

INTRODUCING...



Keeping his cool no matter what, cinematographer Mark Irwin.

Mark Irwin Keeping it Simple

It was the summer of 1978. On the set of **The Newcomers** all hell was breaking loose. Production assistants were scrambling all over the place, the afternoon's sets weren't built, and the generator truck had just knocked over a hydro pole, cutting off all power to the studio.

In the middle of this chaos was a mature, graying D.O.P. (director of photography). Like an island of serenity in a sea of madness, he talked softly with his assistant, helped out the grips and the gaffer, and joked with the director. Mark Irwin was 27 then.

Already he was a fixture in the Canadian film scene. He had shot four features and scores of documentary films. There were very few producers or directors in Toronto who hadn't worked with Irwin and whose films hadn't benefited from his craft.

Now, barely 30, and completely gray, his documentary work is too extensive to keep track of, and he has already shot ten features.

A personal style is emerging in his camera work, which Irwin describes as: "Less is more. I'm not a flashy person myself, and I want to reflect that in my work — straight, clean and simple."

Working with the minimum amount of lighting necessary for a scene, he tries to create a natural, source-lit feeling in his work. Possibly, he developed his sense of discretion from working with the master of restraint, Ed Hunt — for whom Irwin made his first two feature films.

"All the stories about Ed Hunt are true — in one form or another. Ed was very, very austere. He was a master of 'compression'. He knew what not to do because he couldn't afford it.

"When I got out of film school in '73, I worked with Ed as a focus-puller on **Diary of a Sinner**. I had never seen a 35 millimetre camera before.

"Do you know how to load one?" Ed asked.

"Oh yeah, hey! Look, I been to film school, right?" I didn't know up from down, but it didn't bother anyone. Jock Brandis was the D.O.P. The way Ed saw it, Jock had lights. So Ed would operate, Jock would light, and it would be great fun. And it was."

To this day, Irwin is very concerned with production restraints — time and money. Because he likes a source-lit, bounce-lit look, with no hard shadows, he uses few lights. As a result, he's a fast shooter, and his films have a natural look about them.

Sometimes this look descends into a murky darkness. The wrestling sequences in **Blood and Guts** (directed by Paul Lynch) are close, steamy, and smaller than life.

Irwin considers that Cronenberg's **The Brood** is a milestone for him. It has a consistently edgy look to it.

"In shooting **The Brood**, David just kept pushing me: make it darker, make it moodier. Most directors want that."

But many directors hesitate to go as far as they should. That kind of lighting doesn't flatter anyone, and many stars are reluctant to look bad. In the beginning, even Irwin was afraid to make the story look as dark and moody as it was. But finally, the story won out.

"The mood of the story isn't pretty, and in the end, the shooting went the distance." Since the film's release, Ed Hunt has taken to calling Irwin "The Prince of Darkness".

Irwin worries that people will pigeon-hole him as a guy who shoots scary movies — a risk that becomes more pronounced as he continues to work with David Cronenberg. Together, they have shot **Fast Company**, **The Brood**, and **Scanners**, and seem to share a similarity of vision.

By fostering personal relationships with the directors he works with, Irwin is trying to break out of the mold in Canadian film production of the D.O.P. as technician.

"Quite often in Canada, the D.O.P. is hired before the director! And he's just an employee. There's no artistic consultation. Producers are too busy making deals and not making movies. So, it's really left up to the director, the first assistant, and the director of photography.

"When I meet a director I ask him 'What do you want to feel when you watch this after it's been shot?' That way I deal with him on an emotional level.

"Some directors will say 'Okay, a 28 here, a 55 here, and then over-the-shoulder with a 75. You got me?' Well, it's not that easy. It's not push-button filmmaking. I keep asking 'Is this shot necessary? What does it mean?'"

Though he shot three features in 1979, Irwin is now spending most of his time on documentaries and interviews. His only feature in 1980 was **Terror Eyes**, directed by Ken Hugues. It was shot in Boston for Lorimar.

Feature production in Canada has suffered a sharp decline this year. The features that have gone ahead have chosen to go with IATSE crews. Irwin refuses to join IATSE in Canada.

"I am a member of the Committee for an Independent Canada, and I have a visceral thing about not joining an American organization within this country. I don't want to belong to the branch-plant stepchild of an American parent union. That may be the Canadian way of life, but it has destroyed our labour situation. I just couldn't join.

"In Hollywood, it's a different thing. I'd join IATSE there." And Hollywood is Mark Irwin's ultimate destination, as it must be for anyone making movies.

"I don't think I want to live there, but I would like to work there. It has nothing to do with being a turncoat, turning my back on culture. But there is only one Hollywood.

"I study everything. I subscribe to every magazine — a magazine called **International Photographer** which does nothing but list who's shooting what, where, everywhere in the world. I read that and go to see films.

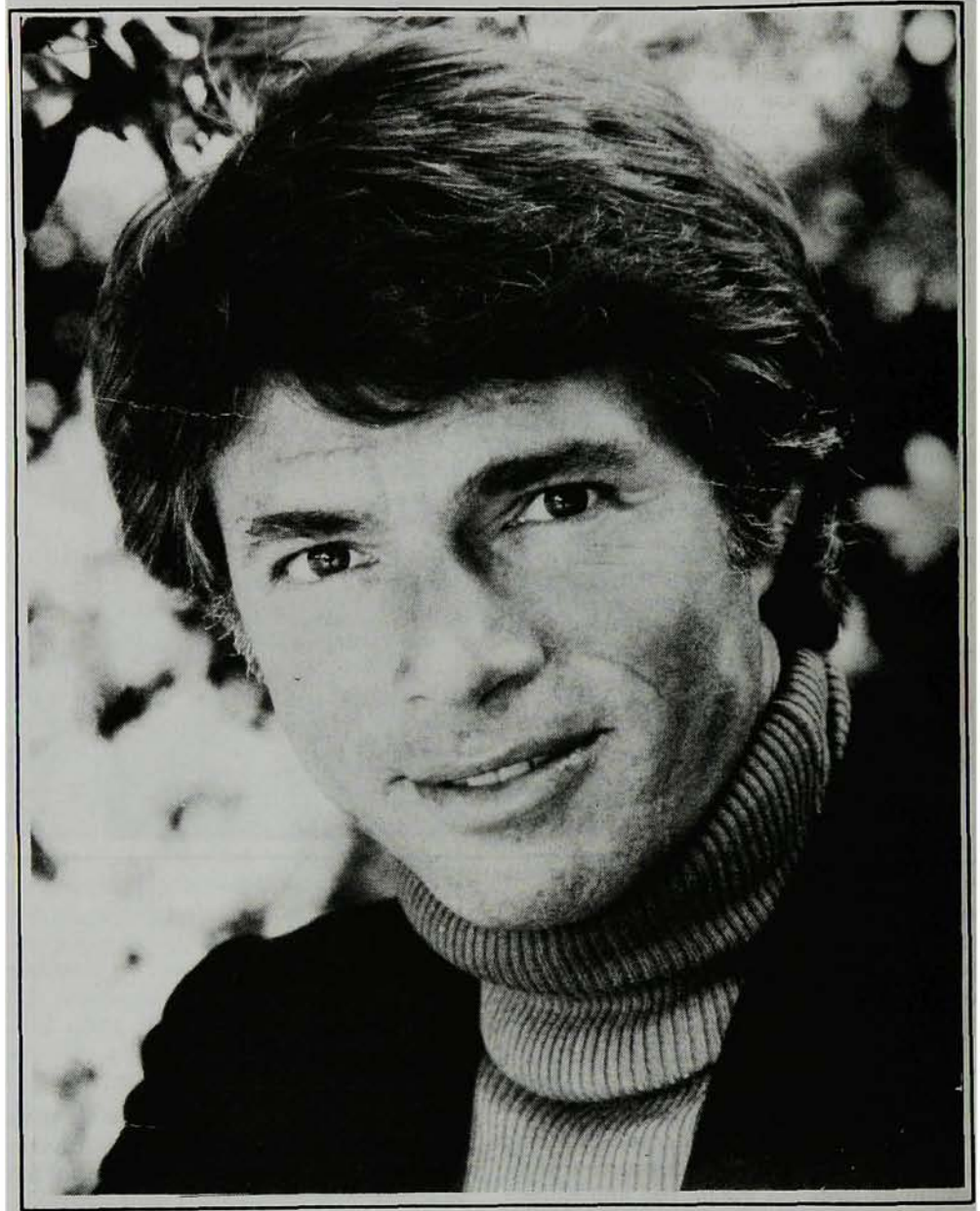
"How many people do you know that have seen **Gold** four times? I did, because Ousama Rawi (**The Black Windmill**) shot it!

"I saw **The Godfather** thirteen times! Just to look at Gordon Willis' work! If you look at Diane Keaton, she looks pretty bad. This is because the mood in that room had lit itself. I feel the same. I don't want pin-spots for ladies everywhere. The source of light has to be in this room. The room is what you're acting in. Leave it at that." Straight, clean and simple.

Charles Lazer

Stephen Young

All Things Considered



No place quite like home for actor Stephen Young.

Stephen Young doesn't actively seek press interviews, but when he's offered one, he doesn't refuse. "It's publicity," he says with a shy smile.

The fact that we don't have a "star" system in the Canadian film industry has long been the lament of many Canadian actors, including Stephen Young. In the twenty years that he's been acting, the CBC has employed him only once, three years ago, when he made a guest appearance on an episode of *Sidestreet*.

Young is visibly mystified by the CBC's attitude towards him. Although it's their prerogative not to hire him he comments,

"They bring back a lot of other Canadian actors to work, but I come back and still nothing." So why does Young keep returning to Canada from California where he now lives? "It's simple; I like Toronto a lot. I was born and raised here. My family still lives in town."

After graduating from Forest Hills Collegiate where he was school president, Young went across Canada as a travelling salesman before taking an interest in the advertising trade. He joined a Toronto based agency as an office boy and it was there that Young was introduced to doing commercials. Next, he went to Robert