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Compassionate Activism in a Tibetan Community-in-exile

I happened to be in India last year on Antioch Education Abroad's Buddhist Studies in Bodh Gaya (Bihar) program. For the independent research component of the program, I chose to spend a month in Dharamsala researching vegetarianism in exiled-Tibetan culture. As Tibet's religious heritage is part of the Mahayana (or, "Universal") school of Buddhism, believers follow the texts known as sutras. In these texts, the case is made that eating meat is a violation of the first Buddhist precept of "no killing." The eighth chapter of the Lankatilaka Sutra even outlines all of the Buddha's reasons for vegetarianism, which include avoiding meat because there is no way of knowing if a being that you might eat was your mother in a previous life. But for Tibetans, following the Buddha's prescription of vegetarianism has been difficult because of how bleak and difficult the land itself is. Tibet is frigid and mountainous, allowing few things to be grown there. For its people—particularly the nomadic pastoralists—to survive, meat and animal products must be eaten. But since Tibetan Buddhist philosophy has always favored a meatless diet and the Dalai Lama has been a staunch advocate (though not a practitioner) of vegetarianism since fleeing Tibet, I was interested to see if the community in exile—a very different environment, with all of the food resources available in India which had not been in Tibet—would move towards a vegetarian diet. It was there, while doing my research, that I met a white crow.

For Tibetans, the new locale of Dharamsala, India, would seem ripe for putting into practice an act of compassion that has historically been impossible for them to perform. Strolling through McLeod-Ganj, one notices signs of a turning tide, such as the large number of vegetarian restaurants. There's the Gakyi Vegetarian Health Food Restaurant, which offers traditional Tibetan cuisine that is entirely vegetarian (including their famous mussels). A few doors down the street from there is the Shangri-La Restaurant, another diner offering purely vegetarian Tibetan dishes. The Shangri-La also enjoys the distinction of being maintained by the...
The Cleveland Cinematheque is run by Ewing and Tim Harry, who serve as its assistant director. Harry, who attended Kent State University and majored in Film Studies, is also an independent filmmaker (mostly experimental and documentary) and has lived and worked in New York and San Francisco. Harry assists in promoting the films and managing the theatre where they are shown. He also supplies and catalogues stills, posters, and films in the Cinematheque’s archives. Ewing is responsible for choosing, booking, and shipping the films that are eventually shown at the Cinematheque. Other responsibilities that tend to fall on the shoulders of these two cineastes include publicizing, lobbying for coverage, supervising ticket sales and projectionists and paying the bills. “Whatever needs to be done to make the program work, we both will do,” Harry said.

From my internship at the Cleveland Cinematheque this summer, I saw first-hand how the Cinematheque was run and all that it entailed. I realized how distribution of the monthly member mailings and calendars were so important in maintaining the support from the Cinematheque audience. I saw the eclectic press releases, movie stills and posters in the archives, from The Dreamlife of Angels to The Apple. I overheard how Ewing would negotiate bringing a film to the Cinematheque, or how Tim Harry would decide to write a public announcement for a film series. All of this for the sake of cinema.

I have seen many programs come and go this past summer, including “British Cinema: The Changing of the Guard”, “Brazil: Cinema Novo and Beyond”, “The Magic of Miyazaki”, and recently, “Alfred Hitchcock: Centennial 1899-1999.” It is not hard to see that the Cleveland Cinematheque is dedicated to bringing a wonderful array of films every month. It is no wonder why so many are flocking to Cleveland to see a newly restored version of a film, for example, or the Ohio premiere of another. “Cleveland is the best film city in the state in terms of what’s shown here,” Ewing said.

Just how does the Cleveland Cinematheque manage to bring such films to Cleveland? 85% of the Cinematheque’s budget comes from ticket sales, 10% from the Ohio Arts Council and 5% from memberships. Despite the lack of a publicity budget, the Cinematheque manages to draw a crowd of approximately 600 people on the weekend. The calendar of films to be shown is what draws locals. “We rely on the power of our calendar, which is distributed to 9,000 people, mostly locally. Another 9,000 are placed in coffee shops, college bookstores, resale shops, record stores, art and live theatre joints, and just about anywhere else that folks who like movies will take notice,” Harry said. Harry and Ewing work together on the bi-monthly calendar which features the dates, times and descriptions of the films to be shown for those two months.

The Cinematheque brings films from France, England, Brazil, India, China, Saudi Arabia, Mexico, Italy, Japan, etc. and also showcases the talents of U.S. and more specifically, local filmmakers’ works. Harry offers that it is all about the want, not necessarily the need, to develop an audience.

“We have to take chances and start the trend, to show people what is cool by putting it out there. For example, the Cinematheque was the first place in Cleveland (or for that matter in the U.S.) to show Jackie Chan 12 years ago,” Harry said.

The Cinematheque has had further success in showing films from India. “Bollywood is a bigger industry than Hollywood and some of their filmmakers are real masters,” Harry said. Animation has also done well, including Spike & Mike’s Sick and Twisted Festival of Animation. “The college crowd has a taste for it because of the obvious, due to the raunchiness and looseness of the films,” Harry said. October 28-31, 1999 drew over 1,500 people to the Russell B. Atkin Auditorium to see the films of the Japanese Animation series at Cleveland Cinematheque. Some of these featured Kiki’s Delivery Service and the acclaimed epic, Princess Mononoke, both from Japanese director Hayao Miyazaki.

The Avant-Garde Film and Music Festival features rare films from various countries and directors. This program tends to do well because people want to escape from the movies dominating the multi-plexes and experience the films of independent filmmakers who have something to say in an unconventional way. Harry, an independent filmmaker himself, explains that having live music accompany an experimental film produces a “hypnotic” effect. Documentaries on bands (like director Grant Lee’s People in the Trees) tend to draw a good crowd of fans as well. Other programs that have done quite well in the past include: The Robert Bresson Retrospective in February of 1998; Leni Riefenstahl Series in September of 1994; Krystof Kieslowski’s “The Decalogue.”

Ewing and Harry are already working together on planning the upcoming film programs for these next few months. Future endeavors may include: Best of Hong Kong, Retro, Tributarian Series, and documentary films. A Michael Antonioni Retrospective is something both Ewing and Harry are extremely motivated to bring to the Cinematheque in the near future. Furthermore, there may be a series showcasing the works of up-and-coming French filmmakers. “There seems to be a second wave going on and much of the work I have seen lately is quite exciting,” Harry said.

While Ewing and Harry both agree that the establishment of the Cleveland Film Society and the Cleveland Cinematheque, as well as the annual Cleveland International Film Festival are helping to further the support and energy behind the film scene, productivity is a different story. “Here, everyone wants to be a star,” Harry said. In recalling his days spent in San Francisco, Harry said it was possible for any one to take a cinema production course and rent equipment for a fraction of the cost it is today.

What needs to be done so that the “seventh art” not only be viewed and critiqued but continue to flourish in its creation? “Universities and industry should make available the means to further one’s education, make film stock and processing readily available, have access to equipment,” Harry offered. Furthermore, a fund for visual artists should be established – much like the Ohio Arts Council, yet only pertaining to the art of cinema. The city of Cleveland should also promote itself as a location for film production and give more media coverage to the programs offered by the Cinematheque. All of these will undoubtedly lead to a stronger and more united community of filmmakers and film enthusiasts in northeast Ohio.

Ewing offers some words of wisdom to young filmmakers out there, “Don’t let anybody stop you from realizing your ambitions. But part of the preparation for doing what you want to do (i.e. making a film) is to know what has been done before, and what is happening now.” The Cleveland Cinematheque is just the place to immerse oneself in these films.
American Interview

Making a film about making a film: a cozy chat with two independent filmmakers

by Robert Levine

American Movie is the story of Mark Borchardt, a live-wire resident of suburban Milwaukee who puts all his time, energy and funds into making movies. The film is also the story of Chris Smith and Sarah Price, two fellow midwesterners and kindred spirits, who spent four difficult years bringing Borchardt’s quest for the American Dream to the big screen. The result is one of the most incisive, touching and hilarious documentaries ever produced about American life. American Movie went on to win the Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary at the 1999 Sundance Film Festival. Smith and Price recently spoke with a Coven of Denison cinema students about the making of their movie, the ins and outs of independent film distribution, and the shortcomings of films about Gilbert & Sullivan.

Q: How did you get into filmmaking?

Chris: I started doing films and videos in high school, and then started making super 8 movies. I went through film school in Iowa, which is where I met Sarah. We took our first 16mm classes together. After I graduated, I made 3 or 4 short films, and then used their equipment to make [Smith’s first film] American Job. I didn’t know if it was going to be a short film or a long film, I just felt like I wanted to get out there and start filming something again. When I got back to Milwaukee from Sundance, I shot Mark on this radio show in October ’95, and that’s when this project really got more interesting and I thought it was turning into something bigger, so I asked Sarah to collaborate on it. At the time we thought it would only be a six-month project, because Mark was bound and determined to make Northwestern in six months. When you see American Movie, you see it ends up taking him two years and he doesn’t even end up making the film he started off trying to make, but it all makes sense in Mark’s world.

Q: How long did it take for you to get comfortable filming him constantly?

Chris: When you look at the early footage, then compare it to the footage at the end, there’s this incredible evolution. We shot for two years, and there’s this relationship that develops between Mark, myself, Sarah and his family and friends...you notice, for the first ten minutes of the film, Mark is putting on this show for the people he’s trying to get to work on his film, but he’s also trying doing it for us. He’s a great salesman, and he’s just playing up to the camera. But as time went on, you really start to see this other side of him. It took a couple months, but after fifteen minutes into the movie, you see this transition where you start to see Mark and all these people as humans, as opposed to these caricatures or stereotypes.

By the second year, we were spending six to seven days a week at their house, twelve to sixteen hours a day. We were just there all the time, and they got to know us. His mother would put out plates for us at dinner. It wasn’t that weird for them, because Mark was always making films. He’d been making films for fifteen years before we came along, shooting in his kitchen, his backyard, using their house as a set. So when we came along it was just an extension of what was already going on.

Q: What was your shooting ratio? How much film did you use?

Chris: We shot 70 hours of film.

Sarah: And there was 105 hours of audio.

Q: So, you shot 70 hours of film, but obviously you were there for a lot longer. The two hours we see in the film, are those just the high points?

Chris: We wanted to make a film so that when you left the theater, you feel like you went through the same experience we thought we witnessed in those two years. It definitely wasn’t all the high points. We had to delete some good scenes that just didn’t fit the narrative flow of the film. We did take the negative and we took stuff that was interesting or funny...

Sarah: ...or meaningful.

Q: How did you know when to stop shooting?

Chris: At first, we didn’t know where the end would be, but there was this really natural ending to the film that came about. We didn’t know if we were going to be in for another two years, but after this climactic event happened, it was so obvious. The energy and excitement that was there before we just went through the floor. So we just did final interviews and stepped back.

Sarah: There was just a natural feeling that things had come to a close. And we knew that if we kept filming, we would start on a new chapter in Mark’s life, and having already filmed him for two years...

Chris: The movie is more about Mark’s family and his relationships rather than what happens, plot wise, and we felt like we had the movie we wanted. We had covered the relationships, the friendship, the loyalty, so whether we followed Mark for another year or not, I don’t think it would have made the film a richer experience.

Q: What did you do for funding?

Chris: It was a very difficult movie to raise money for. I just started with nothing.

Sarah: You had like ten cans of film left over from American Job.

Chris: When I was at Sundance, I met a filmmaker named Jim McKay, who did a movie called Girls Town. He saw American Job and really liked it and was interested in what I was doing next. So I sent him the footage of Mark from Toronto, which he really liked. He is a partner in a company with Michael Stipe of REM, and they gave us $25,000...

Cameras and Cappuccinos

by Andy Hiller

For two months over the summer of 1998 I was a post production intern for a Miramax movie called The Cards. They told me it would be coming out by this fall, but I haven’t heard anything about it since I left or seen any trailers. I have been sworn to secrecy on the details of the movie, but I think I can safely say it stars Marky Mark, Charlene Theron, Joaquin Phoenix, and James Caan. It is about corruption and bribery and murder. It was shot on location in New York and New Jersey.

The editorial was on the twelfth floor of the Magno Sound and Video building on 49th Street and Seventh Ave near Times Square. The building leased out space on its 22 floors to people editing TV shows, TV movies, documentaries and other big-budget feature length films. It had screening rooms, editing facilities and equipment, video transfer equipment, DAT transfer equipment and all of the things that you need to edit motion pictures.

I was referred to the project by editor Colleen Sharpe, who has worked with Jonathan Demme several times to the assistant editor Justine Halliday. She hired me without pay to be an errand-boy. I was to do things like get coffee, photocopy reports and run to the production office at Wall Street and to Technicolor to pick up film. Justin’s job was to assist editor Jeff Freid to not disturb him while he edited the movie together on an Avid computer, and to synchronize all the pieces that needed to move for Jeff to do his job. Justin and Jeff both liked cappuccinos.

There were two apprentice editors, Andrew Backlund and Byron Wong along. Justin, Drew, and Byron worked increasingly synchronizing daily rolls, matching the sound and picture of movies together before the film was transferred to the computer and edited. Each day of shooting there were between four and twelve dailies. At the end of shooting there were more than 1000 daily rolls. Each roll of sound and picture was transferred first to video and then digitized into the computer. Drew drank Earl tea and Byron drank Lattes.

Technicolor printed the rushes daily and kept the negatives stored for later use. The production office synchronized what was happening editing at the shoots and what was happening in the post-production office. When I arrived every day at 10:00 much of the work was already done.

Continued on page 20
to buy film. We used that to continue through the first year.

Sarah: We also spent a lot of money with credit cards. By the end of shooting we had 9 credit cards with close to $26,000 on them.

Chris: We also did production jobs all the while. We shot the Michael Moore documentary <The Big O>. Sarah did sound and I did camera. So we used that money from the BBC, and I shot something for Nintendo, and I did a lottery commercial in Wisconsin. Just odds and ends production jobs that were really small time commitments that paid really well. Any money we could scrape together went into the film. We were living very cheap.

Sarah: We didn’t even have enough money to process the film. We actually didn’t see our footage until a couple of months after we were done shooting. Chris had an apartment with a balcony on it, and it is pretty cold in Milwaukee, so we had almost all of our shots tarp over them.

Q: Was it hard to leave Mark to do these side projects?

Chris: Well, the Michael Moore thing was good because it was two weeks, a consolidated length of time, that happened to line up when Mark was editing full time. Of anything to miss, that was definitely it, because it was just him sitting at a Steenbeck. But Mark wouldn’t have worked with us. He was willing to wait on certain things. It wasn’t that we were controlling what was happening, but we didn’t have problems asking him to wait, because we had to take those jobs to make money. But it was also frustrating—we would have liked to have had the money to pay ourselves to film the whole time, but we just didn’t have that luxury. But I think this was something really great in the sense that we were struggling to make our film while Mark was struggling to make his. I think if we had had a lot of money, it could have created an awkward situation. I think it worked to our advantage, to be in that same situation, because it seemed more fair.

Q: How did you meet Michael Moore?

Chris: He had seen American Job and really liked it. When he was thinking about do- ing this film about his book tour, he found our film and approached us and asked if we would be interested in working with him. I think he was interested in our approach to film-making and the way we worked together.

Sarah: We were definitely hired up. What we didn’t have is what sometimes, how he influenced our filmmaking style. But he just wasn’t much influence. Our styles are totally different—he likes to swoop in and create confrontation. But we both loved Roger and Me, and it was fun to meet him. He sleeps like two hours a night, works very hard.

Q: The Big One was shot on video. With film being so expensive, why didn’t you shoot American Movie on video?

Chris: I get this question often. The reason was, when we started, DV (digital video) wasn’t yet out. Hi-8 was there, but I just didn’t like it. It was too digital. We didn’t want to do something about shooting film. Personally, I feel like it adds a level of authenticity to what you’re shooting. It gives it this thing.

There were two really positive things that came out of shooting on film that I don’t think we realized at the time. With Mark, when you see him in the movie, we realize you could have shot 500 hours of video of this guy. But because we were shooting on film, and couldn’t afford it and it was constantly running out of it, we were forced to make editing decisions as we went along. Plus, there’s this energy and electricity that I think comes from shooting film. It’s not like shooting video; it’s like...

Q: Like you’re shooting something valuable.

Chris: Right. There’s a lot of things you have to set up, it’s so deliberate, and I think the people you interview, they kind of pick up on that, and perk up.

Sarah: Well, with this, it also made sense because of Mark’s passion for film. He sort of had this artistic sense for the cinema, so it seemed appropriate.

Q: So, with all this money you were spending, were you confident your film would be picked up? How did you take that leap of faith?

Chris: Well, after a while, you don’t have a choice. We were going to go bankrupt whether we spent all that money or we didn’t. There’s no way we could get out of the debt we were in, so we felt like we should just go for it, in that sense. But we thought we had a pretty amazing story. If the edit didn’t come together, I don’t think we would have spent all the money we did get to Sundance. We spent $350,000 so far. And then, after Sony bought it, we spent another $450,000 dollars.

Q: You spent that much after you sold the film to Sony?

Chris: That was unexpected. Plus, for me, it gives me these editing decisions to make. So that was good.

Sarah: You pay them incrementally, but it’s not enough to cover the costs.

Chris: So after it was picked up, we edited for another three months while we worked out some legal issues, then we began the whole process of blowing the film up to 35, developing the ad campaign, and doing the new sound mix.

Q: How much did you sell the movie for?

Chris: $825,000. The cost of blowing up the film and delivering it to Sony brought us up to $660,000. So there was about $200,000 left over. The way the deal was set up, and this is a pretty standard deal for films, the investors get 50% of the profits, and the creative side gets 50%, and the investors get paid back first. The investors get their investment back plus half the profits divided by their percentage. From there, we divided it between ourselves, Mark, his family and their kids. Everyone in the film we gave a percentage.

Q: So once you’ve sold it to Sony, they own it?

Chris: For twenty years. They license it to you for twenty years, then you get it back after the twenty. But Sony is notorious for working with filmmakers. I mean, we took our own photos for the poster. When we didn’t like theirs, they put the poster that we went with. They talk to us about the ads—if there is a quote in the ad we don’t like, they take it out. We approved the trailer. They’re very filmmaker friendly, and they’re known for that. Of course, they’re also known for being cheap, but a lot of people will go to Sony for less money. Our friends did Hoop Dreams for Fine Line, and the movie did $20 million, and they never saw a profit, because Fine Line just buried all the money.

We usually don’t talk about numbers and what we sold the movie for, but in a situation like this... I know that when I was in school, I would have loved to have known the facts about what people make, because I was under the impression that with any movie that went to the local theatre, the people who made it were millionaires. When we first started, we felt like, “If this movie sells, will it sell for like a million dollars?” (laughs) I just didn’t know. I met the guy who sold Sundance the year before, and he said he made $2,000 off of that movie, and it won Sundance, got picked up by a big distributor, and was coming out on video. That’s when I realized there wasn’t a lot of money to be made in independent film. We got really lucky that we made any profit.

Q: And great makeup and costumes too.

Chris: Yeah, but you can only go so far with just three good scenes.

Q: It wasn’t about anything!

Sarah: No, it wasn’t excruciating. I think the critics felt like it was one of those movies that put them at a level above everyone else. You know—I’d like this movie because it’s hard to take, like they’re intellectually superior to everyone else. I don’t know. It was not an enjoyable film, I don’t think. But some people obviously liked it. Just not us mid-westerners.
Appreciating Modernity

Technology as Human Progress

by Jason J. Shuba

Upon arriving back in my hometown after finals last spring, an old friend (“Ted” for this article) visited me. After some pointless small talk, he told me he was engaged to his high school sweetheart (alias “Susie”).

My response was half astonished, half bewildered. Ignoring my shock, Ted continued, explaining that after the wedding he and Susie were going to pool their money and purchase, of all things, an old school bus.

According to my friend, he and Susie were planning to completely gut the bus they intended to buy. He said they were planning to rip out the seats, lay out some throw rugs, and install five of what he termed “basic necessities”: a sink, shower, toilet, oven, and refrigerator. He and Susie wanted “to get back to nature,” and both of them wanted to stop being reliant on technology.

My jaw dropped. I looked at Ted and slowly moved from a feeling of shock to outright anger. I tried to explain to him how much technology adds to his, Susie’s, and every person’s life, but he refused PCrtfl €

Ted and slowly moved from a feeling of shock to outright anger. I tried to explain to him how much technology adds to his, Susie’s, and every person’s life, but he refused to listen. He kept insisting people to be part of that dependency anymore.”

I believe each human being’s purpose is to achieve his or her highest potential. If nature endows a person with the abilities to be a garbage collector, then this person ought to try to be the best garbage collector ensconced in the halls of history. In the same manner, if nature endows a person with the abilities to be a doctor, then said person should try to be a very competent one. Consequently, anything assisting a person in the pursuit of the highest potential (short of direct physical harm to other humans) should be utilized. Technology, in any form, can be considered one of these aids and must be implemented to the fullest degree to actualize personal potential.

Technology allows human-kind to create machines and devices empowered with the ability to do jobs and solve problems society normally see as “inconvenient” or “overly time consuming”. These machines and devices allow humans to spend more hours per day and, aggregately, more days per year, creating, inventing, and producing things to help actualize potential. Technology does not detract from the human condition as the anti-industrial revolutionists argue; rather, it enhances the human condition by allowing individuals to achieve and produce more and to creep closer to the fullest actualization of personal potential. In this respect, the benefits of technology manifest themselves in average daily existence.

The modern day furnace replaces the burden of starting a fire during winter; modern day medicines allow people to get well sooner, reclaiming lost potential production time from sickness; and modern day washing and drying machines allow people to do other activities while washing their socks.

These people claim an escape from technology and conveniences in order to live in what they hail as a more natural, pure state. These people rebel against modern day technology and how “[He and Susie did] not want to be part of that dependency anymore.”

In addition to the above questions (and inevitably others as well), the technologically-framed debate over the definition of “progress” must include a discussion of technological decision-making. I find it at least strange and maybe even misinformed to criticize those who choose to not choose between particular brands, in favor of a simpler (more natural?) lifestyle. Technology is (or at least it ought to be) a decision-making process; this includes not only the creation of a particular type of technology but also the freedom to incorporate that type of technology into one’s everyday life (or to reject it out-of-hand). However, the mere existence of free choice when it comes to technology seems somehow suspect; for instance, a term paper penned in calligraphy rather than Times New Roman size 12 would either greatly impress or terribly annoy a professor. Therefore, one who decides not to partake (as much as one can) in the unabashed glory of technological “progress” is making a doubly-difficult decision by choosing not to choose. Moreover, this decision is just as valid and important as the scientist who chooses to concoct more efficient ways of minimizing the explosion and maximizing the radiation contained in weapons of war. Actually, it might be slightly nobler and less dangerous to society. Fortunately, one need not consider the technology of war in constructing a defense of those who bother to question the purpose and effect of technological “progress.”

Perhaps we are entering a new era of colonization: this would entail a moral obligation to spread the holy message of technology throughout the world, especially to modernization pagans, so as to help everyone enter an efficient and productive 21st century. While technology can conceivably be used to promote human rights, solve world hunger, and effect a more peaceful and prosperous human race, there is at least some skepticism in order. Simply adopting a more holistic view of “progress” and asking the important questions involved can improve technological decision-making... for someone it is that actually decides.
I remember very little of the day when we shot on location in Manhattan and the five boroughs, between 60 and 90 every day and over 200 in a year. I worked on but one of them, and this is my story, though it’s not the story I’d like to tell.

I wish I could tell you about scene coverage strategies, how to light a close-up, or what an opal flag is used for, but that’s not what I got to see. I spent precocious little time in the presence of the director. By the time I got to the script, I was convinced that’s not what I got to see. I spent precious little time in the presence of the director.

I had joined an independent film crew, meaning the film would be produced, marketed and hopefully sold outside the studio system. They talk about independent film being very “gung-ho,” and from what I experienced, that’s an accurate description, “gung-ho,” and from what I experienced, that’s an accurate description, from the get-go. The crew agreed to accommodate film crews, and problems were substantially smaller than the industry standard, even the industry sub-standard. Everyone on crew was either underpaid, working for free, or that meant they were disgruntled from the get-go. The crew agreed to pay their way because the shoot would be short, the picture had a good chance of being released (so they said), and because they would have the opportunity to build up their titles and responsibility (grip to key grip, camera loader to assistant director, assistant director to assistant director) and get a credit to boot. But that didn’t necessitate they make them happier. The producers cut a lot of corners to stay out of the red, often at the expense of the crew, and since I (like all the interns) was doubling and tripling as a production assistant, craft service manager, office PA, gopher, and driver, I was on the front lines for all of that discontent as well.

In short, it was a tough row to hoe, and hard to think back on without feeling a lot of painful memories. I’ll recount my experience in a rough chronology, mostly by location, because that’s how I remember it.

Interior House: The first day of shooting is inside a family house in Brooklyn, subbing for a farmhouse in the film. Subway noise, car horns, and dog barks lend incongruity to the story we’re trying to tell. I’m in charge of scouting to do, and will not be on set. I comprise the locations department, “department” being a generous term. It includes me, Jeff, the location manager, and two other interns who, like me, do everything and anything that someone isn’t being paid to do. Regardless, I feel good about having responsibilities.

I learn quickly how to talk over the walkie. “What’s your twenty?” “Meant to be, but where are you?” “100” means “using the restroom.” Other important phrases: “Copy that,” “back to one,” and the vacuous “standby.”

I get assigned to baby-sit the grip truck. All I do is sit outside and make sure no one tampers with the equipment. After two hours, I start to feel slighted by this duty. Kids pass on the street and ask me questions.

“Where are you doing there?”

“Making a movie,” I say.

“What movie?”

“Terminator 3.”

Int. Apartment: We move to the next Brooklyn location, an apartment that will act as the main character’s home. It’s in a neighborhood just south of Park Slope that’s not quite gentrified yet. Lots of mediocre apartments and outrageous rents.

My fellow intern and I are now officially running on empty. Every morning, we are required to be on set one hour before the crew call, with the location and holding areas opened, coffee brewing and breakfast ready. The call is 5:00 a.m., which means we have to be there by 4:00 a.m. With half an hour to get dressed, and another half hour to arrive from our house to Brooklyn, we are facing 3:30 a.m. reality. That’s way too early for me. I recognize the actress playing the grandmother role. She was in Awakenings.

I am also responsible for craft services (the on-set food and beverages), and it is quickly becoming aiasco, especially with the coffee. Food is held in ridiculously high regard on the set, so much so that I was at a loss for what to do. It never occurred to me that someone would actually go through the trouble of being a location. We get pizza for lunch, and a second meal that they can eat fast or take home. My fellow intern Shilpa and I are in charge of coordinating meals. We get pizza for lunch, and a second meal that they can eat fast or take home. My fellow intern Shilpa and I are in charge of coordinating meals. We get pizza for lunch, and a second meal that they can eat fast or take home.

At the time, I was working double time to make it all go away. That night, I go to lock up holding. I turn on the kitchen light to find the room overrun with cockroaches. Later we learn how the landlord was able to sneak in the cockroaches. I can’t help but feel like my health is somehow in danger. “That’ll take the wind out of your sails,” someone says. I go inside and look, and there are only so many options. None of them includes me, Jeff, the location manager, and two other interns who, like me, do everything and anything that someone isn’t being paid to do. Regardless, I feel good about having responsibilities.

I learn quickly how to talk over the walkie. “What’s your twenty?” “Meant to be, but where are you?” “100” means “using the restroom.” Other important phrases: “Copy that,” “back to one,” and the vacuous “standby.”

I get assigned to baby-sit the grip truck. All I do is sit outside and make sure no one tampers with the equipment. After two hours, I start to feel slighted by this duty. Kids pass on the street and ask me questions.

“Where are you doing there?”

“Making a movie,” I say.

“What movie?”

“Terminator 3.”

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on the digit-covered floor. Almost on cue, the AD’s voice comes screaming out my wall. “Prepare to start hosing it down. Before we start bleeding, point out that there is blood running all over the truck? Why don’t you spray it to-wards the gutter?!” I resist turning the hose away from it. I have to hold my thumb across the nail millio_c.

It takes more than an hour. By the time I return, the best boy electric has taken it upon himself to spray down the rest of the shop. He works with a fury. I say to myself, “F**k, let him do it. Get your other work done.” Ironically, I have to prepare lunch, which seems like the last thing people would want to do in my condition. First, I go 10-10 and scrub my hands for fifteen minutes.

At lunch, I sit alone, feeling low. I hear some grips and art department people from the next table talking about the blood. One of the girls finishes with, “And poor Dave (the best boy) had to clean it all up by himself.” I think about the entire crew cleaning this against me. I feel like lashing out, but I don’t. I explain myself, and he says the bar will be closed on the day we need it. I offer to help open it for him, which he says might be in his best interest. We start talking a little more.

After several strikeouts, I come upon a bar, The Mambo Lounge. It looks closed, but the door is unlocked, so I enter. I ask the manager for a meal, and I explain myself, and he says the bar will be closed on the day we need it. I offer to help open it for him, which he says might be in his best interest. We start talking a little more.

At about 11:00, I get a call on the walkie to go down to holding and open the window. One of the actresses is complaining about all the cigarette smoke. I approach the back door. “Who’s in it?”

The bartender is running in circles. “Billy Ray Cyrus!” He’s the one who first started the party. I decide failure is not an option. I’m not about to face the crew down on his bed, passed out. I can’t wake him up. We let him lie. He sleeps for eight hours.

A local kid watches from outside the set. “They’re making a movie in there.”

I’m sent scouting for the next day. Walking through a decrepit Tenderloin, I pass the set of the TV show Trinity, shooting by the ice skating pond. I start talk- ing to one of their PA’s. We exchange “credentials.” She gives me her take on the whole intern lot:

“Never give your best when you’re an intern. If you do, the people you work for will resent you. Then they’ll screw you.”

I had spent the entire day yesterday working for holding areas. No luck. Maybe it’s because I’m so young looking, combined with the minuscule sum of money I’m offering, or maybe I’m just not forward enough. Who knows?

People go home drunk and happy. I’m the desig-nator. An hour after wrap, I return to The Mambo Lounge. “Black Magic Woman” blares from the jukebox. The bartender is running in circles. “Billy Ray Cyrus!” He’s the one who first started the party. I decide failure is not an option. I’m not about to face the crew down on his bed, passed out. I can’t wake him up. We let him lie. He sleeps for eight hours.

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monks of the Gyumed Monastery of Southern India—on the wall by the cash register, there is a great photo of all the monks with a placard on the frame that reads, "The Management." And every Western visitor becomes quickly acquainted with a placard on the frame that reads, "The Management." And every Western visitor becomes quickly aware of the fact that the monks are selling vegetarian food.

There seems to be little evidence to support a statement by some monks that they are not eating meat.

Ahimsa House is also home to another, human-focused organization which is actively involved with the Gelugpa Institute, a humanitarian aid project directed exclusively by Tibetan monks and nuns. The U.C.M. also makes clear in their mission statement that while their future goals are for global work, their current efforts are primarily directed towards Tibetan communities, especially those in diaspora, since we talk about compassion to all other sentient beings, enjoying the flesh of innocent animals is very unjust and a contradiction of what we believe...compassion and justice are our common realizations.

In 1998, Geshe-la expounded on this idea in great detail at the first annual Gelugpa conference held in New Delhi, it was an assembly that invited all the world's geshes and tulkus (recognized reincarnations of gurus). It was there that Geshe-la expressed the idea that he was given the opportunity to present a proposal which called for all monasteries and nunneries to practice and advocate vegetarianism. For Geshe-la, awakening people—particularly Buddhists—to the realization that human beings are one, and that our ability to stop an enormous amount of suffering by simply altering our diets is key to solving many other problems; for him, vegetarianism is the first step towards realizing universal compassion. For humans to learn to extend their heart out to animals, he explained, they can develop compassion for all of their fellow human beings.

Visitors to McLeod-Ganj become quickly aware of the fact that the monks are selling vegetarian food. They are more open-minded.

When I spoke with Geshe-la about his beliefs and convictions regarding animals, he revealed to me that his own move towards vegetarianism came in 1980 after a routine walk through an Indian market. He happened to glance inside of a butcher shop and catch sight of some rather atrocious meat being done. "Butchers were not only doing their killing, but fighting and wresting with the animals, too—such a horrible sight to see. And they did not care if animals were dead or half-dead when they would cut and skin them.

This story came when I asked him about the popular Buddhist teaching that it is a form of harmful attachment, in that it is crippling to a diet. "Nothing changes, the suffering of animals does not stop when we use meat...it is very inauspicious to see a white crow. A white crow is a sign of suffering...I think actually that eating meat maybe is a form of egoism....!

Geshe-la went further, telling me that he felt that all of the different and specific regulations about meat-eating in Buddhism were based on the practice of Theravada and Mahayana traditions and were misinterpreted to be observed literally, and not understood as gradual teachings meant to wean followers off of meat-eating completely.

The Buddha's teaching was always step-by-step. People are addicted to the taste...this is why we must work to show them that there is a process—a very terrible process—to their delicious Momos.

Geshe-la is currently collaborating with a professional chef on a Tibetan cookbook for vegetarians, the sign is the only major work from the U.C.M. at this point. Geshe-la and his associates have been desperately working at raising funds—while the lease and artwork for the sign only costs about $170 per year, a small fortune in regards to certain cooking traditions and foods are passed to the younger generation as something that they must strive to conserve. If there is any truth to this, organizations such as the U.C.M. will need to be on their guard to ensure that Tibetan families are educated about the rich cultural history of food and the importance of keeping their traditions alive.

One might speculate that the younger generations would be the demographic to keep the closest eye on, with the responsibility that the age bracket holds to preserve the cultural heritage of the homeland that many of them have never known. In their book Tibetan Cooking, Diki Lobzang and Samten Karmay quote Geshe-la: "If we don't change these issues at all, so far in our Tibetan world, it is difficult to be a vegetarian—if one is a monk or not. Ninety-nine percent eat meat and they don't even think about it. This is why we are now trying to bring more awareness.

While he strongly believes that the older generation can already see the changes, the change in dietary habits is largely foreign to Tibetans today.

In the words of the Dalai Lama: "I think that there are lots of people trying, but especially the young generation. They are more open-minded and are more educated and sensitive and they also have better understanding and are more open-minded."

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Appreciating Modernity
Continued from page 12

recapturing production time once lost to the tedium of cleaning. As shown, technology does not make humans more independent; it makes humans smarter, quicker, and, above all, more productive—all in the interest of allowing a person to actualize potential.

Another anti-industrial revolutionist argument revolves around technology’s interplay with the natural environment, to the detriment, they contend, of the latter. To prove this, they point to such things as holes in the ozone and the depleting rain and red-wood forests. To my regret, this stance does not embrace the wider picture.

I was allowed to run its course, technology has the potential to solve the same problems it may seem to create. Although I concede, with the birth of factories and modern day production techniques, the environment has come out with the short end of the stick. I maintain, if given time and the opportunity to proceed unhindered, technology can overcome any form of pollution or other environmental degradation. If allowed to use technology to eliminate tedious tasks such as cleaning, cooking, or cooking, scientists could conceivably find a way to replenish the ozone layer, grow a huge red-wood tree in a matter of months, or create fuels that burn pollution free. In my opinion, the benefit of technology is not essential to environmental cleanup.

Having taken a look at some basic arguments for and against the maxim, “technology sea change in everyday life.” I would like to put these arguments into action and observe what a day in the day of a typical person (“Howard”) would be like if anti-industrialists have their way.

Howard wakes up at 5 AM to be at work at 9 AM. In the past, he could have slept a little later and used his car to take the half hour trip to work, but automobiles have been declared dangerous to the air and have been eliminated. His only option is to take a community bus, irregular in schedule and taking two and a half hours to get him to work.

Howard always liked toast for breakfast. He doesn’t have an electric toaster anymore, as it was outlawed as superfluous, since it used electric power and electric power plants contribute to pollution. He is now forced to bake his own bread in an oven. After daydreaming for a couple of minutes because of lack of sleep, he realizes his toast has been in the oven too long, and he finds it burnt when he opens the oven door. There is no time to make another piece. Howard throws away his burnt bread, grabs his jacket and walks an excruciating ten blocks in the bitter cold to the outdoor bus stop. He gets on the bus twenty minutes later, 6:10, and arrives at work at 8:45.

Howard used to work in the office of his company. He works for a paper company, and the company’s orders have taken a cut since limits on paper consumption have become the law. Instead of using his masters degree in economics to create future financial decisions for the firm, he uses his degree in the company’s “physical” division, lifting heavy reams of paper in an under-heated, under-powered factory, which suffers from frequent brownouts (labor like his father did for forty years in order to put Howard through college). When the brownouts occur, Howard associates with work (for economics was very stimulating). Fortunately, there is no brownout today, and this allows Howard to fill the two orders scheduled for shipment today. Halfway through the second order, Howard has lunch. Unfortunately, because of his extraordinarily early rising time, he has only had time to pack a cheese sandwich and coffee. By lunch, the sandwich has gone stale because of a lack of a proper container and the coffee has turned lukewarm because of the recent disappearance of plastic, indestructible cups. Howard shrugs this off, thinking it a fair trade-off for how “clean” things will be in a few years.

Once home, Howard spends three hours in the bedroom, spending time and making dinner. In that time, he does what was once the work of a dozen machines. While sweeping his floor (vacuums are energy waste), he realizes his nailed up pantry doors inex- plicably turn off, causing Howard’s dinner to be cold and undercooked when he finally sits down to eat it. He finishes up his patrolry meal, washes his dishes by hand, and sits down in his living room. Here though, Howard finally realizes the reality of his existence. What is he to do with his free time? He has no television, no computer, no de-

Cameras and Cappacchinos
Continued from page 9

but the day would continue very late for rolls on the Steenbeck flatbed, and I would get snacks and see coffee, and watch my co-workers practice their craft.

What was most striking about the entire process was the voluminous paper work that was done for each part of the production. There were camera reports, sound reports, printing reports, script supervisor notes, and on and on. Because of this meticulous cataloguing, every second of tape, every inch and frame of film was traceable between its various digital and celluloid manifestations. Therefore, once the movie was digitized, there were camera re-

The morning location wraps. So does Ally Sheedy, for whom I am the location manager with the good news. Pieter, the gallery owner, says he’ll just stay up all night. “See you in six hours,” he says, and he slides his door closed. I offer $200. He declines, says he hates getting up in the morning. I bump it to $250. Money appears not to be an issue. He just doesn’t like the hour. I stand there for twenty minutes while he wavers, wavers, then finally gives in. I call my location manager with the good news, and he tells me he’ll just stay up all night. “See you in six hours,” I say.

The next morning, I’m immediately dispatched to find a holding area for that same afternoon. I manage to land two heated offices, complete with couch, for $150. The building owner manages a hardware store and rents out the offices above it. He turns out to be a puppy dog, one of those naïfs you pray to find. He even gives me folding chairs for the extras to sit on. I call the location manager to tell him. He tells the line producer. I hear her singing my praises.

The morning location wraps. So does Ally Sheedy, for good. She gets her hair extensions removed, has her makeup removed, and I finish the day sweeping her dispatched red locks off the floor of Pieter’s studio. Glancing at his computer, I realize he is a graphic designer. I realize that after today, I’ll have nothing to do for my last two weeks in the city. I turn to him: “Hey, Pieter. Do you take interns?”

I worked for him for two weeks and made $400.

Cash, Blood, and Coffee
Continued from page 17

hanging from the wall. I ring the buzzer. The guy buzzes me in, and steps outside his door. “What’s going on?” he asks, in a thick Dutch accent. I ask him if he has a space for a art gallery. He says “Yeah,” lets me in. I tell him I’m not there to see the art. I tell him I need his place open at 4 a.m. I offer $200. He declines, says he hates getting up in the morning. I bump it to $250. Money appears not to be an issue. He just doesn’t like the hour. I stand there for twenty minutes while he wavers, wavers, then finally gives in. I call my location manager with the good news, and he tells me he’ll just stay up all night. “See you in six hours,” I say.

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The Lost Crusade: Former Editor Muses on the Myth of True Love

by Paul Durica
Editor Emeritus

Let’s be honest, I have hurt everyone I have ever loved and have been hurt by everyone who has ever loved me. I have told lies out of fear and, I am convinced, out of care. I have told the truth to preserve love and to foster hate. In short, I have spent four years toeing the line between saint and sinner, and as a relapsed Catholic and failed Boy Scout, I place myself among the world’s fallen angels. My enduring motivation for actions both benevolent and questionable is the pursuit of genuine maturation through a sampling of the weird and wonderful. But as before, let’s be honest, I’m after the One.

The One—call it what you will, soul mate, beloved, lover, life partner—makes us sing that extra bit at a party, cry ourselves to sleep at night, and carry ever onward into the realm of the vulnerable and sublime. Even the nymphs and satyrs among us must admit to an occasional pricking of desire for a single individual to sate their passions. When a relationship expires, buries itself in the elephant graveyard of false intentions, stale desire, and lost hope, we, the lovers of the world, console ourselves with time-tested bromides, “If it was meant to be,” “If you don’t find love, you won’t find love.”

I once relied upon a dull ache in my skull to tell me when a relationship would work or not, like arthritic, old men whose knee pains predict storms, or my grandmother’s intuition, which makes her turn right when left would lead to traffic jams and stalled autos. Even if everything seems perfect on an external level, the ache is accurate; it is a portent of doom. But even the ache has failed in recent history, and I am left to rely upon something more civilized and cunning, complex, and downright deceptive: communication. I can tell any fellow searcher this much. If you find a good person who loves you and whom you love, hold fast. Genuine decent people are difficult to come by, and if you think no one better exists, then you are probably right. Some people only doubts and desires may remain, but the search is far worse than contentment. Even the Flying Dutchman will come to port, the story goes, if her pilot discovers the love of a good person. It also helps to regard your elders, motion pictures, and television with a healthy amount of skepticism.

The Real Appeal of Cinema

by Tom Hankinson

What is the mystical allure of film? Why so many cinema students, why so many film articles, why so many citizens flocking to the theaters, laying down their cash for two hours of non-participatory fun? This has puzzled me for quite some time, but I think that I have finally found an answer: Film is the closest that humans ever get to two-dimensionality.

The urge to achieve two-dimensionality is deep seated in the human psyche, along with the will to fly, the desire for power of the ravages of time, and the search for a container that will keep hot things hot and cold things cold. While we have surmounted all of these other challenges by means of the personal jet-pack, the time capsule, and the magical “thermos,” the hindrance of our third dimension still tugs at us from behind. Its unconquerable presence mocks our other efforts and reduces all of our accomplishments to mere trifles. We, as a species, rail against the Z-axis of our bodies and the limitations this three-fold extension imposes.

Think what humans without their pesky third dimension could do. They would never be locked out of buildings, as they could simply slip under the door. They would be able to hide behind May poles and parking meters. They could throw parties with infinitely more people packed into the same space.

If you doubt that the urge for shedding our third dimension exists in the human will, consider a child who has just learned to draw. How does this innocent young person, who has not yet discovered the restraints of world weighing upon his or her soul, how does this fresh human spirit depict the body? As a “stick person,” a spontaneous outlet of the will for two-dimensionality that persists strongly, even in the very young.

Similarly, observe the fascination of the adult public with waffish fashion models. These wafer-thin runway workers are not beautiful. They are not pleasant to view in the least. Indeed, considered in the context of regular folk, they are grotesque parodies of the human form. And yet people pay them to parade on stage in revealing outfits. Why? These absurd caricatures of the body are the closest approximation of human two-dimensionality in the realm of the physical world.

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