

DOC SPEAK

DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKERS
SPEAK ON THEIR...

ROOTS

INSPIRATIONS

PRACTICES

PASSIONS

TRENDS

FIRST STEPS

DREAMS

hotdocs
OUTSPOKEN.OUTSTANDING.

BASED ON A SURVEY OF BEST PRACTICES OF ACCOMPLISHED DOC FILMMAKERS

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This survey by no means includes the full range of experienced doc filmmakers, but is a representative sample. Every attempt has been made to include accurate information.

HOT DOCS extends its sincere thanks to everyone who took time out of their busy schedules to talk about their craft and contribute to this publication.

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DOC SPEAK

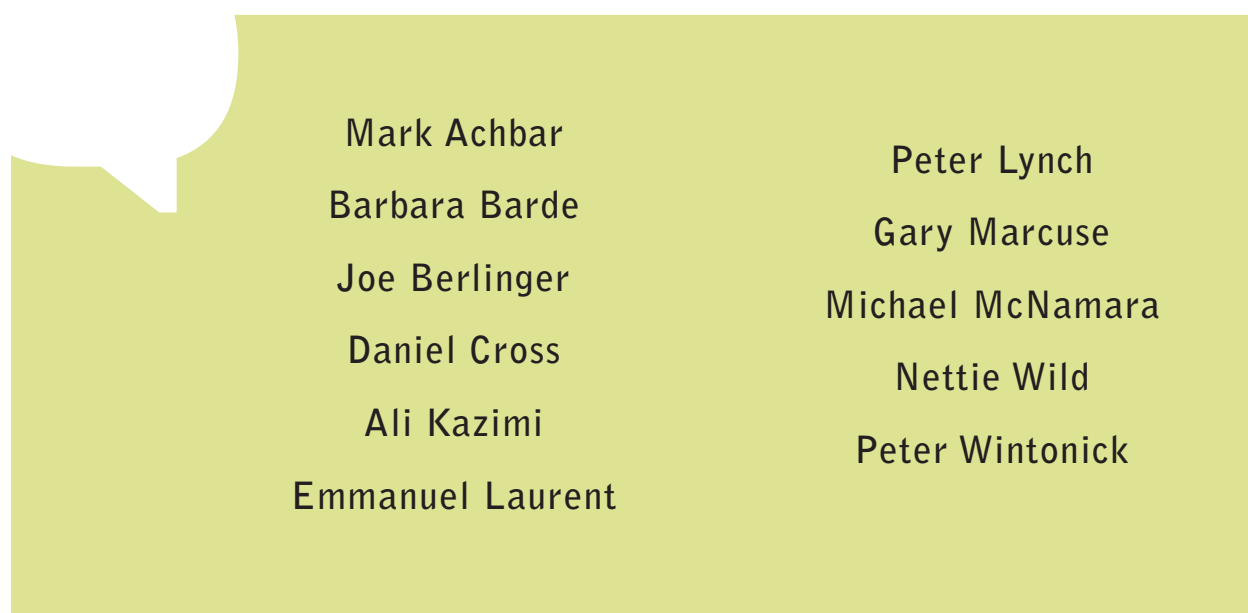
Hot Docs advances and celebrates the art of documentary. Every year we showcase over 100 of the best non-fiction films to an audience of 37,000 and attract 1,500 filmmakers and industry professionals who participate in the festival's professional development programs and market events. Hot Docs provides a wide range of stimulating lectures, panels and workshops that enable rigorous debate on contemporary documentary works addressing creative and production concerns.

Additionally, with the support of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, we publish online and print resources, such as **Knowledge Capture** and **The Guide to Documentary Broadcasters, Other Financiers and Distributors**. **Doc Speak** is the latest extension of these complementary resources, designed to help filmmakers develop their craft.

What does it take to be a successful documentary filmmaker? Who are the people behind these compelling films that are reaching more audiences than ever before? And, how can you become a doc filmmaker? As part of our commitment to sharing professional knowledge with you, Hot Docs set out to explore these questions with experienced filmmakers. We are excited to present you with **Doc Speak**, an inside view from some of the best on their roots, passions, practice and more.

FILMMAKERS SURVEYED

Doc Speak takes the form of an independent survey of 11 accomplished documentary filmmakers from Canada and elsewhere speaking candidly about their experiences. The filmmakers surveyed include the following directors and producers:



(Please refer to Acknowledgements Section, pages 33-38, for bios and contact information)

SURVEY

We asked these doc film sages to share how they nurture creative vision, what paths they took to becoming a doc filmmaker and how they produce their films.

Specifically, we asked the following questions:

1. Who or what inspired you to become a documentary filmmaker and how has that inspiration evolved over your career?
2. What kinds of films are meaningful to you? What types of films do you respond to?
3. What do you feel is your responsibility/involvement with the people who are the subjects of your film?
4. What, in your opinion, is the most interesting/most promising trend or opportunity for doc filmmakers over the next 3-5 years?
5. What was your first step to becoming a doc filmmaker/producer? Were there any training opportunities that you found beneficial and would recommend to emerging doc filmmakers?
6. What was one of the most significant lessons that you learned during your career?
7. If you had unlimited resources, what film would you make?
8. How did you first establish your production company and what values did you find worked best? What changes have you made over the years?
9. How do you maintain your artistic vision while working in a broadcast reality?
10. How did you get your first two docs distributed and how are you doing it now?
11. Describe your ideal industry event/market. How important are these events? What specific market/festivals do you find most useful?
12. How have increasing market opportunities (the proliferation of new doc media outlets) affected your activities as filmmaker?

HIGHLIGHTS

We collected some unique observations and advice in the areas of becoming a filmmaker, nurturing creativity and producing. We found that in some areas experienced filmmakers tend to be in agreement about what works and what doesn't. We also confirmed that the word 'documentary' takes on different meanings for different people. In short, there's no single way to become a documentary filmmaker, but it's clear that there are areas of consensus and common threads of philosophy and approach. The following interviews provide great insights into the filmmakers' style and process, and we hope they will become a source of inspiration and practical insight for you.

In terms of creative vision, the filmmakers interviewed either had an early passion to make films or discovered a keen interest in films through other interests or careers. Their inspirations, subjects and

shared passion for cinema continue to ignite and to define their creative direction.

There were divergent views on what types of training and programs are most useful in becoming a documentary filmmaker. However, they all agree that hands-on experience – with some strongly recommending volunteering for a production – is essential to honing your skills and to ensuring that filmmaking is where you belong. It's clear that being open to opportunities and throwing yourself into projects – your own or someone else's – can give you the skills and the experience to take off on your own.

These filmmakers have learned a lot along the way, and continue to apply new insights to their art. For some, the most important lessons relate to how they work and with whom. A few of those interviewed trace the most important lesson they learned back to a specific experience. For others, the lessons are reflected in personal philosophies that allow them to question and motivate themselves.

In terms of producing doc films, a variety of production models and styles of working were discussed. These ranged from solo endeavours to director/producer partnerships and other expanded business models. Despite this range, a common factor in establishing a production company was a shared commitment to core values, the types of films that you want to make, and the way you want to work.

The growing success of theatrical documentary, the cost efficiencies of new technologies and the increased public appetite for documentary film make for exciting times in the documentary world. Filmmakers voiced their enthusiasm for these new opportunities, but many also noted the challenges that these trends present to their craft: specifically, the reduced resources for long-form, point-of-view feature documentary, despite the proliferation of new broadcast outlets.

Canadian film festivals have increased in number and popularity over the last ten years and many Canadian filmmakers attend international events. How important are these festivals? Successful filmmakers say that the most useful events are those that enable them to connect with other filmmakers and with audiences, as well as help them attract new sales and distribution opportunities. Most of them attend several Canadian film festivals, as well as international events that are targeted to their particular markets and interests.

On another note, one of the most interesting questions in this survey invited these experienced documentary filmmakers to dream about what kind of film they would make if they had unlimited resources, evoking a range of unique and unusual responses. Most of these filmmakers don't doubt they'll eventually make that film they've been dreaming about. Others take the inspiration as it comes. For some filmmakers it might mean pushing the boundaries of their craft and venturing into new territory. What's especially interesting about their responses is not only that they're dreaming big, but the palpable sense that they've only just begun.

Read on to find out more about these filmmakers and what they have to say to you in Doc Speak.

ON NURTURING CREATIVE VISION

INSPIRATIONS

The roots of who you are as a filmmaker remain significant and provide the foundation for your creative direction, your evolution into the world of doc filmmaking and your survival.

Daniel Cross

"To be inspired as a filmmaker starts with the fact that I have always been very socially, politically involved and interested."

"I was living out in Nova Scotia and started going every week to the NFB's free screenings. I learned about Donald Brittain, Derek May, Colin Low, and Wolf Koenig. I started to understand the Canadian documentary tradition and really liked watching these films, which got me thinking about filmmaking. I took a beginner filmmaker's course at the Nova Scotia Film Co-op and got my hands on a Super 8 Camera. I just went out and realized that I was not going to write scripts or work with actors almost right away. I wanted to film real things. Then I read the autobiography of Martin Luther King and some of his speeches. That was the day I decided that I wanted to be a filmmaker and applied to Concordia University as a mature student in their film production program."

"My work needs to remain in the big social picture... the reason I became a filmmaker was very much in the roots of the type of person that I was ... doing social activism through my filmmaking because that ... is part of who I am."

Emmanuel Laurent

"I learned how to make films through editing. Editing a documentary is the most demanding work you can do."

Joe Berlinger

"I accidentally became a doc filmmaker."

"I love meeting new people who you would normally avoid. I am interested in looking below the surface to explode stereotypes. Nothing in life is as it really seems."

Peter Lynch

"My background has been very eclectic ... a very strange and winding journey. I draw on other traditions and mediums more than I do documentary. The first documentary reality that really got me was the Italian neo-realists ... who were melding reality and cinema."

"I love the work of Alain Resnais. Night and Fog, I think is one of the most important films ever made ... it is a human document, documenting something that is unspeakable, and when

you have seen it, you can never really imagine the world the same way.”

“ I love things that are poetic, using images to tell stories.”

“In terms of my own organic evolution in filmmaking, I have really come out of the art world and music as much as I have filmmaking. I used to produce a music video festival in the 80’s called Video Culture . . . I really just wanted to go out and make dramatic film, but I kept getting sidetracked by people experimenting with new media and video. It seemed acceptable and . . . there really was not the hierarchy like there is in film . . . I was attracted to the intimacy and the ability to work with the medium. The video revolution that was going on in the 80s was very influential to me.”



Ali Kazimi

“A Time to Rise by Anand Patwardhan certainly was an eye opener because it opened a window for me about the possibility of using film to look at issues surrounding India at the time and the Indian diaspora . . . the first truly independent work.”

“What I do hope is that I keep meeting individuals who have seen my films at turning points in their lives and whose lives have been influenced by my films just like I was by Anand’s films.”



Michael McNamara

“I started out as a pop music fan. I used to play guitar and my hero was Bob Dylan. There was a film made by D.A. Pennebaker called Don’t Look Back that I went to see and having never seen a documentary before, I was so impressed. When the movie Monterey Pop came out, by Pennebaker as well, that was when I decided I did not want to be a musician anymore; I wanted to be a filmmaker.”

“The whole idea of reinterpreting work touched me. Trying to reinterpret this work for other people and recording it for posterity seemed like a very creative and exciting thing to do.”

“I liked Rock’n Roll because it upset people in my parent’s generation and excited people of my generation. I thought there might be a way of telling stories in film that would emulate that response and that experience. A form of storytelling that would be more akin to Rock’n Roll, that defiance or certain creative spark that would provoke new ideas and hit people in a very visceral way. I always look for a way to echo that response in the films that I make.”



Peter Wintonick

“I am in an evolutionary state of being inspired.”

“I was first inspired by serial fantasy films that ended up in a cinema where I lived in a little town in Nova Scotia.”



Nettie Wild

“I discovered when I was growing up that while I loved theatre and writing and was good at both; I think in images. So, film really appealed to me. When I was working on film as an actor,

I loved it. But, when I went on to work on films it was like I went from using 2% of my brain to using 50% of my brain."

"Early on I went with Kirk Tugas to the first Latin American Film Festival in Havana, Cuba. I was just starting out and I had done nothing except go to school really. I had gone to UBC and taken a triple major in theatre, film and creative writing.

"I found this extraordinary wealth of film from all over Latin America there. At the time, Castro was trying to set up an alternative to Hollywood for Latin American cinema. I was overwhelmed by the artistry, by the stories, and by who was making them."

"What inspires me to make a movie is not an issue; it is the story itself. In a general sense, I find that I don't have a political checklist of grim and determined images out of which I have to make a movie."

"The big inspiration has been the people that I work with—my crew members— because they have not only been my inspiration they have been my teachers."

FILMS THAT CONNECT

Watching films remains a much loved pastime and source of inspiration for many documentary filmmakers. Storytelling, compelling subjects and the language of cinema continue to resonate, while new interpretations and experiments push the art of filmmaking and tease the imagination.



Daniel Cross

"Documentary films are the most meaningful to me ..., so when I see documentary films that influence or inspire me, they inspire me directly towards what I do...so they have a much more profound impact on my daily life."

"In the struggle to be a cinema-maker, it is not all that often that you get to see good documentary filmmaking. A lot of what we see on television is not good documentary filmmaking, it is not using the language of cinema. It is some kind of "reportage" as we say in Quebec. So I really enjoy going to festivals and seeing short films and experimental work because a lot of short experimental work borders very closely with documentary. There is a lot of good documentary work that is kind of experimental in nature and, in magnificent ways that are not talking head or interview or archival footage or those traditional ways, make really strong points about social injustice and revisit events that just happened in the last few years around globalization, for instance. That kind of work inspires me."

"When I see important content merged with, or empowered by, the language of cinema then I think I am watching the best films. When I see emotional content that is important I can get excited about the thought that this is what I wanted to do – the kind of impact that I wanted to be able to have with the work that I would make. It is like finding a bit of your community or finding a little piece of yourself existing somewhere else out there and it makes me more whole."



Peter Lynch

"I love big quest films like Westerns. I like surrealism and I love Fellini. *Dolce Vita* is one of my favourite films."

"I like people that take risks [and make] the kinds of films that push the form as much as the content."

"In terms of documentary, I like stuff that doesn't even announce that it is a documentary . . . films that allow the events to unfold and let the stories speak the truth."

"I love filmmakers that are uncompromising and not afraid to tell a story from where they are from—filmmakers that are so specific and describe their world in such a particular way that it starts to resonate and become universal and connects to the larger world that we live in."



Ali Kazimi

"Any form of creative expression is inspiring. Films that work for me need to move me emotionally and provide a transformative experience."



Mark Achbar

"Some filmmakers have a grasp of the emotional landscape of our lives that can touch me deeply. I appreciate that and have great respect for it, because it's a realm I don't focus on. Others have a masterful control over the medium and seem to go so far beyond the mere content of the piece they take its presentation to another level entirely. The films I really respond to are smart, political and funny. Drama or documentary, the kind of humour that is so dark, so close to reality, that it makes you cringe with recognition."



Emmanuel Laurent

"I am always thinking in terms of form."

"I am very demanding when it comes to documentary. I loved the film *Beirut: the Last Home Movie*. I am thinking about films more as a painter. I am very much aware how one makes the film [like one paints a painting] with a strong aesthetic point of view."



Michael McNamara

"I reserve judgment until the last frame and tend to be fairly uncritical. I want a film to take me someplace that I have never been before and make me think of things differently."

"In a climate where everything is formulaic and nobody wants to take chances, every once in awhile, people break those molds and that is exciting. I like that."



Nettie Wild

"I love films where art and politics come together because for me the word 'politics' is not something that is very dry and somewhat boring that you see on the six o'clock news. For me, politics is that word, that when used in terms of storytelling, refers to the big political stories that I really gravitate towards. I think they are the biggest human dramas going. They are stories where people take huge risks to bring about some kind of change. Yes, it has a heroic side to it, but a lot of times it is so called 'ordinary people' who realize that, if they don't take this risk, they and their kids will never have control over their own lives. They are complicated human stories, complicated by humanity and I love them."

RELATIONSHIPS WITH SUBJECT MATTER

Being able to balance your responsibility to your subjects and to the story is a key skill in documentary filmmaking. Although the approach of individual filmmakers to their subjects varies, sincerity and clarity in conveying their perspectives are consistent parameters.



Barbara Barde

"You always want to be able to go back and have dinner with your subjects."



Daniel Cross

"I fall into the void between social work and filmmaking."

"I don't have any predetermined boundary that I will or will not cross in how close I get to my characters or if I enter the frame or don't enter the frame. I react to each event as it unfolds and how I feel about it. What is consistent is that I get very close and develop very strong relationships with the characters in my films—we become friends."

"Over the years I learned how to use the tools of filmmaking and the industry to actually get a bit better and more effective at strengthening the relationship I have with my characters, with my friends: to be able to empower and assist them to also exploit the resources that are available in the industry to better their lives as a result of these films."



Emmanuel Laurent

"When it comes to documentary, I think I have a strong, huge responsibility to them [the subjects] and it does test my sincerity."

"Of course you do manipulate people that you have been filming, but at the end you have to try to make the most sincere portrait of the subject."



Ali Kazimi

"I don't have the right to film people. I have the privilege of filming them."

"As filmmakers we ... walk into people's lives ... and for a brief moment we are privy to almost everything around them and that is an incredible privilege, but for me it also comes with a lot of responsibility and accountability."



Peter Lynch

"I have a two-pronged approach. On one level, I want to remain detached. I want to have the freedom that a painter has so you can distance yourself and be able to frame the subject into the larger narrative. ... At the same time I like to locate myself in that character. I don't want to put myself above them. I don't want to look down on them or make fun of them. I ask myself: 'Where am I in all of this?'"

"There is a difference between having empathy or showing your subjects in a sympathetic way and wanting your subjects to love you."

"You have to not be afraid to stand on either side of the story and allow the ambiguity to take place and exist in the film."



Nettie Wild

"It is very clear to me that when I go into a community I don't go in as an activist. That is not my job. My job is to be as evocative a storyteller as possible. I have to be loyal to the dramatic thrust of the story, not to the political agenda of whatever movement I may be following. In that struggle to follow the story, if I run into the contradictions of the story, I can't shut my camera down and say this is too complicated... I have to keep shooting and put my nose right into those contradictions because in those contradictions is the drama; that is where the conflict is, where the characters lives get very complicated, and that is the place you want your audience to be."

"Once you have filmed people in these incredibly vulnerable situations, it is one of the most moving things in the world. When people allow you to film them they are saying, 'here is my story, tell somebody about it'. I really owe it to that person and to that community to get the film seen ... I really owe it to the community to be very smart and very clear about the point of view of the film no matter where I am."



Mark Achbar

"I feel interview subjects have to be treated with respect and dignity both at the time of the interview, and during the editing. That means respecting the intention of what they were saying, or trying to say, even if it has to be manipulated in the editing for time or to simplify, or to cut out an irrelevant digression. I have an obligation not to distort their words to a point that they would disagree with the version of themselves I present. I want people to feel they are free to be themselves, to express themselves as clearly and as forcefully as they are able to. I want

them at what they feel is their best, and I make it clear that they can always do it over again if they feel they didn't quite nail it the first time or second time or third.

Verité shooting is a different matter altogether. If I am in the streets of Seattle or Quebec with a gas mask on, I feel I have very little personal relationship to the individuals I'm shooting, that I'm more of a witness to history, watching the forces of authority and resistance claim their turf. There's no time to negotiate permission. We're all out in public and I feel I have a right to film anyone and everyone. I vacillate between observer and participant and am offended when a protester sees me with my Betacam (that I scrimped and saved up to buy) and scowls at me, or blocks my way because they think that because I don't have a mini-DV, that I must be an evil representative of mainstream media. I'm also grateful when I pull out my press accreditation and the police don't smash me with their billy clubs. That doesn't mean I don't loathe the authority and value system they represent, it means I want to keep my head in one piece so I can keep filming and I'll use the master's tools, as it were, to ensure that end."



Michael McNamara

"The documentaries that I have done about subjects are generally autobiographical. I don't usually make films about people I don't care about. My films are point of view films about subjects that I am interested in like the films I did about Jane Siberry and Rich Little."

"Nowadays people are more suspicious of filmmakers. I took a Master Class with Maysles at Hot Docs a few years ago and he talked about subject relationships and his 'gaze', what he called a "look of love", where he can look the subject in the eye and they know that he is not going to [betray] them. To me the perfect relationship with a subject is where the obvious intent of the filmmaker is to make a portrait that is not just fair and balanced, but is actually loving."

FUTURE TRENDS, OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

The growing success of theatrical documentaries, the cost efficiencies of new technologies and the increasing accessibility of documentary film make for exciting times in the documentary world. Hang on, because with new opportunities come new challenges.



Peter Lynch

"The opportunity is that documentary could be the new novel. There are no rules... the only limitation is your imagination. It can be any genre."



Mark Achbar

"On both ends of the spectrum, there is a lot of opportunity. It's a golden moment in the history of documentary. Because of the commercial success of a handful of recent docs, investors and distributors are willing to gamble a little more on people with experience or who are able to demonstrate they have a strong vision on a topic with a potentially broad appeal."

"On the low budget end, of course, it's a truism to point out that the technology has made filmmaking increasingly accessible, to the point that with a sufficiently dedicated team, money isn't really an object."



Emmanuel Laurent

"I do think it is a very challenging task for the future to learn to deal with the extremely important issues that are going to change our lives. The discoveries we make in biology and physics are so important. It is our duty as filmmakers to deal with these topics and to turn them into films."

"Science is not part of culture somehow. They talk about art or painting traditionally, but I think this definition is wrong and I think it is going to change. Science is very creative also."



Nettie Wild

"It seems that the gatekeepers — particularly the film exhibitors and the distributors — think that our work is saleable, that people will come and see it. It is wonderful to walk into a film festival and to be really celebrated. I hope it is more than a trend and that the gatekeepers profoundly understand that a good story is a good story, is a good story. Whether it is a drama or a documentary, if it is a story well-told then you put all the resources out there to tell people about it because people will come and see it."

"Every time a really experimental doc comes out I love it because it really pushes us all in terms of the art form and storytelling."

"More accessible technology is a good thing for all of us. People can get their hands on the equipment and make stories that would not otherwise be told and certainly budget-wise this has led to great democratization of the art form. However, what really turns me on is the kind of storytelling that comes out."

"In terms of trends, we have to be very careful. Despite all of this talk in Canada about the celebration of documentary, there is no money for feature documentary, there is no policy for feature documentary, and there is a trend towards a squeezing of budgets. Everything is becoming reduced to the point that it is very informed by what TV thinks a documentary is. The kinds of stories that I tell are being severely curtailed by this trend."

YOUR PATH TO DOCS

FIRST STEPS

It's clear that being open to opportunities and throwing yourself into projects – your own or someone else's – can give you the skills and the experience to take off on your own.



Barbara Barde

"I've told people that they have to learn a certain amount of the discipline of it, what's involved in making a film."

"I started as a researcher and I worked my way up. I knew that I wanted to be a producer and I became a director along the way."



Daniel Cross

"In film school we were given the challenge of having to make a 15-minute 16 mm film in my first semester... I identified a homeless person as the subject, something I went back to later as the theme for my documentary. I was able to find some small amount of support from the film board..."



Nettie Wild

"I wasn't involved in any official training that I could recommend. A lot of these film schools cost a lot of money and many students don't even get to use the equipment or rarely do. What I always say to people is figure out how much it would cost to go to film school, including your living expenses, save up that money, look around, go to lots of films, figure out which filmmaker you really want to work for and call up that person and say you want to work for free."

"Apprentice and I guarantee you that if you're any good, within four months someone will be paying you something. There are people who come and say, 'I'll do everything', and they mean it; and there are others who stay a few days, they say, 'This is insane', and they leave. But if you stay, it's so interesting."

"My first experience in doc filmmaking was when a friend of mine decided to make a film about the formation of the Canadian Farm Workers' Union. It doesn't sound that exciting but it was wild. I learned to record sound overnight. I was hooked. I had never been involved in something so creative, so collaborative and so exciting. Your learning curve is straight up at that point. The people who have taught me are my editors and the so-called 'techies' – that's where the excitement is."



Ali Kazimi

"When I got out of film school at York, which in many ways was a wonderful program — a number of instructors there were good — I wanted a really good understanding of all aspects of production. Even today I'm not intimidated by doing everything."

"The big thing was what to do after film school — I started by doing short films, some sponsored work. For example, one of the first films I ever did was a film for HDRC, for the Ontario government — but I set it up completely as a documentary in which we followed subjects and learned something about their lives. They didn't know quite what to expect but they actually liked it."

"Not sure I would recommend film school, though it's where I started. From any opportunity, you get what you make out of it. I have mentored a few people and I have watched them evolve as filmmakers and I see how some of them are stymied by lack of formal training. There are many co-ops across Canada that offer workshops, inexpensive gear, all kinds of possibilities for making films."



Joe Berlinger

"I started out as a commercial producer working for an ad agency. I was producing commercials; the idea came up of doing unscripted, real-people commercials. The idea was revolutionary at the time. I came up with the idea of hiring the Maysles brothers because Gimme Shelter was a very meaningful film for me growing up. I hit it off with one of the Maysles brothers. They were making documentaries and I used this as my film school. But the experience that taught me the most was when I went out (after about three and a half years with them) and made a film about the craziest stories that New York cab drivers could tell me."

"It was a lucky break that my language skills got me into a job where I learned about production. I like Robert Evans' definition of luck, which is 'opportunity meets preparation.' A lot of it is luck, and a lot of it is hoping there's a mattress on the other side (to catch you). That's sort of key to verité filmmaking. You take a huge leap of faith."



Peter Wintonick

"The first step is to wake up one morning and declare to the world that you're a documentary filmmaker. It's really about fulfilling your own promise, where you decide you're not going to be an architect or a lawyer. It's a declarative thing."

"Technical, film school knowledge provided me with two years of intensive, hands-on experience, which is one half of it."

"Get the knowledge and the experience, not so much on the job experience because that usually means becoming some slave grip assistant on some American feature film. But you want to work with people you like, whose politics are similar to yours."

"I spend a lot of time in cinematheques and with archival film. Watching well-made films, in a

variety of genres, whether on the Internet, on television or in cinemas. You can really be open to visual experiences, whether on television, in arcades, at music raves, in cinemas.”



Gary Marcuse

“I had skills in radio, local reporting. I think it’s key for people to do a lot of interviewing. You have to settle into that. If you don’t understand who and why you’re there, you won’t get anything meaningful [from the subject].”

“When I left radio, I started off doing an educational project on nuclear weapons. I worked with classroom teachers, found other people’s documentaries, made a documentary of my own... I went on to work on First Nations, The Circle Unbroken. All my friends were making wonderful documentaries about Aboriginal issues. I worked with a teacher and she and I went out and rounded up a group of teachers, students and filmmakers. I started taking apart films in order to reassemble a collection of short films for use by teachers. I’ve now cut 150 documentaries.”

“The most important training I ever got was working in the field with other filmmakers. It gave me a sense of how to manage crews, how to get shots. I never sat in a classroom. Most of the people I know did not have formal training.”



Emmanuel Laurent

“I was a film buff for many years: watching films from two o’clock in the afternoon to two o’clock at night. It is a combination of everything. I loved to go to the movies as a teenager. I didn’t like school very much, when I started learning filmmaking, that was what I was interested in, nothing else.”



Peter Lynch

“I got access to some equipment and I started filming things that intrigued me.”

“Work with really good people, if you can do that - it’s irreplaceable. You have to form a contact with life. You have to be a social anthropologist. It’s not a bad thing [to go to film school], but you have to have some other experience. It’s not just technical.”



Mark Achbar

“I went to film school, studied as an art student. In theory, I was taught to use film and light like a painter would use a canvas and paint. I just shot and shot. I would volunteer to shoot anything for anyone and dedicate myself totally to their project, going to any extreme to get them what they wanted. I worked with my film professor on his films, worked in the summers on low-budget features. Got an internship in Hollywood for a summer on a kids show. Then worked at a small documentary production company for three years doing anything they’d let me do. Just tried to build up as much technical experience and know-how as I possibly could so that when I was ready to make my own film—and I mean ready to take on a big subject in a big way—I was really ready.”

LESSONS LEARNED

These filmmakers have learned a lot along the way, and apply new insights to their art and their lives. Practical advice is strengthened by a sense of commitment and dedication to their art.



Peter Lynch

"I realized that you can't sit around and wait. Don't paint yourself into a corner waiting for the ultimate opportunity to come - because you lose momentum."

"You have to have the strength of conviction to put everything on the line for it. You're flying in the face of what most people do in our culture. It's a vocation."

"It's crazy to make documentaries. Even if you're a star you have to take a big risk. You have to have a maniacal dedication and be very crafty to survive. You max out your credit card, beg favours."



Ali Kazimi

"When people agree to be in your film and agree to open their lives to you...; it's a very interesting process because as a filmmaker I realize I'm in a very powerful position. I need to focus on them to make sure that the process of filmmaking doesn't get in the way, so that it falls to the side."

"The confessional approach is a presentation of how people see themselves, there's an intimate bond that forms between me as a filmmaker and my subjects. I know way more about my subjects than I would about my friends. But the sharing is not mutual. It's one way. When you're focusing on your subjects exclusively it's an incredibly powerful thing for people to experience."



Mark Achbar

"Get it in writing."



Nettie Wild

"There are several questions that you ask yourself over and over again and they're very healthy: one of them is 'What the hell am I doing here?'... the answer might change during the filming of the movie. First, really profoundly understand that you are only a filmmaker. Your job is to document, not to act. Second, it's beyond documenting, it's storytelling. There's an enormous amount of art and an enormous amount of manipulation. The first question will guard against manipulating the story because it's easier to tell then, and you start moving toward propaganda and lack of truth."

"What I've learned over and over again is that for me dogma or rhetoric is death - and I've seen that both literally and concretely. When you make a dogmatic film it's the death of the art"

form. The audience tunes out.”

“In every film there’s been some wonderfully complicated person who has allowed us to shoot when the going gets tough . . . to trust us to tell their story, including the good stuff and the bad stuff... I think the audience intuitively knows that if you’re in the middle of the story that’s not just complicated as hell, but where they’re seeing that the main character isn’t heroic anymore, I don’t think that the audience abandons this person; I think they lean in and go, ‘Holy Shit, what would I do in that situation?’”

“My crew are extraordinary artists – an extended family who are my inspiration. If you as a director can create a soup in which people are inspired to do their best art as opposed to being just shooters or cutters, when you’re actually moving through it as a collection of artists, they’ll do their best work, they’ll flourish. After our retrospective at Hot Docs, people came up to me and said that was my best work. That’s fantastic.”



Joe Berlinger

“My number one mission while I’m filming is to not have a point of view. If I have a point of view I miss the big story. It’s only human nature to look for those things that confirm your point of view. In *Paradise Lost* we went down after reading an article about the killings. We would have missed the story about their innocence. Obviously you need to know what you’re making a film about, why you’re attracted to a situation but you need to remain open.”

“I make a very specific kind of verité film that unfolds before the camera. What I’ve learned is that nothing is what it appears to be. That superficial sound-bite that we hear belies the complexity of real life situations.”

“You have to be brutally honest with your subjects about what you’re doing. I’ve started a couple of films [that I didn’t end up making] – it’s a huge investment of time – but if you feel that you’re not learning and growing, you should probably pull the plug on the film.”



Peter Wintonick

“For me it’s about losing the ego and taking an anti-capitalist, collective working methodology. You try to do the films you want to do with people you admire, or have something in common with on a basic level.”

“The idea of honesty and ethics are the lessons to study, then trying to find your own set of principles is important. At the same time as you’re working collectively, you have to find your own voice . . . to be in control, but not abuse or to be abused by systems of production that are not your own.”

“You have to be prepared to take that vow of poverty and struggle to make the film that you believe in.”

“The biggest lesson is around hope and fortitude and never accepting defeat. ‘No’ is probably the best word to hear. People don’t want to accept no and defeat.”

“If one is motivated by changing the deplorable conditions we live in, then you take a lot of

power from the fact that there are people struggling to survive. And the bourgeois filmmakers need to struggle in solidarity with them.”



Gary Marcuse

“Every documentary that we work on is full of trouble. Always go back to your friends when it looks like the whole project is grinding to a stop, you need to go back to the people who know and understand what you’re doing and be built up again. You have to develop relationships with producers, with subjects, with organizations that understand what you’re doing. It doesn’t make any sense until you get stuck, then you realize that you have a choice. Then you go back to your core.”



Michael McNamara

“Planning, doing your homework, doing a lot of research, doing pre-interviews are really important. And have a tape recorder with you just in case. A few years ago I did a pre-interview with somebody who was critical to the making of my film, talked to him for a couple of hours but didn’t have a camera or a good tape recorder – and I said I’d be back in a couple of weeks and [soon afterward] he died.”

“It can take years to get the trust of the main subjects in your film.”

“There are a lot of people who want to be on TV - look at Jerry Springer – but the stories that interest me the most tend to be the stories of people who for one reason or another haven’t told their stories yet.”



Emmanuel Laurent

“‘To learn how to kill your darlings’, as Faulkner said. It means to be able to write-off this thing that you have been working on for months. And then you have to throw it away despite the energy and work that went into it. [Learn] not to cling to your ideas or the ability to go against your own ideas. Once you’ve learned that, you are an artist, I would say. It is not just about ideas, you have to look at how things work together.”



Barbara Barde

“Figuring out what you do best is often a real challenge for people. There are lots of people who decide to write, direct, star in, edit their own film. People don’t allow others to give them feedback or listen to people who can step back and say, ‘Is this a good film?’ I think that’s one of the things you find among directors and producers who have been in the business a long time: the ability to give good advice.”

“I always said that if I ever made a perfect film I’d quit, because I think it’s impossible. When I look at my films now, I think, ‘Oh, maybe we should change the music or do this differently’ ... I say to myself, ‘Why didn’t I speak up and get that changed?’ Not big stuff but little stuff.”

“There are times and places for [certain] films. I’ve learned that it’s okay to give up.”

"It's incredibly important to listen to what people are saying. If someone isn't giving you the money or not interested in being involved, find out why. Either you want to make the film the way you want to make it, or you give in and listen to people's input."

"[How do you know which films you want to stick to your plan for?] I think it comes down to why you want to do the story, what's driving the film and whom you're doing it for. Once we were working on a documentary and someone said, 'I think the story should be told this way', and I wanted to tell the story a different way and I said that I didn't think it should. And in the end we didn't make the film."

"The stories I think you go for are the ones that are good stories and are saleable. I now try not to get involved in projects that I don't think I can sell. I have enough of a good relationship with broadcasters that I'll call up or send an e-mail and ask 'What do you think?'"



Daniel Cross

"The challenge is to be able to make the work you want to make and to be able to distribute it. Sometimes the work that makes the money is not the work that is most meaningful."

"Maintain a good relationship with an arts board. Arts councils and arts boards are closing down. This is seriously scandalous. We need to respect and fight for arts councils so that Canadian documentary films stay strong on the international scene."

PRODUCING - FINDING THE RESOURCES AND THE SCREENS

YOUR PRODUCTION COMPANY – VALUES & MODELS

Establishing a production company can help you to make the films that you want to make, but finding the time to produce as well as make docs can be quite a juggling act. Working with a partner who shares your values may be one strategy that makes it more feasible.



Peter Lynch

"If Caroline [my wife and partner] were not a successful editor I would be in deep trouble. Partnership has been the key because someone else believes in me, which is good especially if you are going through a difficult period, waiting."

"Trying to find the balance between business and the need to go on to the next thing [is always challenging]. It happens organically for us."



Emmanuel Laurent

"I started a small production company in order to make the film that I thought had to be done. I did not feel that I had the qualities, training or experience to be a producer, but this is how I started. Little by little I started to produce my own films. Later I took pleasure in producing someone else's films. The input as a producer is also extremely exciting."

"I wanted to make films with filmmakers, with people who have the background and knowledge of film and the aesthetic and form that I am committed to."

"I started producing in the mid 80s and documentary did not really exist in France. More and more now we are changing the way of making films. For instance, documentary has switched from political to real art forms and into storytelling. We are more professional now."

"I am developing a lot of co-productions now with Canada and am very proud of that. It is quite ambitious, not only in terms of money but in terms of time."

"Film à Trois, my production company, is basically made up of three partners at the core. We have expanded with writers and projects in development."

"I am also running an association of producers here in France and we are traveling around the world to meet other producers in order to develop and match people with others."



Mark Achbar

“Peter Wintonick and I created Necessary Illusions in order to produce Manufacturing Consent. We came together through shared concerns about militarism, the destruction of the environment and the role of the media in perpetrating myths related to these issues. Recognizing the potential for alternative media to improve the situation, we created an organization whose mandate and objectives evolved from those concerns. Francis Miquet joined us in 1989.

The founding principles were:

- To develop a critical public awareness of the power and role of mainstream media and the potential of alternative media to counteract these forces.
- To encourage and protect free and creative expression through all manner of media.
- To assist individuals and groups to produce and use media to organize for positive social change.
- To develop and execute strategies for increased independent production.
- To develop audiences through creative and alternative means of distribution and exhibition.
- To develop a working process that is democratic, cooperative, egalitarian and non-hierarchical.

Since moving to Vancouver, I have had to create new companies for several projects. You can’t get public money otherwise. So Invisible Hand Productions seeds projects and owns equipment. Scalpel Productions owns Two Brides and a Scalpel. Big Picture Media Corporation made The Corporation.

I tried to incorporate many of the values from Necessary Illusions into my present corporate incarnations, but without a partner like Peter, it has been harder to implement. Maybe it’s because life was cheaper in Montreal and now people are older, have more financial obligations, or see themselves as professionals as well as mission-driven artists. Whatever the case in Montreal, for the most part it was an ego-free zone with zero conflicts over money. In Vancouver, let’s just say it’s been more of a challenge.”

MAINTAINING ARTISTIC VISION IN A BROADCAST REALITY

Persistence, passion, integrity, experience and finding commissioning editors or partners that believe in you are important factors in maintaining your artistic vision.



Peter Lynch

"I have been lucky. The National Film Board allowed me to make Project Grizzly and The Herd, exactly the kind of films that I wanted to make. [Because] there was some success that helped to generate some autonomy, people would then request a Peter Lynch film."

"You have to be able to find other ways to fund your film [beyond CTF and broadcasters]. It is a difficult time for documentary filmmakers. Television is getting narrower. Is it hot or not? That is how television sees it."

"The key is just to be able to keep having the courage and conviction to pursue your vision and the kinds of stories that interest you and the world. That gives you strength because if I did not believe in something I could not put up with the financial gaps and the resistance from funders. I have an overriding vision that I share with my partner and that is how I overcome [broadcast reality]."

"The more you can develop a project on your own, the more autonomy you will have and the more you can master the situation. Instead of just going the usual routes I am looking to Europe and the US to develop allies."



Emmanuel Laurent

"Writing books and forgetting about it allows me to step back and have a less frenzied point of view."

"I am always trying to find good filmmakers, partners and a place for the films."

"Don't try to produce for producing. You've got to really like the idea and go deep into it especially if you are going to spend the time."



Nettie Wild

"We have won some and lost some. What I have done on a concrete level to put a lid on these struggles is that I have a phrase that is written in my contracts that acknowledges that this is an independent point of view documentary film co-produced by Canada Wild productions and the broadcaster . . . It says I have editorial control, but I have never been able to get the words 'creative control' in there. So what that means is that it really comes down to personal relationships and it really comes down to how powerful your commissioning editor is within the broadcaster."



Mark Achbar

"I persist. And for the most part, I ignore the broadcast reality, except for the program length. I make the film I want to make and suffer the consequences, which in the case of The Corporation, as far as broadcasters go, has been an unexpected delight. Except for a couple of minor suggestions around aesthetics and one ethical quandary, we had virtually no creative interference. All the issues were resolved without weapons. But don't get me wrong. I'm not frivolous. I pay close attention to what well-paid lawyers tell me in terms of fair use and libel and all the rest. I'm not interested in spending a decade squandering all my financial resources in court."

DISTRIBUTION— STRATEGIES THAT WORK

Ensuring that your film is widely seen and disseminated is a must and many filmmakers choose to handle this task themselves. However, it is important to set your goals, recognize your limitations and learn about new avenues for distribution.



Emmanuel Laurent

"The basic strategy is to make the film get noticed at festivals and have distributors come to me. It is difficult because distributors should be part of the team, but sometimes they don't really have time to share the information that they gather. So I try to distribute films myself which is not the best thing, professionally speaking."

"Now I am working with other partners in Canada and Australia, so we might open up our strategy . . . we might work with an international distributor."



Peter Lynch

"My first doc was St. Bruno, My Eyes As Stranger, a six-minute piece which I took to Canadian Reflections and got more money for it and then it became a 25-minute piece. I found a distributor and would go to festivals and try to sell it."

"Now it is more complex [with A Whale of a Tale]. My co-producer Ed and I are working on this. The Film Board will distribute to some of the markets and we are trying to find a bigger distributor to do speciality markets: DVDs, that kind of home video market versus the educational market. We are trying to get it into the festival circuit. We are going to Vancouver and submitting to IDFA, Sundance, Rotterdam and Berlin and see if we can sell it. This film was a labour of love. In terms of distribution Ed and I are partners with the Film Board."



Mark Achbar

"My first two docs of substance were Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media and Two Brides and a Scalpel: Diary of a Lesbian Marriage. The first was distributed in Canada non-theatrically by the NFB, and by Mongrel Media in Canada, and Zeitgeist Films in the USA."

In France, Japan and other countries around the world, it was picked up by small art-house distributors. Jan Rofekamp of Films Transit did international TV sales to over 30 countries. Typical agent fee structure: he took 25% of sales. These days it's 30%. Two Brides resides with Video In in Vancouver and mostly plays festivals with occasional rentals."

"The Corporation is also represented by Jan Rofekamp. When I was looking for distribution, because I had a previous relationship with Zeitgeist, I kept that option open, but wanted to explore the possibility of working with a company with more substantial resources. So I engaged Cinetic to represent me and that brought interest from many mainstream distributors but very few actual deal offers, and in the end no offers that in my mind superseded the value I got with Zeitgeist. So I stayed with Zeitgeist for the USA. Mongrel is again doing Canada theatrically and for DVD. Filmwest is doing institutional/educational. And again, there are distributors around the world in each country or region.

(See www.thecorporation.com under "international" for the current list of who is doing what)."

"Alternative modes of distribution are tempting, but it depends considerably on what exactly you are trying to distribute and why. My goal is to increase the demographic of The Corporation, and for me, that meant getting it into as many mainstream theatres, business schools, and TV networks as possible. That's still my goal and pretty much what I devote myself to all day every day."



Peter Wintonick

"We mostly don't self-distribute. It takes too much time. We work with probably a dozen different distributors around the world. A lot of the works get 'versioned' and seen on European and North American public broadcasting systems."

"DVDs are now pretty important in the lives of documentaries."

"We have worked a lot with international sales agent Transit Films, which handles TV sales."



Nettie Wild

"With A Place Called Chiapas we hooked up with a distributor in the States, we self-distributed in Canada because the Canadian market is small enough that you can do that."

"It is a common sense model that takes about a year commitment."

"With FIX: the Story of an Addicted City we had always dealt with the independent cinemas, but most of our screenings were with Famous Players or Cineplex Odeon. The exhibitors were starting to figure out that we could make them money. The dollars and cents that made pulling something like that off went back to the independent fundraising done by the former mayor of Vancouver. He understood faster than the funding agencies that the film had to get into the cinemas and if we could get on 35mm it would run and have legs."

FESTIVALS & EVENTS: IDEAL ELEMENTS, WHERE TO GO AND WHY?

The most useful events are those that offer opportunities to connect with other filmmakers and with audiences, and, secondarily to see what is being sold. These events are very useful to new filmmakers.



Barbara Barde

"I think Hot Docs is great in terms of seeing films, taking in films from around the world and how people tell stories."



Mark Achbar

"My ideal industry event/market is: I walk up to a counter with a one-page proposal. Five minutes later an attractive attendant hands me a check for 1.5 million dollars, shakes my hand, gives me a light kiss on the cheek and wishes me luck. Then I spend the next three years making the film. Then I come back to the ideal industry event/market and enter a cozy room with comfortable seating. Several representatives of large non-profit co-op distributors (who by now control the industry) bid for the film. The highest bidder agrees on a mutually supportive distribution strategy with his 'competitors' and ensures that the film is seen world wide via every medium now known or heretofore invented."

"Hot Docs was useful. Banff was useful. The Toronto Film Festival was useful."



Ali Kazimi

"For me it's something that allows me to get completely absorbed in not just viewing films but also having the opportunity to discuss, debate and really talk about the creative aspect of filmmaking."

"Good to talk about the business end of things . . . I'm not fond of events driven entirely by the business of making films."

"Hot Docs . . . IDFA, I find those festivals really useful because I think, for the most, part filmmakers lead such isolated, atomized lives because of the nature of the business and because of the solitary aspect of filmmaking. It's wonderful to really celebrate. A festival is a celebration not just of the films that are there, but it's a celebration of filmmaking. I think just the possibility of connecting with that in an intensely concentrated period is great."



Daniel Cross

"Events are essential because this is where the broadcasters go."



Nettie Wild

"When you put together audience and filmmakers and set it up so that everyone gets to see almost everything, then you end up with this incredible dialogue over a couple of days."

"I love serious master classes where storytelling is addressed. I think that there should be more emphasis on editors and directors of photography, having the whole crew in one room, and get away from one person representing the work, telling anecdotal stories for two hours."

"People get so engrossed in the deal making, broadcasters drive it all. You hear all these stories about how it all came together at such-and-such a film festival. I think that may be rare."

"The best film festival I ever went to was the Amsterdam film fest. It was all in a relatively small place, there were only two films being shown at any one time, so the majority of people had seen your film. They set up very intelligent press conferences around each one of them."

"Film festivals celebrate film differently. When the film goes on the air there's no interaction."

"I find the pitch sessions make me very uncomfortable . . . You wind up with commissioning editors who have three minutes and you're throwing proposals at them and they have three days that they're at that particular festival then they take off."



Joe Berlinger

"For what I do, which is creating presence for my film in the theatrical markets, Sundance is the most important market, the premier event for someone who makes theatrically released documentaries."



Peter Wintonick

"IDFA [is the ideal] in the existing models – it is essentially seven film festivals in one. Whoever you are you can find a strand in the stream."

"These events are pretty crucial for filmmakers, not so much the small events and not so much the really commercial markets unless you live in the formulaic documentary world. For auteur driven documentary these events are pretty essential."

"For potential television financing there's IDFA, Hot Docs and Sunnyside of the Docs. MIPCOM/MIPDOC in Cannes is mostly for the sale of finished work."

"Increasingly there are international, regional documentary film conferences: Australia, for example. Berlin, Rotterdam, Vancouver have film festivals where there are important strands of documentary."



Emmanuel Laurent

"The most useful is the Marché in France, which is more of a market. There is Festival de Nyon in Switzerland and IDFA in Amsterdam. These are very alive and a good way to make your project noticed. Of course, my favourite is the World Congress of Science Producers. We are

about 400 people gathered to watch each other's films. It's very alive."

"In Europe pitching is something that is not so common . . . we are learning to do it. It is a very efficient way of doing things, but I have to train myself, it's not natural with my background."



Peter Lynch

"Some festivals are good for critical acclaim, some are better markets and some are better locations. In terms of one that has balance of all these it would be Berlin. Rotterdam is a good critical festival, but I would say that IDFA is a better market. I like Toronto and Hot Docs. I like to put my work outside the documentary context and have it seen as a film."

"This year I showed my film at [Toronto International Film Festival's] Reel to Real and I found that it put me on an international level. It was great . . . to move the Perspective Canada program into a broader context. I sat at the table with famous filmmakers from other places. It was very useful for business and sanity and for just pure interest."

"You share stories and learn things and it is a chance to educate yourself as to what is going on."

"To get a balance of critical, public, industry and commercial interest at a festival would be the most gratifying thing to me."

NEW BROADCAST OUTLETS – WHAT DO THEY MEAN FOR YOU?



Peter Lynch

"They have not changed the way I work. In terms of the way I work it does not influence me at all. I never think about pitching what broadcasters want. I think about how I can pitch what I want to them."

"Now, if they said something irrational like, 'We are looking for a feature film on soccer', I might do something irrational and say, 'I want to do that', and pitch them, but other than that I cringe."



Peter Wintonick

"The new proliferation of second, third and fourth tier pitching platforms has been very injurious to the health of documentary in the real sense of the word documentary. It has had a downward pressure on the average budgets, forced people to extremes – plan a film for five days, shoot a film in five days, edit in five days. So, it has demeaned the meaning of documentary as I define it . . . This has had an adverse effect generally on more traditional sources of money. At the same time one hopes there is an awakening to the possibilities of documentary and feature-length documentary."

“As agencies get stars in their eyes in the cult of celebrity transposed to documentary – the ‘docu-cult’ of celebrity—maybe agencies will be predisposed to supporting filmmakers who need support earlier on in their projects, rather than getting them to work in key corporate, core documentary production factories.”



Nettie Wild

“Prior to Hot Docs I was very pessimistic. The only benefit I could see in the proliferation of channels, particularly cable channels, was that everybody’s budgets got smaller and smaller because there were more channels but nobody had any money to pay for real budgets, so if you moved away from the two major broadcasters [CBC, CTV] you immediately started to get into pennies.”

“In terms of the art form and the storytelling, it is dismal.”

“It has completely affected the way people think of what a documentary is.”

“When people talk about this great opening for documentary they either don’t know what they are talking about or they are referring to the word documentary being expanded to include what is known as information programming.”

“On the upside, both the Documentary Channel and the History Channel really just surprised the socks off me after Hot Docs and took me aside and said that they had looked around the landscape and had seen that documentary was doing well at the box office, but on the other hand there was no money for Canadian documentaries and they came to me and said if you come up with an idea for a feature doc we will fund it... That was the first time I ever had a broadcaster say a feature documentary needs serious money and were prepared to put it up.”

BLUE SKY

WITH UNLIMITED RESOURCES, WHAT FILMS WOULD YOU MAKE?

Money isn't everything, but it helps. The other big resources are time and the freedom to make the kinds of films that interest you. Most of these filmmakers don't they'll eventually make that big film they've been dreaming about. Others take the inspiration as it comes. For some filmmakers it might mean venturing into new territory and mixing some of the best elements of documentary and drama.



Emmanuel Laurent

"I would like to make musical. We don't make them the way we used to make them because we don't have the time to train the dancers, we can't afford them. I would start that tradition again. Perhaps adapt my own novel."



Peter Lynch

"There are a couple of films that I have on the go. One is a kind of hybrid film of soccer and family history, loosely based on some diaries of my grandfather. I have a dramatic film called The Floating World about a guy who wakes up in the desert, sort of like Robinson Crusoe. It could be a personal film, a genre film. I would like to have the freedom to combine documentary [and drama without having to worry about commercial success]. This is what I'm sort of doing already, but I want to do it on a bigger scale."



Ali Kazimi

"If there was a film I wanted to make I would be working on it . . . and I would be trying to make it happen one way or the other . . . it wouldn't necessarily be a documentary. In many ways I have always seen myself as a filmmaker who is interested in documentaries, rather than just a documentary filmmaker. For me that's an important distinction. What's frustrating is that there's this status thing between what documentary makers can and cannot do, the assumption being that if you're a drama filmmaker, it's very easy to make a documentary, but not the other way around. And that transition is, in my experience, particularly difficult within the Canadian framework."



Michael McNamara

"I would do some sort of history of pop music, told in a way that it hasn't been told before. I know what that way is. Because you need the music rights, it would be a very expensive and very difficult thing to do."

"There are a couple of dramas I'd like to do as well. One is a drama that Judy and I have been working on for a while, it's loosely based on a documentary called Wrinkles, about aging fashion models who are now in their 60s."



Nettie Wild

“Either a feature documentary or a feature narrative that in terms of shooting approach, allows me to create a work of art. Right now I’m in Bosnia shooting my first narrative fiction, but that doesn’t mean I’ve given up on documentary filmmaking. I feel that documentary film is able to delve deeply into life and storytelling to a point, but there’s a point after which you can go no further. In my latest film, *FIX*, there were two frontiers over which we couldn’t pass. One was that the illegal lives of our characters could not be filmed. But I want to go there, go past that barrier and flesh out that reality and take the fictional camera to a place that the doc camera couldn’t go and use it to film the story’s truth. The second frontier is the psychology of your characters. Oftentimes characters will stop you from filming their true vulnerabilities. But fiction allows you to go there. I want to use this project coming up to go over those frontiers and see if I’m enough of an artist to do it. My new film is on the same subject as *FIX*, drug use in the city, so I’ve always seen the films in my head as partners.”

“What I would love to do is to be able to make a narrative script that feeds on my work as a doc filmmaker – that incredible sense of reality that only doc can give you – and work with a script and work with actors without losing that quality. To push myself into more of an experimental art form, and that I have the time and the budget that allows me to do this. My hunger is to move out of a linear storytelling, I get so inspired by colleagues who deal with a more experimental head than mine.”



Joe Berlinger

“It would absolutely be a documentary, but I don’t have a list of subjects. I like to be hit with a situation by being exposed to it because I like to make a film of an unfolding situation. I live in the world around me and wait till I’m hit with a new subject that’s ready to go and respond to that. The thing that I find harder to get off the ground is a feature film. I have no trouble getting a documentary off the ground, but I find it harder to get the resources for the fiction part of my career. There are a number of subjects I’d like to cover in fiction that I’m passionate about. I was really inspired by *American Splendor*’s brilliant combining of reality and fiction filmmaking. I have a couple of hybrid fiction features that I’m trying to get off the ground.”



Peter Wintonick

“I think that there are many films that I would like to make and more resources would just make it easier. I would buy up every piece of corrupt media production: CNN, Time Warner, Fox and shut them all down and that would be part of the research for a film. It would be about trying to reclaim mass media, which is my definition of documentary.”

“I’ve been making a film for four years about Utopia, and if I had unlimited resources I might focus just on that. I wouldn’t have to be doing 17 things at once. I made a decision to work that way because I didn’t want to answer to anyone’s deadlines and pressures. Which conversely means that unlimited resources don’t necessarily make for better films.”



Gary Marcuse

"If you'd asked me that three years ago, it would be a series on the circumpolar navigation of the Arctic to revisit how we understand that part of the world. It is a lovely project because it takes you to places you've never been and that's one of the perks, to travel to meet people. Also, as Southerners, we don't understand the Arctic. I sent one e-mail out once to scientists asking what we should cover and I got 300 responses.

Now I made a film about the Russian Arctic. We made the one in the series that we thought was most important. I have a passion for re-telling twentieth century history. The theme of all the feature films I've made was a reinterpretation of 20th century history. I have a passion for moral and ethical stuff. I have an eclectic style. I try to bring together a big collage of ideas, archival footage and people who are actively doing something and try and blend those stories together to reframe what we've been told.

I'm kind of at the mercy of things that come in front of me. One million dollars is what you'd need to do something really gorgeous."



Daniel Cross

"Maybe I'd make the film about Martin Luther King that I was interested in making when I started in film."

"I have this idea that in the seven deserts of the seven continents, documentary filmmakers would make a film about the seven deadly sins."



Barbara Barde

"There are a couple of films we're working on. There's a feature film we're developing right now and I would love to get more money to do it. It's based on a non-fiction book called *Stolen Life* written by a woman who gets the longest prison sentence ever for a Native woman. I like the story because it ends with her having the courage to write the book and talk about her life."



Mark Achbar

"Burning Man. IMAX"

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Mark Achbar, DIRECTOR/PRODUCER

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For almost 30 years, Mark Achbar's work in film and video has challenged apathy around issues of poverty, media control, human rights, U.S. hegemony and corporate power.

Achbar is best known for his recent work *The Corporation* as well as *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media*, which he co-directed and co-produced with Peter Wintonick. The film was honoured with 22 awards and distinctions, screened theatrically in 500 cities, appeared in more than 50 international film festivals and aired on 30 national TV networks.

Achbar received a Gemini nomination for Best Writer for his work on *The Canadian Conspiracy*, a cultural/political satire for CBC and HBO's *Comedy Experiments*. In 1999 Achbar worked with editor Jennifer Abbott to direct and produce *Two Brides And A Scalpel: Diary of a Lesbian Marriage*, the story of Canada's first legally-married same-sex couple.



Barbara Barde, PRODUCER, UPFRONT ENTERTAINMENT

President / Executive Producer
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Barbara Barde has worked in the Canadian broadcast industry for over 20 years. Barde is committed to issue-based programming that challenges audiences to think about the world in which they live.

In 1994, Barde successfully spearheaded the application for a new women's channel, the Women's Television Network. As President of Toronto Women in Film and Television, she drove many initiatives to improve both the employment and portrayal of women in the media. Barbara was also the Chair of the Canadian Film Centre and the President and owner of *Why Not Productions*, which specialized in documentaries, made-for-TV movies and television series.

Ms. Barde has produced over 250 television programs, including 16 major series. Her programs have aired nationally and internationally for independent, public and educational broadcasters.



Joe Berlinger, DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER

Filmmaker

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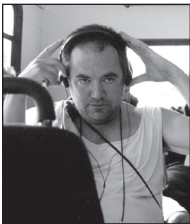
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Since the release of his breakout documentary *Brother's Keeper* in 1992, storyteller and documentarian Joe Berlinger has been obsessed with scrutinizing the criminal justice system in small-town America. Berlinger's films often focus on those who live on the fringes of what is considered conventional morality. His most recent film, *Metallica: Some Kind of Monster*, co-directed by Bruce Sinofsky, is a film that redefines group therapy. It follows Metallica for the better part of 2001-2003, a time of tension and release for the rock band, as they record their album *St. Anger*, fight bitterly, and seek the counsel of their on-call shrink.

Berlinger brought his real-world sensibilities to the small screen with his work on television's popular *Homicide: Life on the Streets*. In 1996, Berlinger returned to documentary film with *Paradise Lost*. The film raises complicated questions regarding the interpretation of and reaction to fringe elements of society. As with *Brother's Keeper*, *Paradise Lost* garnered numerous festival awards and showcased the filmmaker's formidable storytelling skills. Four years later, Berlinger made a rare move in the world of documentary film, filming a sequel, *Paradise Lost 2: Revelations*.

Berlinger considers himself to be a storyteller as well as a documentarian, and his films connote the emotional and political themes of contemporary life.



Daniel Cross, DIRECTOR/PRODUCER

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Daniel Cross is best known for his feature length documentary *The Street: A Film with the Homeless*, which has won awards at film festivals around the world. Cross followed up *The Street* with two projects addressing homelessness in Canada: the radical *S.P.I.T.: Squeegee Punks In Traffic* and *The Homeless Street Archive*. The Archive empowers homeless Canadians to tell their stories on the Internet. Cross teaches film production at Concordia University's Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema.



Ali Kazimi, INDEPENDENT DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER

Director/Producer

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Born and raised in India, Ali Kazimi began his career as a self-taught still photographer. In 1993, he arrived in Canada on a scholarship to study film production at York University, and later graduated with his Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours). As a director and cinematographer, Kazimi has traveled the world working on a range of films. His documentary works include: *Flying Light* (1984), *Narmada the Valley Rises* (1994), *Shooting Indians - A Journey with Jeffrey Thomas* (1997), *Passage from India* (1998), *Documenting Dissent* (2001) and *Continuous Journey* (2004). Over the last 20 years, Kazimi's films have been screened internationally and have won several awards. His current project is a film for CBC Television's *Passionate Eye*.

Kazimi is the past president of the Independent Film and Video Alliance, and a past co-chair of the Canadian Independent Film Caucus (Toronto). He is a member of the Directors Guild of Canada and the Documentary Organisation of Canada/Documentaristes du Canada. Kazimi makes his home in Toronto.



Emmanuel Laurent, PRODUCER/DIRECTOR/WRITER

Producer

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Emmanuel Laurent is the CEO of Films à Trois, President of the Association de Science & Télévision (AST) and a steering committee member of the World Congress of Science Producers, the Union Syndicale de la Production Audiovisuelle (USPA) and TV France Internationale.

Laurent has been making documentary films for over 30 years. Major works include the documentary triptych *The Brenne Country, Saintonge Between The Vineyards and Under a Paris Roof*. He also produced the celebrated diptych *Death by Design* and *The Life and Times of Life and Times*, which won 10 international awards. Most recently, between 1998 and 2003 he produced, wrote and directed *The Man from Kennewick*, produced *The Real Life and Sea Man's Yarn* and was involved in two features, *Six Figures* and *Else*. In 2003, Laurent published his novel, *Mademoiselle V. Diary of a Heedless Girl*.



Peter Lynch, INDEPENDENT DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER

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Peter Lynch is a Toronto filmmaker who has shown his acclaimed work both theatrically and on television around the world. His works include the wildly successful *Project Grizzly*, a cult classic singled out by Quentin Tarantino as one of his favorite films in 1996. Lynch's first fiction film, 1994's *Arrowhead*, won a Genie award and has been listed by American film critic Gerald Peary in his top 20 dramatic shorts of all time. Lynch's third feature film is listed in 2002's *Film Comment* as one of contributing editor Nicole Armour's top 10 films of the year.



Gary Marcuse, PRODUCER/DIRECTOR/WRITER

Programming Executive

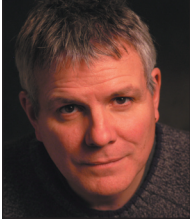
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Gary Marcuse has worked as a broadcast journalist, documentary writer, and freelance host and producer for CBC Radio and Radio Canada International. He has written and produced more than 100 hours of radio documentaries. He currently works as an independent director and producer creating broadcast documentaries and educational video collections for use in schools. He is also the co-author of *Cold War Canada*, which examines the impact of the Cold War on Canadian politics, labour and culture. Marcuse has been active in cultural politics as a national representative of the ACTRA Writers' Council and national chair of the Canadian Independent Film Caucus.



Michael McNamara

Co-President

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Michael McNamara is an award-winning filmmaker based in Toronto. Together with partner Judy Holm, he runs Markham Street Films Inc. Specializing in projects that are edgy, smart, provocative and funny, their recent titles include the documentaries *The Genuine Article*, *Flatly Stacked* and *Meet the Sumdees*. They are currently shooting the documentary *Penis Dementia* and developing the feature-length documentary *100 Films and a Funeral*. With first time writer/director David Bezmozgis, they are also producing the dramatic feature *Victoria Day*.



Nettie Wild, INDEPENDENT DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER

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Nettie Wild came to documentary film with a background in journalism and theatre. She has worked as an actress, producer and writer and is a founding member of Vancouver's *Headlines*, *Touchstone* and *Tahmanous* theatres. Canada Wild Productions, her independent documentary film and television production company, specializes in accessible and engaging documentaries about controversial issues. The 2004 Hot Docs Festival "Focus On" programme featured retrospective screenings of Wild's four crucial documentaries: *A Rustling of Leaves: Inside the Philippine Revolution*, *Blockade*, *A Place Called Chiapas*, and *FIX: The Story of an Addicted City*. All of Wild's films have won a range of Canadian and International awards, from the Berlin Emerging Filmmakers Award to Canada's Genie for Best Feature Documentary to the International Documentary Association's Award for Best Feature Documentary.



Peter Wintonick

Director / Producer

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With 30 years as a film professional, Peter Wintonick produces and directs indie film and next-media, an array scanning theatrical docs and political work. He makes award-winning media about media. He directed *Cinema Verité: Defining the Moment*, and co-directed with Katerina Cizek *Seeing is Believing: Handicams, Human Rights and the News*. He also co-directed with Mark Achbar the infamous *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media*, winner of more than 20 awards.

Exiled from the 'industrial motion fiction jungle,' Wintonick has aided and abetted many filmmakers, from Peter Watkins to Nettie Wild to Ron Mann. He is a founding Quebec board member of the Documentary Organisation of Canada/ Documentaristes du Canada, a contributor to international cinemags like DOX, the international editor of *Point of View Magazine*, and an advisor to festivals around the world. He and Francis Miquet run Montreal-based Necessary Illusions, producing non-fiction cinema and television including his current work-in-process, *pilgrIMAGE*.