

An Interview with Marlon Riggs

Tongues Untied Lets Loose Angry, Loving Words

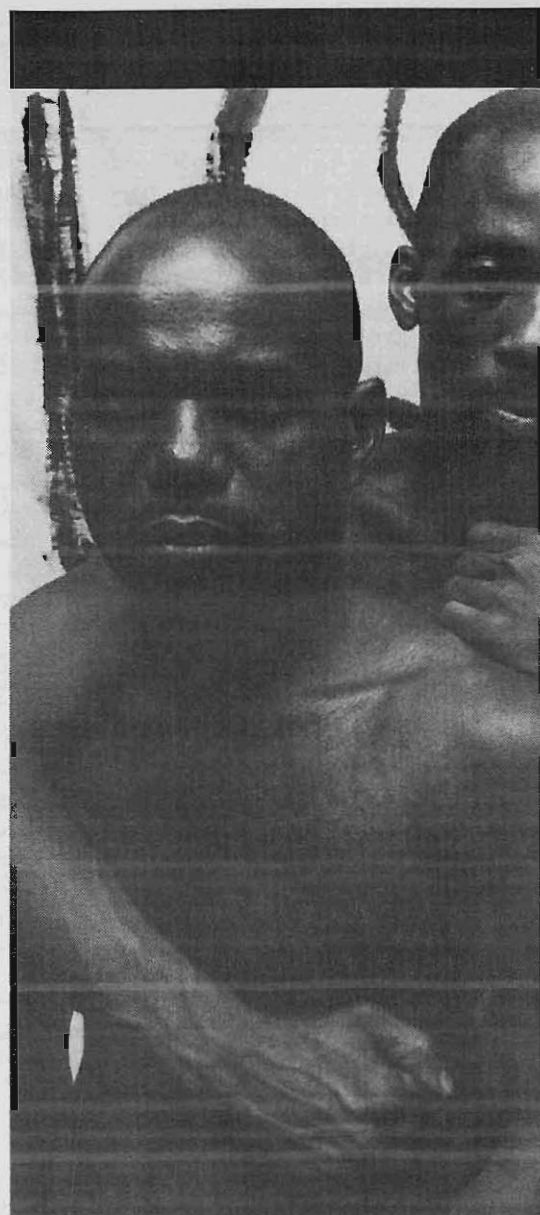
by Robert Anbian

Berkeley documentarian Marlon Riggs is best known for his 1987 *Ethnic Notions*, a scholarly and sobering examination of 100 years of interplay between racist tensions in the U.S. and the images of blacks in popular culture. An eventual critical and audience success, *Ethnic Notions* nonetheless faced much initial resistance. Despite its scholarship and carefully measured tone, the video's exposé of racism in American culture discomfited many, not least of all black and white liberals, who may have privately approved the piece but who were reluctant to be publically associated with its painful images. While in the process of producing the sequel, *Color Adjustment: Blacks in Prime Time*, Riggs took the time to create another work that comes without the varnish of traditional documentary objectivity. *Tongues Untied* shares with *Ethnic Notions* its determination to bring into the light of day taboo material, but it does so in a form quite different. *Tongues Untied* is an intensely personal and collective expression of, and delight in, being black, gay and male. It is by turns poetic, confessional, entertaining, chilling, moving and erotic. It is full of rage and tenderness. Since its completion, it has been a breakthrough hit almost everywhere it has played (*Tongues Untied* screens this month at the Castro Theatre). Just before his departure for the Berlin Film Festival, where *Tongues* was scheduled for screening, Riggs talked with RP about his shot from the soul.

What's surprised you about the reception *Tongues* is getting?

The shocking thing to me is that *Tongues Untied* has transcended my expectations of who would understand it, who would be moved by it. I had intended this work specifically for black gay men. Making that very conscious, deliberate choice allowed me to be very free in terms of my structure, the form of what I wanted to say as well as how I was saying it...how frankly I could speak about certain things, how upfront, how passionate I could be...and not fear alienating an audience that may not understand the terms, or the rage or

the degree of sexual attraction. I put all those kinds of people out of my mind and made it specifically for people who are already engaged sympathetically by the subject of the black gay experience. At the AFI Video Festival the audience was totally the opposite of any I'd ever conceived for this...in fact I looked at the audience at AFI that night, I said, "Well, I should look at this strategically. This is just so it will be able to be shown at other film festivals...." I was preparing myself not to be upset that people wouldn't understand, or they would sit there mutely as they saw this panoply of drag queens and black gay men and erotic scenes and angry poetry and it would all go by them, and they'd wonder what the hell was that. In fact, people really understood. They laughed. I heard people crying, which I was shocked at, because I don't remember crying at anything when I looked at it myself. I heard people saying hmmm, or comments where you'd know that something was striking a chord. People clapped just within the first two minutes, just within the opening sequence! It was just amazing to me. Something that I thought was very personal and very specific to the community reached beyond that and touched people of diverse backgrounds and experiences....But I never quite know how people are going to react. Most times it's been screened in situations where people in some way knew about what they were going to see. I had a screening at U.C. Berkeley where the students, sociology students, freshmen and sophomores, had no idea and they were blown out of the water. They didn't know what to say. I stood in the background myself. I just watched people during the screening, four or five hundred students...many of them just didn't know how to process what they were seeing, partly because of the form of *Tongues Untied*, but also because of the frankness of the subject, that upfront way it deals with a very erotic image. There was nervousness, laughter at inappropriate moments, tittering, people getting up, looking



I spoke of black men loving black men being not just a revolutionary act, but within the context of black male dynamics, the revolutionary act....It's really learning to love within all the conditioning of learning to hate ourselves....I wanted show two black men touching tenderly, romantically, and sexually...

around, asking "What is this?" That's the only time I've had a bad reaction.

What qualities do you think are reaching across boundaries to people?

You might have to ask other people this, but I guess what helps translate this beyond the specificity of the group I intended it for, is partly that it's a passionate work, and regardless of the subject, much of what we see in films and video, even experimental work, is so passionless. It is so formal in a way that is concerned merely with structure and style and not with the meat of the content, the viscera of life. Or they're driven by content but in this detached analysis of the subject...this cool approach to whatever you're dealing with. *Tongues* is different in that it's upfront and raw. There's emotion, rage, pain, sadness, hostility, as well as love and intimacy. I really wanted to explore all that in myself [because] my bent, if you will, has been towards cool dispassion, and people who know me know that that's been in almost all my work, and it's something I really haven't let go of either. My experimentation with that was to let myself be freer, allow that original, emotional impulse that moved me to do this, to be preserved in the work, even though I think it always dissipates somewhat because you have to structure it...but to preserve it to some degree. I didn't know this beforehand, but I realize it does talk to different kinds of experience on a more metaphoric level, even though I'm dealing with a black gay experience and the conflicts that are attendant to that. People can see within that particular experience a parallel to their own, whether that experience deals with being a woman, an ethnic or national minority in America, being between cultures, perhaps bicultural or biracial, someone who doesn't fit within mainstream society.

Is it speaking also to a very general feeling of alienation? Does anyone

wholly identify with dominant culture anymore?

I realized when I was in Atlanta recently that, yes, there are definitely people who identify with society. There are people who are not at all conflicted about who they are, where they are, what their place in society is. Those people, and there are black people like that, especially those who have reached a comfortable level in life, don't see any kind of oppression in which they are complicit, and therefore don't find anything problematic about their relations with others and with the world. I think this video does speak to people who are more troubled, who don't find it easy to enter society, who have to make their own way...but again, I wasn't thinking on that level as I was conceiving and doing it. I was focused and specific.

Has this crossover changed your sense of the mass audience?

It's both changed and affirmed what I think was always in the back of my mind, that you can do work that is very particular and specific and yet it will appeal broadly...not because it's been watered down and made palatable for a mass audience, because mass audiences are, in fact, made up of particulars. And those particulars often share parallels even though they're distinct in their own right. It's not as if I didn't know that, but I don't think I practiced it that much before. Now I realize you can speak in a very small, focused, particular way...I don't mean in a trivial way, but in a particular sense that is a very community-identified, personal, and yet reach people who are not necessarily part of your immediate culture.

In making a film that focused and intensely personal, did you ever imagine Berlin, or a theatrical run at the Castro?

No, I never imagined it. I never imagined Berlin, I never imagined the Castro. I wasn't thinking that far ahead. This piece

came out of a very desperate drive and need on my part, partly because I'd been very, very ill earlier in the year and had a strong sense of my mortality...not knowing what would happen next and realizing that I had certain gifts, as well as a number of means that most people didn't. I knew how to do this work. It's like the opportunity was presented to me as well as the insight that I may not be here in order to continue this, or to put it off and wait till a better day, a more convenient time when my career was more established and this wouldn't threaten it in any way. I realized I had to go for broke. I was really very desperate, adrenaline-rushed, intensely energetic to do this, without thinking about distribution and fundraising and so forth. I didn't think about fundraising, I thought I'd try two or three places that I hoped might be amenable to this, but I'm not going to bother to convince others or wait years and hope that somebody will finally realize that this is a worthwhile subject to explore on film or video. I didn't imagine Berlin or the Castro, even when I finished. I imagined groups like the Gay Men of African Descent seeing it, or Black Gay Men United which is here in the Bay Area, or the Black Gay Lesbian Leadership Forum...a few film festivals.

Has the black gay male audience received it in the way you hoped?

Yes. I was a little concerned, because I knew I was putting things out on the table that a lot of people feel very uncomfortable putting out there for public viewing... people who feel we can do things in private, in bars, in our homes, within our own community, that's okay. That's true, I think, with any social group that in some way is not part of the majority culture. There are things that you don't talk about or show in public, and I was showing and talking about it all. I knew there were certain things that might get me in trouble with a particular kind of black gay leadership, which is middle

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FAF Members Meet, Vote, Party

Over 200 of Film Arts Foundation's 1,800 members assembled on January 30 for FAF's annual business meeting and kick-off-the-new-year party. In the evening's main order of business, five members were elected to the 15-member board of directors: Ed Burke, Janet Cole, Vivian Kleiman, José Vergelin, and Jack Walsh. New to the board are Burke, Vergelin and Walsh.

Ashley James, 1989 board president, told the gathering that FAF's membership had crossed the 1,800 mark in 1989 (in 1985, membership stood at about 1,100), underlining FAF's continued vitality as the country's largest regional organization of independent film and videomakers. James traced the evolution of the "dream" of FAF's founding members back in 1976, and went on to review some of FAF's signal accomplishments over the last year: In 1989, some 300 different filmmakers used the FAF Editing Facility. Over 2,000 people attended 80 FAF seminars and workshops. FAF screenings, including the largest Film Arts Festival to date (despite the earthquake just two and a half weeks earlier), drew over 5,000 people. Nineteen grants totaling \$45,000 were awarded to Bay Area media artists through the FAF Grants Program in 1989. *Release Print* continued to be a key communications link and informational resource for Northern California independents, and for FAF members in other parts of the country. All sections of the newsletter expanded in 1989, and its critical impact grew dramatically.

James noted that FAF continues to be in the forefront of advocacy work on behalf of independents, tackling public policy issues such as the creation of the new Independent Television Service (ITVS) within public broadcasting, tax reform for media artists, increasing the budget of the California Arts Council, and defending the funding of controversial works by the National Endowment for the Arts.

He concluded with a look to the future, stating that a special project of the board has been to plan for a new space when FAF's current lease expires in August 1992. He noted that this planning project "involves everything FAF is about, and everything we hope the organization can become as we approach our future, a new decade, and the millenium."

The 1989 financial report (distributed at the meeting) was presented by treasurer Cleo Protopapas, who observed that as in the past, FAF's financial strength came from the members themselves, with 61% of the 1989 operating revenues drawn from membership dues and income from services. She acknowledged the grant support, which supplemented FAF's "earned" income, from the National Endowment for the Arts, California Arts Council, Grants for the Arts of the San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund, and grants from the San Francisco, Fleishhacker, Wallace Alexander Gerbode, and John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundations. With 1989 revenues totaling \$382,452 and expenses of \$344,273, Protopapas congratulated the staff and the organization on a financially successful year that coincided with growth in services, observing that the \$38,179 net increase of funds is crucial as FAF prepares for its new space in 1992.

On behalf of the Nominating Committee (Ashley James, Cornelius Moore, Karen Holmes, and Lourdes Portillo), Cornelius Moore and Karen Holmes introduced the five candidates for the 1990 board election, who were then elected as a slate. Following announcements from members, the meeting was adjourned and the party was underway! Δ

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class, educated, more polished, wanting to present an image that's more accessible and amenable to the public. But I knew I would deal with frankly obscene language, that I would show drag queens who were not elegant and beautiful and pretty but who were street and low, if you will. I knew I would deal with interracial relationships, black/white relationships which a number of people within the black leadership find troublesome. So it wasn't like I knew that in speaking to the black gay community everything would be hunky-dory. In fact, people have actually been very, very positive, even about those things which I think are more troublesome. They acknowledge the trouble of discussing certain things and having them presented, rather than this Pollyanna image of us holding hands together, everyone loving each other, no problems of anger and self-hate, nor the black/white kinds of sexual tension.

Tongues is intensely personal but also highly collaborative.

It was important to me from the start, in recognizing how I attain my own sense of identity, that it not be the way a lot of other personal pieces are, simply personal. In fact, to me the person by him or herself is in some ways nothing. One achieves virtue and value within the context of community. I'm not saying the community is all, I don't subscribe to that, but it's that balance of individualism along with social group, peer group community, that makes self-identity, and all of the things that flow from that, possible....I knew I wanted to collaborate with people, that it wouldn't be just the Marlon Riggs show. For me those kinds of works are very self-indulgent, and tend not to speak to me and tend not to speak my community, that is, the black community.



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Works that are intensely personal, self-absorbed, tend not to have appeal. I think you see that at most screenings if you go to screenings of works like that. I knew I had to involve a community of artists, dancers, musicians, poets, whose lives mirrored the kinds of experiences that I was hoping to translate on video. I knew that I wanted to work with poetry, in fact, that was in some ways the genesis of the entire piece. There have been within recent years, the last four or five years, a number of black gay anthologies of poetry, essays, fiction, and non fiction that, to me, were tremendously exciting. These works deserved a larger audience, not only black and gay. So I wanted to work particularly with poets and bring in that work and try to create a form that wouldn't just be basic illustration. The more I thought about it, the more I read the poetry, I realized there was no way I could do that in a very traditional documentary form. That wouldn't live up to the poetry. That would gut all of what people were talking about, its real emotion, its passion, and make it distant, and a distancing kind of experience. What I wanted was something much more immediate. This was a process of thinking over nine or ten months about how to do this, and coming up blank. Really it was after the process of my illness, I had kidney failure, laying up in a hospital for a good two months staring at Geraldo, that my mind started to spin its own images. I guess the subconscious started to work when, cognitively, I wasn't able to work things out. Images and scenes and poetry started to come into focus. It was very different, in some ways liberating and very daunting to me, because I never thought of doing anything formally like this. I do define it as documentary. Documentary, I think, is a very broad form.

Ethnic Notions by contrast is almost scholarly in approach.

Exactly. Documentary embraces journalism, but it's not confined to journalism. Documentary embraces dramatic form as well. It embraces poetry and personal confession and, in some ways, is parallel to literary styles. I do see my not being able to go back to a very traditional style, that now I'll always be challenged to think, what should the voice be saying here or where is that voice located when you hear a narrator? Why shouldn't it be my voice since I've written all of this as opposed to someone else's voice? How should I judge the form of this? I know that the sequel to *Ethnic Notions* can't be done in the same style as *Ethnic Notions*....Partly because of the subject matter itself, I know I can't just make a scholarly piece. The images aren't as removed, and in terms of looking at prime time entertainment images, or looking at recreations of the black experience in film or TV, there are so many ways of reading all that, that I can't look at it the way I could with *Ethnic Notions*. What I'm looking at is a typography of a racial conflict, being worked out and made manifest through popular culture. There are different ways I have to allow the reading....The challenge is how to combine what is more free and associative with a subject that's chronological, historical, that's rooted in analysis and historiography and a history that confines you.

I was glad you took on Eddie Murphy in Tongues.

You know, though, I've seen people laugh with Eddie Murphy, again at U.C. Berkeley when I showed the video to the younger students. That's the first time that happened. I thought, that even for people who are homophobic, because of the context of everything that had happened before in the video, with the violence and the racism and the overt homophobia, and with the face of the man who's reacting to Eddie Murphy, who's obvi-

ously gay and can't laugh [because] he sees it as self-hatred if he laughs, that people at least would be shamed not to laugh. Yet their identification with [homophobia], and their need to release it in some way through Eddie Murphy, was so strong that they still laughed. It made me realize the limitations of what I had done. I realized that certain icons in our culture, whether it's a person or a form of filmmaking that's comic or a sitcom, whatever you present, no matter how offensive or how derogatory, if it's said by somebody that they associate with being funny, they will laugh. That showed me there just how deeply people are conditioned...by images that house certain responses regardless of what the content is, or how much you structure and try to contextualize in a way for them to see anew.

Did you have to get permission to use the Eddie Murphy clips?

I didn't get permission to use Eddie Murphy or any of those things. I consider those "fair use." I'm placing all of those images, that kind of humor, also Spike Lee's *School Daze*, the section where you see them saying "fag, fag, fag, fag, punk, punk, punk," I'm placing all that within a critical context for people to evaluate. As I understand it, that's fair use.

Is it true Tongues Untied is going to be on public TV.

Yeah, WNET [in New York City] has actually agreed to show it. WGBH [in Boston] which is the programming center for this new television workshop shown primarily on the east coast, which is supposed to be programming innovative works in form and content, said no. People looked at it at WGBH, the upper hierarchy within the programming of the station, and decided that it would be offensive to the black and gay communities, and that it should not only not be broadcast on WGBH, but on no public broadcasting channel in the country. They never described exactly why. WNET actually has agreed to show it, and during prime time as well, at which I'm shocked.

Without cuts?

Without cuts. I wouldn't do that. There's nothing I can cut. I'm not being egotistical here, the language is deliberate. I wrote it that way. The eroticism, or the one erotic scene, is deliberate because so much work that has been done about the gay experience by gay filmmakers, as well as lesbian filmmakers, tends to just talk about it. You never see couples touching in an intimate way, you never see or really feel it. I wanted to show how people touch, and the touching. I didn't want to show pornography. I wasn't interested in showing erect genitalia and winking anuses and so forth. You can find those things in your local video store. I wanted to show two black men touching tenderly, romantically, and sexually...an image that I had never seen and which would confirm an experience for a number of people.

I want to ask you a question in both a general and a specific way. The general question is: Can individual desire overcome the contradictions inherent in social conditioning? To be specific: Is your film saying that you, now—as a black, gay man in a racist and homophobic society—cannot love a white man and feel fully-integrated as an individual? I thought I detected a "separatist" note.

Let me backtrack. I wasn't saying one has to love a black man to the exclusion of others, or that in order to be a self-affirming and integrated person, the only route is by loving black men.

Personally, my discovery was the ability to love a black man, not necessarily in a sexual way. I mean, some people interpreted the last statement in the piece ["Black men loving black men is *the* revolutionary act"—Ed.] as being solely sexual and it wasn't meant as that. Or they interpreted it that that love between black men precludes other kinds of love, and I wasn't saying that. I find people read that depending on where they come from, and their own perspective. In terms of my own personal experience, it was discovering an affinity between me and black men, and though you think, he's black, he should understand that, that's not an easy thing for a lot of people like myself, who in some ways have been acculturated with the majority culture. I've been always and still now am by myself, the only black in a condition where everybody else is white...in society where you're almost always a minority, and all the paradigms of culture and achievement held up to you are white. That affects you. I don't know how it can't...you often find yourself alone and at the same time bombarded with images and experiences that don't reflect you, your culture, your color. I can see in the Castro how rare it is to see a black gay couple. You'll see lots of black and white couples, black and Latin, black and Asian...black and black, no. So many people, particularly when they are coming out, buy into all the images that you see associated with being gay. Those images of being white, blue eyes, green eyed, blond, brunette, brown hair, tan. I know black men who say, "If I could really find a black man I would be with a black man." Get them in a club where that option is present, and one white man comes in and their eyes immediately go to the white man. I had to deal with that. It was learning to get beyond that identification, the attendant self-hate, and sense of inferiority. That's the kind of experience I tried to get across.

So, given all that, can you love a white man without the complexity of race relations entering into your own psyche?

I think it's inevitable. An interracial relationship inherently involves racial conflict even though it may not come to the surface as such. It may be manifest in all kinds of other tensions and conflicts that are looked at as just personal. The realization that what's involved is race, and not just personality differences, income differences, but racial differences, is often late. It came late to me. It was really after looking at not only my relationships to white men, but also looking at others and hearing what people were talking about, hearing the experiences of black men who get involved with white men, and the kinds of patterns that I saw over and over in terms of who was assumed to be the dominant person in the relationship, not just in a sexual sense, but in a psychological, financial and decision-making sense. The kinds of things that happen, like people having their English corrected, the things said about black anatomy and feelings during sex. It made me realize that there are issues here that have to be dealt with. They're often buried but they have to be dealt with. A lot of people never deal with that. I think a fair question is if it is possible given our sexual and psychological makeup, to come to the realization that what I feel is self-hate, that I've been conditioned by racist society and now change and start to love black men. I'm not saying that's an easy process. Just the realization doesn't necessarily make you change, and feel passionate affinity, sexual, romantic, fraternal, what have you, for other black men, which is why I call [that affinity] a revolutionary act. It is a radical break for a lot of people. Even for a lot of black men who are attracted only to black men, it's very difficult because so much of our conditioning is a defensive posture against the white world...this kind of cool and angry appearance, this detached sort of silence, this contempt for all

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things and never showing anything. It translates into our experiences with ourselves, too, and among ourselves. I really spoke of black men loving black men being not just a revolutionary act, but within the context of black male dynamics, the revolutionary act. It's not the overthrow of whiteness. It's learning to love within all the conditioning of learning to hate ourselves. To me that's truly a radical break from our past.

I see what you mean. I have to admit that that last statement regarding "the" revolutionary act threw me.

Again, this is a difference in terms of when you think specifically about a certain group, a certain audience, and then the work goes beyond that audience, in this case black gay men who know what I mean. It's not meant that black men loving black men is the revolutionary act and "the" signifies more than any kind of revolutionary act in the world. I mean, that would obviously be ridiculous and I wasn't trying to say that. I would never make a statement like that. I was talking specifically to an audience that I saw as black and gay, then to a context of black male dynamics, in some ways in response to the black power militancy of the 60s, 70s, and the sort of neo-nationalism you find today, where there's a harking back to this black macho image, dominant black male image. A couple of friends objected, that once you put that statement out in a wider context, it's seen in relation to all kinds of movements and revolutionary acts. Therefore people read it as being in some ways very chauvinistic. This is a problem I find when you're programming, you have no control over things once they're done. The work is finding audiences I never conceived, and therefore it's being read in different ways than I ever imagined. And in some ways misread....I hope people will start to make the connection about audience and form, and specificity of intents rather than what most people do, which is think, well, I'm the privileged audience, you have to speak to me, you have to explain in terms of me. You have to put it in context for my life, my culture, my community. In fact some works aren't aiming at you, aren't aiming at the mainstream.

Is there a contradiction in Tongues Untied between overthrowing stereotypes of black gay men, and the majority of men in it being, especially in the bare skin scenes, young, hunky, beautiful? Is this liberation or entrapment?

I was very much aware of that in doing this, especially after seeing *Looking for Langston*...I actually had the privilege, before finishing *Tongues*, of seeing *Looking for Langston*, in which all the men are beautiful, by and large light-skinned, well-dressed, tuxedoed, refined. I wanted to avoid, as you say, that kind of entrapment, that sort of construction of another stereotype in the process of trying to break down a stereotype of black gay men and black gay experience. That often happens when groups who are on the outside try to win favor with the dominant culture, as well as to define themselves. I was aware that what you call a contradiction would get attention, partly because I know my own personal preferences, and then I know what my political preferences are in terms of what needs to be supported, what kinds of diversity. I would say that among the dominant characters in the piece, their bodies are nice, if you will, and that probably is seeming a little bit immodest on my part. I was aware of that, in fact...and that's a tension. Most of the men who have dominant positions in the work tend to be [in their] 30s, 20s, a few 40s, and sort of within the normal weight, and very nice looking. I still tried to get in people who represented diverse kinds of looks, people who weren't beautiful...I don't

know if I was totally successful. Partly, I had to go with what I could get for free, people who were willing to be photographed. It wasn't like a film that was cast, where I was hiring people.

What do you think the outlook is for innovative, controversial material such as you're producing?

I think it's a very bright future. I know we've all read about the death of the documentary, and I would say within certain venues like public TV and commercial TV, it definitely has a long way to go to be resuscitated. But I see, especially as I go to film festivals, jury at film festivals, travel and attend screenings, that people worldwide are very much in love with the documentary form, or with documentary forms, and constantly experimenting. What's encouraging is the degree to which you're seeing marginalized communities making use of this medium, both as a tool and an art form, doing things differently with it. It's refreshing to see that the greatest innovation is coming from those communities which tend to be either third world or ethnic or racial in this country, or from women or lesbians and gays. People are breathing new life into the form, as well as exploring new kinds of subjects with documentary, so I think it has a long and healthy life ahead even though public TV stations may not show it, and *60 Minutes* may not broadcast it. Δ

FAF ANNOUNCEMENTS

RP Deadline: Editorial deadline for the April Release Print is Monday, March 5.

A very special thank you to Diner+Allied for their generous donation of remaining 16mm processing, printing and editing equipment. Thanks in particular to Marty Marks and Gary Coates of Diner+Allied, and to Greta Snider, Lance Acord, Claire Dannenbaum, Thad Povey, Mark Taylor and Bill Daniel for helping to move the booty!

Many thanks for help in the office to Daniel Halas, Florence Catin, Alessandra Pasquino, Bill Peterson, Maggie Fishell, Andrea Sigel, Diana Muirhead, Luz Castillo, Mark Redpath, and Pamela Canyon Rivers.

Festivals
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FESTIVALS

Domestic

Ann Arbor Film Festival (March 20-25) is open to "all films that demonstrate a high regard for film as a creative medium." Submissions must be in 16mm regardless of original format. Numerous cash awards include the \$1,000 Tom Berman Award for "most promising filmmaker of the festival." The jury — this year consisting of Karen Aqua, Barbara Hammer and Richard Kerr — also selects films to be sent on a national tour. Entry fee per film: \$25. Entry forms available in FAF offices or contact: Ann Arbor Film Festival, P.O. Box 8232, Ann Arbor, MI 48107. (313) 995-5356. Deadline: **March 5.**

Athens International Film & Video Festival (April 27 - May 5) invites entries of 35mm, 16mm and Super-8 films completed between March 1988 and March 1990. (Deadline for video submissions, Feb. 5, has passed.) Categories include experimental, documentary, traditional narrative, experimental narrative and

MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

Awards & Honors: Ruth Shapiro, Ed Burke and Pamela Yates' *¡Teatro!* received an honorable mention at the San Antonio CineFestival, and has been accepted for the AFI International Film Fest...receiving honorable mentions at the Black Maria Film & Video Fest were Gunvor Nelson's *Light Years* and Marlon Riggs' *Tongues Untied*; named director's choice selections were Lynne Sachs' *Sermons and Sacred Pictures*, and David Weissman's *Song From an Angel*...Ray Telles' *Children of the Night* was one of five PBS Frontline programs to win an Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Gold Baton Award...Sheila Ganz's *Sealed Records* project has received a first grant from the J.L. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation...the Long Beach Museum of Art's five-year retrospective of its Open Channels program includes work by Aron Ranen and Kevin Bender, Jeanne Finley, Ed Jones, Tony Labat, and Paul Kos...Lynn Hershman has received grants from Art Matters Inc., The Women's Project, and S.F. State Grants for Creative Work...among those receiving 1989 National Endowment for the Arts visual artists fellowships are Mitchell Loch.

Screenings Near & Far: Elizabeth Sher's *Just Another Weekend* screened as part of an American Film Institute's "Featured Independents" program at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., and a selection of shorts from Sher's *I.V. Magazine* will screen at the Kennedy Center...Ellen Bruno's *Samsara* has been chosen for the 1990 Women In the Director's Chair fest, the Big Muddy Fest, and was a finalist at the Films des Femmes fest in Creteil, France...David Siegel and Scott McGehee's *Bird Past* screens this month at the Millenium Theatre in NYC as part of the BACA Film & Video Fest.

On the Business Scene: The musical score for Dieter Wehl's *China Lake* was recorded and mixed at Poolside Studios...the HBO special *Louie Anderson: Comedy On Canvas* received post production and graphics work at Varitel Video...San Francisco Production Group designed and produced the opening animation sequence for KING-TV/Seattle's *Evening* program...Jonna Ramey Productions, in association with San Francisco Production Group, produced the video modules for a pilots' training package UPS Airline.

animation. \$6,000 in cash prizes; entry fees range from \$20-\$50, depending on length. Entry forms available in FAF offices or contact: Athens Int'l Film & Video Festival, P.O. Box 388, Athens, OH 45701. (614) 593-1330. Deadline: **March 5.**

Hometown USA Video Festival (July 26, in Washington DC) accepts any videotape that was cablecast over a local or access channel between March 18, 1989 and March 9, 1990. Entries must be in 3/4" or 1/2" format. There are 32 categories, both single programs and series. Entry fees range from \$20 to \$50 depending on professional status and membership in National Federation of Local Cable Programmers. Entry forms available in FAF offices or contact: Hometown USA Video Festival, c/o The Buske Group, 3112 "O" St., Suite 1, Sacramento, CA 95816. (916) 456-0757. Deadline: **March 9.**

Humboldt Film & Video Festival (April 2-7), the oldest student-run film festival in the U.S., "seeks to provide a forum for personal expression through the medium of film and video" and invites all student and independent film and video artists to enter their 16mm and Super-8 films and 3/4" and VHS tapes. Categories include experimental, narrative, documentary and animation. The