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Filmmakers celebrate decade of independence

By Randi Spires
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The Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto (LIFT) has not only survived 10 years, it also enters its second decade with something no previous Toronto film co-op ever had — the relatively sound finances that enhance the likelihood of a 20th birthday.

But things weren't always so rosy for LIFT, which is marking its 10th anniversary with special screenings tonight, Thursday and Oct. 20 at the Euclid Theatre.

It was formed in 1979, about a year after its predecessor, the Toronto Filmmaker's Co-op, bit the dust. The initial organizational meeting was called by filmmaker Bruce Elder, who had been active in the old co-op, and Jane Gutteridge, who then worked for the Canadian Filmmakers' Distribution Centre (CFMDC).

That first meeting was held in the old New Yorker Cinema (now



the Showcase). Between 50 and 200 people attended (estimates vary). Many veterans of the Toronto Filmmakers Co-op were disillusioned and burned out and so declined to participate further. But a batch of naive neophytes, including Janis Lundman and Alan Zweig, were determined to put some sort of alliance together.

They had no money to speak of and only survived because of the assistance of the CFMDC, which provided office space, postage, photocopying services and use of a small theatre for screenings.

It took another two years of meetings before the steering committee was able collectively to hammer out such tedious but

essential details as a constitution and a set of bylaws.

For its first five years, LIFT's existence was precarious. For one thing, the organization relied almost entirely on volunteer labor. Asking people who are already overburdened from juggling their survival jobs, time for their own art work and family responsibilities to add hours of volunteer labor to their schedules is writing a recipe for burn-out. Many people, understandably, dropped out.

There was also an unfortunate competition between LIFT and the Funnel Experimental Film Theatre. The Funnel (b. 1978, d. 1988) was an artist-run centre oriented to a certain narrow range of avant-garde filmmaking. LIFT assumed a broader mandate, which included everything from experimental work to documentaries to low-budget narrative features.

When the turn-around happened is uncertain. Zweig says it occurred around 1984 when a number of Ryerson grads with distinctly non-mainstream sensibilities came aboard. These included such people as Adrienne Mitchell, Bruce McDonald, Colin Brunton and Peter Mettler, he says.

Lundman says the pivotal point came in 1986 when LIFT began receiving federal job development grants. With them, LIFT was able to hire three much-needed full-time staff members.

Today the LIFT is headquartered in modest premises at 345 Adelaide St. W. Besides producing a monthly newsletter, the organization presents monthly screenings of members' works, has a small library of film books, periodicals and other resources and offers workshops several times a year.

Filmmaking equipment includes several 16mm cameras, two Nagra tape recorders for location sound, two flatbed editing suites, lighting and grip equipment. There is also a magnetic transfer machine which transfers sound from standard audio tape to the larger stock necessary for editing.

LIFT is also a clearing house of information about who is working on what and which production might be in need of volunteer or non-volunteer crew.

Membership, which is open to anyone — regardless of whether they have made a film — is growing rapidly. A year ago there were about 300 members; now there are around 430.

Affiliate members (\$30 per year) get the newsletter and other mailings, access to all resources except equipment and discounts on workshops. To become an associate member (\$60 per year), one must first complete 20 hours of volunteer labor. Then one is eligible to rent equipment, vote at general membership meetings and serve on the board of directors.

Full members (\$120 per year) have additional privileges but are required to perform 20 hours of volunteer labor annually.

LIFT office hours are 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday. For more information, phone 596-8233.

Tonight's LIFT-OFF screenings at the Euclid Theatre, 394 Euclid Ave., include *Nion In The Kabaret De La Vita*, *Thee Civil Servant* and *Unways* at 7 p.m. and Atom Egoyan's *Family Viewing* at 9 p.m. Thursday's program includes *Forgotten Mother*, *Elephant Dreams*, *Northbound Cairo* and *Inside/Out* at 7 p.m. and *O, Zoo!* and *Lac La Croix* at 9 p.m. Details: 925-8104.

Rimmer fascinates with unusual styles

Vancouver experimental filmmaker David Rimmer, who began his art career as a sculptor, is known for his use of found footage and looping and other forms of repetition.

Innis Film Society will present two nights of his unconventional techniques next week.

Some of Rimmer's earlier films, such as *Blue Movie*, *Surfacing On The Thames* and *Seashore*, will be shown Thursday. On Oct. 21, Rimmer will be on hand to present some of his more recent works, such as *Black Cat/White Cat*, *Divine Mannequin* and *Bricolage*.

One segment of *Bricolage*, taken from a Hollywood action film, contains a particularly mesmerizing use of looping.

The rhythms created by the repeated movements of the female bathers in *Seashore* provide the viewer with some of the same esthetic pleasures found in Joyce Wieland's film *Hand Tinting*.

In *Surfacing On The Thames*, Rimmer, through the use of stop motion, dissolves and other techniques, extends a single piece of film about 50 times its normal running length. This sepia-toned view of a slowly passing barge calls forth, if not nostalgia, at least a sense of how tenuous our historical connections are.

Both programs begin at 7 p.m. at the Town Hall, 2 Sussex Ave. Admission is \$3. Phone 978-7790.

In conjunction with AIDS Awareness Week (Oct. 16-22), AIDS Action Now is holding a benefit screening of two new tapes by veteran video artist John Greyson, 9:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Euclid Theatre, 394 Euclid Ave.

In earlier works such as *Kipling Meets The Cowboys* and *Urinal*, Greyson combined a commitment to gay issues with a campy sense of humor and a penchant for playing about with historical figures.

In *The Pink Pimpernel*, a fable meant to encourage both political activism and safe sexual practices, Greyson conceives of a Rainer Werner Fassbinder film called *A Safer*

Querelle. In Greyson's version, two antagonists find their knives suddenly transformed into a packet of condoms and a tube of lubricant. It's a neat play on the make love not war adage.

The World Is Sick (sic) is a documentary made at the International AIDS Conference in Montreal last spring. The perspective is that of the militant AIDS Action Now organization.

While some of the criticisms, such as those of do-little politicians, are on target, the attacks on front-line researchers and health care professionals are both off-base and counter-productive.

The most valuable parts of *The World Is Sick* (sic) are interviews with grassroots AIDS workers from around the world, particularly those from Thailand and Soweto.

Admission is \$4.

The Body In Film, a month-long look at how avant-garde filmmakers have represented the human form, begins on Tuesday at the Art Gallery of Ontario, 317 Dundas St. W.

Program One includes three films by Bruce Conner who was a strong influence on David Rimmer. In *Marilyn X5*, Marilyn Monroe's recurring yet sensual gestures evoke the obsessional nature of romantic love.

All programs begin at 7 p.m. Some are at the AGO and some are at Innis College. Admission is \$4. Phone Innis at 978-7790 or the AGO at 977-0414.

Surely To God, Margaret Moore's sequel to *Frankly Shirley*, premieres at the Euclid Theatre, Saturday at 9 p.m. and 10 p.m.

Jane and Wendy, the two women who went on a tour of passion without words in *Frankly Shirley*, are talking now, although, oddly, they've neglected to take out the newspapers for months.

Surely To God is really a video confection in which Lady Luck, a white witch and a frozen chicken play significant parts.

— Randy Spires