

Low (no) budget feature wraps in T.O

MORE FROM LES

by Les Wedman

TORONTO - *Freeloading*, a project conceived by a film technician and a student at the Ontario College of Art, working with a practically non-existent budget and an armful of deferral agreements on a production many skeptics said would never get off the ground, completed principle photography November 22 in Toronto after a three-week shoot.

Conceived by Chris Terry, an OCA film technician, and OCA student Joe Sutherland, *Freeloading* is a satirical look at freelance employees at a national broadcasting network. Terry co-directed with Sutherland, who also wrote the script, did the cinematography, and served as associate producer with Fraser McAninch. Robert Wertheimer, a veteran of ten professional feature film shoots, works as the film's production manager and accountant.

According to Wertheimer, the entire cast and crew, totaling about 65 people, signed

the production's deferred salary agreement. ACTRA gave the film permission to sign non-ACTRA performers and allowed them to present ACTRA members with the deferral agreement; in return, the production will allow ACTRA to approve any distribution agreement the film can negotiate. "No one on the cast or crew is being paid," said Wertheimer, "but we have kept the books based on the standard going union rates as if it was a normal production."

Wertheimer said the production has benefited from many professional favours, including a deal from Panavision to rent \$15,000 worth of camera equipment for \$1500, purchasing over 20,000 feet of surplus film stock from various Toronto-area production houses, the use of MTV's studios over two weekends, and the use of a plane, an airstrip, and some old airplane wreckage from King City Airport owner Brian Baker.

Wertheimer cites the actual cost of shooting the film, excluding deferral arrangements, at under \$10,000, but maintains that all film rental houses were paid cash by the production.

The film has some second unit shooting to complete on December 6, but presently there is enough material for a 90-minute feature, according to associate producer Fraser McAninch. Wertheimer said the shooting ratio was about 4:1, but added, "We didn't always have the confidence to cover the way we wanted to, because we were afraid we would run out of film."

The production is currently looking for a backer, either a producer with some cash or a lab willing to buy a piece of the film in exchange for film processing and sound transfer. According to McAninch, the production has only been able to print 2,000 feet of film stock so far. But Wertheimer was confident a deal could be arranged soon.

VANCOUVER - Where there's Hope, you'll find Sylvester Stallone and Kirk Douglas.

Hope, B.C., is where, on Nov. 16, they started shooting *First Blood*, an action-filled drama in which Sylvester (*Rocky*) Stallone plays a Vietnam War veteran who reacts violently when he is hassled in a small town.

The picture, reported to be costing upwards of \$10 million, is being produced by Buzz Feitshans - a John Milius partner - and directed by Canadian filmmaker Ted Kotcheff.

Kotcheff gave Canada its best-known feature film, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, which, with *Outback*, a film made in Australia, rates as his finest work. Now based in Los Angeles, Kotcheff has had more lucrative works such as *Dallas North Forty*, *Who's Killing the Great Chefs of Europe*. His latest film has yet to be released.

On the job and geared toward the shooting of *First Blood* that will last 10 weeks in Hope, is Vancouver filmmaker Paul Tucker. He is production manager of the feature and it's the first time a Canadian here has been named production manager of an American film without playing second fiddle to an American production man.

The Columbian Connection, a drug drama with Britt Ekland starring, wrapped in early November.

Among the producers of the film are BCTV newsman Tony Parsons and Channel 8 newshen Pamela Martin. They must have gambling blood in them - taking that hard-earned television money and risking it on a Canadian feature.

Gene Hackman stars in a film called *Eureka!* to be made in British Columbia right after the Christmas and New Year's holidays. It's to be done in Barkerville, in the Mount Robson area of the Rockies and in Jamaica and estimated budget is \$10 million U.S.

It will be an unusual film. To forecast that, you only have to know that *Eureka!* will be directed by British filmmaker Nicolas Roeg, whose films have been called hypnotic, hallu-

cinatory, visionary.

His most recent presentation was *Bad Timing: A Sensual Obsession*, that starred Art Garfunkel and Theresa Russell, in a steamy love story that continued Roeg's experiments with advanced visual techniques.

"I create images and tell stories on film," Roeg has said, adding that he doesn't like the film business. "I like filming. I'm a filmmaker."

Roeg started as a cameraman, doing *Fahrenheit 451* for François Truffaut, Richard Lester's *Petulia* (that he transformed into an offbeat masterpiece of kaleidoscopic narrative), and John Schlesinger's *Far From the Madding Crowd*.

Then came *Performance*, which Roeg directed with Donald Cammell. Despite the lure of box-office star Mick Jagger and a plot that mixed music, drugs and sex, the film gathered dust on a shelf at Warner Bros. Nobody, it seems, could fathom the movie's labyrinth structure and heady invocations of Jorge Luis Borges. There was even talk of Roeg being sued for unprofessionalism because his contract said he would make a picture that was "up to professional standard" and, to Warner Bros., *Performance* apparently did not meet that requirement.

Finally *Performance* was dusted off and Nicolas Roeg became one of the top new directors. After that came *Walkabout*, *Don't Look Now*, *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, each of which quickly substantiated the promise he showed in *Performance*.

Filmgoers hostile to his work link his name with an exasperating habit of turning plain and honest stories into cinematic labyrinths. For those who admire him, Roeg's work may be the shape of cinema to come.

And that is why you have to look beyond the simple statement that Gene Hackman will star in a movie called *Eureka!* It's about a miner who strikes the motherlode in the Rockies and retires, rich and satisfied, to Jamaica.

Nicolas Roeg, you can be sure, will take it from there.

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