

ROMAN KROITOR

Master Filmmaker
and Technical Wizard
Take One's Interview

Images courtesy of the NFB (except for *We Are Born of Stars*, *The Last Buffalo* and *Rolling Stones at the Max*).





Roman Kroitor, a technical innovator, has pioneered new cinematographic approaches for decades. In the 1950s, he was one of the first filmmakers to use the light-weight cameras, and his *Labyrinth* project with Colin Low was one of the most brilliant multi-screen efforts at Expo 67.

As an NFB veteran of Unit B and one of the leading members of the direct-cinema movement, Kroitor contributed to the groundbreaking *Candid Eye* series and directed the legendary *Lonely Boy* with Wolf Koenig, which won Film of the Year at the 1963 Canadian Film Awards. He also co-founded the Imax Corporation with Graeme Ferguson and Robert Kerr, and he produced and wrote *Tiger Child*, the first film partially shot in the revolutionary format, directed by Donald Brittain.

Kroitor returned to the NFB in the mid-1970s and was put in charge of dramatic production, securing two Academy Award nominations for Giles Walker's *Bravery in the Field* and John N. Smith's *Last Winter*. Later he returned to Imax and had a hand in directing its first feature-length film and the first concert film shot in the IMAX format – *Rolling Stones at the Max* – in 1990. *Take One* spoke to Roman Kroitor at his home in Quebec in January of this year.

You graduated from the University of Manitoba with a master's in philosophy and psychology. What made you decide to go to Ottawa and join the NFB in 1949?

I was interested in the local film society at the university and made a little experimental film called *Bridge*. My professor Malcolm Ross, who used to be in distribution at the Board, said he would help me get a job there. I was a summer student for a couple of years, then I was asked to join the staff.

What did you do for those first couple of years?

I worked as an assistant editor and sometimes I would go out on location as an assistant. I wasn't responsible for anything in particular.

*Your first credit is *Rescue Party* in 1952, which is an educational film. Is that the first time you directed something?*

Rescue Party was an instructional film about how to get people out of bombed buildings. It was very simple and didn't require any skill beyond what you could read in a book.

*You're next film, however, was *Paul Tomkowicz: Street-Railway Switchman* (1954). It is also simple in a way, but you really managed to capture this man and despite its simplicity, it seems so different from many of the NFB films of the time.*

There was a series being made called *Faces of Canada*. It was specifically designed for beginning filmmakers, so I got a chance to do something. I had seen these guys clearing the streetcar switches in the middle of winter at night when I was living in Winnipeg. I talked to the head of the streetcar company and said I was looking for someone who could be in movie about this job. He said, "I know just the one for you," and introduced me to Tomkowicz. As I talked to him during the shoot, it became clear to me that he was an interesting guy. So after the shoot I took him into a radio studio in Winnipeg and sat him down in front of a microphone, but he got up and walked around. Technically the recording wasn't very good but what he said was the source of the stream-of-consciousness-type voice-over. One of the things that made the film simple was the fact that half the footage was unusable. It was underexposed. At that time high-speed film didn't exist, but the cameraman, Lorne Batchelor, was really very good. He invented a



lantern with a film lamp in it that worked for quite a few of the shots, but a lot of them were useless. So I came back to the NFB with half the material we had intended to shoot and this voice-over stuff we had recorded.

Did you shoot it with a certain style in mind? Some critics have referred to this film as an early example of cinéma-vérité.

Cinéma-vérité wasn't a phrase that was used at the time. One of the elements of the film was that Lorne was keen on hand-held stuff. That's why it has the feel of cinéma-vérité. Some of the shots were very carefully set up and clearly composed but a lot was actually shot hand held, which made shooting during the really cold weather a lot easier than it would have been if we had had to set everything up on a tripod.

You use a basic story arc of showing Tomkowicz on his way to work, then you see him on the job through the night, and then it is morning. Had you sorted this out in advance or did it come in the editing?

The fact that these guys worked mostly at night, or at least that was my memory of them, made me want to shoot over a single night. It was an A-B-A story structure that we also used in *City of Gold*. The middle part somehow delves deeper into the subject matter – the subconscious, whatever – and that is something that Northrop Frye wrote about.

And you used the same story structure for City of Gold?

We can talk about *City of Gold* [1957] if you like. That particular film is very important to me, but let me jump ahead a bit to when I shot *Universe* [1960] with Colin Low. I had a very strange experience. We were shooting some of the film in the Dunlop Observatory, north of Toronto, and there were some pictures on the walls, various things, and a graph that was basically a sine wave. You know what a sine wave is? Imagine a horizontal line with a curved line going over top and underneath it. I looked at this graph and felt that there was something there, something significant. It was sometime later, when I was talking to Wolf Koenig, that we came up with this idea for a plot line. Basically it had to do with the progression of a character through an up-and-down cycle. Sometimes it can be ironic because when the character feels he is at the top, he's actually at the bottom of the situation. Those switches, from up to down, are the plot points and give a story its interest. *City of Gold* begins in the present, then there is a transition to the past, but the transition is designed in such a way as to be very smooth, almost invisible. In fact, it takes place on a photograph of a mountaintop. Through that shot you go from present day into the past, which, if you like, is the down part of the curve, and then you come back up again at the other end, which, again, is through a transition on a still object — some pick axes — and then you're back in the present. So it has the same kind of structure as *Tomkowicz*, in a way.

City of Gold lists you as scriptwriter and Pierre Berton as the narrator. Was there a collaboration between the two of you?

There was a lot actually. It was really a teamwork kind of thing. My credit is storyline, but in fact I did about 95 per cent of the editing, putting the pictures together in a way that created a flow. Tom Daly, who actually has the editing credit, did a little at the end. Pierre Berton was involved because Wolf Koenig, who was the cameraman, had heard Berton talking about growing up in the Yukon and the gold rush and felt he was the guy we

Top: *City of Gold*
Bottom: Roman Kroitor, left, with Colin Low.



“Gould never liked being around anyone with a cold. I recall Wolf and I had a meeting with him in New York after we had finished the shoot, and he wanted the NFB to make a film based on a script he had written. Unfortunately, I had a cold and it was clear that he was quite unhappy about that.”

needed. So he was brought in and he did a draft of the narration that Stanley Jackson, who was at Unit B at the time, revised to make it work with film. Berton took that and put it in his own words, following the outline that Jackson had written. So it was a real collaboration.

Unit B is famous for doing the Candid Eye series for the NFB and CBC during the late 1950s. The CBC and NFB didn't necessarily get along in those days.

No they didn't. They were enemies for some bizarre reason. They ought not to have been, but they occasionally ran some NFB stuff. Not much, but some.

So how did this particular series come about? Did Tom Daly initiate it?

No, it was Wolf. There was a series being made at the Board called *On the Spot* that was carefully scripted and, in my opinion, really dull. Wolf had taken a Bolex camera home with him. He did a little sequence on his father that was beautifully shot, like all of his stuff, and it became perfectly clear that you could just walk into a real situation and get some interesting images. Wolf was the guy who said we ought to make whole films in this manner. We had seen films like *Momma Don't Allow*. Do you know that film?

It was made by Karl Reisz during the mid-1950s in England. It's now considered a classic of the cinéma-vérité style.

That's right. We went to Tom Daly, who went to the director of production, and we got permission to do a test. The question was how we could do this on a film-production

schedule when we had to meet the demands of television. We couldn't take years making a movie, so we had to prove that we could make it work mechanically. We shot the first one – I can't remember whether it was *Days before Christmas* [1958] or *Blood and Fire* [1958], which was about the Salvation Army – and we proved we could do it, so we went on from there.

You were pretty much involved with all of them weren't you?

In one way or another. There were two series of seven over two years.

Can you tell us more about the one with Glenn Gould?

It came about fairly easy. We were in contact with his manager who had no problems with us doing it. We did some shooting in New York and at his place on Lake Simcoe.

It turned out as two films, Glenn Gould – On the Record and Glenn Gould – Off the Record (1959). Was it your intention just to make one film?

I can't remember, probably we did. When we returned to the studio we realized we had enough material for two films, but I'm not sure what the original intent was.

What was it like being with Gould who was known as a great eccentric?

He was fine to work with. I recall when he saw the footage for *On the Record* he thought it was more about the studio-



Peter Kastner in Don Owen's *Nobody Waved Good-Bye*, produced by Owen and Kroitor



recording engineer, which certainly wasn't true. He never liked being around anyone with a cold. I recall Wolf and I had a meeting with him in New York after we had finished the shoot, and he wanted the NFB to make a film based on a script he had written. Unfortunately, I had a cold and it was clear that he was quite unhappy about that. We talked about making this film, but Wolf and I had always worked closely together and if we were going to do it, we would have to work on the script. Gould didn't like that, so he went to the CBC, which made it the way he wanted. Wolf and I didn't think much of the script anyway.

How did your relationship with Wolf begin?

When I came to the Board he was the splicer boy. He had a big foot-operated machine that clanked and banged and used acetate film and glue. He had his own little room where he did all the splicing for everybody. Gradually we began to talk and found each other congenial. I don't remember the first films we worked on. We just came together.

*The first credit of you and Wolf together was *City of Gold*.*

I had come in late on that film. Colin and Wolf had gone off to shoot the footage in the Yukon. Colin had found these glass plates of old photographs that were beautiful and would reproduce marvellously on film. Then he and Wolf came back to the Board but they were having a hard time editing the footage as a film instead of just a pile of stills. I was asked to take over the editing.

The freedom you had at Unit B was the envy of the NFB. How did that come about and what was Tom Daly's role in making it work the way it did?

He's role was absolutely remarkable. The more I think about it, looking back, the more I am amazed. He was very intelligent. He had studied the classics and was extremely diligent and hard-working. But the most amazing thing about him was that he was able to create the circumstances and give people the freedom to develop the best they could and do their best possible work. He also had this positive way of reacting to criticism. At one point, during the early days of Unit B, a group of us sat him down and told him what we didn't like about how he was running the unit. At times he could be quite overbearing and difficult to work with. He listened very carefully, which was amazing in itself, since he was the boss, and he really bent over backwards to try and improve. I don't know that I have met anyone else in my life who so assiduously decided that he could improve his character and his relationship with others. His support was critical and he really got involved in every film.

*I know you have probably been asked many times, but how did *Lonely Boy* (1962) come about? In retrospect it seems an important film and in a way a precursor to Richard Lester's *A Hard Day's Night with the Beatles*, which was made only months after *Lonely Boy* was released.*

I went to New York to talk to Paul Anka's manager and with his permission we went off to do the shoot. I admit, with chagrin, that at the beginning it was our purpose to show how ridiculous this whole teen-adulation thing was, but as shooting went on we changed our minds. The particularly memorable thing about the shoot was the end sequence with all the screaming girls. It was footage that Wolf and Marcel Carrière, who was the soundman, got by themselves. I wasn't there at the time they shot the concert. Wolf later said that being in that situation, somehow the



Stravinsky, produced and directed by Kroitor and Wolf Koenig.

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intensity got through to his head. He said he knew what Anka was going to do before he did. That's how he was able to get those really tight close-ups of Anka on the stage. Technically it was a real tour de force, just in terms of focus and movement and keeping it all going. It was beautiful. Despite what the credits say, Wolf was the guy who gave the film its final edit and shape.

The film won an award at Cannes that year and is considered a NFB classic.

We were just working away, making movies. It's not something we thought about at the time. The NFB was *the* place to work. We were in a privileged position. It's an unbelievable thing that the government of Canada said, "here's some money, go do something in the public interest" and fundamentally kept its hands off. We were allowed to do films that we thought were interesting and we didn't have to think in terms of if this film is a flop then I'm not going to be able to make another. So, for that reason, we didn't pay much attention to awards. It was nice but wasn't a big deal.

How do you look back on your work for Unit B now?

At the time it was just what we were doing, and we were doing it the best we could. We enjoyed it and worked very hard. In the first year of *Candid Eye*, my wife pointed out that I had

been home one complete day out of the whole year, the rest of the time was working 14- or 15-hour days. Basically, we all got along very well together. Stanley Jackson was also part of the group. He did some of the narrations and he was the kind of guy who set a standard for structure and approach. He was an important contributor.

You produced a couple of films with Don Owen in the early 1960s, Toronto Jazz (1964) and the seminal Nobody Waved Good-Bye (1964). You were in Montreal and Don was shooting in Toronto. How tough was it for you to keep an eye on what he was doing?

Nobody Waved Good-Bye was done when Tom Daly was away from the studio, and he asked me to watch over things. I was looking at the material coming in and it was interesting. Don phoned me and told me that he had enough footage to make a feature and could he do it. I said, "yes, do it." Later Grant McLean, the director of production, was very upset about this. He said, "Why didn't you ask me before you gave him the authorization to go ahead and make a feature?" Basically I told him I didn't trust his judgment. I didn't think he would understand that it could be feature. But perhaps I might have misjudged him. Maybe he would have said yes. Apart from that, it was really tough to edit and finally we got an editor from Toronto who whipped it into shape. I would say over 50 per cent of the story was created in the editing room. It took a long time. That film came out of the *Candid Eye* experience.

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Labyrinth

Was it your first feature as a producer?

Yes.

Were you surprised by the reaction to the film? It went to New York where it garnered great reviews and came back for a theatrical release in Toronto.

It don't remember much of that. I do remember it was a pain to cut. That I remember.

Your next credit is on Stravinsky (1965), which was also shown on CBC-TV. It's a marvellous film.

Someone from the CBC had approached the Board about filming Stravinsky because he was coming to Canada to do a recording. It was a great chance to do a film. So we did it and at the end, when we showed him the film, he said he liked it and that we had a very good sense of structure. And then he looked at us and said, "You were hoping I was going to die, weren't you?" Which was absolutely correct!

It's a lovely film and a nice homage to Stravinsky. And again you have the A-B-A structure which you talked about earlier. You're in the studio with him and he's recording, then we go back in the past to learn who he is and the character that he became.

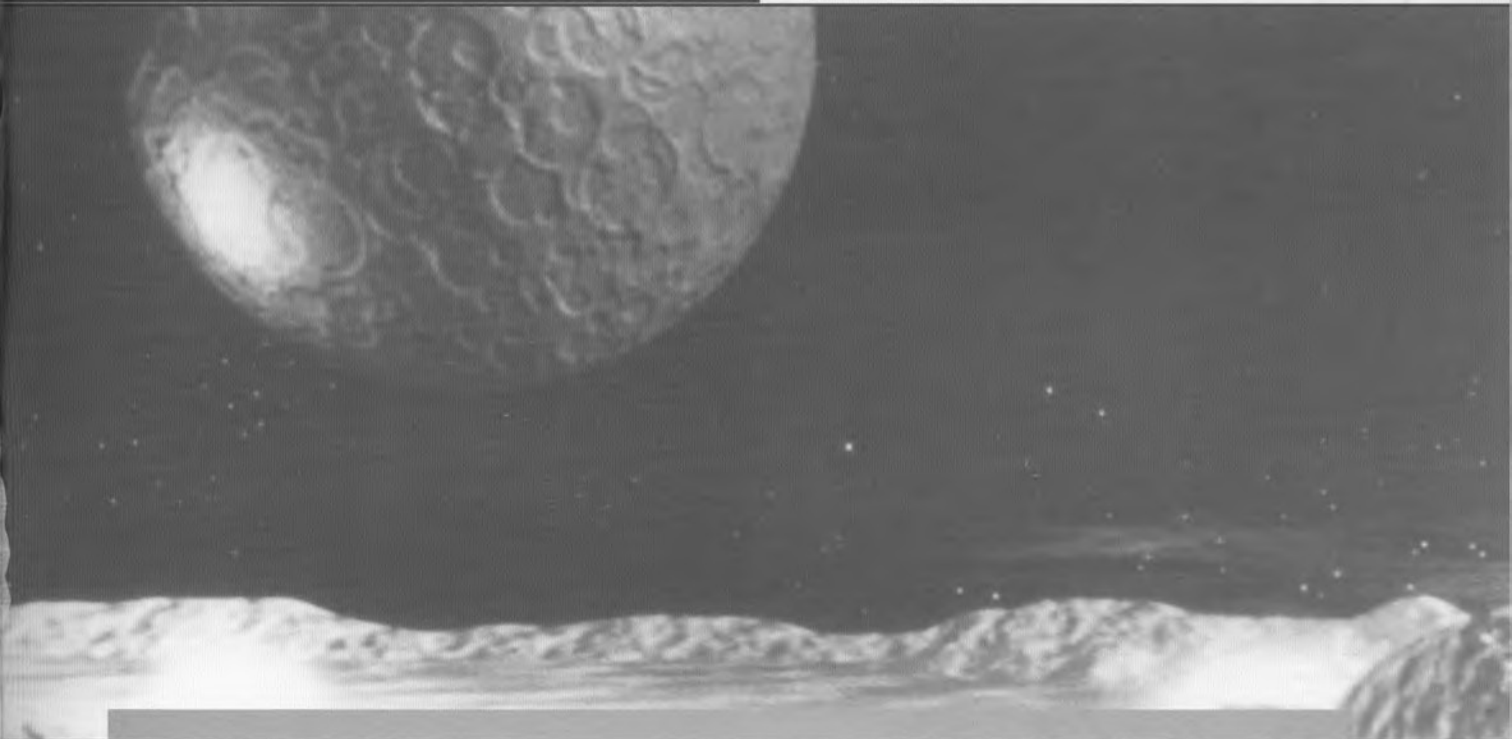
Actually, we didn't ask him to do much. We shot the recording he was conducting. On the boat back to Europe he basically stayed in his room and drank. I remember him saying, "I don't get seasick, I get sea drunk." We got very little there and then we got some footage in Hamburg. We weren't pushing him at all. Basically, we got the footage that we could.

After that you worked on Labyrinth (1967) for Expo 67, which was tremendous and I had the chance to talk to Colin Low in some detail about it [Take One no. 23 and 26]. I was wondering about the shoot, which took place all over the world.

The concept was mine and I basically ran the operation. In terms of direction, it was pretty evenly divided between me, Colin Low and Hugh O'Connor, and I was responsible for overseeing the editing. One of the first things I did was come up with the myth of the labyrinth, the Theseus myth. It seemed as good as anything to hang our hat on. We met with Northrop Frye for a couple of days to talk about myth and symbolism, and he explained to us the seven stages of his arc, which he described as the shape of a U with a horizontal line going through it. The hero had to descend to a place of great difficulty that would either kill him or give him great insight and lead him back up. Frye described this process in seven stages, corresponding to the stages of life. The original idea was to have seven theatres that the audience passed through. But when it came down to practicalities, we reduced it to three. We shot some footage with two 70mm cameras for the first theatre – one projected vertically at one end of the first chamber and one projected horizontally. The middle chamber turned into a light show and the third was a cruciform structure. Actually, technically, it wasn't very innovative. We did

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We Are Born of Stars, produced and written by Kroitor

things like shoot with a five-camera rig that we had made at the Board, which was five Ariflexs mounted on a big frame and all synchronized. Walter Lassally shot most of that footage. We lugged it here, there and the other places around the world.

You claim it wasn't very technically innovative, but it did lead to the creation of the IMAX process.

What led to the creation of IMAX was the fact there were several big-screen things happening at Expo 67. *Labyrinth* was just one of them. Graeme Ferguson's *Polar Life* was another. Chris Chapman did *A Place to Stand* and Francis Thompson did one for CP Rail, which was a six-screen film. What was very clear was that these big-screen images really knocked people out. It wasn't just *Labyrinth* that put the bee in my bonnet.

But it did lead to Tiger Child for the 1970 Expo in Osaka, Japan.

The executive producer of the Fuji Group in Japan for the 1970 World's Fair had seen *Labyrinth* and sent an emissary over to ask if I would make a film for Fuji's pavilion. I said yes. Colin was involved as well. Donald Brittain went around the world shooting this and that. We had told Don that we were going to use a new process, which we then called multi-screen, to film it. We built a 15-perf camera that worked very badly. Only one small part of that film was shot in IMAX and the rest of it was shot with a standard 35mm or 70mm camera. We edited it on this crazy contraption in Japan, which

was a multi-head movieola. We could move the images around on the screen by manipulating mirrors and in order to edit the movie we had a team of assistant editor girls who had a cue sheet, like for a sound mix. It was hilarious, wiggling all these mirrors around, trying this and that. It was a lot of fun. What was clear to me was that you could create some interesting graphic and thematic connections using more than one image. I personally think that some day cinema will move in this direction. That was my main interest in developing IMAX, creating a system where this could happen. Quite a few of the early IMAX movies used the multiple images but basically that has vanished. One day, I hope it will happen again, as Abel Gance did a long time ago with *Napoleon*.

Who's film was Tiger Child?

Don Brittain basically directed the film and I helped with the editing. There was no script. Don is thought of mostly for his words and the intellectual content of his film, but in fact in *Tiger Child* he did a superb job in terms of pure visual filmmaking because there were no words to it. It was about life – its horrors, its delights.

Then you went into partnership with Graeme Ferguson and formed Imax Corporation.

Graeme, Robert Kerr and I started Imax, first called Multi-Screen Corporation. However, after a few years, financially we were just having a terribly hard time. I used to make



Stephen Low's *The Last Buffalo*, produced by Kroitor

up a checklist for our weekly executive meetings that said we are going bankrupt in one month, one week or one day. You just had to check one off. It became clear that the company couldn't support everyone, so I was nominated by the board to lighten the load on the ship and go back to work. I was asked by John Hirsch to join the CBC. He was running the drama department then, but I knew the Board better and I didn't particularly want to live in Toronto. So I went back to the NFB for a while and returned to Imax later.

You served as producer or executive producer on a number of dramas during this time.

I was asked to develop a drama program for the Board by Jim Domville, who was then executive producer of Unit B. We did develop a drama program and I was very proud after the first year that we walked away with a ton of awards for our films. Everyone was surprised because the Board had come from nowhere to earn a lot of well-desired awards including two Academy Award nominations.

For Giles Walker's Bravery in the Field (1979) and John Smith's First Winter (1981).

That's right.

How did you feel about coming back to the Board after being in the private sector for a number of years.

It was okay. There was a change in structure. The unit system was destroyed by a palace revolt of sorts, and I think, in retrospect, that was a really bad idea, although at the time I supported it. The filmmakers were sort of kept in pens – the unit that they happened to be in – and they had to make sponsored films, for example, for the Department of Health. And if that is where you were, that is where you stayed. There wasn't the flexibility of movement back and forth. In the earlier days that was a very good thing because it built the strong team thing I was talking about earlier. But for some other people it was a kind of a hell and it built up envy between the

units. At Unit B we had a lot of freedom and people, like Terry Macartney-Filgate, wanted to join us. So there came a movement to break down the unit barriers. Grant McLean, the director of production, felt that the executive producers of the units had too much power and were difficult to deal with. He wanted to desolve that. So did I, but I think it was a mistake.

You have done a lot of films over the years that deal with music, and I'm going to get to another one a bit later, but you have done Stravinsky, the Glenn Gould films and Festival in Puerto Rico, with Maureen Forrester, which was part of the Candid Eye series. Do you play music or do you have musical training?

I love music and sometimes I sit down at the piano and improvise in my own bizarre way, which only my wife likes. She's very kind, but I wouldn't play for anyone else. Music is such a key part of filmmaking, so that's another reason why I am interested in it. Someone you should talk to about music is Eldon Rathburn? Do you know Eldon?

He's a great composer.

He's a great composer and in a film like *Labyrinth*, for example, if you listen to that score, it's half the movie. It's just absolutely wonderful. *City of Gold*, the same thing. He made a huge difference to all those films and he is really unsung.

During the 1980s you rejoined Imax and did a series of films for them, including Hail, Columbia! (1982), We Are Born of Stars (1985) and The Last Buffalo (1990).

There was a dispute within the company about whether I should come back or not. The majority prevailed and I came back. *We Are Born of Stars* was fun. It was shown in Japan; 3-D with computer graphics. *Hail, Columbia!* I did the narration. It was a team thing with Graeme as the director. *The Last Buffalo*, again I was not a large part of that. It was Stephen Low's film. It has a really great sound track, done by Eldon Rathburn and some others. It's one of the best 3-D films ever made by Imax.

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I've been told by Graeme Ferguson that you had a large part in the making of Rolling Stones at the Max (1991). Can you tell us about that?

I'll try and tell you what happened in a nutshell. The whole thing was going ahead, but then 10 days before the shoot was about to begin, the executive director for Imax called me up and said, "I'm really worried about this. I don't think the director is really into this." I was asked to come and troubleshoot. I took a look at the script, which I thought was really stupid. It was not a very interesting and it had some really dumb things in it, like a big, inflatable doll being pumped up by a thousand Chinese coolies beneath the stage. Just nutty things and there was no way the band was going to give us the time to do the necessary set-up stuff. I told the producers that this is not going to work. I suggested just shooting the concerts. There had been some tests of concert footage shot by Noel Archambault. They looked great. You could tell that the spectacle on the large screen would be great. So I told the producers to get some really terrific concert footage then decide whether they would need more footage of the band, interviews, whatever. They agreed with me and said they could do that if you, meaning me, would be responsible for the shoot. I almost had a heart attack. I hate rock 'n' roll! I just despise it and I thought I absolutely can not do this. So I went back to the producers and told them I had changed by mind. I told them their original approach was just fine. They were understandably puzzled. I phoned my wife and asked her to join me and hold my hand. She said, "Forget it, but I will send the grandchildren." So I got saddled with this thing. I contributed a couple of things. There had been no plans to shoot audience reaction, which I thought was dumb. So we built that in. And Noel, who was in charge of the cameras, told me that my just being there gave him confidence to do what needed to be done. Julien Temple came in the last five days of the shoot and set up some special stuff that never made it into the final movie. I edited some early footage, then Temple and another editor cut it in Los Angeles. I was a bit upset about that but not terribly.

So you really didn't work with Temple at all?

Not really. He did the main editing, but in terms of the direction, he had nothing to do with it really.

I know you don't like rock and roll, but the film is very good. It captures the Stones when they were still a musical force and it was the first concert film shot in the IMAX format. It was a big success at the box office.

The story I like the best about it was my father-in-law, who was really quite old, came to see the film, along with my wife and some others. I thought, my God, what is he going to say? But he starting smiling and stamping his feet, having a good time. Afterwards he said he really enjoyed it, but then I realized that he was probably quite deaf.

To get back to an idea you talked about earlier, this notion of multiple stories. I'm wondering about that. Do you think it is the cinema of the future?

Well, I hope so. A single-image film, especially something the size of IMAX, is terrifically concrete. Everything about it says it's real. So in a certain sense it's extremely restrictive. When compared to literature, which can be evocative or poetic, etc, the concreteness of a single image is a barrier. When you put two images side by side – the right images side by side – then you can be 100 times more subtle, more wide ranging, more evocative or poetic. Technically it would be difficult and would have to be well-thought-out beforehand. You would have to shoot it so it all came together properly. I think if you could do that, you could move cinema to another level. I think one day it will. Maybe not for many years, but someday it will happen. Multiple storytelling is perhaps not the right phrase. It's not telling three stories at the same time. I think it's telling one story, but with dimensions you can't get with a single image.

Are you aware of Mike Figgis's Time Code, which was released last year?

I read about it. I think it's important to understand that multi-image films have to be graphically integrated. If you look at *Tiger Child*, for example, you'll see what I mean. There are scenes that are colour-related. There is a scene with a high-class fashion show on one image and then there is an old man in rags creeping along a back alley. They're linked thematically, but they are also linked by the colour and by the composition of the images. You can't just be telling two or three stories at the same time. You have to link the whole thing graphically and be in careful control of the whole film.

You have always had the reputation as a tinkerer. You like to work on things, not only IMAX, but prior to that with light-weight cameras and innovative animation techniques. You're not only a filmmaker but also an inventor.

I've always liked that side of things. The first thing I invented at the NFB was a way of doing camera movements over still photographs that made it look like they weren't made by a machine. In *City of Gold*, if you look at the final shot of the miners standing around, the camera movement over that still is very fluid and organic. It was done with a device we called the Kroitorer. It was made from a loudspeaker. Basically we replaced the voice coil with a needle and then put in a signal at 24 frames per second so the needle would punch down every 24th of a frame. We moved it over a cell overlaid on top of the photograph so it could track exactly how the hand movement would go and exactly where the framing was. The person operating the optical camera had a microscope device and he just tracked the dots, making the camera movement exactly as if you had hand moved the camera. There was that. And when I looked at the guys with the cameras balanced on their shoulders, with all the weight up front, I thought it was just awkward. So I put the battery in the back of the camera, which balanced it and made it a bit easier to handle. For me, the high point of my career is what I'm working on now, the animation device for hand-drawing 3-D. I'm hoping to get an IMAX film made with my system.* So the short answer to your question is yes, I like technical innovation and I have several patents, including a Globe Navigation Simulator.



Rolling Stones at the Max, co-directed by Roman Kroitor

“I hate rock ‘n’ roll! I just despise it and I thought I absolutely cannot do this.”

Do you ever look back over what you accomplished at the Board?

Not really. It's nice that you're interested in talking to me, but I don't think of the past much.

*It's something that has bothered me for a long time. In Canada we tend to ignore our cinematic past. What you and Colin and Wolf and others did in *Unit B* influenced the direction of Canadian cinema for at least a generation.*

Well, I appreciate that.

Do you have any thoughts about the future of the Board, or do you despair at what you see now?

I just don't know. I know the animation department is being supported very strongly and I think that is a really good thing. Clearly, it's an area that does need public support because there is no way that animation films, other than the big commercial features, could be made. I think the Board still has a role to play and maybe, in the not too distant future, there will be a government intelligent enough to realize that it was, and still is, a great resource and will support it adequately. If what you are saying is true, and the work we did in the 1950s and 1960s influenced a generation, then let's not make this a one-time thing. What can be done with cinema that is socially useful is not finished. So the question is, who's going to do it and under what circumstance can those explorations take place? The NFB is a great place for this to happen. The commercial world is terrific but it is restricted by obvious reasons. The Board should be a place where the future of film can be explored in a non-commercial context.

TAKE
ONE

*Called Sandee and used in *Cyberworld*, in IMAX 3-D.

Roman Kroitor's filmography includes: *Age of the Beaver* 1952 (ed); *Paul Tomkowicz: Street-Railway Switchman* 1954 (d/co-sc); *City of Gold* 1957 (sc/co-ed); *Blood and Fire* 1958 (co-p); *The Days Before Christmas* 1958 (co-p/co-d/co-ed); *Glenn Gould – Off the Record* 1959 (p/d with Wolf Koenig); *Glenn Gould – On the Record* 1959 (p/d with Koenig); *The Back-Breaking Leaf* 1959 (co-p); *Cars in Your Life* 1960 (co-p); *Universe* 1960 (sc/co-d with Colin Low); *The Days of Whiskey Gap* 1961 (co-p); *Festival in Puerto Rico* 1961 (p/co-d/co-ed with Koenig); *Lonely Boy* 1962 (p/co-d with Koenig, CFA-FY); *The Living Machine* 1962 (co-p/d); *Toronto Jazz* 1964 (p with Don Owen); *Nobody Waved Good-Bye* 1964 (p with Owen); *Legault's Place* 1964 (p with Tom Daly); *Above the Horizon* 1964 (co-p/co-d); *The Hutterites* 1964 (p with Daly); *The Baymen* 1965 (p); *Stravinsky* 1965 (p/co-d with Koenig); *Little White Lies* 1966 (co-p); *Labyrinth* 1967 (d with Low); *Tiger Child* 1971 (p/sc); *Propaganda Message* 1974 (p with Koenig); *Circus World* 1974 (p/d); *Man Belongs to the Earth* 1974 (co-p); *Bargain Basement* 1976 (p); *For Gentleman Only* 1976 (exp); *Listen Listen Listen* 1976 (exp); *Striker* 1976 (exp); *Henry Ford's America* 1977 (co-p); *One Man* 1977 (p); *Back Alley Blue* 1977 (exp); *Bekevar Jubilee* 1977 (exp); *Breakdown* 1977 (exp); *Flora: Scenes from a Leadership Convention* 1977 (exp); *Happiness Is Your Loving Teacher* 1977 (exp); *Hold the Ketchup* 1977 (exp); *I Wasn't Scared* 1977 (exp); *Sail Away* 1977 (exp); *Margaret Laurence: First Lady of Manawaka* 1978 (co-p); *The Red Dress* 1978 (exp); *So Long to Run* 1978 (exp); *Voice of the Fugitive* 1978 (exp); *Why Men Rape* 1979 (exp); *In the Labyrinth* 1979 (d with Low); *Bravery in the Field* 1979 (exp, AAN-S); *Northern Composition* 1979 (exp); *Revolution's Orphans* 1979 (co-p); *Twice Upon a Time* 1979 (co-p); *Challenger: An Industrial Romance* 1980 (exp); *Acting Class* 1980 (exp); *Coming Back Alive* 1980 (p with Koenig); *First Winter* 1981 (exp, AAN-LAS); *Hail Columbia!* 1982 (co-p/sc); *We are Born of Stars* 1985 (p/sc); *Heartland* 1987 (p); *The Last Buffalo* 1990 (co-p); *Echoes of the Sun* 1990 (co-p/co-d); *Rolling Stones at the Max* 1991 (co-d).