

Behind the scenes: an in-depth look at the Montreal World Film Festival

Elliott Lefko

From the city of smoked meat comes the 10 day party that dares to call itself the World Film Festival.

From Yugoslavia and Poland to New Zealand and Canada, the Montreal Film Festival embraces film cultures from over 20 countries. There are no favourites. Within the five theatres of the Parisienne Theatre, one could zoom from eyewitness accounts of both Iranian hostage and Polish solidarity crises to contemporary big-budget fiction, all within the space of a hectic, tiring, sore-eyed day.

Sissy Spacek, last year's Academy Award winner, came to Montreal with on one arm, director/husband Jack Fisk, and on the other **Raggedy Man**, the first film by the pair.

Is their a lack of good roles, Spacek is asked?

"There's a lack of good films," she replied in her Texas drawl, then went on to say, "It's harder to find good projects than it is to actually make the film."

Raggedy Man is based on a childhood fantasy of director Fisk. It is his first feature film after spending a decade as an art director on pictures like **Days of Heaven**, **Badlands**, and **Carrie**.

"So many people that are making films about the South don't know and have nothing to do with the South. I wanted to recreate the South as I know it," says the tall, bearded Fisk.

Raggedy Man, which also stars Sam Shepard and Eric Roberts (in his first film since **King of the Gypsies**) casts Spacek as a poor young divorcee with two kids working as an operator in a small town during the Second World War.

"I like to play characters with redeeming values, with a ray of hope. Like **Carrie**, she was a strange person, yet she had a ray of hope. You cared about her."

Besides **Carrie**, Spacek's name is also associated with another strangely unique American film, David Lynch's **Eraserhead**, which she helped fund.

"David had known Jack (Fisk) since high school. They had lived together in stables. David worked on **Eraserhead** for five-

and-a-half years," Spacek says, then adds proudly, "I was even the script supervisor for a couple of days."

And on **Heartbeat**, for which she portrayed Carolyn Cassady, the wife of famous beat protagonist Neal Cassady, Spacek argued that the film was the victim of a studio that had no confidence in the product.

"I like **Heartbeat**. My only problem was that it could not have been longer."

Finally on her life Ms. Spacek, whose appearance is healthy and unadorned, except for her magnetic personality, and whose passion is riding horses, says that "Our Hollywood is different from the traditional vision of Hollywood. It's a big community. We are a new Hollywood. We move in our own circles. And there are many of us."

It was just four years ago that Ron Mann, 23, was projecting films in S137 Ross as a part-time job in his first year at York. This past month the young filmmaker wowed the Montreal Festival with his first feature film entitled **Imagine The Sound**.

A 90 minute documentary, **Imagine** examines the work and minds of four of the leading exponents of free jazz music. It stars pianists Paul Bley, and Cecil Taylor, reedman Archie Shepp, and trumpeter Bill Dixon.

The idea for the film was conceived one night last year, after watching Shepp in concert at The Edge, a Toronto nightclub which has since closed. Mann met Bill Smith the co-owner of the Jazz and Blues Record Store, and a leading producer in free jazz through his own Sackville Records, that night, and the two began assembling the project. A year later as the film unreel in its world film festival debut (it had also debuted at the Edmonton Jazz Festival), it appeared that Mann had won his battle against the forces that impede a first time director and had assembled a first-class work.

The film is both a performance vehicle for the four musicians, Dixon and Shepp with bands, and a sounding off stage for the

four to tell their story of the music: how it had transpired and what their involvement was. Paul Bley talked of knowing when the music was being played when he saw the audience on the street. Taylor talks of the Ralph Ellison's **Invisible Man** and how it paralleled the lives of the Black free jazz musician.

The good sense echoed by the musicians in their conversation is underlined by their richly sometimes dark, sometimes buoyant improvisational music. The excitement does spill over into the performance and Taylor, for example, turns one of his pieces into an exercise in speed that leaves both the audience and performer sweating by the final notes.

"The film has potential distribution to Japan, Europe, the U.S. and in Canada," says Mann, whose warm personality and bubbling creativity made him one of the highlights of the Festival.

Before leaving Montreal, Mann had already received offers for his film from German television.

And he was lining up an American distributor. He already has a Canadian distributor International Tele Films.

Mann's film will be shown at the Toronto Festival September 12, and repeated on the 18. Afterwards he will rush to tie up his next film, a documentary on poetry featuring a collection of the top performers in contemporary North American poetry.

The next time someone knocks the Canadian film industry or the Canadian Film Development Corporation ask them if they've seen the **Black Mirror**. It's new, it's Canadian and it's good.

Directed by the burly alternately sensitive, alternately gruff, Pierre Alain Jolivet, and starring some of Canada's finest

female dramatic talent, **Black Mirror** is a bizarre parable that is both shocking and intellect-



Archie Shepp booms out the sax in **Imagine The Sound**.

ually satisfying. The film is loosely based on Jean Genet's **Death Wish**, and actually was written with Genet's cooperation. It concerns a secret ritualistic society within a women's prison.

"I happen to be, and I don't know why, the 237th to ask him to make a film of his works. He said no 236 times," Jolivet says still radiating from the association.

The two worked together for eight-and-one-half months, meeting every day.

"He would discuss with me

what he wanted to say, and then I'd have 24 hours to write those ideas into one or two new scenes," explains Jolivet.

The two had started to adapt **Death Wish**, but wound up writing their own script which became **Black Mirror**.

"He (Genet) said 'we're two good guys. We should be able to find a new idea for a screen play'. It's actually been included as the last volume in Genet's collected works," says the Quebec director.

Lenore Zann's **Black Mirror** of success

Elliott Lefko

Lenore Zann just cannot stop smiling. The 21-year-old Western Canadian's career as a celluloid actress has begun to take off at an alarming rate. The actress is hot and she knows it.

In Montreal for the premiere of **Black Mirror**, the sensational new Canadian film (co-authored by Jean Genet) in which she leads, Zann looked every inch the star. Dressed in colourful red dress with white beads and bracelets, the dark tan contrasting against her dirty blonde hair, she spoke of the range of roles that she has played and offered some insight as to the roles she has been offered.

"I began as a singer in musicals, and eventually relieved the starring role in **Hey Marilyn**. Cliff Jones's Marilyn Monroe-based stage musical.

"When **Black Mirror** came along I jumped at the part. Here was a film that required you to show some emotion not for shock horror but for a film that made people think.

"It was the hardest thing I'd ever done. We did our own

stunts. When it was finished I was black and blue.

"**Black Mirror** was an exception to the usual roles offered actresses in this country. I studied Genet and knew what the film was saying. I may not agree with Genet's black vision, but I understood how he can be and feel that way.

"Since the film I've turned down roles in **Death Bite** and **Battle Zones-Atom High**, two of the few films being made in Canada this year. I'm sick to death of films like those. Why can't they make films that give us something to chew on?"

One film Zann is proud of is **The Fright**, a Canadian film in which she plays a street punk. "It's got a social message," she says emphasising her concern. "It's the type of film I'd want to go and see."

As with many good Canadian actors, Zann is being courted by Hollywood, or L.A. as it's now being called. She claims that she's been offered roles in both the all new **Saturday Night Live**, and in Tony Randall's new

situation comedy **Sidney Shorr**.

"**Saturday Night** wanted someone who is a good actress, who can do comedy and serious roles. As well they want me to sing in character ala say, the Blues Brothers."

Zann is reminded that the show barely made it to the end of last year's television season, and chances of it succeeding this year are slim.

She smiles again. "Yes, but I want that year for the exposure, and then I'd go on to American films."

The other proposed television role casts her as a young married mother who teams up with private detective Randall. The pilot done two years ago had Randall as a gay. The new role has been streamlined and his sexual status has been eliminated because of pressure from the moralists.

"I'm pondering the choice between the two," she says. "The Randall contract is for five years. I guess I'll take one of the roles and give it everything while it's going on and then hope the series will go under after a year."



Smiling Lenore Zann is just happy to be 21 and Canadian.