

The following three articles inaugurate Cinema Canada's On Location section which, each month, will profile feature-length productions as they are being shot. In each report, only certain aspects of the shoot will be highlighted.

Below, Pat Thompson gives us a glimpse into a day-in-the-life of a novice actress as she takes a role in *The Peanut Butter Solution*. Then Lois Siegel documents the trials of being a Cinema Canada photographer on the international co-production *Hold-Up*. Finally, Farid Barsoum talks with the director of *Pouvoir intime* as the principal photography wraps.

Miss Prume examines The Peanut Butter Solution

by Pat Thompson

Les Productions La Fête producers Nicole Robert and Rock Demers, following the great box-office and critical success of their first film, *La Guerre des tuques* (The Dog Who Stopped The War), which was awarded the Golden Reel Award for 1984, are presently well into post-production on the second of their planned series of family feature films, this one entitled *The Peanut Butter Solution*.

The original idea and screenplay for *The Peanut Butter Solution* come from the film's director, Michael Rubbo. With this film, Rubbo, who has spent close to 20 years as a much-acclaimed documentary filmmaker with the National Film Board of Canada, (*Waiting For Fidel*, *Solzhenitsyn's Children*), makes his debut as a fiction feature director.

Although Rubbo, by his own admission, is not accustomed to the lack of flexibility and strict scheduling tensions that the making of a feature film requires, he has adapted masterfully to his new role.

"One of the most difficult things about making a scripted film," Rubbo told *Cinema Canada*, "is that the freshness has to be planned. Everything is calculated and there is very little room, if any, for improvisations."

The freshness of *The Peanut Butter Solution*, undoubtedly, will stem from Rubbo's masterful control of the actors' performances, as well as his under-

standing of how scenes will on with the screen. The energy and dedication of the film's leading players, Mathew MacKay (Michael), Siluck Saysanasy (Conrad), Michel Maillot (Signor) and Alison Podbrey (Suzie), most of whom are children, will also, more than likely, radiate a sense of freshness on the screen.

The technical crew of *The Peanut Butter Solution*, lead by first assistant director and line producer James Kaufman and director of photography Thomas Vamos, are also largely responsible for the particular character of the film's production. Producer Nicole Robert told *Cinema Canada*, "What is special about this film is that everybody who is directly involved in the production feels a personal attachment to the film."

Much of this feeling of dedication can be attributed to Rubbo's easy-going, controlled style of directing and to the nature of the film itself. "It is a pleasant film to work on," said one technician, "We're surrounded by toys and little kids." In the following, Pat Thompson shares what certainly was a pleasure for her: a chance to act in the film.

If Rubbo can muster as much enthusiasm at the box-office for *The Peanut Butter Solution* as he did in its production, Nicole Robert and Rock Demers have a sure winner for *Les Productions La Fête*.

Producers Nicole Robert and Rock Demers - flushed with the box-office reception of their first family film, *La Guerre des Tuques* (The Dog That Stopped The War) which netted them the Golden Reel Award for 1984 - are well into the second of their planned series of nine features.

By a strange twist of fate (as all the best spine-tinglers remark) this writer was called upon to perform as, indeed, performers are sometimes called upon to write... A longstanding acquaintance with producer Rock Demers brought forth an unexpected telephone call. "I have a part for you in my next movie," said Rock. "That's what they all say," I

replied. However, the flattering offer of two days' work in Montreal plus an assurance that I looked 'just right' for the role, caused me to cast caution every which way and say, "Er, well, yes."

Within a few days, the script of *Michael's Fright* - now *The Peanut Butter Solution-ed* - arrived. I was to play the school principal Miss Prume (that's right - Miss Prume) described as "A small round warmhearted woman, but tough as steel underneath." Let me tell you, that's me, I think. So I counted up my lines, was called to a videotaped audition with the director/screenwriter Michael Rubbo, got the part, and received the final script (they hadn't cut out any of Miss Prume's lines). I dashed to ACTRA for my work permit.

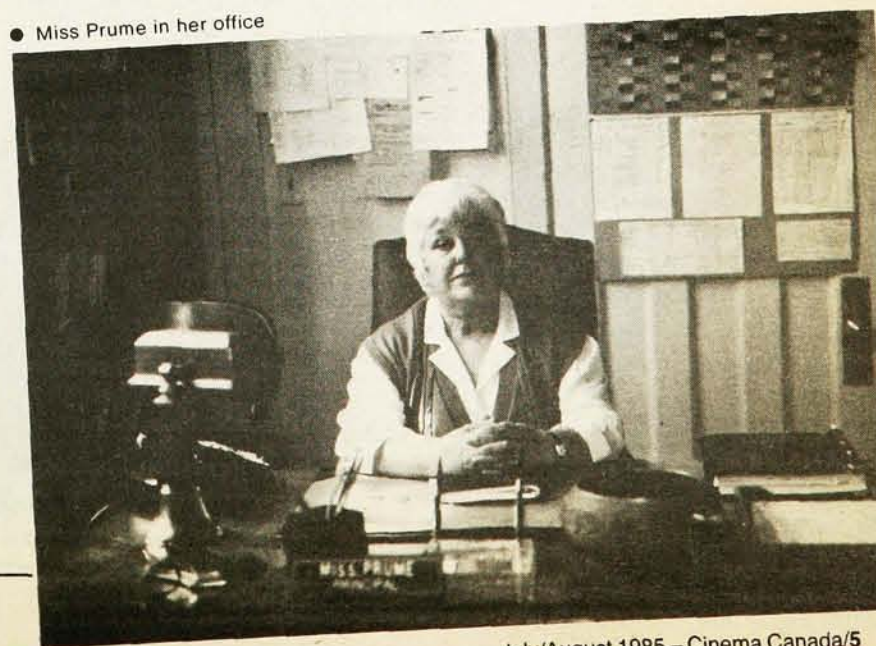
Then at the beginning of May, I took off for Montreal, clutching chunks of my



● Director Mike Rubbo reads a shot as...



● Signor (Michel Maillot) makes a point to...



● Miss Prume in her office

Pat Thompson is editor of the *Canadian Film Digest*.

photos: Warren Collins



● Behind the scenes, Pat Thompson gets made up



● Miss Prume at the ready



● Going over the lines with Patches and his trainer, Raymond Lacasse

clothing for consideration as film wardrobe, and feeling the first pangs of panic. The costumière, Huguette Gagné, arrived at the hotel to inspect my duds, fresh from dyeing 20 kimonos for a sequence with the kids. Revived with a few sips of wine, she pronounced my three changes OK, gathered them all in a garment bag and departed into the night. The 2nd assistant director, Blair Roth, telephoned and then delivered my call sheet for the next day. I tried to sleep...

The first day

This was the biggie – two scenes in one day. On arrival at Roslyn School in Westmount just after 9 a.m. the atmosphere was calm at the old brick building. Just some scaffolding with lights outside one of the windows, and the two lead kids, Michael (Mathew Mackay) and Conrad (Siluck Saysanasy) doing a tiny scene – running home from the front entrance.

I trotted inside and was directed to wardrobe where I put on my first set of clothes, and was made up. It was then I caught sight of Signor, the art teacher (Michel Maillot), having his abundant mane of iron-grey hair raised to some considerable height by the application of the curling iron. Then I was whisked away to have some stills taken in 'my office' – you see, there's going to be an enlargement of Miss Prume in the factory where the kids... well, I won't give away the plot, just get your admission money ready.

Then came the acid test – my first scene with words. Tagged as "Ms. Prume reprimands the boys," it was done quite a few times – I rose to my feet, walked round the desk and spoke to the two boys sitting on the blue velvet couch and dangling their feet. And so we came to lunch-time.

The afternoon was devoted to the scene: "Ms. Prume fires the Signor." The principal's office filled rapidly with the crew, equipment and lights. And then came animal trainer Raymond Ducasse with his dog Patches, who plays the Signor's dog, Jim. An unbeatable team. Jim is a lazy dog, but he follows the Signor into the principal's office and jumps on a table. His trainer indicated quietly that he couldn't do that – too fat – and the table is too high. The velvet couch, however, presented no problem, and it was decided to shoot Jim's entrance separately. Ducasse took Jim outside the door, came back to crouch down by the camera and, right on 'Action', the dog ambled in, jumped on the couch and collapsed in a heap (we all refrained from applauding). The director, trainer and cinematographer (Thomas Vamos) had a conference. Perhaps the dog could come in a little faster? Or course, said Ducasse. Perhaps he could move a little further along the couch? Of course, said Ducasse. And good old Jim/Patches did just that for a few more takes, and additional shots on the couch. At one point, the wonder-dog had an ear up and the other down, and was slowly blinking his eyes. What a scene-stealer.

How to follow a dog act? Very cautiously and with a certain degree of fortitude, so the rest of the scene was launched and shot first from Miss Prume's perspective. Since there was little space to manoeuvre behind her desk, sacrifices had to be made. I sat on a crate instead of a chair; I had to remember not to sway to my left and thus come

into frame; I was asked to place my hand lightly on the desk top because a tiny mike was taped behind the telephone; the room seemed crammed to bursting – Rock Demers arrived and waved encouragingly from the doorway.

I watched the lighting being adjusted, heard camera angles and lenses being discussed, and listened to director Rubbo giving advice as to how he wanted the lines to sound. God, how I tried to relax, to remember my lines, to sound natural, to feel really ticked off with the Signor – but as the afternoon wore on I decided that the best and most interesting place was the other side of the camera.

Playing opposite Michel Maillot as Signor the dotty art teacher, was both an entertainment and an education. His Shakespearean voice, grand gestures and mobile face were wonderful to behold – so much so that my lines kept slipping out of mind. But he was also very helpful to this neophyte.

Wrung out and nervous, the day's shoot finally came to an end. Only one scene tomorrow. Should be a breeze...

The second day

This time the arrival at Roslyn School was considerably noisier than the previous day. At least 25 extras – all kids – were swarming in the corridors. What appeared to be mayhem was quickly perceived to be organized chaos under the firm hand of 2nd a.d. Roth. "Listen up, kids," he roared, "everyone back in the gym and shut the doors!" And the crowd dutifully rushed off to the other side of the building at his command.

Equipped with a radio mike attached to my sweater and a pack taped inside of my skirt band, I coped gamely with my one scene, regulating traffic at the junction of three corridors as the kids ran to their classrooms. While tossing off various commands, the Signor passed by with Jim. The children were boisterous, I was buffeted about a bit, and Jim seemed confused by all the rushing around. Ducasse had told me earlier that Patches/Jim had been up since six a.m. and was, he thought, getting a little tired.

The overwhelming impression of the two days spent with *Michael's Fright* was of professionalism. There was no screaming and yelling, and even though (not unnaturally) you could feel tension in the air on a number of occasions, everything seemed to get ironed out in a suitably civilized manner. Director/writer Rubbo, in his fiction-feature debut, was working to a tight timetable, and he and cinematographer Vamos often consulted together. An incredibly meticulous continuity person, Marie Théberge, seemed to be everywhere, but the line producer/1st a.d. Jim Kaufman pushed things along with a firm hand. I recalled the name of Serge Beauchemin, coping with sound, from many an NFB production – he was slightly stunned when I told him it was great to meet 'the credit' read many times on the screen. Sound people don't get too much recognition.

The shoot was at about the half-way point when I arrived, and on schedule. The crew worked as a team well-accustomed to each other, fast-paced and efficient – many of them told me that it was a really nice film to work on.

I was delighted to be a privileged snoop on *Michael's Fright*, though perhaps not cut out for an acting career in my twilight years. But I can't wait to see the completed movie though, come September/October...

The director's 'pouvoir intime'

by Farid Barsoum

The last day of shooting of a major motion picture is always one of mixed emotions for cast, crew and all those people involved in the production of a film. Relief is compounded by fatigue and the last day of shooting *Pouvoir Intime* was certainly no exception.

On a cool early June night, in the parking lot of an old warehouse in Montreal's Point St-Charles area, the cast and crew of *Pouvoir Intime* were assembled on location for the final night of production of this psychological thriller.

To make the situation even more tense, this was also the last possible day of shooting, with close to 10 shots still to be filmed. The tension was reflected on the faces of all the crew members as, maintaining their professionalism, they fought back their eagerness to "wrap". The pressure was most obvious on the director of photography, Guy Dufaux, and on first assistant director Alain Chartrand, both of whom ran around furiously preparing scenes, camera angles and lightings. In fact, the only person on the set who was, or appeared to be, completely relaxed and in complete control of his emotions was the film's director, Yves Simoneau.

Simoneau, at 29, is considerably experienced for his age. He already has three feature-length films to his credit, a documentary entitled *Pourquoi Monsieur Zolock s'intéressait-il à la bande dessinée?*, and two fiction films, *Les Célébrations* and *Les Yeux rouges*, as well as several television commercials.

His control of the hectic pressure of the busy night of shooting was clearly a

reflection of Simoneau's experience. He understood that, if he panicked, the rest of the crew would soon follow and productivity would falter. So, Simoneau walked steadily from set-up to set-up and from scene to scene maintaining an expression of serenity.

What was very clear from Simoneau's cool was that he had a great deal of confidence in his crew. He would arrive on the scene knowing that everything was ready and waiting for his call of "action." The crew, in return, responded to the director's confidence.

"This was not always the case," Simoneau told Cinema Canada, "I have a very particular way of doing things. I like to have the *mise-en-scène* adapted for the camera and not the camera adapted for the *mise-en-scène*. At first they would always tell me that this was not the way to do things. But when they saw the rushes, they understood what I was striving for."

Control is really the name of the game for Simoneau. His technique of filmmaking requires that everything be perfectly well-planned, prepared and executed. "I don't like to use master shots," says Simoneau, "So nothing can be improvised within a scene, not the camera, not the acting."

Simoneau, however, does not seem to be bothered by taking risks. "Making a film like *Pouvoir Intime*, a psychological thriller, is risky in itself," explains Simoneau, "This is why there are so few thrillers being made in Quebec. The text has to be perfect, the mechanics of the story have to be just right, and it is a very expensive type of film to produce. Very few of the province's producers are willing to invest in such a risky endeavour."

Simoneau, who had originally conceived *Pouvoir Intime* and wrote the

screenplay with the film's leading actor, Pierre Curzi, succeeded in getting the right people interested in the project. Claude Bonin of Les Films Vision 4 inc. and Rober Frappier of the National Film Board accepted to co-produce the film. With the financial assistance of Telefilm Canada's Broadcasting Fund, Radio Canada and the Société Générale du Cinéma, Simoneau was able to put together a \$1.7 million budget.

"It is good to see these organizations getting involved in such a film," explains Simoneau. "Their support has been tremendous. What people don't understand, however, is that \$1.7 million is really very little to make this type of film. We have to make many sacrifices and still make it look like a multi-million dollar production. All this," continues Simoneau, "made the making of *Pouvoir Intime* quite a challenge for all involved."

"The future of the film industry in Quebec and even in Canada as a whole," Simoneau argues, "depends on the taking of risks by filmmakers, producers

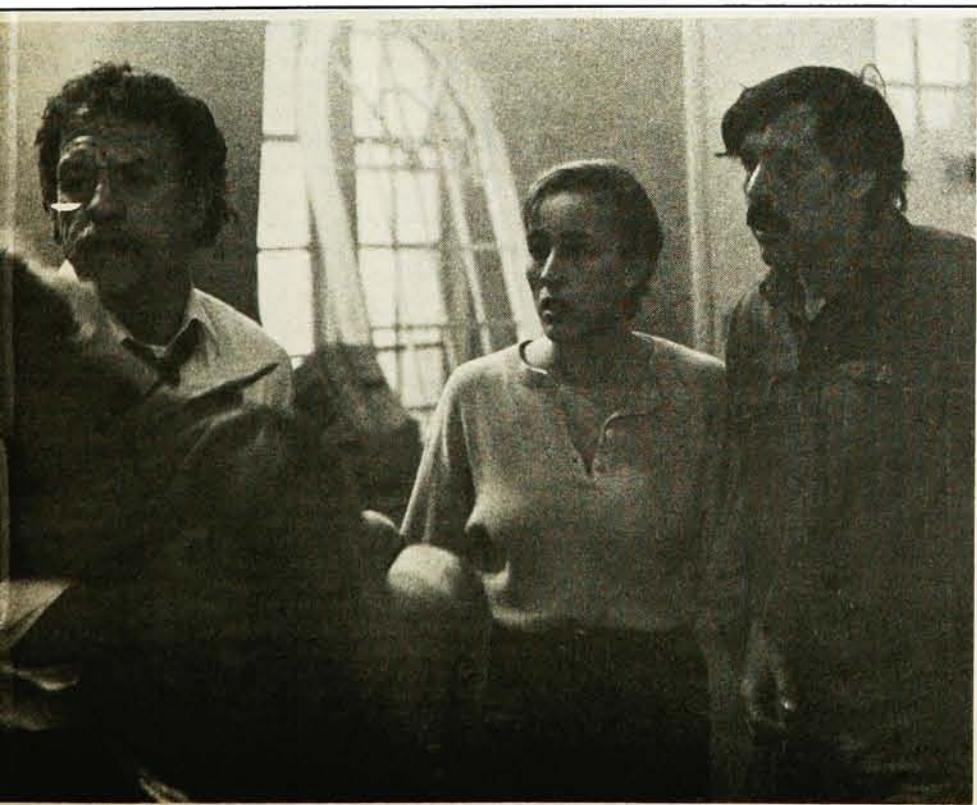
and investors. They have to strive towards creating the best film industry in the world. It is useless to simply let the province's or the country's films wallow in the mass of the international film market."

Simoneau described *Pouvoir Intime* as accessible to a universal audience, not just aimed at Montrealers or Quebecers. "This is the road Quebec's filmmakers will have to take," says Simoneau, "to attain success on an internationally competitive scale. We cannot gain anything with purely nationalistic films any more."

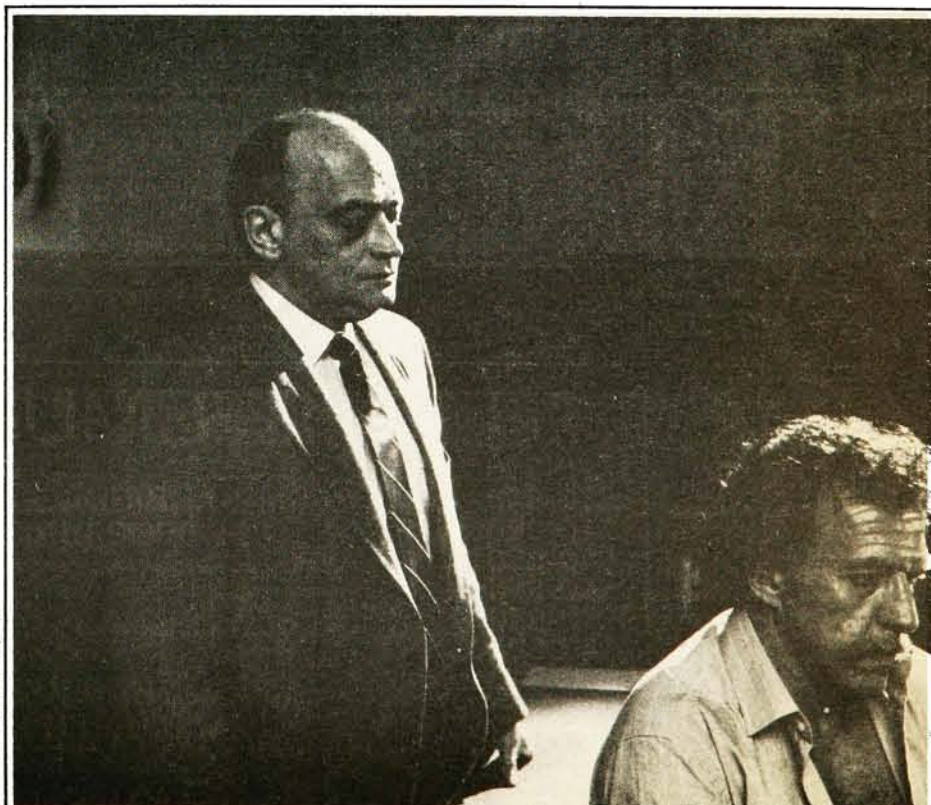
The confidence Simoneau displayed during the last night of shooting of *Pouvoir Intime* is reflective of his attitude towards the film's, as well as his own, future. He clearly anticipates financial as well as critical success with his latest film, now in post-production. If Simoneau can control the fate of *Pouvoir Intime* as well as he did its production, his confidence may prove to be well-founded.



● Old friends meet again - Pierre Curzi and Marie Tifo



● After the Brink's robbery, a shoot-out



● A police interrogation as Jean-Louis Millette grills Jacques Godin

Photos: Warren Lipton

Hold up: The power of the image

by Lois Siegel

Eight years ago my first article/photo story for Cinema Canada was entitled "The man upstairs or... on the shoot of *Blood Relatives*," a Franco-Canadian co-production produced by Denis Héroux of Cinevideo and directed by Claude Chabrol making his first film in English.

In May, 1985, I once again was invited to set foot on a Cinevideo set. This time the picture was another Franco-Canadian co-production, *Hold-Up*, featuring Jean-Paul Belmondo, and directed by Alexandre Arcady.

Eight years ago my photo/story highlighted an incident whereby a man refused to remove his car from an archway in Old Montreal, nearly preventing a million-dollar-shoot from happening. It was a lovely production nightmare, and no one could do anything for two hours until a producer showed up and supposedly bribed the guy with \$2,000 to remove his car.

Hold-up, Day 1: I call up Cinevideo and speak to their publicity director. I explain that I would like to do a photo/story for Cinema Canada. At first he insists Cinevideo can provide the photos. My stomach flips once over, not so lightly. Everyone knows what boxed-lunch-type photos look like; they drip with the creamy richness of too many cheesecakes. I renege on the offer.

After these preliminaries, he finally agrees to let me do my work and tells me to meet him at 2 p.m. By 2:15 we arrive on set and are told that everyone has just left for lunch. So I mark that one off to bad timing. No harm done: shootings are rarely on schedule. The publicity director said I could return in an hour and take any photos I wanted. But I was not to aim my camera at Jean-Paul Belmondo, who had his own private, personal, exclusive photographer. Fine. I returned in an hour.

As I was preparing my camera for shooting, this same publicity director ran forward, explaining that I had to leave the set. Belmondo's photographer was having a fit. No other photographer was to be allowed on-set.

Wonderful, I thought, now people have contracts on entire productions. I wondered how all the Montreal photographers who thrived on selling photos to newspapers and magazines were going to do their jobs and earn a living, me included.

The publicity director told me that I would have no trouble taking shots because I could merely remain behind the barriers a few feet away. What he didn't tell me, and what I later found out, was that no photographer except Belmondo's, had been allowed on-set since the beginning of the shoot May 6.

In addition, the barriers to the public were at the end of the street on Rue McGill, a block away from the action. So why did he invite me down to the set?

Curiously enough, when I also asked him for some written publicity on the shoot, which all productions usually provide journalists, he said lots of arti-

cles had already been written. In other words, why didn't I just read the news-

papers? It's encouraging to be written off like that. I had to obtain a call sheet from a crew-member for some of the information I required.

Anyway, I stuck around for a few hours to observe what one could see between the camera trucks parked tightly around the set in Old Montreal, in front of the impressive Banque Intercontinental du Canada in Place d'Youville. Overshadowing everything was a \$100,000 newly constructed monstrosity which looked distractingly familiar -

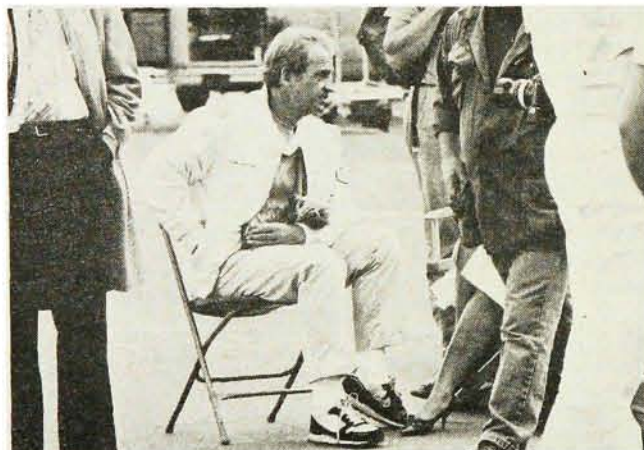
something like the Brooklyn Bridge in New York - and painted ugly, hospital green. Someone joked that when the bridge was disassembled, they were going to use it as Mayor Drapeau's Olympic Stadium roof.

Then I ran into one photographer friend who said he got some great shots with his 600mm lens. Great, I thought, getting my 105mm so that it wouldn't be insulted or ashamed of being little in a big people's world.

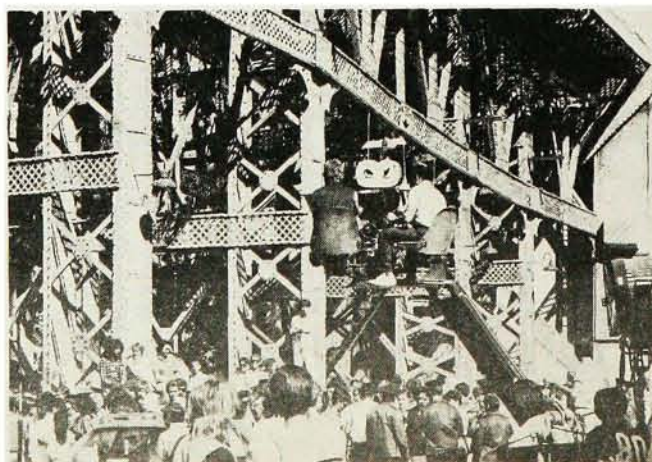
I trailed this photographer as he



1. What Jean-Paul Belmondo looks like to a photographer not allowed to get close enough to photograph him.



3. Belmondo with furry friend



5. Extras pretending to be a crowd

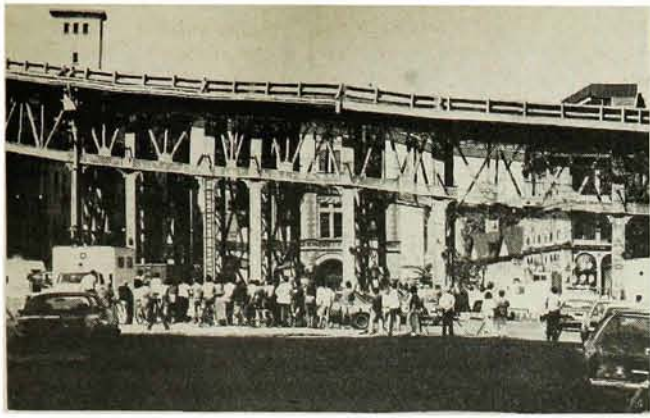


2. What JPB looks like with a 105mm lens one block away and enlarged to the maximum in the darkroom. Belmondo plays the old man with the cane.

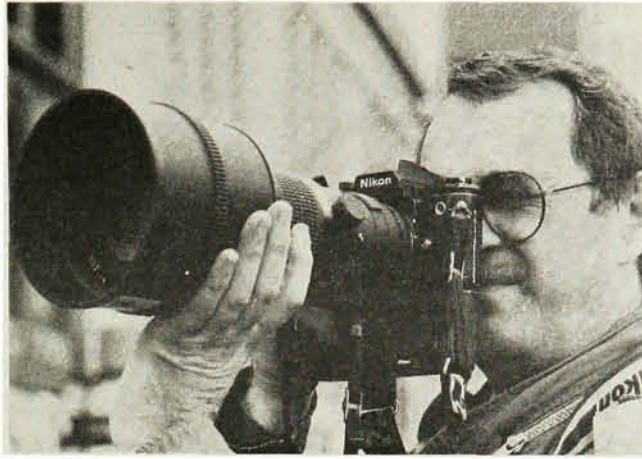


4. JPB up close

photos: Lois Siegel



6. The Brooklyn Bridge's brother-in-law



7. M.F. Ponomareff with his man-sized camera. He's trying to earn a living, taking photos at a distance



8. JPB's infamous private, personal, exclusive photographer shows Belmondo some snapshots



9. Lois Siegel, rather small and unassuming, espionage photographer-at-large



10. A walking arsenal tree



11. DOP Richard Ciupka takes an actresses' temperature



12. An artistic creation : North Atlantic Bank

weasled his way through the barriers to a friend's "private parking" lot adjacent to the shoot. The production assistants, Belmondo's guarding watchdogs, descended immediately to word us away. We didn't budge.

"Private property," my heavily-experienced photographer friend admonished them, "you can't make us move." Then a resident of the remodeled condominium adjacent to the private parking, appeared. He was, by this time, fed up with film shoots that created noise and congestion. He also hated trying to exit his car from the barricaded premises, so he jumped to our defence.

I was still not on-set, but from this less than advantageous point-of-view, I was able to snatch the photos you see, captured from a distance.

Day II : Three-thirty p.m. I head over to the set, again in Old Montreal. Everything looks the same. I station myself at the "private parking" lot, flashing my Cinema Canada card to avoid displacement, while mentioning the publicity director's name. People are impressed by name-tags.

Belmondo isn't far away, being lit in a telephone booth with lots of reflectors, and glaring into my lens. Every few minutes his private photographer also glares at me ; I love significant glares : they do wonders for my sense of well-being.

But I look like a stupid, innocuous female (just barely 5' small), and I am soon ignored. If I had been a 6', 300-lb. male with a huge, phallic camera lens aimed at Belmondo, forget it. I would have been out of there quicker than you could have said "the image is the message." So much for male chauvinism.

Belmondo eats an ice-cream cone - "click."

The crowd-scene extras pretend to be a crowd - "click."

More ice-cream - "click."

I couldn't get close enough to do anything else.

But just as I was leaving, a production assistant (God's greatest gift to the accidental misadventure) approached : they needed more extras for the crowd-scene... On The Set ! Who wanted to be in the film, he encouraged encouragingly. I did. He promptly guided his small but eager new extra to the nearest crowd-scene. I smiled obediently, joining the crowd, neatly hidden in the second row, but at a good vantage-point for shooting photos, and since people with cameras were part of the scene, no one bothered me.

A few of my friends on the crew smiled in disbelief when they noticed me, after having seen me escorted out-of-bounds the day before. I smiled back.

By then (5 p.m.), Belmondo sat out of costume with a furry thing (animal) on his lap - "click."

His photographer was nowhere to be seen - "click."

When his photographer finally did appear, I took *his* picture - "click."

The moral, or rather, morass of this story ?

Image monopoly is a result of power. If I can control my image, I can control what people think of me. Barbra Streisand is said to allow cameramen to shoot her from one profile only. Some actors/actresses have a say as to which director of photography will photograph them.

One would think that if Telefilm Canada is kicking in one million dollars in Canadian money on this shoot, that at least Canadian photographers should be allowed on the set.