

CENTRE INTERNATIONAL DE LIAISON DES ECOLES DE CINÉMA ET DE TÉLÉVISION
THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FILM AND TELEVISION SCHOOLS

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**SCHOOLS
SECRETS**

SCHOOLS' BEST KEPT SECRETS

A GEECT Conference, Bratislava, 30 September - 3 October, 2004

The Secret of How It All Began

In 2000 I attended the GEECT conference that dealt with recruiting new students to the schools. Among other speakers was our colleague, Caterina d'Amico, from the SNC School in Rome. She noted her school's conclusion that the average Italian candidate was well-versed in American films, but had only the slightest idea who Roberto Rossellini and Federico Fellini are. They decided to tackle this matter by holding a screening of 100 masterworks of the Italian cinema, followed by an exam. As a result, the students who passed the test and enrolled in the school received a sturdy infrastructure to their education, while the others enjoyed a fine lesson that broadened their general knowledge.

On the flight home to Israel I wrote out my own variation of this idea, and now our students sit through four intensive days of the best of Israeli cinema, prior to the school year.

I then realized that we should make a point of sharing. Why don't we all get together at a GEECT conference, each reveal 5-6 of these brilliant ideas, our pearls of wisdom, which are simple and applicable, and thus better our schools?

And this is how the Bratislava conference was born.

Our partner, Dr. Zuzana Gindl-Tatárová, kindly agreed to host the conference in her school, VŠMU, and handle the logistics. Zuzana and I made up an initial list of various steps we each make in our schools, from procedures on the day before school year to our relationship with our graduates.

Renen Schorr
JFS, Jerusalem

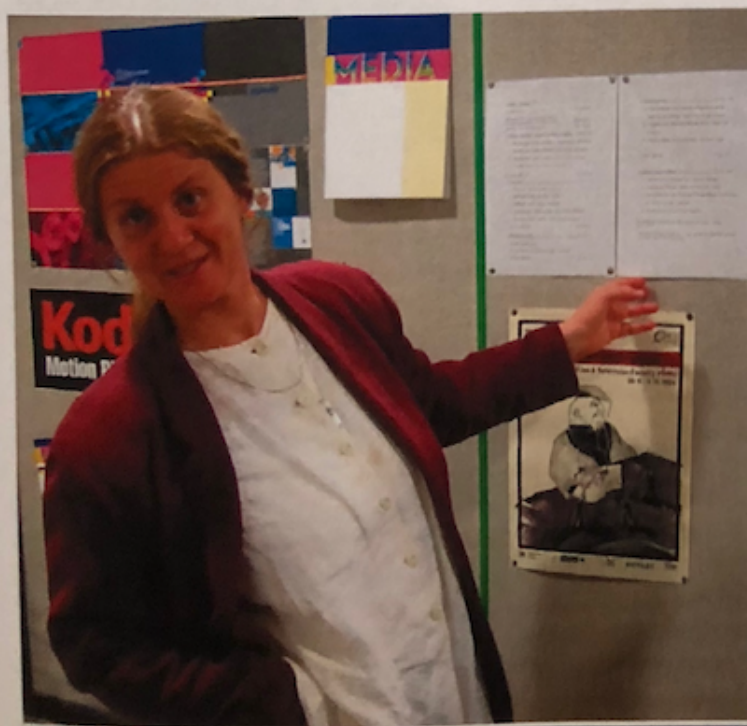
The goal of the conference followed the aim of the GEECT executive to organize some special conferences and workshops for film school pedagogues

in the extended European Union. The Bologna Agreement and other concerns about mobility of students in the European Union lead us not only to harmonize our ECTS (European Credit Transfer Systems) or the number of school years needed to get a Master's Degree; they press us to share our professional and pedagogical experiences as well. Pedagogues in our film schools need to be able to teach and prepare their students for the era of globalisation and quick communication, and to prepare them for the increase in co-production projects.

The support of the E.U.'s MEDIA Programme leads us not only to "train trainers", but also to think about how to help young professionals to enter the professional audiovisual environment.

The name of the conference is a challenge in the same way: to let our colleagues be generous in sharing introspection into their pedagogical methods and tricks of the trade, from entrance exams, to the first day of classes, to helping recent graduates, and share their experiences with other European film professors. In a sense, we challenged them to show us their family silver. We hoped it could be a successful and satisfying experience, bringing new knowledge for all of us, and all CILECT members.

Zuzana Gindl-Tatárová
VSMU, Bratislava



SCHOOLS' BEST KEPT SECRETS

Jerusalem Film and Television School

PREFACE

As member schools within GEECT you are already familiar with the many initiatives launched that gave us a unique opportunity to present and review teaching practice in our schools. One of these projects, called "Our Schools' Best Kept Secrets", was planned to examine aspects of some school programmes which were particularly effective.

It is a reality that some schools have fortunate reputations for the quality of their teaching, the effectiveness of their organisation and for nurturing the talent of their students. Inevitably, the work of students from these schools dazzle, and the future career path of their graduates has a great impact on world cinema.

No school has a secret formula guaranteeing success, but they have different strengths, in different areas. This strength has emerged, not by accident, but by design. It is the result of a deliberate policy. We are interested in "why?" and "how"?

Our project seeks to look at the combinations of input and output, of teachers and students, of course-structures or philosophy that has built the schools that stand tall in the world of audio-visual education.

Most schools share the same problems. It is the solutions that vary.

In order to facilitate fruitful dialogue, we have listed some elements we feel might lead us forward. We have called these elements SECRETS

We have listed them in a chronological sequence following the average school year, rather than in order of priority.

1. STUDENT SELECTION - THE CREATIVE PRODUCER

There have already been several significant exchanges between schools on varying methods for selecting students.

However, we propose to look specifically at the selection of "creative producer" students.

Since there can be no formal pre-school training, where do these entrepreneurs come from? How can their potential be assessed during the selection process? Are we looking for visual literacy, or an intuitive instinct for recognising a story with cinematic potential? Or should we look for business skills based on past experience?

2. WEEK ONE

Some schools have given much thought and experimentation to the students' first week in school. They recognise that this period sets the "tone" of the school for the next three or four years.

In the first week, a new society or social group is born. Many students of differing specialisations will form links that may last a lifetime.

Should the first week be given to forming group loyalties, or should it concentrate instead on allowing the individuals to present themselves and their work?

3. THE FIRST EXERCISE

Students enter film school from Day One obsessed with the idea of being a filmmaker. They cannot wait for their first practical experience. However, most schools delay the first film exercise for weeks, even months. It is the carrot that drives the donkey through the initial training process.

Timing is crucial. So is the nature of the exercise itself.

4. VISUAL LANGUAGE

An average student entering film school at 22 years of age has seen at least 10,000 hours of television. They have seen only around 1,000 hours of cinema images on a big screen. If they have a visual language, it is inevitably that of television. They frequently have little interest in the long evolution of cinematic language.

On location, students revert to the most powerful visual influence they have experienced, that of television.

Some schools have methods of reversing this trend. They appear to celebrate cinema. How do they achieve this desirable result?

5. AUTEUR VS PRODUCER

School after school is embracing the triangle principle — the creative partnership of the student screenwriter, producer and director. Fewer schools now still hold to the principle of the "total" filmmaker, a residual effect of the auteur theory.

We are interested in a dialogue examining the arguments for and against either approach, and we welcome those who have found a middle way.

Some schools place the function of story telling at the forefront of their philosophy. Others are more open to craft or technological training. Either way, it would be interesting to learn how they integrate the training on producers.

6. BUILDING THE MUSCLES OF THE IMAGINATION.

Jean Claude Carrière once observed that the imagination is like a muscle and argued that a powerful imagination is the result of constant exercise. What are those exercises?

Can a personal vision and voice actually be taught, or merely encouraged? How is this achieved?

Are there other subjects that should be taught, like photography, painting, perspective and form in art and so on? How do we build the student's visual vocabulary to enable his/her imagination to be realised?

7. AUDIENCE AWARENESS.

How can we help students to be conscious of their potential audience? Is this merely a part of the script development process, or is it a continuous process throughout production, and, in particular, post-production?

Does a student really care about his/her audience? On the other hand, what does a school do to

"educate" its potential audience in appreciation of the short film form?

8. BREAKING THE MOULD.

The film school can be a hermetically sealed, safe world in which standards of excellence are self-defined. So how do schools prepare their students for exposure to the tough world of professional filmmaking?

What is the relationship between the school and the local industry? Some schools have tried internships, professional mentoring, and industrial sponsorship of student productions. How effective are such relationships as a learning process?

What are the processes to help students understand professional work, not only in terms of high-level skills, but also in presentation of self, the importance of social skills, etc.

9. GRADUATION EVENING

A school does not exist to produce films. It exists to produce young and skilled filmmakers for the immediate future. Their work, shown as evidence of their graduation is important, not just as a showcase for future employers, but also of the school that nurtured them.

How each school recognises this duality varies widely. Although schools increasingly favour course structures divided into specialisations, the graduation screenings usually tend to favour the students of directing. How do schools recognise the essential contribution of cinematographers and students of postproduction etc?

Many schools have a long tradition of formal ceremonies. Others favour a more relaxed celebration. However it is marked, it is a goal—a milestone—for all the students that follow.

10. THE MORNING AFTER

Does a school have a responsibility for students *after* they graduate? What are the different strategies for easing the passage of graduates from school to employment?

Some schools work hard to establish systems of placements; others have various forms of "greenhouse" support to help students prepare packages for potential first films. Other schools merely say "Goodbye".

What attention is paid to the preparation of packages of scripts, alternative storylines, show reels, etc. for graduates to offer prospective employers?

Students who graduate have often already formed creative teams within the school and seek to maintain this working relationship after graduation. What guidance is given to students to help them form limited companies or partnerships?

11. TRACKING ALUMNI

How do schools maintain contact with graduates in later life? Often successful graduates show their appreciation by returning to present master-classes and workshops.

Others are willing to be mentors of successive generations of students.

Do schools include recent graduates on committees or review bodies considering curriculum or other changes in the structures of the school? Many schools consider such informed feedback vital.

How many schools maintain a database for tracking the graduates, thereby providing a profile of the school's relevance to the national industry?

Renen Schorr

SCHOOLS' BEST KEPT SECRETS

VŠMU, Bratislava

SCHOOL'S HYDE PARK

Every teaching story is a personal story, and each of us who has been employed in any film or television studio or industry has his or her own style of dealing with creative work. But we have never been taught how to teach.

I was asked to become a teacher at VŠMU just after the political changes in 1989. Some students came to me and asked me to teach them. A great honour, wasn't it? I said: "OK, but I need to invent my own way to tell you about films and what issues I can deal with."

This wasn't easy, because our society was going through two fundamental changes at the same time. We had moved from one social system into a completely different one, from socialism straight into a market economy, and from an artificial bloc economy to the rough economic and cultural globalisation of the world. We somehow needed to change the perspectives of the people from those of the previous regime to new ones. The state stopped being a producer of feature films, and filmmakers themselves needed to learn to be producers. And this transformation had to occur at other levels as well. To step across this border was a quite tough job.

In my lecture I referred to the lessons of the famous Professor Brousil, who taught at FAMU in Prague during my own student days. He would screen films, and then all students of the school would come to discuss them. When I saw fresh newcomers without any point of view, coming mostly from grammar schools where the teacher was always right, which by the way was the main illness of the whole society, I decided to help them find their own opinions, both in creative work and if possible, in civic attitudes, too. I hated their fear of speaking so much that sometimes

I was really naughty with them. I provoked them, and shouted "Please, oppose me a little bit! This is not the way to be yes-men all the time! It's very opportunistic, you know?! How would you like to create films this way? Your attitudes are not a luxury, they are your duty to the future audience!"

My lecture had some other goals. I wanted to make students, especially newcomers, acquainted with older students and their opinions, to recognize and choose their collaborators for the shooting teams that would be formed later on, and I wanted them to be able to compare their points of view in an easy, spontaneous way.

PUT IT IN CONTEXT

I would give them a five-ten minute long introduction, to put the director and the screened film into a brief context. (Context is an important word, isn't it?) The screening followed, and then we had at least one hour or more to analyse it – in many levels. The first one was always the level of context. It's not just the context of the director's history and his environment, but it was mostly a search for what the author wanted to tell us. Then, of course, come the level of structure, genre, and main characters, their inter-actions and relationships, etc. At the end of this analysis, students need to point out if the author has succeeded in communicating his idea, if he has used this particular structure, this genre, these main characters, etc. effectively.

So this was the first impulse of how to start. But I recognized later on, that not only students, but my colleagues and sometimes my friends were coming to participate, as well as students from other schools like the Academy of Fine Arts or the Philosophical Faculty of Comenius University. They were sitting among my real students and discussing openly all the problems

tied up in the film. Some sociological, demographical, political or psychological aspects were addressed, too. Things were put into an even wider context, and the whole status of our newly reformed society was analysed. It was very helpful, and I decided to open my lecture to everybody.

LOCK DOORS

I used to be very unhappy that some participants were disturbing my screenings by coming late. And later on they didn't respond to questions because hadn't seen the whole film. So I started to behave like a military commander. "OK guys", I said, "I will begin the lecture with a short introduction, then I will lock the door when first titles of the film come on." If you want to teach dramaturgy, the structural and emotional development of the film story, nobody could disturb it.

Pretty soon a funny habit was evident every Friday morning as people ran to the school to be on time. I was running from my side, they were running from their side. We were smiling, but at nine o'clock we were sitting in the class ready for the lecture.

BE A MODERATOR

Another point is that it isn't easy for the teacher as moderator to keep things going. You need to recognize every student in a personal way. You need to know their characters, weaknesses and possibilities to be helpful all the time, no matter what their age. You even dare not stay up late the night before, because you need to be fit and prepared to moderate such an organism wisely and carefully, and give everyone the space to speak and explain his or her opinions.

I have sometimes met students with very specific problems. One student from the script-writing class was suffering from schizophrenia. He

fought with me all the time, trying to be on first name terms with me, and speak to me in the informal tense. In English there's no difference in the degree of formality between "you" singular and "you" plural, but in our language it was very impolite for him to use "you" singular, because teachers should be addressed formally.

I told him "OK darling, you can speak in singular to me, if you need to, but let me to decide to use plural in our communication." He used to sit at the very back of the room, in a distanced position but in front of my eyes, and he was always muttering something aloud and shaking his shoulders in a gesture of opposition. Once, he changed his mind about where to sit and he sat himself to my right side. And you know, if you address any audience, it is better to have them in front of you. Your energies directly engage theirs. But if someone sits to the side, you aren't covered, and he can easily hit you with his bad energy. So I asked this guy: "Listen, I don't mind that you mumble and oppose all the time, that's fine, but would you be so kind as to take your chair and move back to your old place? I am used to your opposition from that particular side". He smiled and went back, and from that time on he started to be very helpful and constructive in our analysis. And I thought that might be true for any teacher.

PROVOKE

Sometimes the class is very lazy and silent, then I provoke them by a false statement. If they agree, if they say YES, I am naughty again: "That's not true, it's not YES, but NO! Hell, haven't you got any brains? You need to oppose me if I am kidding. This is not the proper way for future filmmakers!" They finally recognize that in this discussion space they can speak in public about whatever they really want.

Sometimes they debate with me without any concrete arguments. I always tell them: "OK, what you mean may be really interesting, but you need to prove it with proper reasoning, based on the film. Otherwise the crappy professor's truth remains the only one that's valid here."

One girl, for example, didn't accept

my analysis of *Barton Fink* by the Coen brothers. She was a very special and strange personality, a little bit crazy, so I said: "OK, give us your point." "I am ashamed," she said, "there are a lot of people around and I simply cannot..." I asked her to write it down for me. So she wrote her statement down over the course of two weeks, and she brought me the paper, and she was right according to her particular point of view. I promised her to tell it to other students, but she stopped me: "No, no, I don't want you to tell them. I am just very happy you have recognised my being right..." You could solve things with nearly every student in more or less similar way, but it will cost a lot of your energy.

POINT OF VIEW

But now to the point: we have recognised that we desperately need to prepare a completely new generation of producers who will be creative, who can recognise quality, who have learned how to analyse films and how to pick up the main idea of the film so as to strengthen its message.

Every year I am given around twenty newcomers, producers and managers for my class, not counting some other departments like Documentary or Animation. I simply cannot manage that many students at once. That's why I am focusing mostly on producers nowadays. As for scriptwriters, directors or editors, my lecture is a must. We analyse films together, and if they don't agree with the director's solutions in some scenes or sequences, the students are sent out of room and asked to prepare their own version of the scene or sequence. They are taught to work together constructively.

And this is a point of view. To criticise just by their feelings is really very simple, but if they need arguments and they need to be creatively constructive, the situation is completely changed.

This is my way to teach producers to respect the contribution of others and, yes, how to recognize the meaning of quality.

Zuzana Gindl-Tatárová

SCHOOLS' BEST KEPT SECRETS

NFTA, Amsterdam

SELECTING THE CREATIVE PRODUCER

We prefer that our student producers come from universities where they followed another area of study like Film Studies, Theatre Studies, Media Studies, Journalism, Economics, etc.

In a rare case, we might make an exception for a very, very talented and motivated high school graduate, but we normally recommend that these very young talented people get some more experience in life and in film or television production, and we invite them to reapply after one or two years.

We look for students with the drive to tell stories, the urge to initiate and organise projects, the stubbornness to reach goals, and who have an insight in human behaviour, a strong ability to deal with and care for all kinds of people, and the cleverness to generate and handle money.

We require that every applicant for the creative producer program submit at least one short film (8 minutes maximum length) with a story (beginning, middle and end), self-written, self-directed and self-produced. Why self-written and self-directed? Because it gives us an insight about the motivation of a applicant to tell film stories.

We consider the way applicants fill in their application form. How do they communicate and present themselves on paper? Did they work to provide us with interesting, relevant and orderly presented information about their motivation, experience and goals?

We make the first selection from the application forms and short films we receive from applicants, and invite about 30 applicants to be examined.

The examination consists of three elements: a written part and two oral parts:

For the written exam the applicants get a short story, a script based on this

story and a list of questions. The questions are about differences between story and script (do they recognize the choices the screenwriter made), about content, plot and characters, about production aspects, budget, and target market, among other things.

The oral exam is conducted by a committee of teachers, and we test the applicant's knowledge of recent films, insight in production obstacles and solutions, and get a better idea of their personal strength and weakness.

A second oral exam is conducted by a committee of student producers. In our experience, applicants tend to reveal different aspects of themselves to students than to teachers. Our students have very good insights about whether an applicant will fit into the culture of our student population.

THE TRIANGLE

Since 1995, we have worked successfully with the Triangle principle, of differentiating the functions of director, screenwriter, and producer and helping students learn how to work in creative collaboration. It gave us the opportunity to improve the curricula for screenwriting, directing and producing, because time became available for more depth in specialisation. After four years, the students in each of these disciplines graduate with much more knowledge, strength and self-assurance than before we adopted the Triangle idea. In many cases, the triangles that are formed at school continue after graduation, which makes it much easier to initiate and realise projects in the professional world than it would be for an individual working alone.

The credo of our school is that film is "ein Gesamtkunstwerk" (one total work of art) by artists from different disciplines. We try to be very specific in the ways we put our philosophy

into practice. For example, by requiring a very strict credit protocol that forbids students from taking credits like "a film by John Smith" or "a Paul Jones production". Students may only take credits like "screenplay by ..., directed by ..., produced by...".

In our opinion, it is a mistake to believe that it is possible to train a "total" filmmaker to a level of sufficient quality in four years' time. Our experience has taught us that in the exceptional case when one of our student directors works from his own script, the final film is virtually never as good as it could have been. This is because of the student director's lack of screenwriting skills, and insufficient distance between the two roles of screenwriter and director. In the case of a student director writing his own script, the relationship with the student producer is very different from the usual triangle structure. The consequence is often that the student director takes a defensive position, instead of an open attitude towards the student producer when, for example, the producer makes suggestions for script improvements. A defensive position does not help create a constructive foundation and a stimulating cooperation from which a project can flourish.

We believe that even when a student director desires to tell only his own film stories, he is much better off when a student producer and a student screenwriter believe in what he wants to tell, and are eager to give all their support to bring the stories to an audience. While the student director is learning how to translate imagination, opinions and words into cinema, the student screenwriter is developing skills to translate ideas and stories into screenplays, and the student producer learns, among other things, how to build and maintain

bridges between the student director and the student screenwriter, and between the project and the audience.

THE SECOND YEAR

From the very beginning of the second year (the first year is a general year) the student producers, screenwriters and directors work in triangles of director, screenwriter, and producer. The triangles work develops over three years' time. The student screenwriters initiate the first projects at the beginning of the second year, together with students of Production Design, and the teachers decide which students will work with each other.

For the next projects, the student screenwriters, directors, and producers begin with brainstorming sessions to find shared opinions, ideas, and interests. Then, triangles are formed on the basis of those shared interests. The student screenwriters then work out first drafts that will be discussed by the triangles, and the second draft is written, discussed and so forth.

THE DIPLOMA FILM

For the final films, the students are first asked to form triangles. Then at the end of March of the third year we "lock them up" for a week in a youth hostel, far from their homes, where they work out ideas under guidance of a triangle of professionals. At the end of that week each triangle has a synopsis for a 25-minute film. The script development takes place in the months following this week "in jail". At the end of June, each triangle has a first draft that is presented to the commissioning editors of public broadcasters. In principle, a different broadcaster adopts each project.

In the fourth and final year about seven fiction films and 5 documentaries are made, and they are broadcast on Dutch television in a special weekly programme called "Film lab".

How do we train our student producers to be compelling partners for student screenwriters and directors in discussions about script development? The training of producers in storytelling is a very important issue. For example, the student producers attend classes in storytelling, film analysis, classical editing techniques,

and editing theory together with the students of screenwriting and directing. In addition, lessons in analysing screenplays are organised especially for the student producers, and of course they take part in the script development sessions with coaches concerning their triangle projects.

AN EXAMPLE OF A FIRST EXERCISE: ONE-DAY FICTION PRACTICE (4 TO 5 MINUTE FILM)

This is an example of an important exercise in cooperation between students of eight disciplines (screenwriting, directing, producing, production design, camera, sound, visual effects, and editing), carried out in the second year. It is the first exercise in which all students are present on a set in their own discipline. The focus is the cooperation between the students. Each student is supported by a coach, who is a professional from the student's specific field of study.

Student production designers and student screenwriters initiate this project. Together, they determine the physical environment, the venue, assuming that it can be constructed in our studios. For example, they may choose a Victorian Manor, a factory or a cruise ship. The student production designers must design two sets, an interior and an exterior. Each student screenwriter writes a story for the interior and for the exterior.

Research is carried out together by production design and screenwriting students. Sketches are made, and each production design student makes a model. They draw from the different designs to create a final design. This is used to make a construction drawing (in Vector Works) and a final model.

At this point the visual effects students become involved. They make a three-dimensional model, using Maya software. With this model, not only the production design students, but also the students from the other disciplines can get to work.

Triangles and crews are appointed by the teachers, scripts are discussed, editing styles, sound designs and budgets are drawn up, and pre-production starts.

Under guidance of the production design students, students of all disciplines help with the construction work in the studio.

Finally, some thirteen films are shot during a two-week period. Each production has one day of rehearsals and one shooting day. At the end of each day, an evaluation of the shooting process is held. When all films have been edited and the sound mixes are completed, a general viewing takes place, and final evaluations are made for each discipline.



Henk Muller

SCHOOLS' BEST KEPT SECRETS

NFTS, Beaconsfield

Visual Language

Confronting the Twin Challenges of Ignorance and the Seduction of Technique

I want to suggest that the digital revolution alongside a widespread lack of knowledge of the past of visual storytelling has potentially created a formal vacuum for our students, which brute nature enjoys filling with the detritus of superficial hamburger movies. So that, for instance, point of view is often not even on the agenda, thus making the use of visual language inchoate.

When I first visited the new incarnation of the French National Film School, La FEMIS, in its first home at the Palais de Tokyo, I remember trying to judge what sort of institution this new incarnation was. Talking to Jack Gajos and Jean-Claude Carrière was very stimulating but I wanted to dig below the surface of their laudable intentions. Whilst waiting to meet up with colleagues before going to dinner I happened to browse amongst the notices in the reception area.

Amongst the usual cultural agendas was one series of sessions, which stood out as particular. My approximate translation of the title was "Computers, their language and influence on cognitive processes". Intrigued, I struggled to decipher the accompanying French text. The crux of the argument seemed to be that all students of creative expression should be aware that the way basic computer language is designed affects our thinking processes. There seemed to be an implication that using these machines modified the structure of self-expression and encouraged a shift in the creative mind-set. If nothing else the result could be, so the argument went, a deep homogenisation of attitudes.

It is not surprising that the French, with their steadfast protection of the

'Cultural Imperative', a philosophy, which lies behind many years of economic and political support for their National Cinema, would be wary if not paranoid of any and every source of possible infection that threatens the specificity of French Culture. The question haunted me then and still does now. I happen to accept the statement that no technology is neutral.

Nor is it a question of the 'new' technology. The problem has existed at least since man first sharpened a flint. Humphrey Jennings, for some the only poet British Cinema has so far produced, left behind him after his sad demise, the material from his research into the effects of the Industrial Revolution or the coming of the machine, based entirely on contemporary accounts. It was eventually edited into a book by Mary-Lou Jennings and Charles Madge and published in 1985 as 'Pandemonium'.

Pandemonium refers to a place of confusion. It was Milton's term for hell. We could say a place of 'sound and fury, signifying nothing'. For Jennings the Industrial Revolution created a human hell. Not only literally in the creation of urban environments that subjected the mass to a depraved existence as wage slaves in service of the new machines, but also spiritually in that mechanistic laws replaced the function of the use of the imagination in support of an evolving culture that can sustain human society above an animalistic level.

Neither the industrial revolution nor the subsequent technological one is reversible, except through their

collapse. The problem is that whilst we can clean up the more obvious side effects of industrial activity, because the more subtle influences of the functioning of modern technology remain insidiously hidden, we are unable to take evasive action.

To speak plain: we are not only sorcerers apprentices we are slaves of the sorcery itself. The image of a computer in a mud hut is frightening not because of its apparent anachronistic appearance—it is terrifying because the effect on the user is not subject to easy analysis or to remedy. At least when the Wizard of Oz spoke from within

his machine it was easy to recognise the inhumanity, but he had to be forced

to come out from behind to achieve a sympathetic relationship with Dorothy and her friends.

How does this relate to our work as teachers of cinema? The development of new technologies and thus new ways of getting images on the screen forces us to add elements to our curriculum. Indeed the fact that students are familiar with everything that the computer and the internet can give access to, means that they enter our schools often with too much knowledge or more precisely too much information of a superficial kind.

Our response to this can tend to be more remedial than creative. By responding in this way we can be perceived as the keepers of some past wisdom, which the new generation rejects as out of date and backward looking. When I interviewed Michal Leszczyłowski, the editor of Tarkovsky's 'The Sacrifice', and now edit-

Films will become merely a marketing tool for the latest computer game. Our Schools must function to help prevent this catastrophe.

ing tutor at the Swedish Dramatic Institute, he said that he deliberately and forcibly tells his students that they are very unlucky to be starting out in this era when the predominant source of their visual education is television. The previous generation benefited from a deep knowledge of cinema and prior to that, knowledge of the wider cultural spectrum allowed filmmakers to be inspired by all of art. The truth is that we are now faced with a generation that doesn't even watch television beyond MTV unless they are hooked by soaps and reality shows.

It is possible that people of my generation are unable to bridge the gap between classical cinema and the artefacts that are being produced now. That visual expression, especially in support of narrative, is going through a major transformation, which we should treat as part of cultural evolution. Why don't I believe that? Shouldn't we hold on to the values of a good story told well and effectively from a clear point-of-view and involving characters whose motivation and dramatic journey is part of the contract we have with our audience, even if Jean-Luc left this all behind a long time ago?

The bottom line for me is that the values I have referred to are still the best place to start from and our curricular strategies must embrace them at all cost. Cultural ignorance in the face of seductive technology is eroding our ability to reinvigorate the medium. In my opinion the result is likely to be the erosion of all specific cinema and films will become merely a marketing tool for the latest computer game. Our Schools must function to help prevent this catastrophe.

Your thoughts on these matters are of fundamental importance to us all.

Roger Crittenden

September 2004

BEST KEPT SECRETS 2 IN AMSTERDAM

The Best Kept Secrets conference of 2004 in Bratislava was an inspiring event, with special thanks to the wonderful initiative and organisation by Renen Schorr (the Sam Spiegel Film & Television School) and Zuzana Gindl-Tatarova (FTF VSMU). And of course thanks to all the participants who shared their school's secrets with each other.

It tasted for more.

The Netherlands Film and Television Academy is trying to organise a follow up in Amsterdam, called Best Kept Secrets 2, November 21 - 23, 2005.

The theme will be *"how do film schools challenge the imaginative power of their students?"*

Twenty-five participants would be a nice company to exchange secrets with. An entry fee of €200 should be reasonable.

Could you please send an email to Henk Muller at h.muller@akh.nl if you would like to be part of this gathering. Then you will receive more details.

The International Documentary Film Festival in Amsterdam starts in the evening of November 23.

So for those who would like to continue their stay in Amsterdam and see some of the world's finest documentaries, it's a great opportunity to combine two most interesting events!