

POP CULTURE

DIALING THE FUTURE

**AMONG THE NFB'S
INNOVATIONS
ARE FILMS
MADE FOR,
AND EVEN WITH,
CELLPHONES**

BRENDAN KELLY
THE GAZETTE

This is not your grandfather's National Film Board. When Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King tapped a dynamic 40-year-old Scottish filmmaker by the name of John Grierson to set up a new public film studio way back in 1939, the idea was to "interpret Canada to Canadians and to other nations." Grierson, the first government film commissioner, proposed to do that by producing socially conscience films and screening them to as many Canadians as possible in theatres across the country.

That was then, and this is now. Sixty-seven years later, the NFB hasn't lost any of its enthusiasm for churning out activist films, but what's rapidly changing is how the films are distributed and where we see them. With the arrival of a slew of specialty channels over the past 15 years, the NFB has shifted its focus from cinemas to the small screen, and its films have become staples on networks like the Documentary Channel and History Television.

But the decision-makers at the Film Board believe the future of the institution now depends on its ability to adapt swiftly to the revolutionary technological shifts that are constantly rearranging the entertainment/media landscape. For film commissioner and NFB chairperson Jacques Bensimon, that means making every effort to ensure that the studio's films make full use of all the new distribution avenues, from iPods to cellphones to the Internet.

Please see NFB, Page D3