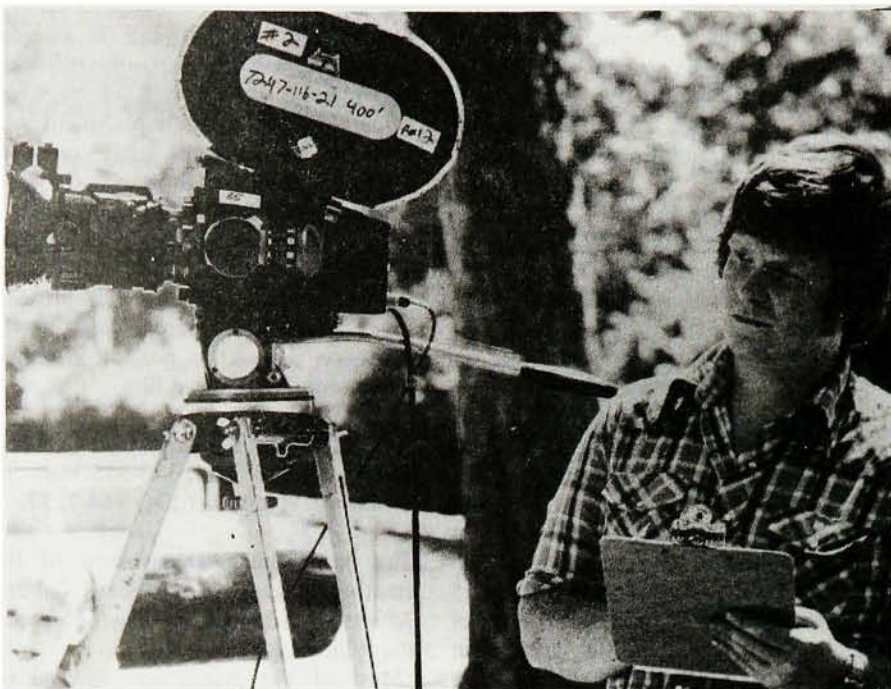
The **Nova Scotia Department of Recreation**, visual arts officer, Cultural Affairs Division, Tom Taylor reports the following:

"Most of our grants are directed towards developmental projects for groups and individuals, and applications are made to a Grant Review Committee and based on a provincial priority." The program includes assistance for co-sponsored (visual arts) projects (maximum assistance negotiable), Assistance



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A student success story: Glen MacPherson went on from Algonquin College to find steady work as an assistant cameraman
photo: Robert Brown

to Travel for Market (art) purposes (maximum \$350. per project) and Assistance for Miscellaneous Proposals in the Visual Arts (funds negotiable).

"The major film organization in Nova Scotia is The Atlantic Film Co-op, 1671 Argyle Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3J 2B5. This organization has an extensive program for art education through filmmaking and is funded through the provincial government, this office and the Canada Council."

Address: The Nova Scotia Department of Recreation, P.O. Box 864, Bank of Montreal Tower, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 2V2 (902) 424-7512.

The Government of the Province of Newfoundland: The Arts and Cultural Centre, P.O. Box 1854, St. Johns, Newfoundland, A1C 5P9, (709) 737 3650, offers a small Grants and Awards program available through their Cultural Affairs Division.

No grants are made presently to individuals. Director of Cultural Affairs, John C. Perlin wrote the following: "I believe the (Grants and Awards) committee has received an application recently from a filmmaker for a specific project that was approved subject to the other funding that he applied for being available. Apart from this, assistance was made available to two filmmakers to attend a National Film Board workshop several

years ago in Nova Scotia... The Grants and Awards program, therefore, is open for submissions from filmmakers on a project basis subject, of course, to the Committee's having the funds and approving individual projects.

The Province of British Columbia Cultural Services Branch in Victoria has no official policies for assistance to filmmakers, other than tuition scholarships for serious students of filmmaking and an operations grant to the Pacific Cinémathèque Pacifique Society for film distribution in B.C., according to C.M. Thomas, administrator, Grant Funds.

Letters were written to the other provinces not listed. No reply was received, but the Canadian Film Institute Yearbook of Canadian Cinema 1977-78 does provide a list of federal agencies, associations, unions and guilds. Address: Canadian Film Institute, 75 Albert Street, Suite 1105, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5E7 (613) 238-6748.

In Quebec there is the **L'Institut Québécois du Cinema**, 306 Place D'Youville, Montreal, H2Y 2B6, (514) 844-1954. The Institute works through investments and loans. It will provide up to 60 percent of the total film budget, if you can prove that you can supply the other 40 percent. The intention is to eventually recuperate the investment and share the profits of the films it supports according to the pro-

portion of the investment. For loans reimbursement is arranged with the producer, including interest. It works on the same basis as a financial institution. The Institute has contributed to 271 projects in less than two years.

Ministere des Affaires Culturelles du Quebec: Grants, not for production, but for research and scriptwriting are available.

Write to: Aides Aux Artistes, Ministère des Affaires Culturelles, 955, chemin Saint-Louis, Quebec. G1S 1C8.

Distribution:

If your film is very good, you may try CBC or a commercial distributor, but a distributor who wants to make money with your film will require professional quality and subject matter that sells. Most distributors will tell you entertainment sells, culture does not. They say only 30 percent of their audience is interested in the arts: music, dance, painting. The films that sell deal with the following: animals, children, sports and safety. They are definitely not interested in experimental films, but animation is fine. It is a good idea for every young filmmaker to talk to a distributor. Sometimes it's best to shatter a few illusions in the early stages of one's career.

But young filmmakers are welcome at several independent distribution centers, and the great advantage is that here the filmmaker retains all rights to his film.

COOPERATIVE CINEASTES INDEPENDANTS, 3682 St. Laurent, Montreal, programs films for the Cinema Parallel as well as for foreign festivals and schools.

CANADIAN FILMMAKERS DISTRIBUTION CENTER, 144 Front St. West, Suite 430, Toronto, Ontario, M5J 1G2 rents and sells films throughout Canada and is also establishing ties with the United States.

Contacts:

Since filmmaking is an art which almost always involves working with others, it is very important that one gets to know a variety of people and that one can easily get along with other individuals. A film director who merely 'uses' his 'friends' to his own advantage is soon labeled and people will become hesitant to work with that person. Reputations spread fast, both good and bad.

It is important to realize that not everyone is qualified to be a director or cameraman. There are other jobs available, and it is quite advisable that students grab the first opportunity they have to join a professional production. Practical experience is invaluable. The first thing any director will ask a prospective crew member is: "What have you done?" No one is going to walk onto a professional crew as an assistant cameraman without experience. Some unions require 100 days apprenticeship for any given position, and then they often require a written and oral examination before one becomes an official member. It may take 4-5 years for a 2nd assistant cameraman to become a 1st assistant in the IATSE union in Toronto.

But there are always low budget, non-union productions being shot. In the beginning, experience is much more important than money, therefore it is very wise for a young film aspirant to offer his services free of charge just for the chance to observe what happens during a production. Any intelligent young filmmaker can learn five times what he can learn sitting in a classroom just by keeping his eyes open and,

during actual shooting, his mouth shut. When crew members are taking a break, they will usually be more than happy to answer your questions, but don't bother someone while he is concentrating on his work. In this fashion one begins to meet other filmmakers, finds out what productions are coming up and discovers where filmmakers and actors hang out — what their favorite bars are — where they go to relax.

If one wants to succeed, one has to be persistent, with a dash of politeness and humbleness thrown in.

There is the story of the kid looking for work who used to sit and read a book on the floor in the hallway in the middle of English Production at The National Film Board. One day a film director came by and tripped over the young filmmaker and said, "Oh, I was just thinking of you. There is a Mexican crew arriving in a day. They need a production manager. Would you like the job...?"

A Final Note: When you finally do become professional, do not forget that you were a young filmmaker once. When a young person approaches you for a job, give him a chance too. □

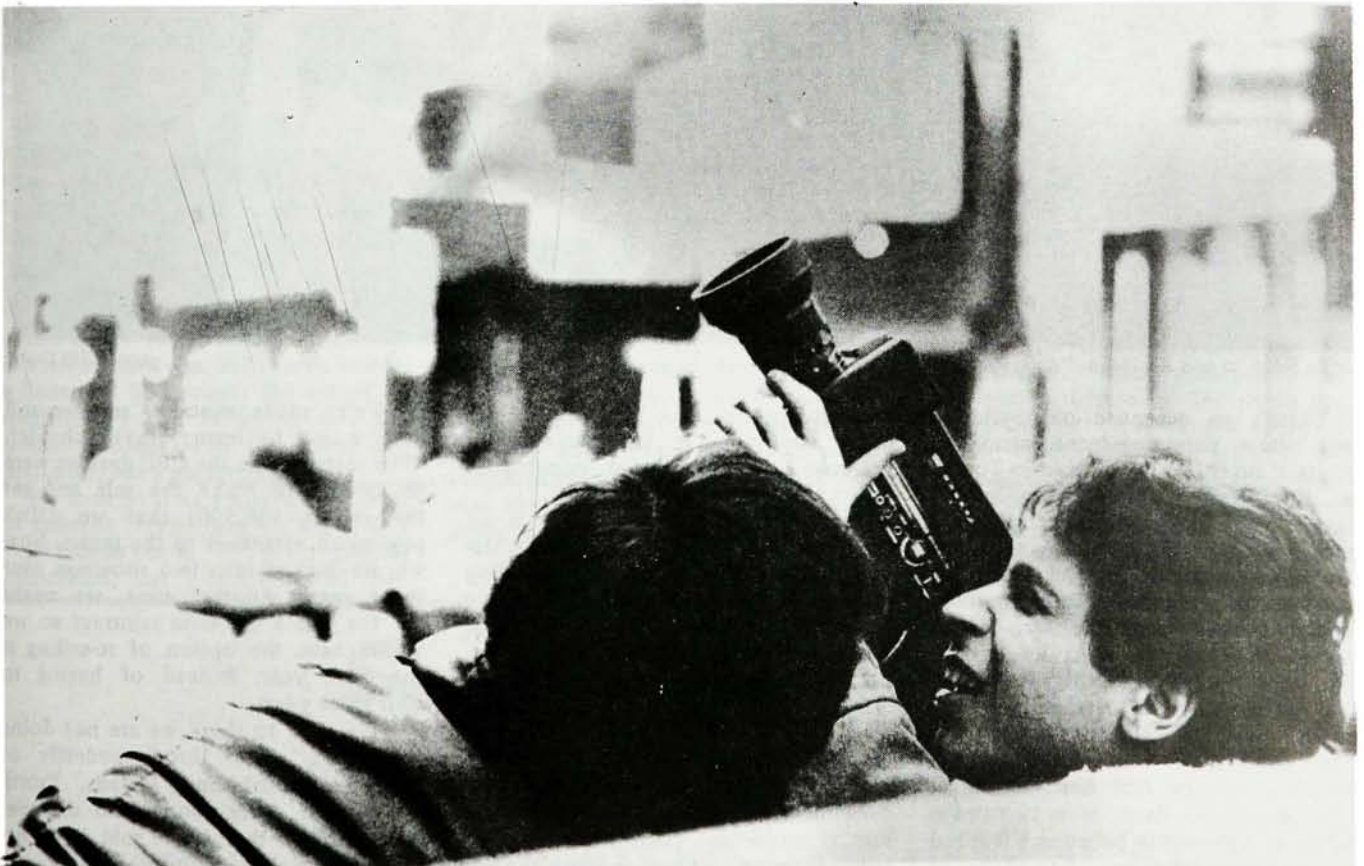
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Serge Bouharevich (right) enjoying one of the advantages of student life — readily available equipment

photo: Lois Siegel