LISTEN, YOU SCREWHEADS.

GLADSTONE HOTEL
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Cab Driver

W ell, I might look like Robert Ford but I feel just like a Jesse James as Outlaw. Blues, Bob's Dylan.

You may be asking yourselves, "What's a dumb white boy from Rosedale doing editing a natural film magazine?" I'm saying, "Trying to kick out the jocks." Welcome to the Outlaw Edition of Cinema Canada. Connie Tadros, the rock, the heart and soul of this publication is on a much deserved vacation, while we here in T. O. try and pull it all together in time to hit the presses. I'd like to thank Connie for giving us this chance, and for having the faith in us to try something a little different.

The idea for this issue came out of a meeting with Connie, just after she had finished the 19th edition of Cinema Canada. She rang me up when she was in Toronto, connecting me from doing a feature on Norman Jewison, and asked if I could collect some of my filmmaker-type friends so we could all sit down and talk about ideas about what the magazine should be doing. She was at the crossroads and we met her there.

Connie listened patiently as we gave her our honest opinions on the magazine as it was, and the things we'd like to see it doing. A lot of wild ideas were tossed back and forth but it was Peter Mettler who came up with the idea of a whole issue ourselves. I tried to sell the idea, knowing how much sweat that would take but Connie perked up on that idea. Soon enough, a few days later, she phoned me up again, this time asking us to put our money where our mouths were, so to speak, and assign the editor of this special edition. When I asked her, "Why me?" she replied, "You were the only one I could think of grilling through the whole meeting." Guess that means I'm a sucker, but I was sold on the fact that Connie gave me complete editorial control to do whatever I wanted. The inmates were going to take over the asylum.

The focus of this issue is on the concerns and viewpoints relating to the Toronto independent film community as opposed to the film industry, the Outlaws as opposed to the Establishment. We're sending this out as a communication from one community to another with the hope of offering an alternative view of filmmaking in this city. I understand that outside of Toronto the city has a reputation for being a money-grubbing hub of greed, populated by high-minded people who can't dance very well. But there are a few pockets of resistance here in the centre of the Known Universe that are beginning to sprout up. One of these pockets is a late-night Booze Can at the corner of King and Dundurn and the other being the Independent Film Community: a loose collection of directors, actors, writers, producers, technicians, editors, artists, cinematographers, and directors, who have stamped out the territories between the hardcore Lunatic Fringe and the lonely American colony dubbed Hollywood North.

A lot of us work in the industry to pay rent on our shoddy apartments, to support our families and some of our nasty habits, but we also work hard on each others' films and are beginning to produce some of the best work this country has ever seen. It is a community with a spirit not unlike the thriving groups of Outlaws in
short films have won awards at film festivals around the world and we are breaking new ground with the daring manipulation of our materials and our adventures in storytelling. We are paving the ground for the creation of the new Canadian Feature Film. This new Canadian cinema needs new freedoms. Freedom from the conventions of the trade. Freedom from the influence of commercial partners. Freedom from the tutelage of vested interests. We have a strong grasp of the cinema on a formal, intellectual, and economic level and we are prepared to take the gamble because we believe in a new cinema.

Back in T.O., keeping my life alive, the critics are either completely ignorant of the surface of this new-generation of filmmakers or they are too cowardly to write about and explore these films until they are first noticed and labeled in Berlin, or Cannes or New York. When Family Virging was given its world premiere at the '87 Festival of Festivals there was not a single review in any Toronto paper. John Harkness of New Magazine remains under the spell of Swarzengergusses muscles. Jay Scott of the Globe and Mail just doesn't seem to have the time and Peter Cockard of the Toronto Star is just too old to notice. I must admit that until film Wenders, spoke of his admiration for Egoyan's film many months later, in another festival, in another city, that the press here took any significant interest in the film, and even then it was Wim that they were really interested in with Egoyan as their ticket. Just another bunch of star fuckers.

That leaves the ball in our court. Most of the pieces in this issue are written by the filmmakers themselves or issues they are concerned with. My hope is that this will inspire a dialogue with other film critics, the critics and the public across the country. I hope you hate it. I hope you love it. It's indifference on the part of the industry, the Community, the Critics, Joe Public, and Miss Emma Crompton, that little old lady in Saskatchewan, that will kill us all.

The Toronto Independent Filmmakers is a hard bird to define because the work covers the spectrum from the experimental to the commercial. Many of the films are attempting to open possible unisons rational and sloppy, grainy, dark and shadowy, Russian, Eastern European, and Italian. The danger is that this is what we are doing as we create something new from the ashes of the past.

Alexandra Gill for all her work as associate editor, Kevin Bass for his visual design, and of course, Hunter S. Thompson for his advice.

The best we can hope for is to inspire others with this issue, with our films and with our stories. So, enjoy your new film magazine and let me know if you have any comments or questions.
Pourquoi Fl

by Patricia Rozema

S

o I'm sitting with two good friends, Alex and Sheila, under a parasol on the edge of a very fashionable body of water. The debate is as intense as the sky is blue. The focus of the discussion is a bottle of Dom Perignon that has just arrived courtesy of a distributor who wants the film we had just made. We aren't thirsty, it's expensive, they can see we're not drinking it, but we've got 350 interviews that afternoon and we don't want to fall asleep but it's Dom Perignon, but I hate champagne, but it's such an impressive gesture, etc. All the big issues - professional protocol, social responsibility, Western wasteloshness - are ricocheting around the table.

Suddenly, overhead, we hear a low rumbling noise, how can I describe it? It's like thunderous applause, no, maybe it's more like the sound of distributors' feet stomping to bid on the rights for I've Heard the Mermaids Singing. No, that's not it, there's something up there, it's a bird, it's a plane, yes, it's a plane, a small one, pulling behind it a huge, mind-bending question. A question so great that even the Dom Perignon issue was overshadowed: "Pourquoi filmez-vous?" On the same banner, behind the question was the word "Liberation." I speculate that this message was brought to us by some sort of Third World delegation who still believe (aren't they cute) that film can bring about social/political liberation. I am later informed that "Liberation" is the name of a French daily newspaper that had asked this question of hundreds of directors from around the world, many of whom had assembled there for the 1987 Cannes Film Festival. Their answers had been published in a special magazine edition of their paper. But, for obvious reasons, wasn't 'asked. So realize that big question in the sky is still, for me, unanswered.

Pourquoi filmez-vous? For the next year, I'm tormented. I'm sitting in a lovely hotel room somewhere in between: "Where did you get the idea?" and "Is this story autobiographical?" and a little voice with a lot of reverie on it would speak up on me... "Pourquoi filmez-vous?" And you know the rest - groaning and thrashing about during my transatlantic naps, waking up drenched in sweat unable to read the distributor's reports; eventually, I couldn't even concentrate on the fan mail. My friends would say, "Oh Patricia, of course you've got a lot of incredibly deep things on your mind, you're a major motion picture famous superstar renowned celebrity now." (I've nice friends.) But I knew the problem was reaching me at the next great gift to cinema - designer pen and paper on the right, computer on the left, glass of wine in the middle - and as soon as I would start to think of What to write, there it was again. "Pourquoi?" So I'd take a different tack, and I'd think of How I should write, or Who my characters should be, but alas, the same haunting question. Why? Why? Why?

At first I thought it was vindication. All those times I sat at dinner parties surrounded by droll contemporary wits who watched with fascination and disgust as my comments would dribble down my chin and onto my plate and sit there, congealing (my comments not the wits), until someone else would mercifully rescue me from the limelight - at those times I'd say to myself, "Just watch me, maybe I can't talk so good as youse guys but give me enough time and I'll write something so... nice, and then I'll make it into a movie so incredibly... nice that you just can't stand it." The desire to do something great or even just unusual consumes me at the times of my greatest humiliations. Like when my superiors at The Journal told me that the good news was that they only had to cut one person from their ranks that year and the bad news was that it was me. Or when I notice with disturbing frequency that there's something different about my body and those lovely ones in the magazines. Let's see then, that means that filmmaking is indirect self-improvement or possibly secondary seduction. I suppose it's no accident that somebody in my film said "To make something beautiful is to be beautiful forever." But still, there's more to it, that's not quite why.

Perhaps the answer is that I can't really do anything else. I don't have a musical imagination. If I decided to become an architect, the chances of them letting me try something as breathtaking as the Royal Bank Plaza are even slimmer than the chances of them letting me make a movie. I don't dare to write a novel. I can't cook and if I had a baby I'd probably forget it in a supermarket somewhere. In journalism I always felt too restricted by the facts to actually tell a good story (when I did tell a good story it had only a nodding acquaintance with fact). And I'm afraid of spending my life just maintaining my life, not making anything, not even a mess. I'd lose my little mind if I couldn't turn around, point and say, hey, look what I did, what do you think?

I need to make a difference. I need to have some effect. I'm like a little kid who's discovered that her hand is actually connected to her mind and when she pushes her spoon it falls off the highchair, it makes this tremendous noise, creates an emotional reaction and somebody actually picks it up, so I do it again. I'm almost 30 now so I play with the toys of the cinema, and instead of moving spoons I try to move people. There's a very distinct rush I feel when I see the pictures move before my eyes the way they did behind my eyelids, when I see a whole group of people frozen in reverential silence as we film an instant of compassion (Uri Barabas), when that bass note strikes at just the right moment, when people laugh, when people speak or write and I know they've felt what I've felt - these little proofs that I've had an effect overwhelm me. The sensation defies words. Maybe that's why so many films are about sex and death and love and war, these things have their own power. You don't even have to do too much to make them hit the audience between the eyes.

Another related reason for making movies is the slaying of monsters. (David Cronenberg knows about this one.) If you've filmed a monster it's not quite so difficult to face anymore. When you've seen it in Make-Up and eating bagels at the Craft Service table somehow it doesn't carry the same threat. Words and scenes on little pieces of celluloid can magically subdue the terror of, say, public artistic ridicule (Mermaids) or the inability to love and work at the same time (Fatal). With films I can sleep...
way Jorge Luis Borges was blind for almost 40 years, the nape of a young woman’s neck, the black waves my mom described seeing in a Venezuelan oil spill, the way Alex’s cat’s little arms were shaved so they could put him on intravenous, the way the Da Vinci’s Madonna on the Rocks looks down with all the tenderness of eternity, the way our violent, sophisticated little planet seems to be completely alone in the universe, the way people look totally different if they think they’re alone, the way poetry only happens when you’re honest, the way the muscles move in Ben Johnson’s thighs, the phrase “the unbearable lightness of being”, the horrifying majesty of the Challenger explosion, the simplicity of good ideas, the seriousness in the eyes of a newborn, the luxury of being apolitical in a good ol’ clumsy democracy, the way a tennis ball sounds when you hit it right, the way Mick Jagger groans and growls in between the words, the elegance of pure logic, the way Sheila McCarthy blinks, Alex Reit’s vocabulary, the way turkeys drown from drinking the rain, the impressions bodies leave in an unmade bed, the way clothes can look so damn hot one season and ludicrous a decade later, the birthmark on Gorbachev’s forehead, a good argument, hands, eyes, office supplies, “canaries in the morning, orchestras in the afternoon and balloons at night” (F. S. Fitzgerald), how mistakes can be brilliant, sad wisdom and silly intelligence, the way you can wake up crying and not know why, the way you can go right inside some pictures, stuttering, the way a bunch of moving pictures in a row have changed my life. If I can put just a little, just a little of these things in a box on a screen and inside someone else, my god, then... I don’t know what, but it’s a good thing. It’s a good thing.

Patricia Rozema wrote, directed, edited and coproduced the feature film, “I’ve Heard the Mermaids Singing” in 1987 which was selected for the Director’s Fortnight at Cannes 1987, won the Prix de la Jeunesse that year, was subsequently selected for 27 festivals and theatrically released in 34 countries. It was her first feature film.

(excerpted from answers originally published in Libération, May 1987)

WOODY ALLEN
The constant and incredibly complicated problems posed by directing films keeps my mind occupied, consequently I don’t have too much time to think about the terrible realtites of life.

FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA
I make films to pay debts accumulated on films that I made to be able to make other films.

JIM JARMUSCH
I really don’t know why I make films.

PAUL SCHRADE
Because it’s the medium of my generation.

JOHN WATERS
I make films because it stops me from committing crimes.

ROBERT BRESSON
To live.

CLAIRE DEVERS
Because I’m afraid of the dark.

MICHAEL SNOW
I make films I want to see.

DENYS ARCAND
...It’s an agreeable way to resist death and to soften my solitude.

JEAN BEAUDRY
...Because solitude is as hard as a rock and as necessary as the wind, because too often love is bitter, because I want to love life.

ERIC ROHMER
Because I don’t paint and I don’t write.

AGNÈS Varda
I film for what’s in the frame and to suggest what’s outside the frame.

ROMAN POLANSKI
I wonder.

JEAN-LUC GODARD
I film to avoid the question “why?”

ERNEST LUBITSCH
(1937, rephrased by Stoney Donen in 1972)
For me directing films is like having sex. When it’s good, it’s very good. But when it’s bad it’s still good.