I am a filmmaker trying to make a living from my own experimental films. While trying to research and write an article for Bruce McDonald about short film distribution in Canada, I was given the following advice: "Get a day job. Make films with Arts Council Money. An experimental film cannot pay for itself." Is this fact true?

I agree that experimental films have a bad name. Often what is called ‘experimental’ is self-centred, self-indulgent, elite, boring, long and has very little to do with an experiment. Have you suspected this before? ‘My film didn’t turn out, so I’ll call it experimental.’ If a film is made for what seems to be an audience of one person, is it worth the effort? I understand that short experimental films are seldom shown. But short experimental films are what I want to make. Can I make a living from this? I need to know the truth.

Tentatively, I increased the speed of the car to 55 miles an hour. As I passed the black '66 Camaro on Hwy. 401, headed to Ottawa, my heart surged with the spirit of adventure. The wind seemed to blow away the smell of mouse nests that the car had acquired from the long period of time it had spent sitting in a field. It also seemed to blow away the doubt in my mind, imposed by the local rural wisdom of Teeswater, and typed the animation onto 3,409 sheets of paper. We called it Primiti Too Taa.

I took our plans and the soundtrack back to Teeswater, Ontario, and typed the animation onto 3,409 sheets of paper. We called it Primiti Too Taa. The 5-minute, 16mm film made it in time for the San Francisco Film Festival. They bought a copy.

The simplicity of one man and one chair, but the film, by being so thorough on the micro scale, actually turned out, so I’ll call it experimental. It is about one man and one chair, but the film, by being so thorough on the micro scale, actually turned out, so I’ll call it experimental. The film revealed something about universal ‘Chairness’, ‘Mannness’, and what it feels like to be sat upon.

By using an experimental technique, Norman McLaren could show something common to an audience, in a way that they had never seen before.

I’m trying to make a film like that. That night, I found a piece that Colin Morton had adapted from a 40-minute nonsense poem, Ursamute, written by the late German DaDaist, Kurt Schwitters. On Friday, over an extended lunch break from Colin’s day job, writing for the government, we recorded his performance in a local radio station. With the soundtrack done, we mapped out an animated choreography of the text of the poem. The film was going to be a very closeup view of the words, typed onto paper. These words, through animation, would become lively, and would dance to the rhythms and feelings that the poem inspired.

I took our plans and the soundtrack back to Teeswater, and typed the animation onto 3,409 sheets of paper. We called it Primiti Too Taa. The 5-minute, 16mm film made it in time for the San Francisco Film Festival. They bought a copy.

Primiti Too Taa has since won four awards and has been shown around the world, even in Zagreb, Yugoslavia. Herwig Gayer, my assistant, now has reanimated the 3,409 pages of typing. The 35mm version sold to the Spike and Mike Festival of Animation.

I am on the road again, driving my car, which is now painted plaid and am headed for Chicago to an IMAX theatre owners, convention. I have a 70mm version of Primiti Too Taa under my arm, in exchange for our house. I hear that IMAX lacks product. They have only a little more than 65 films for their 65 theatres. And the longest film they have is 41 minutes. This looks like a medium for short experimental films and a really big audience. Next stop: Chicago.

Editor’s Note: Ed Ackerman was tragically killed in an automobile accident on the way to Chicago. He was to unveil the IMAX version of Primiti Too Taa. Mr. Ackerman is survived by his wife Cathy and his two small children, Zara and Brandon. Send all donations to the Ed is Dead fund to: Teeswater, Ontario, Canada.