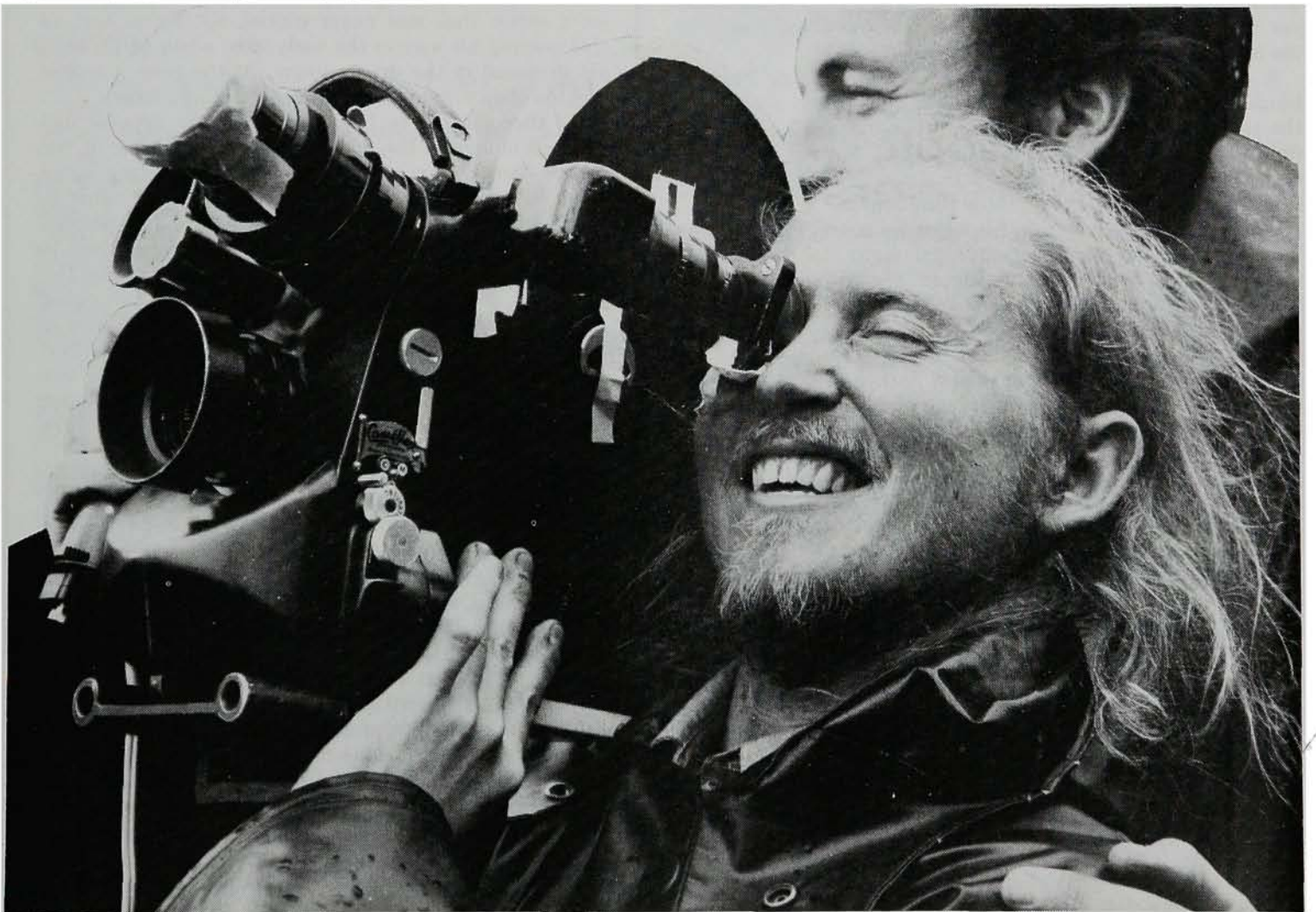


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Making three features in four years is no mean feat for a filmmaker working in Canada. Yet Ed Hunt is still working with low budgets and making films on deferral. His last film, *Point of No Return*, was released last month in Ontario. Ken Dancyger tells us about it.

# the point of returns

by Ken Dancyger



Ed Hunt, director of *Point of No Return*

Ed Hunt is a non-establishment Canadian filmmaker. Which is a nice way of saying he makes films but no money. Which is strange because Ed Hunt makes establishment films, films whose sole purpose is to make money. He's never set the box office on fire, nor has he made a stinker. He makes films fast and cheaply and they look good. But he has just finished his third feature in four years and is still working on deferral.

How does such a set of anomalies separate the filmmaker from the fruits of his labour? First you set the situation in Canada, a country that can't make up its mind if it wants a film industry, and if it does, whether it should be trashy or artistic, no middle ground. And then you introduce a new concept – if you want to make films badly enough, then do it for nothing. And you find people to operate under these rules and there are lots of them – people who want film credits, people who want glamour, excitement, people who want to make films so badly, the act itself justifies no means. These last are the film junkies – they need to make films, under any conditions. Ed Hunt is a film junkie. He would do well to declare himself a charitable organization.

It takes more than stubborn determination to make three feature films in Canada. Ed Hunt's film experience belies his 30 years. Ed is an American expatriate. He served his film apprenticeship in Hollywood after graduating from UCLA's film school. He was a cameraman on a series of educational films, edited half-a-dozen sex features and directed two others. There were lots of sex films being made in Hollywood in the late 60s. They were the "Roger Corman school" for a later group of filmmakers than Coppola, Bogdanovich and Hellman.

Ed brought his sex film experience to Canada. Shoot them quick, and make them look as good as you can. A sex scene per reel, fast women, fast cars and a moral à la Grimm at the end. Keep your audience on its toes.

It didn't take long before Bennet Fode and his Phoenix films decided to follow Quebec's lead and try to cash in on the sex film craze. Ed Hunt made **Pleasure Palace**, a very funny and reasonably successful sex film. The film had wide Canadian and foreign distribution, as well as multiple screenings on Channel 79's "Baby Blue Movie."

Enter Richard Nixon and his supreme court. Pornography became a matter for the individual states to define. The market for softcore and hardcore sex films contracted faster than Linda Lovelace's neck muscles.

Undaunted, Ed Hunt teamed up with Ian Ewing to produce another sex film. This time the entire film was privately financed. **Diary of a Sinner** was a harder film to sell. The market had changed; the advantage shifted to the distributors, whose new-found conservatism about sex films meant more of the financial risk had to be borne by the producers and less by themselves. Needless to say **Diary of a Sinner**, doing business all over the country, has not yet repaid its investors.

Now two years after **Diary of a Sinner** we have **Point of No Return**. The film grabs and gropes for the respectability that has never been associated with quickie sexploitation films. It has the car chases, the murders, but none of the sex that marked Ed's earlier work. And no more 16-hour shooting days. The film was shot with ACTRA people (Sue Petrie, Cec Linder, Eli Rill) in a relaxing twenty days. Although **Point of No Return** isn't quite family hour fare, Ed hopes the film will find a television audience.



*Kenneth Dancyger is a lecturer in film at York University and has taught film in the U.S. and Canada since 1968. His film **The Class of '75** won Best First Film at the International Experimental Film Festival in Buffalo, and he has since worked on a number of film projects as director, producer, production manager and scriptwriter.*

## WHO IS NICKY FYLAN?

Denise Romberg

He's got his index finger stuck in the top of a Lowenbrau as he remembers the day that he arrived at the opening of one of his first stage performances in Toronto in 1963. Odd that sticking your finger in a Lowenbrau prompts the memory, but maybe there is some connection. Seems that Nicky had won himself a part that called for an Irish accent. He practiced for two weeks to get the accent down pat, then was told that he would be playing the part of an Indian and had two days to prepare before the opening night. He arrived at the stage dressing room, put on his Indian costume and makeup, stood in the wings waiting for his cue, then walked on stage and repeated his practiced line, with his newly acquired Irish accent. "The next day, I was out looking for work," he says, as he pops his finger from the bottle.

Fylan, a 31-year-old actor, stars in **Dream on the Run** and **Point of No Return**, both feature films scheduled for June release. He began his acting career in the theatre, and had seven productions, completed in three years, to his credit when he was offered a part in a television pilot for the CBC. Among nine performances for the CBC are included three Festival roles, a lead in a Quentin Durgens episode and a pilot for a series that was never picked up. Fylan had all this coming his way in the early '60s, when he chose to get drowned in the drug culture. At the time it looked like the choice cost him a promising acting career.

He then turned to business, where he says he just counted money at the massage parlors he owned on the Yonge Street strip. In 1972, he started acting again when he played the role of a massage parlor owner in Ed Hunt's first feature, **Pleasure Palace**. The sexploitation film was a huge success, earning more than 10 times its cost. Hunt, a graduate of the UCLA Film Department, stopped making sex films when he started work on **Point of No Return**. Fylan describes him as an excellent technician who knows his craft well. However, Fylan is not all that pleased with any of his own performances in the four feature films he's completed. He says there was one minute in **Point of No Return** that he liked, and that's all.

"That's not so good," he says from the side of his mouth, in his raspy godfather voice.

Fylan came to Canada when he was seven years old. He was born in Italy, "in the heel," he says. He plans to return there in July to attend the Venice Film Festival, where **Point of No Return** will be entered in the competition. There's a chance too, he says, that he may play a part in an Italian production and is now busy brushing up on his Italian, which he claims he hasn't used for 15 years.

Fylan is cast time and again in the role of a delinquent. It's paid him some money, but none of the roles have yet developed to the caliber of a Ratso Rizzo, or a Robert de Niro performance. In **Point of No Return**, Fylan is cast as a bum, who through circumstances is forced to take up a noble cause. Unfortunately, the story seems a little too unbelievable, making impossible demands on his performance. In **Dream on the**

**Run**, Nicky appears opposite a non-professional which tends to weaken his role even though he looks strong by comparison.

Generally, though, his film performances lack direction, to which he attests: "I've never really worked with a director who demanded any discipline" – not that Fylan would submit to such restrictions, but the opportunity to find out how he'd fare under such circumstances has never been presented.

Prior to acting, Fylan left school at 17 and got himself a job as a model. He was sent to a hair stylist for his first job. "I went there for a modeling job and I ended up with a scissors and comb in my hand," he explained. His days as a stylist were numbered right from the start, not because of his ability, but rather his chairside manner. He remembers one client particularly well. Fylan began work, but was continually interrupted by the smoke from his client's cigarette. Frustrated, he clipped the cigarette in half, thus putting an end to his dilemma, his job and his future as a hair stylist.

Fylan says he's never taken his acting too seriously even though his list of credits over the last 12 years is impressive. Still, he's not convinced that acting suits him, so this spring he'll try his hand at co-directing a feature film about a boxer, called **No Neutral Corner**.

## Nicky Fylan filmography

### CBC TV

*Crime Test* (principal), directed by Paddy Sampson, 1965

*Wojeck* episode (principal), directed by Ron Kelly, 1966

*Festival: Fifth Floor* (principal), 1966

*Man in the Middle* (lead) pilot episode, directed by Ron Weyman, 1966

*Festival: Reddick 1 and 2* (principal), 1968

*Anthology* (lead), directed by René Bonnière, 1968

*To See Ourselves* (principal), 1968

*Quentin Durgens M.P.: Where Have All the Flowers Gone?* (lead), 1969

### Feature Films

**Pleasure Palace** (lead), Phoenix Films, 1972

**Diary of a Sinner** (executive producer), 1974

**Point of No Return** (lead, executive producer), 1975

**Dream on the Run** (co-directed, lead), Circle Productions, 1973-1976

### Theatre

*Teenage Macbeth* (two principals), Young Questers, 1962

*Oliver Twist* (principal), Young Questers, 1963

*The Cave Dwellers* (lead), Theatre Upstairs, 1965

*Summer Stock with the Strawhat Players*, Port Carling, Ontario 1965-66

*Infanticide in the House of Fred Ginger* (lead), Century Library Theatre, 1966

Directed two one-act plays, United Church, Avenue Road, Toronto, 1967

Produced and directed for Living Theatre, Toronto, 1969

Shot on a modest \$85,000 budget, \$40,000 of it in deferrals, **Point of No Return** has a good chance to recoup its costs quickly if it does garner any TV sales. Ed would be happy, and Famous Players would be happy. Without Famous, **Point of No Return** might not have been made. Famous invested \$15,000 in the film; their reason, Ed's films have played and done well in Famous theatres across Canada. Needless to say Ed is very complimentary about Famous Players' practical business attitude toward his project.

A few words about Ed Hunt's philosophy, a world view that links **Point of No Return** to **Pleasure Palace** and **Diary of a Sinner**. Ed Hunt is cynical about organizations and authority. The heavies in his films are always the scientists, the intellectuals, the bureaucrats. All exhibit hypocritical behaviour that sooner or later reveals them to be like all of us – strivers in the same slimy pot of humanity. The underprivileged hero may be equally immoral, but at least he is honest about himself and his desires. And he's not inhibited. If he feels like fucking, fucking it is, on the spot. If he wants revenge, he relentlessly pursues it, usually outside the law which, as an organization, is itself corrupt.



Mike (Nicky Fylan) threatens the evil Professor Lime (Eli Rill in **Point of No Return**)

The hero is usually a quietly depressed person. He's had trouble with the law, or is divorced, or deserted by a girl. He lives in a rooming house. But he does possess the overt material symbols of power – the fast car, and the gun. He is a cynic who distrusts almost everyone. He lives by his own code of homilies – about religion, and about politics, and believes that there is some sort of master plan whose goal is his own destruction. The system is out to get him.

He may be honest with himself but the hostile world doesn't care. He adopts a sense of independence from the system but he always has to come to grips with it. He flaunts his independence in its face, up its ass, and in the end he defeats the establishment, edging them out by being slightly less immoral.

For a guy who makes sex films, Ed Hunt is very involved with the concept of morality, personal morality and a code of survival. Ed Hunt to date has never had a budget of \$100,000 to produce a film. And all his films look more expensive than they actually are. The CFDC gives larger budgets for virgin features, many of which never see the light of day. And Ed Hunt has made three features here, all of which were, or will be, distributed, exhibited and exploited in Canada and elsewhere. It would be interesting to see what Ed Hunt could do with a budget over \$100,000.

Ed's next film will be of the science fiction genre. I wish him luck. □

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