



Abbie Then and Now: tales of Hoffman



reshowing of that incarnation of themselves to the film's subjects. Their reaction to themselves *perdu* is often quite hilarious. Former White Panther John Sinclair admits that the doped-crazed boy he was would frighten the family-crazed father he has become. "If somebody walked up to me today and started talking like this, I'd probably be frightened, you know. Get this guy outta here." He laughs. Har. Har. Har.

Allen Ginsberg tries to forgive himself for saying the "wrong mantra all along". Jerry Rubin talks about waking up one morning in 1974 and finding that the whole scene he has been involved in had disappeared. Everyone had disconnected their phones and moved away.

The saddest confrontations of then and now are revealed in the lives of the two blacks in the film. Don Cox, a Black Panther who fled the country and now lives in Paris, speaks a kind of French-English, English-French no-man's language. He has had none of the 'life's second chances' which seemed to have abounded for the whites and, not surprisingly, views his life as a kind of shadow of reality. "Nobody cares as long as I don't break the law. I'm satisfied here. I really don't want any attention," he says. We have no idea how he survives except as a kind of Kafkaesque Hunger Artist made up to look like God's lost Watusi.

Fred Hampton's wife and son have plunged from the poetry of the Movement into the reality of the '80s. The political dreams of the Panthers have been replaced by street rapping. What is most interesting is that those of the '60s who changed least, Abbie Hoffman and movement lawyer William Kunstler, come across in some sense like the film's true conservatives. They found a space for themselves and a truth and it has protected them from worrying about the siren lure of other realities.

"I have been doing this for 27 years. I could do it for another 27 years. I don't have to change," brags Hoffman, endearing nonetheless as a kind of aging Peter Pan counter-culture politician.

What is also fascinating is the realization that the political actors of the '60s are absolutely great television. Unlike the rest of us they don't fumble much for words or speak like drones when the camera is turned on. There is a kind of dramatic sweep to their personae which radiates back at the camera. They are comfortable with being either famous or infamous or simply notable. Maybe the '60s were only about images and 15-minute sound bites.

What is irritating about the film is its cultishness. There is an assumption that the audience is supposed to know, and, what is more, feel some kind of historical understanding for the men who are being chronicled. It's more than a "yeah, we were there, man," '60s mantra of nostalgia. One feels that there are certain questions which couldn't be asked. How does Hoffman support himself? Does Tim Leary still take drugs? How is Fred Hampton's son surviving in the ghetto?

They are not asked because there is a kind of film vision of what constitutes intelligence at work in the movie. What is happening is what you see - what has been edited in and makes the most gripping images. What is not there is the uncinematic rest of the lives; the parts where they are not famous; where they have poorly edited their own existences; the parts where they have broken some father's heart in several ways and with several meanings and have to live with it. This turns what is, in many ways, a gripping and interesting film ultimately into something a little too cinema *cutsie-verité*.

Stephen Strauss •

**GROWING UP IN AMERICA** exec. p. Don Haig co-p. Joan Schafer p. Morley Markson d. Morley Markson based on a theme suggested by Don Haig and George Miller consulting assoc. p. John Board cinematography Andreas Poulsson, Leonidas Zourdoumis, David O'Keefe, Yves Billon, Joseph Friedman, Morley Markson asst. camera Leonard Farlinger location equip. P. S. Production Services, Doug Dales sound Aeryn Weissman, Reynald Trudel, Mike Lecroix, John McCormick, Agnes Guerin p. man. Joan Schafer loc. man. Leonard Farlinger prod. asst. Joanna Markson original music score Marty Simon pic. ed. Morley Markson asst. ed. Louise Lebeau cons. eds. Tom Berner, Don Haig sound ed. Karl H. Konrny asst. sound ed. Louise Lebeau Foley Reid James Atherton re-recording sound mixers Mike Hoogenboom, Tony Van Den Akker post-prod. Film House Group, Film Arts neg. cutter May Bischof neg. inner Ricardo Olivero title design Eli Barr Associates titles Meta Media research Claire Weissman, Zoe Thurling, Shari Segal, Paula Draper, Cyril Levitt stills Leonard Farlinger theme consultants Prof. Ron Levaico, Joan Schafer new york liaisons Alan Meislin california liaisons Ken Beckman trans. n. y. The Vanmen northampton mass. video Don Abrams travel Perly Travel, Tic-Toc Tours insurance Arthur Winkler prod. accountant Rowie Walker; with the assistance of City TV, Louise Lebeau, Michael Macina, Ellen O'Leary, Houghton-Mifflin Publishing Co., The Palladium; produced by Morley Markson and Associates with the participation of Telefilm Canada, Ontario Film Development Corporation, Film Arts, P. S. Production Services.

## Nettie Wild's A Rustling of Leaves: Inside the Philippine Revolution

**A** *Rustling of Leaves*, Nettie Wild's feature-length documentary about political conflicts in the Philippines, is a riveting film experience. It's beautifully photographed, dramatically constructed and overflows with the sort of spontaneous footage that sticks in the mind weeks after viewing. Unfortunately, it falls a little short of providing the complete picture we need to understand the complexities of Third World power struggles.

Cinematographer Kirk Tougas headed up a crew which collected an astounding 64,000 feet of film, much of it during two months of living 'underground' with left-wing guerrillas (the New People's Army). From the opening shots of grossly underpaid workers harvesting bamboo it's clear the filmmakers were on the front line of the conflict. Even the talking heads are alive, especially in a disturbing interview with right-wing radio announcer Jun Pala who, when he's not talking with Wild, is broadcasting the names of suspected leftists. This is public service radio with a gruesome twist: those named are

about to be decapitated by the 'tad tads' or death squads.

The camera also crouches behind a bush as guerrillas wait to stage an ambush. The attack fails and, to his everlasting credit, Tougas keeps the camera rolling as he, the crew and the guerrillas flee for their lives.

Wild follows the debate as the guerrillas decide whether to execute a member-turned-traitor and cuts away only as the trigger is pulled. The respite is short; moments later she films the executioner consoling the father of the dead man.

Her support and affection for those of the left is unmistakable, perhaps no surprise after weeks of shared hardship and political action. But she's sold them a little short.

The opening moments of *A Rustling of Leaves* promise that "the six o'clock news will never be the same again", implying that what we're about to see is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. It is not, however, quite whole. For example, Wild makes early mention of the six families who for all intents and purposes control the Philippines and are therefore the ultimate enemies of the leftists, legal and illegal. Yet that's the last we hear of the power-brokers. She doesn't tell us who they are, how they won the power or how they manage to hang onto it. Nor does she talk to them. Instead we see their presumed mouthpiece, Jun Pala, at work. He's a frightening individual but, ultimately, one-dimensional without some explanation of who he represents and how the hell a radio station can be used to make before-the-fact death announcements. Granted, the evening news rarely tells the full story of what's going on in lands far away, but even the most cursory television journalism involves giving the bad guys a chance to strut their stuff.

And, apart from a few distant shots of Cory Aquino being presidential, we don't see evidence of any changes the 'People's Revolution' might have achieved. Is her government nothing more than the military puppet show Wild implies? If so, such a startling revelation needs to be backed up by more than the animated graphics she uses to portray the evils of capitalism, imperialism and other philosophies this film so clearly opposes.

It's not that Wild and her crew don't have the skills. Their comprehensive coverage of leftist Bernabe Buscayno's unsuccessful attempt to win the election is superb. Sequences shot at his rallies leave the viewer damp with perspiration from both the tropical heat and the ever-present threat of violence (Buscayno survived an assassination attempt).

*A Rustling of Leaves* is worth seeing. Even with the flaws it's a gripping two hours made all the more worthwhile by the four years it took Wild and her crew to complete the project. She's a filmmaker with imagination, tenacity and social conscience who deserves encouragement. If future projects make a greater effort to penetrate





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 *aidm. 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*