

**W**ell, I might look like Robert Ford But I feel just like a Jesse James  
Outlaw Blues/Bobby Dylan

You may be asking yourselves, "What's a dumb white boy from Rexdale doing editing a national film magazine?" I be sayin', "Trying to kick out the jams." Welcome to the Outlaw Edition of *Cinema Canada*. Connie Tadros, the rock, the heart and soul of this publication is on a much deserved vacation, while we here in T.O. try and pull it all together in time to hit the presses. I'd like to salute Connie for giving us this chance, and for having the faith in us to try something a little different.

The idea for this issue came out of a meeting with Connie, just after she had finished the 150th edition of *Cinema Canada*. She rang me up when she was in Toronto, having remembered me from doing a story for them on Norman Jewison, and asked if I could collect some of my filmmaker-type friends so we could all jam on some ideas about what the mag should be doing. She was at the crossroads and we met her there for beers.

Connie listened patiently as we gave her our honest opinions on the magazine as it was, and the things we'd like to see it doing. A lot of wild ideas were passed back and forth but it was Peter Mettler who came up with the idea of doing a whole issue ourselves. I tried to shut him up, knowing how much sweat that would take but Connie perked up on that idea. Sure enough, a few days later, she phoned me up again, this time asking us to put our money where our mouths were, so to speak, and assigned me editor of this special edition. When I asked her, "Why me?" She replied, "You were the only one grinning through the whole meeting." Guess that means I'm a sucker, but I was sold on the fact that Connie gave me complete editorial control to do whatever I wanted. The inmates were going to take over the asylum.

The focus of this issue is on the concerns and viewpoints relating to the Toronto independent film community as opposed to the film industry; the Outlaws as opposed to the Establishment Cats. We're sending this out as a communique from one community to another with the hope of offering an alternative view of filmmaking in this city. I understand that outside of Toronto the city has a rep for being a money-grubbing hub of greed, populated by tight-assed yuppie swine who can't dance very well. I assure all of you out there in the rest of Canada that this perception is a most accurate one. But there are a few pockets of resistance, here in the centre of the Known Universe, that are beginning to sprout up. One of these pockets being a late-night Booze Can at the corner of King and Dufferin and the other being the Independent Film Community, a loose collection of outlaws, actors, writers, producers, technicians, editors, artists, cinematographers, and directors, who have stamped out the territory between the hardcore Lunatic Fringe and the lonely American colony dubbed Hollywood North.

A lot of us work in The Industry to pay rent on our shoebox apartments, to support our families and some of our nasty habits, but we also work hard on each others' films and are beginning to produce some of the best work this country has ever seen. It is a community with a spirit not unlike the thriving groups of Outlaws in

# LISTEN, YOU SCREWHEADS..





Winnipeg, Kapuskasing (The Sargent Family), Montreal, Halifax, Vancouver and Newfoundland - not to mention the many pockets of resistance in The States. It is a community, still young and fragile, that is just beginning to find its own voice, the most notable young lions being Mettler, Rozema, Egoyan, Hoffman and Mann. These names, however, are just the tip of the iceberg.

Over recent years a great number of young *outlaw* directors and producers have earned the praise and respect of international critics: our

short films have won awards at film festivals around the world and we are breaking new ground with the daring manipulation of our materials and our adventures in storytelling. We are paving the ground for the creation of the new Canadian Feature Film. This new cinema needs new freedoms. Freedom from the customary conventions of the trade. Freedom from the influence of commercial partners. Freedom from the tutelage of vested interests. We have a strong grasp of the cinema on a formal, intellectual, and economic level and we are prepared to take the gamble because we believe in a new cinema.

Back in T. O., keeping Jive alive, the critics are either completely ignorant of the surfacing of this new-generation of filmmakers or they are too cowardly to write about and explore these films until they are first noticed and lauded in Berlin, or Cannes or New York. When *Family Viewing* was given its world premiere at the '87 Festival of Festivals there was not a single review in any Toronto paper. John Harkness of *Now Magazine* remains under the spell of Swarzeneggers muscles, Jay Scott of the *Globe and Mail* just doesn't seem to have the time and Peter Goddard of the *Toronto Star* is just too old to rock. It wasn't until Wim Wenders spoke of his admiration for Egoyan's film many months later, in another festival, in another city, that the press here took any significant interest in the film, and even then it was Wim that they were really interested in with Egoyan as their ticket. Just another bunch of star fuckers.

That leaves the ball in our court. Most of the pieces in this issue are written by the filmmakers themselves on issues they are concerned with. My hope is that this will inspire a dialogue with other filmmakers, the critics and the public across the country. I hope you hate it. I hope you love it. It's indifference on the part of the Industry, the Community, the Critics, Joe Public, and Miss Emma Cromwell, that little old lady in Saskatoon, that will kill us all.

The Toronto Independent Filmmaker is a hard bird to define because the work covers the spectrum from the speedmetal experimental films of Bruce Elder, the B-Movie lunacy of Tino Magnatta, the tender seriousness of Lori Spring's drama, to the earliest traditions of the documentary form with James and Bay Weyman. If there is any trend or school emerging from Toronto the Good, it must have something to do with the desire to break on through to the other side. It is definitely not a political cinema or a cinema of urban realism. Many of the films are attempting to open portals into surrealism and stepping through stitches in time as seen in Peter Mettler's upcoming feature, *The Top of His Head*, or in Polly's fantasies in *Mermaids*, or in the dark memories of forgotten ancestors that Phil Hoffman seduces us with in *Passing Through/Torn Formations*, or in Colin Brunton's wildly eccentric trip to the moon in *The Mysterious Moon Men of Canada*, or in the apocalyptic world Ross Turnbull takes us to in *Scavengers*, or the sometimes dark and dangerous collection of comics in Ron Mann's *Comic Book Confidential*, or in the magical ecstasy of Moze Mossanen's *Dancemakers*, or in Amy Bodman's haunting *Treetale*. Toronto filmmakers are creating the Cinema of Escape. Not

*escapist* cinema by any means, for the work has the highest respect for its audience, but a way out of our home turf as we know it, flying deeper into the century, venturing into a world where time loses its meaning, searching for someplace west of lunch, someplace close to the edge, someplace where East meets West and north and south do not exist. Living, grooving, and working in a city as stolid as Toronto, this is not a difficult concept to grasp.

Now as far as the term *outlaw* goes, one might argue that these people can't be coined as true outlaws because they're all camped out on the doorsteps of every government funding agency in the book. Yet I would argue that the term does apply 'cause we're just casing the joints, every damn one of us is on the run from at least three people we owe money to, we operate outside the established parameters of tried and tired formulas of film production and storytelling and, most important, we realize and revel in the fact that there are *no rules*. We've discovered that nobody else really knows what's going on, and we aren't going to put all our precious time into pretending like we do. We're going to drive all the way till the wheels fall off and burn.

The term *Independent* is quite useless, especially in this country where there is no studio system to be independent from. Everyone from Cronenberg, right on down to Ed Ackerman, qualifies. Film is, after all, a collaborative effort and outlaws have been known to travel in gangs. Independents stand alone. Other terms like *underground*, *avant-garde*, *low budget* or *new wave* leave a bad taste in everyone's mouth. Being an outlaw is more fun. It's cool. It's dangerous.

Before I sign off, I'd like to say that the one big temptation with the *Outlaw Edition* was to finger "the enemy". Being an outlaw involves trying to avoid the clampdown, so I started asking around for clues to find out who was turning the screws. Some of the fingers pointed at Hollywood, some at Telefilm, some at the cinematic illiteracy of Joe Public or the "Big Bad Producer" and some at America and some at "Free" Trade, some at those nuclear-powered submarines, some at Patriarchal pooh-heads and others at Feminists, some at the unions and some at the Tories, some at the Gays and some at the Jews, and some fingers were pointing at you. My feeling is that the enemy of the would-be outlaw filmmaker lies first in themselves, and in the timidity of the community and industry in thinking there are rules they must follow. There ain't.

Again, I would like to commend Connie Tadros for her spirit of adventure in letting us do something that has never been done before, Tom Perlmutter and Cameron Bailey for their encouragement and journalistic wisdom, Alexandra Gill for all her work as associate editor, Kevan Buss for his visual design, and of course, Hunter S. Thompson for his advice.

The best we can hope for is to inspire others with this issue, with our films and with our stories. So, steal what you can get away with, don't get caught up in the Tyranny-Of-Shoulds, remember that the land makes the music, always carry a light bulb and "don't follow leaders, watch the pawkin' meters".

\*Bruce McDonald, Outlaw ready, fire, aim.

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# POURQUOI

by Patricia Rozema

**S**o I'm sitting with two good friends, Alex and Sheila, under a parasol on the edge of a very fashionable body of water. The debate is as intense as the sky is blue. The focus of the discussion is a bottle of Dom Perignon that has just arrived courtesy of a distributor who wants the film we had just made. We aren't thirsty, but it's expensive, they can see we're not drinking it, but we've got 350 interviews that afternoon and we don't want to fall asleep but it's Dom Perignon, but I hate champagne, but it's such a impressive gesture, etc. etc. All the big issues - professional protocol, social responsibility, Western wastefulness - are ricocheting around the table.

Suddenly, overhead, we hear a low rumbling noise, how can I describe it? It's like thunderous applause, no, maybe it's more like the sound of distributors' feet stampeding to bid on the rights for *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing*. No, that's not it, there's something up there, it's a bird, it's a plane, yes, it's a plane, a small one, pulling behind it a huge, mind-bending question. A question so great that even the Dom Perignon issue was overshadowed: "Pourquoi filmez-vous?" On the same banner, behind the question was the word "Liberation." I speculate that this message was brought to us by some sort of Third World delegation who still believe (aren't they cute) that film can bring about social/political liberation. I am later informed that "Libération" is the name of a French daily newspaper that had asked this question of hundreds of directors from around the world, many of whom had assembled there for the 1987 Cannes Film Festival. Their answers had been published in a special magazine edition of their paper. But I, for obvious reasons, wasn't asked. So I realize that big question in the sky is still, for me, unanswered.

*Pourquoi filmez-vous?* For the next year, I'm tormented. I'm sitting in a lovely hotel room somewhere in between "Where did you get the idea?" and "Is this story autobiographical?" and a little voice with a lot of reverb on it would sneak up on me... 'Pourquoi filmez-vous?' And you know the rest - groaning and thrashing about during my transatlantic naps, waking up drenched in sweat unable to read the distributor's reports; eventually, I couldn't even

concentrate on the fan mail. My friends would say, "Oh Patricia, of course you've got a lot of incredibly deep things on your mind, you're a major motion picture famous superstar renowned celebrity now." (I've nice friends.) But I knew the problem was reaching melodramatic proportions when I, full of sound and fury, would sit down to write the next great gift to cinema - designer pen and paper on the right, computer on the left, glass of wine in the middle - and as soon as I would start to think of What to write, there it was again. "Pourquoi?" So I'd take a different tack, and I'd think of How I should write, or Who my characters should be, but alas, the same haunting question. Why? Why? Why?

At first I thought it was vindication. All those times I sat at dinner parties surrounded by droll contemporary wits who watched with fascination and disgust as my comments would dribble down my chin and onto my plate and sit there, congealing (my comments not the wits), until someone else would mercifully rescue me from the limelight - at those times I'd say to myself, "Just watch me, maybe I can't talk so good as youse guys but give me enough time and I'll write something so... nice, and then I'll make it into a movie so incredibly... nice that you just can't stand it." The desire to do something great or even just unusual consumes me at the times of my greatest humiliations. Like when my superiors at *The Journal* told me that the good news was that they only had to cut one person from their ranks that year and the bad news was that it was me. Or when I notice with disturbing frequency that there's something different about my body and those lovely ones in the magazines. Let's see then, that means that filmmaking is indirect self-improvement or possibly secondary seduction. I suppose it's no accident that somebody in my film said "To make something beautiful is to be beautiful forever." But still, there's more to it, that's not quite why.

Perhaps the answer is that I can't really do anything else. I don't have a musical imagination. If I decided to become an architect, the chances of them letting me try something as breathtaking as the Royal Bank Plaza are even slimmer than the chances of them letting me make a movie. I don't dare to write a novel. I

can't cook and if I had a baby I'd probably forget it in a supermarket somewhere. In journalism I always felt too restricted by the facts to actually tell a good story (when I did tell a good story it had only a nodding acquaintance with fact). And I'm afraid of spending my life just maintaining my life, not making anything, not even a mess. I'd lose my little mind if I couldn't turn around, point and say, hey, look what I did, what do you think?

I need to make a difference. I need to have some effect. I'm like a little kid who's discovered that her hand is actually connected to her mind and when she pushes her spoon it falls off the highchair, it makes this tremendous noise, creates an emotional reaction and somebody actually picks it up, so I do it again. I'm almost 30 now so I play with the toys of the cinema, and instead of moving spoons I try to move people. There's a very distinct rush I feel when I see the pictures move before my eyes the way they did behind my eyelids, when I see a whole group of people frozen in reverential silence as we film an instant of compassion (Uri Barbasch), when that bass note strikes at just the right moment, when people laugh, when people speak or write and I know they've felt what I've felt - these little proofs that I've had an effect overwhelm me. The sensation defies words. Maybe that's why so many films are about sex and death and love and war, these things have their own power. You don't even have to do too much to make them hit the audience between the eyes.

Another related reason for making movies is the slaying of monsters. (David Cronenberg knows about this one.) If you've filmed a monster it's not quite so difficult to face anymore. When you've seen it in *Make-Up* and eating bagels at the Craft Service table somehow it doesn't carry the same threat. Words and scenes on little pieces of celluloid can magically subdue the terror of, say, public artistic ridicule (*Mermaids*) or the inability to love and work at the same time (*Passion*).

With films I can sleep

with the fact of cockroaches, blindness, and menstrual blood when it's not expected; films can soothe the horror of the terrible cleanliness in the barracks in Dachau, of skin diseases, of the way a rape is never really over, of the way a love story always ends tragically - either the love dies or the people who love die, of the way some people only ever have one good idea, of the fear of peaking early, of nuclear war. All these nasty creatures that crawl around in the scummiest parts of my psyche are more manageable when I have the ability to shoot them. But, there's more.

Finally one day a little bird named Jane Siberry solved the pourquoi problem. She was just going along singing her strange and wonderful things when suddenly she said, "... something catches me and I have to catch it back..." That's



# WHY WOULDS?



way Jorge Luis Borges was blind for almost 40 years, the nape of a young woman's neck, the black waves my mom described seeing in a Venezuelan oil spill, the way Alex's cat's little arms were shaved so they could put him on intravenous, the way the Da Vinci's Madonna on the Rocks looks down with all the tenderness of eternity, the way our violent, sophisticated little planet seems to be completely alone in the universe, the way people look totally different if they think they're alone, the way poetry only happens when you're honest, the way the muscles move in Ben Johnson's thighs, the phrase "the unbearable lightness of being", the horrifying majesty of the Challenger explosion, the simplicity of good ideas, the seriousness in the eyes of a newborn, the luxury of being apolitical in a good ole clumsy democracy, the way a tennis ball sounds when you hit it right, the way Mick Jagger groans and growls in between the words, the elegance of pure logic, the way Sheila McCarthy blinks, Alex Raffe's vocabulary, the way turkeys drown from drinking the rain, the impressions bodies leave in an unmade bed, the way clothes can look so damn hot one season and ludicrous a decade later, the birthmark on Gorbachev's forehead, a good argument, hands, eyes, office supplies, "canaries in the morning, orchestras in the afternoon and balloons at night" (F.S.

it, that's why! That means more than secondary seduction, affecting people or the taming of monsters. It's the love of things. Life tends to be too much for me, if I can catch it, if I can catch that little crackle in the voice of someone who doesn't want that crackle to escape, then I'm freer. It's a way to stop from bursting. I have to catch the way people laugh when they are sad and then the way they feel guilty about it, the

Fitzgerald), how mistakes can be brilliant, sad wisdom and silly intelligence, the way you can wake up crying and not know why, the way you can go right inside some pictures, stuttering, the way a bunch of moving pictures in a row have changed my life. If I can put just a little, just a little of these things in a box on a screen and inside someone else, my god, then... I don't know what, but it's a good thing. It's a good thing. That's why.

*Patricia Rozema wrote, directed, edited and coproduced the feature film, "I've Heard the Mermaids Singing" in 1987 which was selected for the Director's Fortnight at Cannes 1987, won the Prix de la Jeunesse that year, was subsequently selected for 27 festivals and theatrically released in 34 countries. It was her first feature film.*

(excerpted from answers originally published in Libération, May 1987)

**WOODY ALLEN**

The constant and incredibly complicated problems posed by directing films keeps my mind occupied, consequently I don't have too much time to think about the terrible realities of life.

**FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA**

I make films to pay debts accumulated on films that I made to be able to make other films.

**JIM JARMUSCCH**

I really don't know why I make films.

**PAUL SCHRADER**

Because it's the medium of my generation.

**JOHN WATERS**

I make films because it stops me from committing crimes.

**ROBERT BRESSON**

To live.

**CLAIRE DEVERS**

Because I'm afraid of the dark.

**MICHAEL SNOW**

I make films I want to see.

**DENYS ARCAND**

... It's an agreeable way to resist death and to soften my solitude.

**JEAN BEAUDRY**

... Because solitude is as hard as a rock and as necessary as the wind, because too often love is bitter, because I want to love life.

**ERIC ROHMER**

Because I don't paint and I don't write.

**AGNÈS VARDA**

I film for what is in the frame and to suggest what is outside the frame.

**ROMAN POLANSKI**

I wonder.

**JEAN-LUC GODARD**

I film to avoid the question "why?"

**ERNEST LUBITSCH**

(1937, rephrased by Stonely Donen in 1972) For me directing films is like having sex. When it's good, it's very good. But when it's bad it's still good.