



Nettie Wild in the Philippines with members of the New People's Army

that with which she disagrees, then she'll do credit to Canada's reputation as a nation of documentary makers.

Mark O'Neill •

A RUSTLING OF LEAVES p. 14. *Director* Nettie Wild *exec. p.* Christopher James *ed. assoc. p.* Peter Wintonick *cam.* Kirk Tougas *cam. asst./2nd. unit cam.* Jojo Sescon *asst. ed.* Gael MacLean *loc. sd. rec.* Gary Marcuse, Paul Morales, Jeanne Marie Hallacy, Nettie Wild *orig. mus.* Joey Ayala, Salvador Ferreras *post. sd. ed.* FX Motor Sisters *sup. sd. ed.* Haida Paul *sd. ed.* Gael MacLean *sd. asst.* Michael Paul *re-rec. mix.* David Cochrane *aidm. cam.* Nettie Wild, Steve Griffiths, Joseph Fortin *p. man.* Susan Lord *aldm. mus.* Martin Gotfried *musicians* Joey Ayala, Salvador Ferreras, Martin Gotfried, Barry Muir, Ken Newby. *Manila crew:* p. man. Renuie del Rosario *p. assts.* Corie Concordia, Bob Roldan *cam. asst.* Jo Cuaresma *driver "Lito" Mindanao crew:* p. man. Mario Castillo *translators* Maria Victoria Maglana, Anita Sescon *driver* Tony the Vulcan *Mountain crew:* *facilitator* "Lnday" *translator* "Ocoy" *Vancouver crew:* p. man. team Betsy Carson, Tom Braidwood *translator* Emmanuel Sayo *p. asst.* Geoffrey Rogers *Post Prod:* *graphic des.* Joan Churchill, Robin L. P. Bain *animation cam.* Robin L. P. Bain, Pierre Landry *2nd. asst. ed.* Monika Mannke. Produced with the support of the NFB (Montreal and Pacific centres), the Canada Council, Channel Four, G. B., R. G. N. Laidlaw 1984 Trust, United Church of Canada, Alpha Cine Service. Produced by Kalasikas Productions in association with Channel Four Television.

Janis Cole's and Holly Dale's Calling The Shots

Some are called bitches. Others are accused of being too weak. These are the women in the film industry who have given up the subordinate positions of continuity and production assistant to become "bosses", directors and producers; and they are the latest subjects to come under the scrutiny of documentary filmmakers Janis Cole and Holly Dale. Over 30 women, with a wide variety of interests and styles, are interviewed in different parts of North America and Europe. However, they all have one goal in common – they are determined to make films in an overwhelming

male-dominated, highly-competitive industry.

The opening interview with actress Katharine Hepburn sets the tone of the film when she announces that the legendary Dorothy Arzner, one of the few female directors from Hollywood's golden era of studio domination, was one of the first "to prove that women are not completely foolish".

Themes are developed and tales unfold from the impressive list of directors interviewed by Cole and Dale. Some of Europe's finest such as Agnes Varda, Chantal Ackerman and Jeanne Moreau compare experiences with their American "rebel" counterparts: Donna Deitch, Lizzie Borden and Penelope Spheeris. Claudia Weill, who co-directed the documentary *Joyce At 34*, said her reason for getting into films was because "documentaries were my passport into the world". Karen Arthur, film and television director of *The Mafu Cage* and *Cagney and Lacey*, enthusiastically describes how, in the business, "you can meet kings and judges, prostitutes and junkies. The cornucopia is there for you."

Calling The Shots is about women who understand the power of the medium. They are very comfortable behind and in front of the camera. A vivacious and bubbly Sandy Wilson, director of *My American Cousin*, actually gets up, leaves her chair empty (the camera keeps rolling) and returns with a prop in hand, a dainty purse. She recalls how she planned for her first day as director by packing the purse with the essentials for any good moviemaking – lipstick and cab fare. Anne Wheeler, director and producer of *Loyalties* and *Cowboys Don't Cry*, confesses to her foolishness as a first-time director when she shot some footage with the camera held upside down.

There's also a very funny and spontaneous scene when Penelope Spheeris, director of such violent films as *The Boys Next Door* and *The Decline of the Western Civilization*, is interrupted midsentence by a telephone call. She exclaims, "It must be my mother!" It's a wonderful moment, and one that not many professionals admit to on camera – except maybe someone like Woody Allen!

It's clear that Cole and Dale are sensitive to and respectful of their subjects. Emotion and vulnerability are understood. As Margareta Von Trotta (*Marianne and Julianne, Sheer Madness, Rosa Luxemburg*) explains, "If you are a woman, you know the inside and outside as well." Joan Tewesbury (screenwriter of *Nashville*) talks about having to give up her children in order to succeed in the industry. Sandy Wilson becomes a little unnerved when she talks about her marriage breakup over her determination to make a film. Spheeris reveals her own vulnerability with childhood memories of family violence. "Women aren't supposed to deal with violence," she says. "I got slapped around when I was a girl. Why didn't they slap my brother around if women are not supposed to be involved with violence?"

However, the main thesis throughout the film is the discrimination against women in the film industry. Lizzie Borden, director of the controversial *Born in Flames* and *Working Girls* is particularly astute in considering the various types of censorship that confront women. She contends that women filmmakers very often choose subject matter that is marginal, and so are, in fact, faced with "box office censorship". "Low sales are almost impossible to fight for and this type of economic censorship is ironic. At least with a censorship board, you can make an appeal."

Genre censorship is another form of discrimination according to producer Barbara Boyd (*Desperately Seeking Susan*). "If you do well in one genre, then one is always offered the same kind of film. She can do this, but can she do that?"

Determined to beat the odds, these women have to contend with downright hostility. As Sandy Wilson says, "People are not accustomed to working with women who are ambitious. They are used to working with women as actresses, secretaries – women that people can dismiss or divorce!" Karen Arthur speaks about her first opportunity to direct for which a friend put his job on the line to guarantee the money. "People, with cigars in hand, came around to the studio to see this 'broad' direct".

But as much as one might want to be

sympathetic to the cause, *Calling The Shots* is ultimately disappointing. It is a premise that has great potential but regrettably it does not succeed beyond a competent, rather dull film documentary. Cole and Dale selected some of the most intelligent and creative talents in the industry, and then treated them in a very traditional manner. They use the endless "talking heads" method, with precious little additional texture by way of background, or atmosphere to differentiate one filmmaker from another. Only short film clips are shown as introduction.

Cole and Dale seem so delighted to meet some of these women – many of whom, presumably, are role models – that they counted on their subjects' personality and intelligence to carry the film through. Very little discussion is initiated about their diverse styles and feminist perspectives, although this is hinted at near the end of the film by Martha Coolidge (*Valley Girls*) and Lizzie Borden.

Unfortunately, *Calling The Shots* is for the converted. One suspects that Cole and Dale decided on their thesis and then set out to prove it. Claudia Weill told them that she got out of making documentaries because she got "so sick of following people around, trying to get them to say things, then spending months, trying to get the film to say what she wanted it to say". Cole and Dale could be accused of doing the same in trying to show how difficult it is for women to succeed in the industry. So what else is new?

We all know that the film industry is a tough business that discriminates against any lack of experience, money, and the right connections. But as Jean Arthur points out, "Ultimately, it doesn't matter. If you are an orangutan, and you can direct, then the crew accepts you."

Jane Perdue •

CALLING THE SHOTS p. 14. Holly Dale and Janis Cole *cinematography* John Walker, Sandi Sissel, Judy Irola *sd.* Aeryn Weissman, Alan Barker *ed.* Janis Cole, Holly Dale. Produced by *Women in Cinema Inc.* with the financial participation of Telefilm Canada, the OFDC, The Canada Council, Ontario Arts Council, the Samuel and Saidye Bronfman and Woodlawn Foundations. With assistance from the NFB, Studio 'D' and the Ontario regional office. 16mm/video running time 118 minutes. *dist.* Cineplex-Odeon *foreign sales* Films Transit.



Ida Lupino (left) *Calling the Shots*