

WIDC 2007 DIRECTOR PARTICIPANT



ALANA CYMERMAN, Montreal, QC

Alana was born and raised in Montreal. In 1994, after graduating from Concordia University's Communications Studies Department, Alana set out to New York City, determined to develop a tougher skin and understand the world of producing so she would never 'have the wool pulled over her eyes' when directing her own projects. There, she had the opportunity to work for the then-small production company Open City Films where she got a crash course in producing. Alana soon realized that rubbing shoulders with the crème de la crème New York's independent film scene while holding down two jobs, left her no time to work on her own projects. She decided to return to Montreal and hone her talent as a writer/director.

Unfortunately, the way home was not that simple. She was falsely accused of forging her own signature on the credit card receipt for her train ticket and asked to remove herself from the train in Schenectady, New York, a town whose name she still cannot pronounce. A brawl ensued as several righteous citizens argued for her rights against Amtrak. Needless to say she avoided that train for years.

Alana worked in Montreal's booming industry as a location manager and scout, absorbing the skills of many a master along the way. When not working in the industry, she devoted her time to developing her own projects. In 1999, Alana traveled to Shanghai China with one of her New York collaborators, Heather Greer, to film a documentary entitled THE GENTLEMAN OF SHANGHAI. The film was a follow-up to the Academy Award-winning FROM MAO TO MOZART. From that collaboration, many trips back and forth to New York (incidentally by plane) led to an animation series developed with Greer.

Alana's directing experiences embody both the hot and cold: literally. In 2001, Alana wrote, directed, produced and self-financed her first short film: ROOM TONES with the help a group of young passionate crew members she had met in the industry. The voluntary crew members, amongst them being a very pregnant DP, found themselves in a sweltering small apartment, over six days, in a record breaking heat wave. Ironically, the film was about a couple's heated relationship so the sweat only added character. ROOM TONES set the grounds for Alana's next project, a much more ambitious film entitled: WHEN ERMA MADE HERMAN. The fantastical nature of this project meant there were many lively discussions amongst the collaborators about sets, casting, and visual effects. The hard work paid off when, in 2002, the film was financed by CALQ, SODEC and the NFB. The film was shot in early 2004 in a barely-heated set, in an old school, during one of Montreal's worst winters. Ironically the film is about an inventor who is faced with a giant hole that's freezing her home. One must wonder if Alana's not a method location-ist!

In 2002, Alana directed a half-hour episode of the television series WOMAN WARRIORS for CBC Sports/WTN, featuring Judo Olympian Michelle Buckingham. Later on that year, Alana had the pleasure of working for Denys Arcand on THE BARBARIAN INVASIONS where she was inspired by Arcand's great example of maintaining enthusiasm among the film crew and his never-ending resource of storytelling. She has often been referred to as "the female Tim Burton of Montreal". Inspired by John Cassavetes directorial style, and having observed the trickle down theory many a time, Alana knows that a good humored director will only motivate the troops. Her goal is to establish herself as a feature film Writer-Director with films that will enlighten both young and older audiences pointing to the absurdity of the world we live in. Alana is especially thrilled by the energy that comes from bringing collaborators together to share in a passion they so seldom find on "regular" jobs. Alana is currently writing the feature film script ERMA INVENTS THE LOVE MACHINE, based on the character Erma of her short film WHEN ERMA MADE HERMAN. It is a fable filled with oddball characters, zany inventions and a world obsessed with consumption.