

# Promising young film makers of Montréal: Ani and Sébastien...

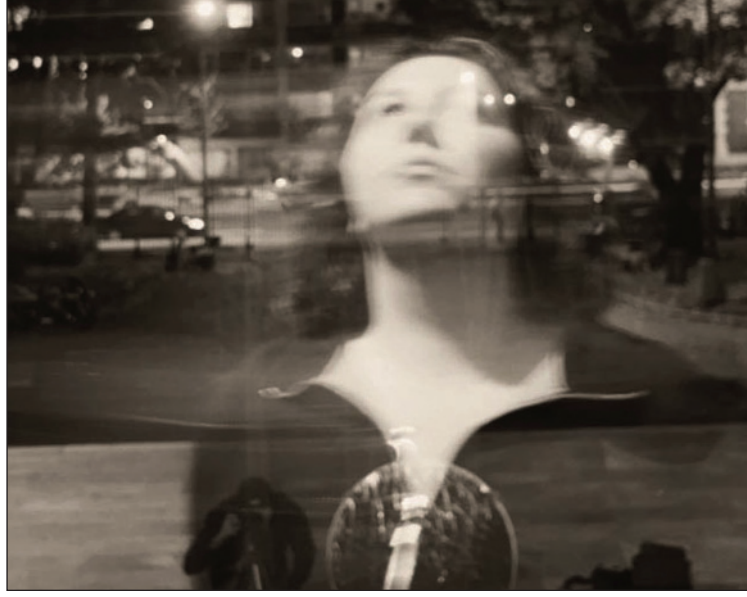
BESTE BARKİ

The Québec Film and Television Council (www.qftc.ca) tells us that "our European cultural and architectural heritage, vast and diverse territory, state-of-the-art CGI facilities and sound stages, technology and equipment continue to lure film producers from all over the world". Quebec also offers unparalleled tax credits to film makers that employ local people and proximity to companies producing software used by digital artists. Here we have experienced crews, highly-creative people producing world class special effects and talented people graduating from specialized schools. All this makes Montreal the hub of the film world.

We spoke with two young film makers from the Montreal film scene, Ani Guranlian and Sébastien Morin from Guru Films and Les Productions Déconstructhead, about what they do and how they started. Here is what they told us about their film careers. Ani Guranlian, Guru Films (guru-films.com)

**- How did you become a film maker? Is it a just a hobby or do you intend to make a career out of it?**

- As far back as I can remember I've always loved watching movies and reading good stories. In high school I often had a camera in my hand, but once I put it down I promptly lost my way. In CEGEP and University I took classes in everything from health sciences to philosophy, from art history to business administration, and finally settled for a degree in English literature. My working experience was just as varied, ranging from dishwashing in an Indian restaurant, to being an administrative assistant in federal government law offices. Although I felt rather directionless, I knew that I possessed valuable skills: I was articulate, well read, sociable, highly organized, and had a taste for business. "When I got a job as a production assistant on a major Hollywood film production in Montreal, I realized I belonged in film, and I felt like I finally came home. After years of working closely with directors and producers, I resolved to establish my own filmmaking career, and I couldn't be happier doing anything else."



Ani Guranlian.

**- Could you tell us a little about your past projects and future plans?**

- 2007 was an amazing year for me. I made a very dark, very funny short film about murderous plastic bags called "Stop Chucking", and I hope to be screening it at environmental film festivals in 2008. I also took part in a 48-hr filmmaking competition, where we had to make a 5-minute movie from scratch in 48 hours. Considering we hardly ate or slept, including a hilarious confrontation with the police, I was very happy with our finished film, "2880 Mistakes".

After making "Rock'n Noir" with Seb, I'm happy to help him make anything else his pen desires. My future projects are ambitious... I'm trying to produce a painterly animated short film based on a jarring poem by Earle Birney, (an award-winning Canadian poet). Also in the works is "Chimera", a romantic nightmare in the spirit of David Lynch. These stories have great potential, so I'm deeply committed to getting them told on screen.

**- Who do you work with?**

- My fantastic network of friends are a constant resource of support and advice, but I also go out hunting for talent. I'm not shy in approaching total strangers, so I find everything from firearms trainers to animal wranglers. I often tend to trust my instincts, especially when it comes to finding talented actors, and they

haven't let me down yet.

While I was making my earlier short films, I began to realize my strengths and limitations, and I needed to find someone with complementary skills. The Movie Gods heard my whining and blessed me with Sébastien Morin, a visionary director with a great sense of cinematic artistry. We immediately joined forces and shot an ultra-stylish short film called "Rock'n Noir". Seb and I are so well suited to each other that we've also founded a video production company, offering a wide range of services for consumers and corporate clients alike.

**- What do you most like about making films?**

- Taking an idea scrawled on a piece of paper and making it into a polished film is an intoxicating, addictive experience. But making movies isn't a one-person operation. It takes a team effort, and I love working with different people who are as driven as I am. The hours are long, the work is hard, but the fun is substantial. Most importantly, I love the storytelling aspect of a good film. As I've always loved fiction and literature, I believe that a great story is the primary building block of a great film. To make people feel something, to feed their imaginations, to take them away from their lives for just a moment, is indescribably gratifying. Roman Polanski said that, "cinema should make you forget you are sitting in a theatre". I couldn't agree more.

Sébastien Morin, Guru Films and Les Productions Déconstructhead

**- How did you become a film maker? Is it a just a hobby or do you intend to make a career out of it?**

- I've always been a very visual person. When I was a little kid I was always drawing characters and comic strips. In high school I saw in photography the possibility to make my drawings real. In photography I felt the need for movement and started to play around with one of the first digi-

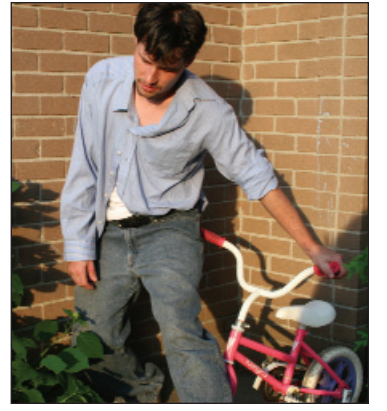
tal Handycams. Cinema came to me as a logical next step.

My main influences were the old black & white American Noir films, into which I now forge my own modern style. I really like the broken down, hard-boiled, pushed-over-the-edge hero, the mysterious, sexy, and strong femme fatale, the inner psychological battles, and the twisted plots. I also take that dark shadowy aesthetic of the classic film noir and mix it with the urban, pop, kitsch, and colorful work of photographer David LaChapelle.

Filmmaking is a passion, but it's also a business that I take very seriously. I fully intend to make a career out of it because I could not see myself doing anything else and be happy. Since I have now wasted almost four years trying to get projects financed by either SODEC, TELEFILM or the Canada Council for the Arts, I've decided to take the Hollywood formula and aim for international sales, instead of just the French Quebec market, which is pretty small anyways. After all, filmmaking is a business.

**- Could you tell us a little about your past projects and future plans?**

- So far I have worked on more than 10 projects as screenwriter, producer, director, cinematographer and editor. My last short film was called "Rock'n Noir", an edgy and very stylish film noir. I'm currently completing two feature film screenplays that I wish to produce and direct in 2008. Since I decided to take the Hollywood approach, I'm also writing a business



plan to help establish my companies, in order to help finance those two projects.

**- Who do you work with?**

- My last short film, "Rock'n Noir", was produced by Ani Guranlian and it's easy to say it was the start of a great partnership. She's a very good producer and she completes what I was lacking. I hope Ani will be involved in all my future projects. For now we will work together in a corporate video production company offering many services.

I also work with a crew of highly motivated people who are following me from past projects, but I am always open to work with new talents.

**- What do you most like about making films?**

- I like filmmaking because it allows me to create impossible worlds and tell extraordinary stories from my unique point of view. I also like filmmaking because I like to work in groups on a community project. You'll never live the same day twice, unlike other jobs. That's why I like to be part of a film every step of the way, from drafting an idea to editing the final cut. At the end of the day you have a finished product that you can visually see, it's real, it's done, you made it and you can be proud of your work.

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