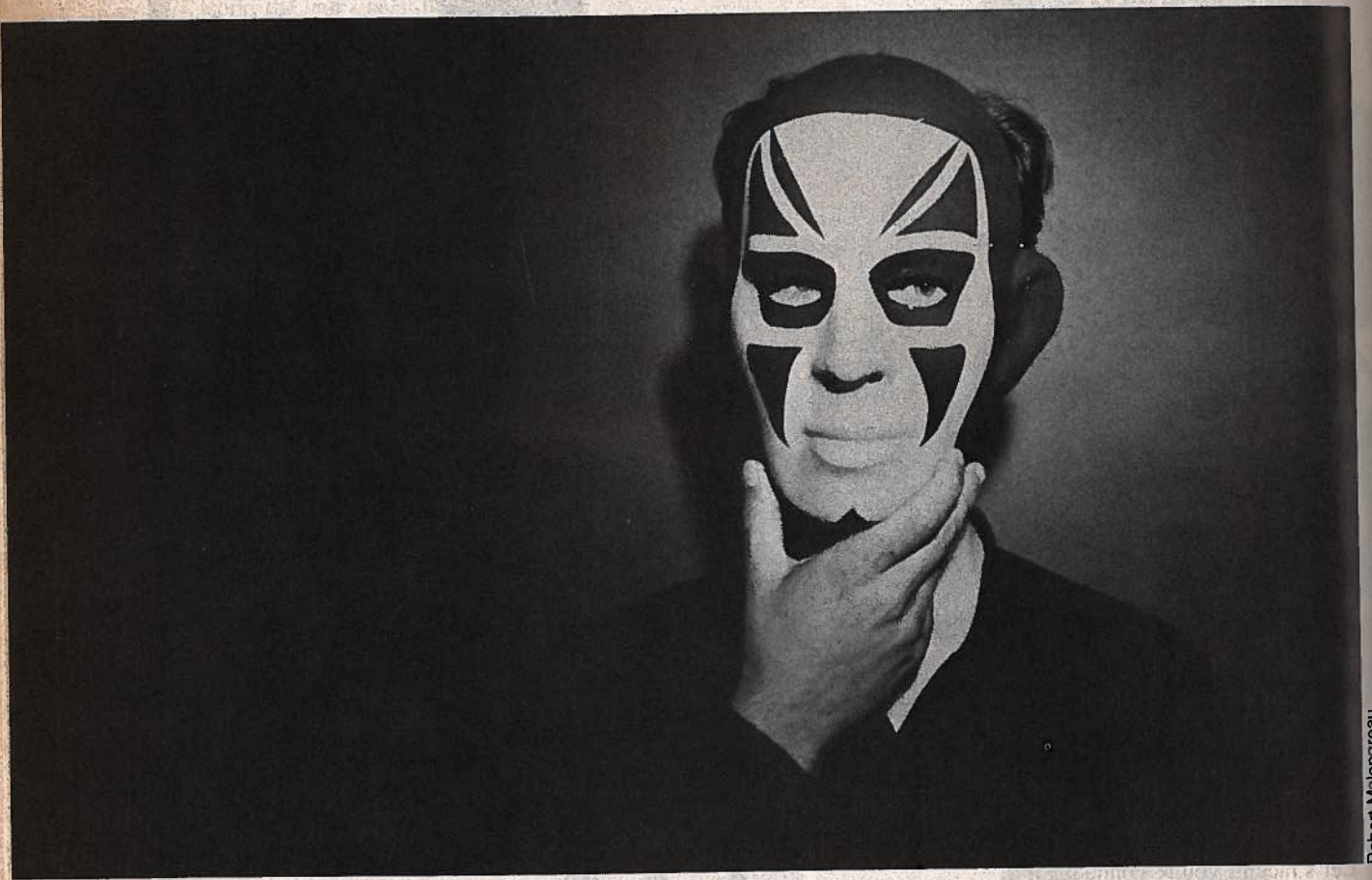


QUEBEC'S FIRST SUPER-8 FESTIVAL



Robert Malengreau

IS A WINNER!

FRANK VIVIANO

In English, it's pronounced "Super-Eight." The French make it sound like a breakfast cereal: "Super-Wheat." And in Quebec, it means first rate cinema. At least that's the conclusion I drew from the 1980 Festival International du Film Super-8 du Quebec, an event that was full of pleasant surprises from beginning to end.

For starters, foreign visitors were met at Montreal's Dorval Airport by hospitable provincial officials who whisked them painlessly through customs and across town to a fine hotel, in the Paris-like district known as Saint-Denis.

The early February weather cooperated with unusually sunny skies and warm temperatures. There wasn't a speck of snow on the ground in the continent's northernmost major city.

HIT OF THE WEEKEND

But the best surprises were on the Festival screen. Amidst scores of films representing the tops in international Super-8 production from Europe, the Middle East, North and South America, the contributions of our French Canadian hosts were the hit of the weekend. Italian critic Romano Fattorossi spoke for the majority of Festival goers when he called *les films Quebecois* "better shot, better edited and more effective than most of the international entries."

What makes this so impressive is the fact that they were student films, turned out for a separate national competition mounted by the Quebec Association for Young People's Cinema. Part of the credit must go to the National Film Board of Canada, which puts the United States and every other country to shame when it comes to supporting young filmmakers.

Larger credit, however, should be accorded people like Richard Clark, the talented film instructor whose efforts to encourage high quality production in the colleges

and universities of Quebec has paid off so handsomely. It was Clark who organized the Festival, and if he wanted it to serve as a showcase for his students' work, he succeeded beyond expectations.

Two student films were among the finest Super-8 productions I've ever seen. In *Bar Rock*, Michel Payette took viewers on an eight-minute tour through the grisly remains of a nightclub destroyed by fire in December, 1978. The sharpness of its images and the emotional force of its tone deserve comparison with Alain Resnais' *Night and Fog*.

Another young filmmaker, Philippe Bergeron, is surely on his way to very big things. His *Visions* was an exercise in com-

"The audience was simply stunned by *My Father*, an account of the last weeks in the life of a Chinese-American who had abandoned his family 17 years earlier."

puterized special effects every bit as spellbinding as those in *Star Wars*. Monsieur Bergeron has promised us a look at computerized effects for limited budgets in a future issue of SUPER-8 FILMAKER.

Thanks to films such as these, Quebec is not just on the Super-8 map anymore; it's one of the most prominent features in the topography of independent cinema. Which is not to say, of course, that the rest of the Festival was a disappointment. In fact, it testified to the continuing health of Super-8 as an important medium of personal expression, available to people almost everywhere.

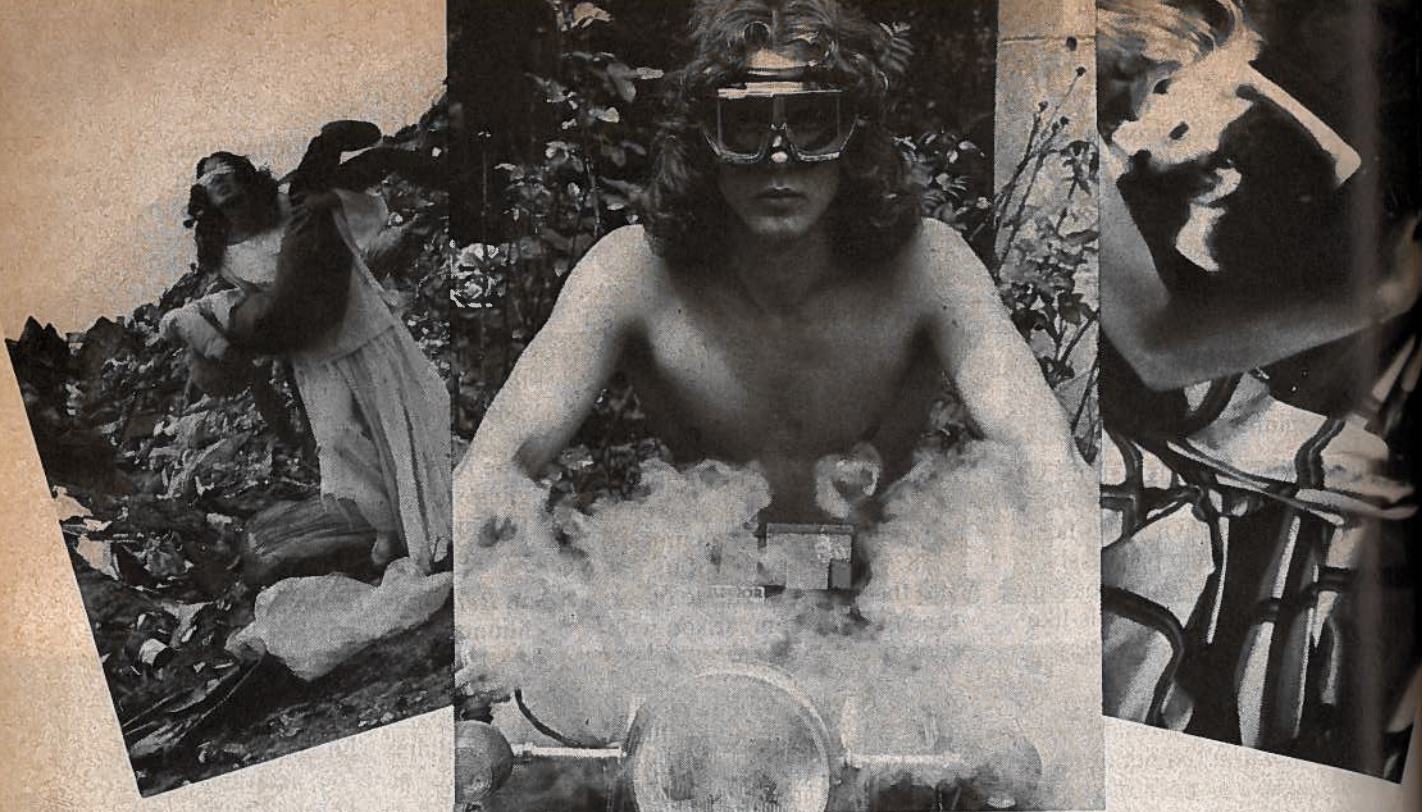
Among the many documentary films at Montreal, three stood out. *Ouled El Abed*, produced by a film collective in Tunisia, explored the problems of a small village located miles away from any school. Like many documentaries, it had a political target, in this case the failures of a Tunisian Government project aimed at "democratizing education." The result was a significant glimpse of life in the Third World, envisioned and described by the people who live it.

In *Return to Hiroshima*, U.S. filmmaker Francis S. Lestingi joined grim stills of the atomic bomb's first victims with a voice-over narrative by a horrified soldier who entered the city shortly after its devastation in 1945. The escalation of anti-nuclear sentiment was much in evidence at the Festival. Three separate American films dealt with the menace of atomic warfare.

Jacques Vendenborre's *Couvin Guerre Au Barrage (Couvin at War With the Dam)* concerns itself with the efforts of the citizens of Couvin, a Belgian town, to prevent construction of a huge dam that would destroy their community in the event of an accidental spill.

Animated films were surprisingly scarce, but Daniel Erdodi's *Moi et Les Autres (Me and the Others)* and Lewis Cooper's *Get in the Picture* made up for the shortage with their intelligence and wit. The first, a French production, sent its chief character scrambling through Paris streets with a giant eye in hot pursuit. Englishman Cooper used clay pixillation to shape and reshape his viewer's understanding of the differences between the surrealism of the filmed image and the reality outside of it.

In the fiction division, Venezuelan Carlos Castillo's *TV-O* was a great popular favorite. The movie won 3rd prize in the 1979 Caracas Festival ("Caracas '79,"



Photos: (L to R) Lisa Castillo, Phillippe Bergeron, Carlos Castillo.

Vol. 7, No. 8/1979). Its title is a pun, meaning both "television" and "Te Vio"—"I See You," in Spanish. It treats a Caracas woman who finds her perfect lovmate on television, and takes the set to bed with her.

Il Etait Trop Tard Pour Partir (It Was Too Late To Leave), by Iranian filmmaker Abdullah Bakhideh, provided the audience with a more tragic brand of fiction. The film's only characters were a husband and wife, she dying and he waiting, set against the existential landscape of a Persian Gulf desert.

Two experimental films earned special attention. Robert Malengreau, publisher of *Pour le Cinema Belge*, Belgium's excellent film magazine, brought along his *Sept Images Impossibles (Seven Impossible Images)*, a dream-like montage inspired by such artists as Warhol, Pasolini, Jean Genet and David Hockney.

Joseph Morder's *Les Balcons de Caracas (The Balconies of Caracas)* is an intimate journal of his experiences at last year's Caracas Super-8 Festival, tying quick cuts of that event and its participants to a narrative in

which Morder ponders his childhood as a Polish refugee in South America.

NATIONAL RETROSPECTIVES

Based on the response to a special series of retrospective screenings compiled by representatives of the 11 nations participating in the Quebec Festival, U.S. filmmakers have plenty to crow about. The popular interest in Bill Chayes' *Living in the City*, a pixillated commentary on the

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frenzy of urban life, was so great that a second showing had to be arranged. The audience was also impressed by Steve Antonuccio's *The Making of a Family*, which chronicled the birth of a child and its impact on other children and parents.

But it was another personal documentary, also a prizewinner in Caracas' 1979 Festival, that really seized attention. There was dead silence following Angelina Chen's *My Father*. The audience was simply stunned by this account of the last weeks in the life of a Chinese-American who had abandoned his family 17 years earlier and moved to Germany. Ms. Chen travelled to Europe to see her father before his death, and recorded the emotionally intense visit in Super-8, along with a deeply moving voice-over narration expressing the terrible ambivalence she felt about the experience. There is no exaggerating the effect this film had on viewers.

Retrospectives from other countries offered ample opportunity for the kind of speculation a viewer seldom derives from commercial films, which so often lose their cultural peculiarity in an effort to mimic the slickness of Hollywood. Here, however, were films which almost asked the mind to consider what makes one culture differ from another.

The films of South America, for example, were full of the mystical heritage of that continent's In-

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Super-8 filmmaker Jacques Vendenborre documented a protest in Couvin, Belgium.

dian peoples, mixed with the Spanish appreciation of symbolism, and the "latin beat."

French and Belgian films were marked by the Gallic love for intellectual and political debate, sometimes at the expense of images—although the contributions from Quebec demonstrated that a marriage of French argumentativeness and eye-

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catching visuals is quite possible.

The Italians showed once again that they understand humor as well as anyone on the globe. One of the most amusing examples was a film shot in Milan entirely by a group of 12-year-olds out to retell the Dracula tale in a modern setting, where the vampire must adjust to the distractions of heavy automobile traffic and loud rock-and-roll. It proved the axiom that Super-8 can be great kid's stuff; these particular kids told their story very well.



This Belgian mother protests at a damsite in Couvin *Guerre Au Barrage*.

The English reminded us how it was that a small island could acquire an empire: sheer perseverance. Americans have a lot to learn from the British when it comes to identifying a concept and fully exploring it.

The weekend ended with a meeting of the newly constituted International Federation for Super-8 Cinema, which hopes to sponsor more events like the Festival du Quebec. If that hope is realized, filmmakers all over the world will benefit from the opportunity to share knowledge, skills and achievements. *Vive le Super-Wheat!* □

Put a "third hand" on your tripod to run the camera while you zoom, fade and pan

Hours in the sun have tested both your film ambition and your camera, but what a ball game . . . and what a film! You've already shot a pile of rolls with incredible scenes of both players and fans. Now the home team is ahead by one run. It's the top of the 9th, one out, bases loaded.

The batter hits a grounder; it looks like a double play! Quickly your left hand triggers the camera's run switch as the other hand guides the tripod pan handle, following the ball to second, then to first . . . but help!

You want to zoom into the catch at first base but you need a third hand to manipulate the lens! Too late . . . the play is history now.

How can you solve a filmmaking problem like this one? The solution is a small push-button switch installed at the end of your tripod's pan handle. You can then shoot and pan with one hand, leaving the other hand free to control focus and effects buttons.

Third Hand Parts

You'll need a camera with a remote control jack and a tripod with a hollow, tubular handle. Most tripod handles have a plastic or rubber grip on the end, and if the grip doesn't have a hole (most do), you'll need to drill or cut a hole at the end. You'll also need soldering equipment. All other materials are available from electronics stores like Radio Shack, and include the following: one miniature push-button switch (called an SPST contact), one subminiature 1/16-inch phone plug, about 30 inches of small-gauge, two-wire zip cord and some electrical tape.

Finally, you'll need some means of securing the switch at the end of your tripod handle (Figure 1). This can be any one of a number of things: silicone rubber tub caulk, rubber tape, Scotch Fill,

Epoxy glue or a similar material that insulates, adheres to metal and rubber and hardens into place.

Start by separating the two wires on one end of the zip cord for

"You'll need a camera with a remote control jack, a tripod with a hollow, tubular handle and soldering equipment."

about an inch. Carefully remove the insulation on each wire for a 1/4-inch. Solder one wire to one post of the SPST switch (Figure 2). Then solder the other wire to the second post.

Insulate by wrapping electrical tape around each post and the bare wire. *Be sure that neither wire touches the other or touches the metal of the handle when the switch is installed.* The soldering

must be done neatly and carefully as there is very little room to work on this small switch.

Now push the free end of the zip cord through the tripod handle from back to front. This brings your switch into the approximate position that your thumb will later find convenient. However, do not secure the switch into place at this time.

Remote Plug

The phone plug has two parts, the plug itself and a screw-on plastic cap (Figure 3). Separate the parts and push the zip cord through the cap, making certain that the threaded end of the cap faces the end of the cord.

Strip down the insulation on the end of the zip cord for about an inch and separate the two wires. Remove 1/4-inch of insulation from each wire and solder the wires to the two posts of the phone plug (Figure 3) in the same manner you did for the switch. It doesn't matter which wire connects to which post. Work carefully so that no wire strands or solder particles touch. Screw the plastic cap in place.

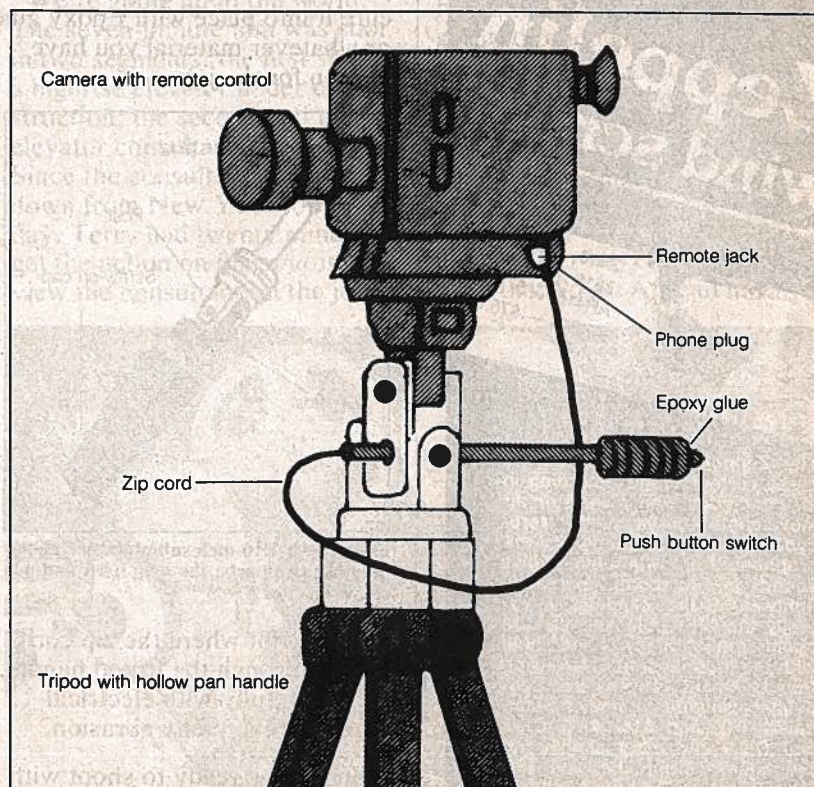


Figure 1. Once you've assembled the push-button device, you'll need to secure the switch at the end of the tripod handle.

Hideo Iwata