

# ROUGH CUT

by Robert Rouveroy C.S.C.

## Leader

Just now I've ripped up two drafts of this article as I made the mistake of rereading them. Both topped out at four to five pages and my friendly editor reminded me to cut the B.S. and simply get down to brass tacks, pointed extra sharp if possible. So here goes:

## A-Track

Sorry to say I didn't make it to the PhotoKina in Germany. Going there is horribly expensive, so I applied for a travel grant from the Canada Council. Target was a series of articles on the state-of-the-art of cinematography for **Cinema Canada** and lectures I was asked to do at several universities, here and abroad, so I had some weighty sponsors sign my application. Back came a request for a film I had made, so I sent them a short item on Trinidad I shot a few years ago. The film had been promptly picked up by the CBC and CBS and subsequently made me a fair bit of money in print sales. Let's call it a modest success as Canadian shorts go.

The film was returned with a short form letter informing me that all travel grants authorized that year had been handed out and that furthermore their interest was for applicants who had more "experience". Quickly I surmised that they, in their collective wisdom, were right. It is quite true that I had not yet visited Patagonia, Outer Mongolia, and British Honduras, so I could've gotten lost on my trip to Europe.

They warmly advised to apply again next year when, presumably, my travel "experience" would be more adequate. A quick check revealed that none of my sponsors was contacted by the Canada Council. However, one of them advised me that my film might have been too commercial and successful, and why did I not make another film, like, on Copulating Clouds or something of that sort. I will take that under advisement, if I have cause to trouble the Canada Council again.

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Toronto's "gimmick man", Robert Rouveroy C.S.C., is president of Robert Rouveroy Films Ltd. and shares ownership in *Cinimage*.

## B-Track

So I thoroughly interrogated a gentleman of my acquaintance who had made the pilgrimage to PhotoKina. Gerd Kurz came back with a large package of handouts. Alas, his interest is mainly in lenses, as he is the undisputed lens expert in Toronto. As my interest in lenses is limited to their performance while gathering my sustenance (they better give me the image I observe through the viewfinder, or else!) I had very slim pickings. However, a very clever gimmick of much value to the Canadian cinematographer (fig. 1) – a heated eyepiece, designed to forever banish fog and mist – was found in his grab bag, as well as a flat-top low-profile magazine (fig. 2) for the Arriflex 35 mm II or Arri 16BL. Both made by OPTICAL & TEXTILES Ltd. of England. No distributors for Canada yet!

The same Optical & Textiles Ltd. also carries every imaginable adaptor to convert your still-camera lenses for use on either an Arri or Eclair, or C-mount. Clever chaps, these. Now about delivery times from England...

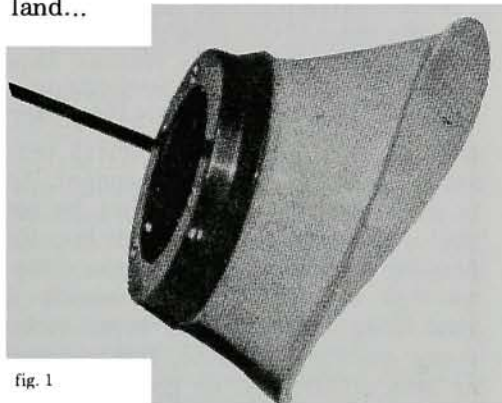


fig. 1

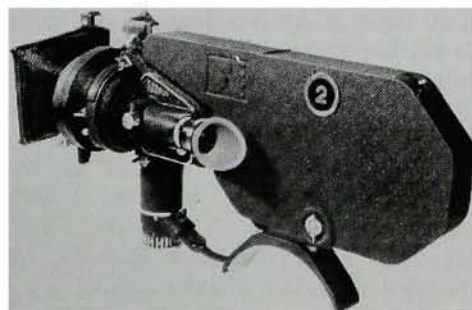


fig. 2

## C-Track

For the cheapskates who find even super 8 mm too expensive for their masterpieces there is relief. KOWASEIMITSU has brought out the first half-frame super 8 mm camera and projector (fig. 3). Using an anamorphic lens in both the camera and projector, it doubles the running time while using normal filmcartridges and



fig. 3

magnetic sound systems. Your friendly neighbourhood dealer will display them next spring.

## Sound track

GERD KURZ is a little miffed, and with good reason. Seems that a year ago ARRIFLEX purchased two zoom lens blimps from him. You see, Gerd was the only one in the world who had designed and marketed such a thing for the Arri 35BL. The Arriflex people, queried at the time that the 35BL came out, maintained that they did not foresee any use for a blimped zoom lens on their camera and *had no plans* to introduce such a thing. Gerd Kurz, in the meantime, made and sold some 24 housings. The Arri people must have had some change of heart, purchased two housings from Kurz and this summer proudly announced their availability. Now this is not a case of what came first, the chicken or the egg, 'cause both eggs

(fig. 4 and 5) look identical. I'll print them here side by side, and you make up your mind. Unfortunately, this item is not patentable, or Gerd would have done so.

Prices for the zoom housing were hard to come by from BRAUN ELECTRIC, the Canadian representative. But finally, the S M P T E magazine disclosed the American Arriflex prices: about \$2500 each – \$2480 to be exact. By projection, Canadian Arriflex prices are quite a bit higher, with duties, taxes and what not. Gerd, and his many customers, may still have the last laugh: he makes a tidy profit selling them for about \$1800.

### Magnetic track

Like most freelance cameramen I have heard the crunch-crunch of the ENG (Electronic News Gathering) footsteps sneaking up on me. This summer, CTV asked me to make a feasibility study on the use of portable video cameras for their W5 program. In a very short time I was able to come up with a very interesting package, based on a Hitachi FP1600 camera and a JVC video recorder.

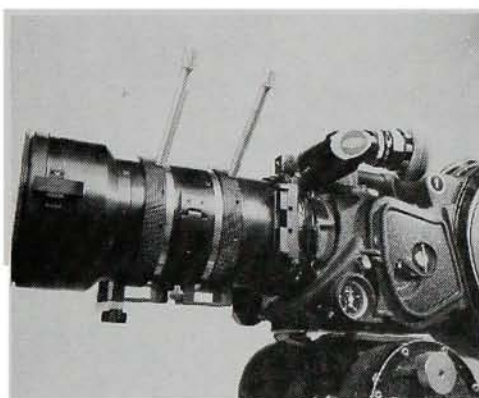


fig. 4



fig. 5

A variation of this package is now in use by the CBC in Toronto and elsewhere. And I was quite surprised. In the most incredible light situations I was able to come up with a very acceptable picture, as good or better than any 16 mm film. It is really impossible to compare video with film, in terms of sensitivity of ASA or really in any terms. It is simply a different medium to get the same result on air. So, you video engineers please forgive me when I try to translate video in film terms. First the ASA. This FP1600 had something I might call variable ASA, ranging from ASA 50 to an incredible ASA 20,000 or thereabouts. I shot night scenes at 11:30 pm under a streetlight and came up with a fairly good picture and a blue sky. Let's put it this way, what you see is less than what you get. Unfortunately, editing videotape is still not as selective or as easy as film, and sound editing is rather primitive, unless one goes to computer editing at a quarter of a million dollars minimum worth of hardware. The package I came up with was around \$60,000 and that did not include a DTBC (Digital Time Base Corrector), a must for broadcast applications. Editing in this configuration resembles editing for single-system film production, barely adequate for news film.

While ENG was and is a big thing in the States, application is limited to news only for diverse reasons. One of them is that by union agreement video can only be handled by NABET people. Now a newsfilm camera person is by nature a bit independent. As no film director can see what he (or she) is shooting, the end result is quite possibly different from what the director had in mind. This is usually a good thing as the director is apt to be young and inexperienced. The moment he gets experienced he goes to bigger and better things until, if he's lucky, he makes features and can tell the DOP exactly what he wants. But by that time, if he has learned anything at all, he will again rely on the cinematographer to come up with just that little edge that'll make him look better. The video cameraman usually has been pulled from behind his big Plumbicon to do ENG and has to work for (you guessed it) the young director with no experience. Results, on the whole, are dismal news items.

Now there is a big fight going on in the States between IATSE cameramen and NABET for jurisdiction. Here

in Canada, NABET has also jurisdiction at the CBC, so that all their ENG is done by NABET personnel. I'm sure that CTV will have the same trouble, unless they'll go to freelancers who can supply the whole package, and who sell story by story. So, for you out there who want to try this field, there might be some place for the film cameraman who goes on contract with one of the networks. But there is a rub. There always is. And that is the finances.

Let's face it: an Arri BL will still grind out pictures after 10 years and probably will go on forever. So will sound equipment. I know of one highly successful soundman who still uses a NAGRA III and wouldn't be caught dead with all that new-fangled stuff. So it goes for Auricons and all the other cameras. Why, even the Arri SR, the best-designed new five-year-old camera, will probably go to the year 2000. The video cameras are a totally different kettle of fish. Nobody knows much of their life expectancy. The problem also is that by the time you buy your video camera it is rather outdated. Prices are rather startling too. The Hitachi FP1600, at 20 lbs and \$22,000, is overtaken by the 11½-pound Minicam at \$54,000 – and that will shortly be replaced by the Microcam at 5½ lbs and umpteen dollars. So how can a freelancer decide what to buy and what to charge for it? The best way to find out is from the rental places. I found a very interesting catalogue from Camera Mart in New York. And we find some very interesting figures. While a daily rental fee for, say, a BL with everything on it is around \$100 – working out at about ½% of the value – ENG equipment is around 3 to 4% a day, going up to 7% for some items. An example: an inexpensive Sony video camera (at \$5,000) and a portable recorder (at \$3,000) will go for \$250 a day! And that is not really broadcast quality. What you need is, for instance, an IKEGAMI HL-35, never mind a recorder. This beauty sells for about \$50,000 – and you may rent it for \$1,000 a day!

So it looks like that on a long-term contract, say a year or so, one has to amortize the whole kit-and-kaboodle in that time or go flat broke. I doubt that many TV stations can afford such a freelancer. Unless you can convince them of the filmstock savings they can effect. For instance, a good year-contract man shooting regularly will burn up around \$120,000 a year,

what with workprints, processing and all that. On  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch cassette tape that would work out to about \$9,000 a year. And you can still use it over again. On the other hand, however, you would be wise to engage the services of a very good videoman to go with you on your trips, as the hardware is devilishly tricky to keep running properly. Ah, for the simplicity of my trusty BL, that I can field-strip and repair on the spot.

Sooner or later, video will take over a great deal of our film work, and until that time I'm taking all the video lighting cameraman jobs that come my way, cause the writing is on the wall.

#### Stereo track

ZALE MAGDER csc, a well-known and respected cinematographer here in Toronto, has found a different way to wed film and video. The problem with film vs video has always been the incompatibility of the standards. As film is exposed at 24 fr/sec and video at 30 fr/sec, the technical trick used in transforming film into video has consistently deteriorated the film quality. Well, Zale — with the technical expertise of JACK SINCLAIR, our own home-grown electronic genius — has changed all that. At his studios in downtown Toronto, film is exposed at 30 fr/sec and the negative is put onto videotape with a specially built flying spot scanner.

The cameraman may, if he so wishes, correct his exposure, color and contrast during this process. Available bandwidth is in excess of 7 MHz, which is about twice as much as the broadcast standard of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  MHz. Those among you who toil in the commercial world will instantly recognize what this means. Some commercials are so loaded with titles, tricks, double exposures, multiple images, travelling mattes, etcetera, etcetera, that under the best of circumstances the optical house will come up with a muddy or grainy product, due to the many generations needed in the process. It is a very time-consuming affair, never mind the money involved, when produced on film. Which in the end is only seen on TV anyway.

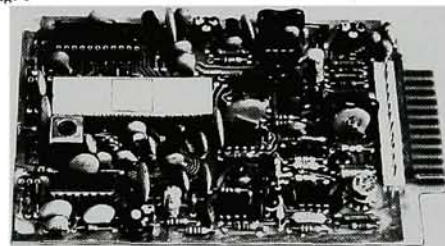
With the Magder system, each step on the way is controllable, can instantly be corrected and even a 10-generation dub (very exceptional) will come out at standard broadcast (video) parameters. It is now quite feasible to combine high-quality 30

fr/sec 16 mm film inserts with, for instance, video dramas, without anybody seeing the difference. This, by the way, has been the norm in Europe, particularly in Britain and Sweden, for quite a while, but there they had both film and video clattering along at 25 fr/sec, the normal European standard. The Magder system is the only one in North America. It is Canadian.

#### Answer print

Received a livid letter from an irate reader of mine in Montreal, working at the CBC technical headquarters as a matter of fact, taking umbrage with my article on the Hologon projector and related sound equipment. I stated that there was a fairly new invention that would allow the soundtrack of a film to be either speeded up or slowed down, *without changing the pitch* or timbre of the sound, so as to fit a film on available broadcast time with a Hologon projector. The gentleman wrote that it was inherently impossible to do so, giving several learned and highly technical

fig. 6



The Varispeech Model 20, a real-time pitch shifter and speech compressor/expander for original equipment manufacturers' use in tape, disc and film sound reproducing equipment, has been announced by Lexicon, Inc., 60 Turner St., Waltham, MA 02154. All electronics including a 4K RAM 8-bit digital-to-analog converter and LSI microprocessor pitch computer chip are mounted on a  $3\frac{1}{2}$  × 5-in PC card. Use of the microprocessor provides high reliability, low power consumption and compact size.

Model 20 produces a multiplicative pitch shift for all frequency components of the input ( $f_o = Nf_i$ ) as opposed to heterodyne pitch translators that produce an output of ( $f_o = f_i + N$ ). All units shift pitch in real time from two times higher than normal to 0.4 times lower than normal. Model 20 corrects pitch of rate-altered speech permitting the listener to listen at his own rate of comprehension between one-half and two and one-half times the original speed.

A 4096-bit random-access memory stores digitized voice samples. The rate at which data enters the memory is proportional to tape speed. Data emerges, however, at a constant 16-kHz frequency insuring the restoration of correct pitch. A patented splicing technique is said to eliminate pop and splice noise. Model 20 modules are priced at about \$100 each when ordered in large quantities.

reasons with diagrams and formulas. The gentleman also stated that I should confine myself to dissertations on film equipment as he grudgingly allowed I was somewhat conversant with that subject, but to leave electronics strictly alone so I would not make a fool of myself. Kindness forbids me printing his letter and his name, but if the gentleman cares to split with an even 100 bucks he may order the impossible device from this SMPTE reprint (fig. 6). □

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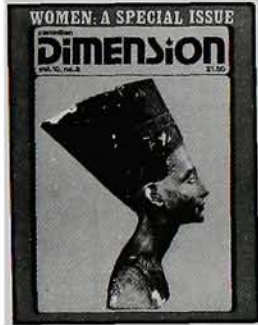
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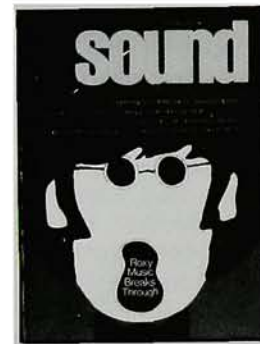
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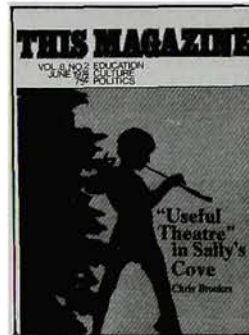
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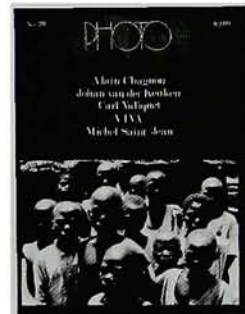
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