

LÉA RINALDI turns the camera on Jim Jarmusch's exploratory filmmaking technique, and finds the truth about life on a movie shoot by staying invisible

# Beyond the limits of control

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GAZETTE FILM CRITIC

The Festival du nouveau cinéma had much to give thanks for after the long weekend.

There was a lingering buzz about American horror master George Romero's Friday night visit to support his new title, George A. Romero's *Survival of the Dead*, including real live undead zombies, near-riot-like fan frenzy and Romero's unfailing generosity toward those who adore his work.

There seemed to be solid audience support for virtually everything that screened, including the short-film collection *Les 10 ans de Prends ça court*, which was attended by 800. As communications chief Mélanie Mingotaud put it: "800! For short films!"

She left it to associate Michael-Oliver "Ollie" Harding to put out the call to French director Léa Rinaldi, missing in action on her way to talk about her 52-minute documentary *Behind Jim Jarmusch*, which has its world premiere here tomorrow night.

Turns out it's longer from Fort St. – where she's staying with friends – to festival HQ at President Kennedy Ave. and Jeanne Mance St. than the lovely young Paris native anticipated.

"Please, I want to film you" is the simple line she used to gain access to

the iconic American independent director of classics like *Stranger Than Paradise*, *Dead Man*, *Ghost Dog* and *Broken Flowers* – all films that have helped defined the festival down the line.

"I met him at Cannes, where I was working as a media reporter. We got along, and it occurred to me to ask if I could do a portrait of him at work. Not a 'making of' – I hate those. Or an analysis – he hates that. But an intimate look.

"He said, 'No, I'm shy, but maybe later.' Nine months passed, and out of the blue I got an invitation to Seville, in Spain."

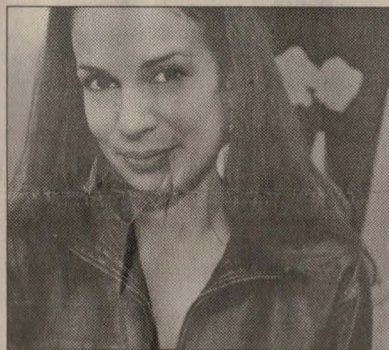
Jarmusch was in that beautiful city shooting *The Limits of Control* with Isaach de Bankolé, Bill Murray, Tilda Swinton and John Hurt.

He welcomed Rinaldi in typically idiosyncratic fashion, by refusing to give her a script or shooting schedule. This from the guy whose motto is "It's hard to get lost if you don't know where you're going."

Beyond that, though, she had carte blanche. What she didn't know – which was plenty – she'd figure out on the fly.

"I'd never done this before," says the 26-year-old graduate of the Sorbonne and Havana University in Cuba. "At first I was totally intimidated. But he trusted me.

"I wanted to be invisible, so I could



GUNTHER GAMPER FNC

Initially, Rinaldi "was totally intimidated. But (Jarmusch) trusted me."

steal his presence. At first I shot from far away, then crept closer and closer, like a mouse."

Rinaldi, who functioned as a one-woman show – camera, sound, direction – completely strips away the artifice of so many films about films. *Behind Jim Jarmusch* is probably the most honest film made about life on a shoot. When it's boring on the set, it's boring in the film. The difference is her constantly prowling eye, watching Jarmusch quietly watch his actors and crew, including volatile genius cinematographer Chris Doyle, of *Wong Kar-wai* fame.

"I was there to look and learn," she says of the three-day experience. What she learned is that Murray was

a constant comic presence, able to turn his performance on and off like a switch. De Bankolé stayed in his inscrutable character, the U.K.'s great Swinton was a chameleon, and Hurt either seemed slightly irritated or played slightly irritated. Doyle was the very picture of the tortured artist, ecstatic one moment, near suicidal the next.

Over it all hovered the spectral Jarmusch, waiting to see what he could take from the situation and turn into a film that was still very much in the process of creation. Again, this from a man who says he's most excited by what he doesn't know. A man who, says Rinaldi, is "the most honest person I have ever met."

**Behind Jim Jarmusch** screens with Rita Azevedo Gomes's Portuguese film *La Collection invisible* at eXcentris, 3536 St. Laurent Blvd., tomorrow at 9:15 p.m. and Sunday at 1 p.m. For more on Rinaldi and her work, visit [www.learnrinaldi.com](http://www.learnrinaldi.com).

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