

PLANS, PANS, AND SIX GRAND IN THE CAN

by

Carolyn Swartz

B.A. Connecticut College
1971

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
Degree of

Master of Science in Visual Studies

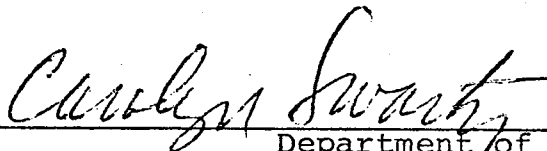
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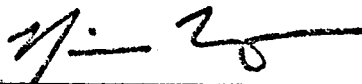
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Submitted to the Department of Architecture on January 18, 1980, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Visual Studies.

ABSTRACT

Making an unscripted documentary (cinema verite) film is a kind of exploration into uncharted territory. It was my experience in making "Marv Cutler and the Little Prince of Rock" that preconceptions in shooting a scene were rarely realized. The footage returned by the lab, having been shot by me in a state of instant surprise, often had a puzzle quality which would then be reworked into a logical scene which was usually a restructuring, rather than a reporting of the event.

Thus the film acquired a shape molded by feasibility, logistics, and accessibility in shooting. Conclusions are avoided; I strive instead for evocative scenes which suggest the complexity of real life.

Thesis Supervisor: Richard Leacock
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text accompanied by videotape

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Description

May 1978

Mr. Jazz will be a 15-20 minute sync sound color film portrait of a Medford man, Marv Cutler, and his family. Marv operates on the shabby fringe of the show business world--scheming, hustling, bungling, and trying to promote himself and other local talent, most notably his seven year old son, Scott . . . The film will depict this ambitious but unsophisticated man attempting to become recognized in a field that he considers exciting and glamorous. The focus of the film will be on the relationships within the family: the energetic and manipulative father, the passive mother, the inexpressive older brother, and Scott, who sometimes enjoys the attention he receives but is too young to have a sense of his own volition. The film is about manipulation, exploitation, and vicarious realization, but Marv Cutler is not a monster, and his relationship with his son is not all business. I will attempt to show some of the love that exists amid this confusion.

The above description was part of a brief proposal written a year and a half ago at the onset of the production of the film that is now titled "Marv Cutler and the Little Prince of Rock." The movie was "to be completed in September 1978," with a "Total Budget of \$1484.04." It is interesting for me to reread my proposal, knowing now that the production costs for this film were twice as high as I had anticipated. (I shot about twenty-five rolls of film, rather than the twelve I'd planned on.) Printing costs should equal production costs in this case, bringing the total budget to around \$6000. I expect the film to be thirty-five minutes (not 15-20) long. And the time it will have taken me to complete it is twenty-one, not five months.

But it is not the difference in budget, schedule or length that is the most dramatic discrepancy between the plan and execution of the film. For while at the most superficial level, I did make the film described above, my recorded plans are a clear reminder of the fallibility of preconception in unscripted filmmaking: depicting character, relationships, and events on film is a more complex affair than I had imagined. Another factor which I did not consider in May 1978 was my own relationship with the Cutler family, which would greatly influence the film. In fact, the entire process of making this film, from trying to make plans with Marv to shooting to editing has been far more complicated than I thought it would be. Real life is full of surprises, and it is impossible to be prepared for them; otherwise they wouldn't be surprises. And it is certainly difficult to deal with them with a heavy camera on one shoulder, focus and f-stops running through one side of your brain and a cash register ringing in the other. Jean Renoir said in 1954 that "The real creative artist in the cinema is the one who can get the most out of everything he sees, even if he sometimes does this by accident."¹ Thus looking at rushes was often more of a shock than a surprise, and editing was often a way of reinterpreting the event in order to salvage usable material.

¹Quoted in Richard Leacock, "Technology and Reality at the Movies," Technology Review, vol. 75, no. 4, February 1973.

I was originally interested in Marv, who called himself "Mr. Jazz" as a main character for the film, and only peripherally interested in his son Scott. It did not occur to me that this seven year old could be a moving or exciting character. This is clear from the (mistaken) description of Scott being "too young to have a sense of his own volition." It just happened that the first time Marv allowed me to film was at his son's recording session, and the proposal was written after this scene was shot, so I included some observations of my first successful shoot. When I first decided to make this movie, I wanted to shoot Marv at his many occupations: Marv the wheeler-dealer in his many hats. At the time he was spinning records at Mafia discos, disc jockeying a midnight show on a Lynn radio station, working for H&R Block preparing income tax returns for people, selling advertising and reviewing restaurants for a small local entertainment magazine. (I pictured Marv and his entire family, all of whom are quite overweight, consuming an enormous meal in a restaurant while discussing the merits of the food.) Marv also managed several entertainers, promoted his son, was trying to put together a cable TV variety show and was thinking about buying a radio station of his own.

It was not until the third shoot that I discovered what was to become an important thread in the film: Marv's relationship with his son. The direction of the film was altered as well, when I began to realize that I was never going to be

allowed to film inside the Cutler home. I had wanted to shoot the family relaxing, eating dinner at home, but Marv insisted they never ate together. I was interested in a scene in which the family prepared Scott for a performance, but there were always excuses. I finally realized that Marv's wife Deanna was off limits, too. As embarrassed as she was about the state of the house (Marv used it as a warehouse for the paraphernalia involved in his ventures), she was more uncomfortable about her weight problem.

I suggested many times that I film the family at a restaurant Marv was reviewing, but Marv insisted it would "blow his cover." He did not want me with him when he was selling ads either, because he felt it would interfere with business. I slowly became aware that it was only the public or semi-public Marv that I would have access to, but I felt that his real character could be gleaned in these situations. In fact, I felt that Marv's self image, evident in his public and even on-camera (TV) personality, was a real key to his personality and dreams. Thus the emphasis of the film slowly shifted, and I became aware of a shape that would be molded by feasibility and accessibility, strengthened by my perceptions and interpretations, and colored by events that I could not have predicted or planned. I sometimes followed impulses that proved to be blind alleys, and when it became clear what the film was about, it was not difficult to reject these scenes. But "what the film is about" in scriptless movie-

making is usually more multifaceted than a single subject which can be explained or illuminated by description. "What it's about" emerged as footage and scenes accumulated over a year of shooting off and on. The order of the scenes shot over the course of that year is as follows.

1. Marv at WLYN hosting a late night oldies radio show.
(not processed)
2. Marv spinning records for hire at a Mafia disco.
(processed but not workprinted or synched)
3. Marv and a friend pick Scott up at school, drive him to a recording studio, coach him in a recording of nursery rhymes set to rock and roll.
4. Marv and family in New York City. Marv takes Scott to Sesame Street productions, goes to ASCAP to register a record. Scott and Deanna watch TV in their motel room while Marv's out on business.
5. Marv hosts the "Showcase of Stars" on cable TV at a Saugus lounge.
6. Press party for the release of Scott's record.
7. Scott rehearses with Al Vega an arrangement for the next Showcase.
8. Second Showcase at the Vogue Lounge in Saugus.
9. Marv and Scott visit Jesse Garon, an Elvis clone.
Marv and Jesse sign a personal management contract.
10. Marv talks about himself, shows me pictures and

memorabilia in his office at his radio station, WHOT.

11. Marv spinning records at another Mafia haunt.

Of the eleven shoots, I never made any attempt to incorporate footage from the first two or the last two. The first two were a kind of investigative excursion into Marv's world (and the world of 16mm), and the last two were shot when the film was nearly complete, but I wasn't sure of just what it needed. (I knew it needed something.)

It was not until the third shoot that I was convinced that there was a film to be made about Marv Cutler, and from then on I processed and workprinted everything I shot. (Always expecting disasters, and sometimes encountering minor ones, I always processed the original first, looked at it--to make sure there was an image--and then sent it to the lab for workprinting.)

Scott was very shy in the beginning and, I thought, quite average. The interest in the recording studio scene was more in Marv's perception of success, as revealed in the drive to the studio, and his badgering of his young son to accomplish his goals. I thought the film might show Marv in a variety of situations, trying to get a number of "deals" going at once. I pictured a portrait emerging from this accumulation. I found Scott, who sang out of tune, rather appealing, but fragile and minimal in response. There were technical problems in this scene: I used a non-reflex camera and it was extremely

dark in the recording studio, and impossible to see to focus; but I was pleased with the content, and felt confident to shoot some more.

The next time I shot, Marv and his family were arriving in New York City. The sound person and I had gone down first and met them on their arrival. Here I thought I would get my restaurant scene, but it was not to happen. I tried to follow Marv as he walked the city streets around the theatre district and tried to make business contacts, get free tickets for plays and musicals (as a reviewer), etc., but I found that walking these streets with a \$10,000 camera an unbearably uncomfortable experience (and I don't mean physically uncomfortable). I was not sure if I was motivated by cowardice or good sense, but I made the decision not to shoot that day in that situation.

One problem for me was that I had envisioned a totally different event in New York. I pictured myself in the front seat of a large Checker cab, filming the Cutler family in the rear seat on their way to appointments. (I was picturing my own family trips to New York City twenty years before.) It turned out that Marv's family's New York experience had little in common with my childhood memories. Marv's modus operandi was to leave his wife and one son at the motel while he and the other son roamed the streets in the general area where music and theatre business was conducted. Marv informed me that he made no appointments and, if I wanted to shoot, I

would just have to follow him. When I realized that this simply was not possible, I told him that I would meet him the following day only if he had a pre-arranged destination. I mourned the incredible experiences that I would undoubtedly miss; I wanted to film Marv "doing Business" his own way, but felt that I could only do so in an area or a building in which I felt safe. He called me later that day to tell me that he would meet us the following day at Lincoln Center, where he was taking Scott and his new record to Sesame Street Productions.

If it hadn't been for a broken connection between the camera and the cable to the battery pack which would turn the camera off mid-scene without warning, this would have been an ideal shooting situation. I could see, there was plenty of light, and nobody was moving around too much. The scene was rich with expressed and implied tensions, with Marv trying to "sell" Scott as a performer and his record, and Scott acting completely bored and oblivious. The executive was trying his best to be concerned, helpful, and polite, but was barely hiding his amusement and lack of interest.

After his interview at Sesame Street, Marv took Scott upstairs to ASCAP, where he hoped to accomplish a mere formality in registering a record, but found himself in hot water for unpaid dues. Marv was obviously embarrassed,

but I kept shooting, sure that I would have a scene that would provide a terrific contrast to Marv at the studio in which he'd been so bullyish and in control.

After the ASCAP scene we said goodbye to Marv, but the soundperson and I decided to beat Marv back to his motel room and wait with Deanna and their older son Mark for Marv and Scott's return. I was interested in filming Marv interpret the day's events as he related them to his wife and son. I was shooting as Marv opened the door, but he was probably so surprised (and disgusted) to see us again that for the first and only time, he did not ignore the camera as usual. He looked at me with disbelief and asked, "What are YOU doing here?" When I explained my mission, he did his best to cooperate by telling Deanna what had happened, but his voice was halfhearted and his presentation unconvincing. He later explained to me that "I just never come home and tell Deanna what happened. I just don't do it." Again, what may have been a logical preconception for some other family (mine) simply did not apply to the Cutlers. No matter that my idea was off the mark, so was my exposure.

The last scene that I shot in New York was in the motel room with Deanna and Scott while Marv took his older son out on business. It was the first and last time that I was able to film Deanna in a close situation, and it required some serious cajoling. Marv claimed that Deanna did not want to

be in the film, and Deanna said that Marv didn't want her in the film. I pressed the issue, because I did want a scene of Scott with his mother in the film, and I am sorry that the scene was not usable. Deanna was tense, and I felt the need to shoot my roll and get out. I never tried to integrate the footage into the assemblage of scenes I was working on. The intensity and tension which were elements of all previous scenes--the schoolyard, the studio, even the signing into the motel, Sesame Street and ASCAP--were lacking. Every other scene had worked without narration, had moved in some logical way through time and connected in a manner with Marv's pursuits, but this scene would have required a narration. ("While Marv is out . . .") Deanna and I grew to like each other, but she remained steadfast in her refusal to be filmed.

After New York, in the spring of 1978, Marv and I stayed in touch, but I didn't film for quite a few months. Although I had some strong scenes of Marv and Scott, it still was not clear that their relationship would become the basic thread of the film. I still saw Scott as one of Marv's "projects." I made plans with Marv to shoot a few times over the summer, but he always backed down. Finally, Marv asked me to shoot him and Deanna going to their Weight Loss Clinic together, and I was all ready to film when I got a call from Marv saying that he had decided "not to give them any advertising."

It was not until late fall of 1978 that Marv became interested in my continuing to film him. He was proud that he was putting together and preparing to host a Cable TV variety show, and the "special guest" was to be Scott. My film really needed a scene in which Scott performed in public rather than at a studio or a rehearsal. One problem that was surfacing with the film was that Scott appeared to be devoid of talent, and the film was seeming as cruelly exploitative as Marv's promotion and manipulation. Some viewers of the assemblage suspected that Scott had to be a good performer in the right circumstance (on stage), but I continued to feel that the film was more about Marv's dream than about whether or not Scott was talented. I did, however, agree that a scene that transcended Scott's lackluster quality would balance the film in a positive way, and I looked forward to shooting his performance.

At the Vogue Lounge, I became carried away with the whole show--not only Marv and Scott, but the TV crew, the audience and, in particular, the other performers fascinated me. Fascination is dangerous on a small budget, and I overshot the scene, probably partly because I had been frustrated in my attempts to shoot for months. It was now clear that this was not going to be a film shot in twelve rolls. It was very exciting to see Marv in his own world, with these people who dreamed the same dreams all supporting one another. These

other performers served to somehow explain Marv, and put him in a context in which he could be understood. After this filming, I decided the film should be called "The World of Marv Cutler."

My main disappointment was again the result of a preconception; I learned that rather than performing and singing live, Scott would be lip-synching his record. It turned out to be revealing enough, though, with Marv interviewing Scott and answering most of the questions himself. Even Scott lip-synching his own tune was more telling than I'd anticipated: Scott went through successive stages of embarrassment, giggles, forcing himself to get serious, and finally "getting into it."

In the period of about two weeks from the night of the first TV show, I shot four scenes that would all be included in the final version of the movie. A few days after the TV show was the press party, arranged by Marv and a friend who ran a Polynesian restaurant, to introduce the media to Scott and his new record. About a week later I shot Marv and Scott at the studio of the bandleader/pianist at the Vogue Lounge in a rehearsal of Scott's new Elvis tunes. After that I shot the second TV show, with which I would end the film.

I had two ideas of what the press party could be like. I wondered if no one would show up, in which case I could film Marv dealing with disappointment or wounded ego. I

thought if the press did show up, it might be another opportunity for Marv to reveal his plans and perceptions about their career. In this case, a few radio interviewers did show up, but Marv had told me the wrong time, and I arrived as they were leaving. I wonder if Marv did not want my presence and that of the camera in this situation. At any rate a terrific interview occurred while I was at the car, getting lights, in which a woman challenged Marv as a father keeping his son up late on school nights and Marv had to admit that Scott did not actually work very much. Morgan Wesson, who was taking sound, recorded the interview, but it went the way of all wild sound: it's wrapped around a core in a film can. Having missed the press, the scene became barely a party and is cut into the film as a short and simple restaurant scene in which Scott and his brother are drinking cocktails from a cocktail fountain, and Marv says as he leaves the buffet table with a plateful of food, "I only look happy when I'm eating."

A few days later, Marv informed me that Scott had been practicing some Elvis Presley songs and was going to be trying out his Elvis act at the next Showcase. He told me that it was okay for me to film Scott's rehearsal at Al Vega's studio. I decided to film it, but was really expecting a repeat of the first recording session, and I didn't think that the film could stand another such scene. I was wrong again,

because Scott amazed me (and Marv, who claimed that Scott had learned the songs on his own) with his energy, enthusiasm, his good imitation of Elvis's mannerisms and voice quality, and even his singing, which was inspired and in tune. For the first time in the year that I'd known him, Scott was truly excited about performing. He took over at the rehearsal, deciding where Vega would take instrumental breaks and planning his costume. I was very pleased, partly because I had grown to like Marv and Scott, and I felt that Scott's new-found prowess would redeem them and, perhaps more importantly, the film. I saw the film ending on an up note, as it were, on a success (in their terms). And I looked forward to filming the second Showcase, sure that I would get my scene of Scott performing well in public.

Once again, I was unprepared for real life surprises. I was in fact more unprepared in this scene than in any other, because at this point I had a clear idea of what I wanted and what I felt the film needed. After filming a few of the other acts (one of whom the film now opens with), I filmed Scott as he took the microphone from its stand. Marv reminded him to "put the collar up" as planned, and Scott looked confident--even cocky. But when Scott began to sing in the wrong key and Marv stopped him mid-song, I turned to Morgan and got a slate. This isn't how I want my film to end, I thought. Besides, I was feeling protective of Scott

and wanted to spare him further embarrassment in the movie. I'd liked Marv, and he was acting like a creep. I saw this as a minor preliminary problem, after which I would undoubtedly get the scene I wanted. I don't know how long these feelings lasted--somewhere between twenty seconds and under a minute--but I realized all of a sudden that this was the scene, this was the reality of what was happening, and I was about to miss it. I believe that Morgan went through the same changes, having a fondness for Scott, but we realized almost simultaneously what was happening, and started to record the scene again. Ricky Leacock said at the Flaherty Film Seminar in 1978 that Robert Flaherty "taught me the importance of filming what is there rather than what should be."² What was happening here was that Marv was disgusted and insensitive to Scott's embarrassment as he struggled to find the right key in which to sing. I believe that this scene, although there were no technical problems, was more seriously mis-shot--necessitating the use of more than a few cutaways--than any other in the film. I just was not open to the experience until it was almost too late, and I had missed some important transitions.

It was at this second Showcase that I shot the scene with which I would end the film. Scott was standing alone

²"A Flaherty Celebration," Afterimage, vol. 7, no. 2, October 1979.

after his performance, watching his father and the two low-budget models flanking him. Marv mugged for the (TV) camera and began to dance with one of the women. A woman was singing "What I Did for Love," and Marv looked at Scott, who was rubbing his eyes and looking at Marv. Then Marv looked over the shoulder of his dance partner at me and shrugged. For a long time I thought this sequence was too maudlin to use as the end of the film. But it works, I think, because the tone of the movie as a whole is not sentimental, and the scene is not a set-up--it's what happened.

After the Showcase in December, I didn't shoot for a few months. Marv and Scott were not doing much professionally, and Marv was playing hard to get. Anyway, I wanted to edit my footage, to see what I had, to find out what I needed. It was clear that I needed something in a more private space; the clubs, studios, and offices were giving the film a claustrophobic quality. In the spring of 1979, Marv told me that he was going to be negotiating a contract with an Elvis look/sound-alike who had taken the name Jesse Garon (the name of Presley's real twin brother who had died at birth). It sounded like Marv thought the guy was a little nuts, but was going to go through with the deal anyway. (I later found out why, when Marv admitted privately to me that after he signs a personal management contract with a performer, he puts it in the "circular file." He has no interest in a

binding contract if things aren't right.)

I was still thinking of the film as "The World of Marv Cutler," and I saw the potential of this scene as another business hustle of Marv's, and an extension of the performers who were seen but not known at the club. I did not know that Marv would take along Scott, or that Scott would blossom in Jesse's living room filled with Elvis artifacts.

Jesse Garon turned out to be one of the strangest people I'd ever laid eyes on. Painfully thin and missing teeth (I found out later he was hooked on amphetamines), he had dyed black, teased and sprayed hair and pancake makeup. Laden with jewelry, he had a face that had been Presleyfied by a West Coast plastic surgeon. He talked a blue streak that was a mixture of homily, wishful thinking, and religion. God and Elvis were his favorite themes, and deserved equal reverence.

Fascinated once again, I shot more than I'd intended to; I couldn't resist Jesse's speeches--"Man has gone wrong; he worshipped 'Buddher, Jehover' and all these other false gods"--or his singing, which he would do with a microphone plugged into his hifi, in unison with a blaring Presley record. Scott watched silently for the first hour or so, and I had to remind myself to shoot him for reaction shots; he was quite invisible. Later in the afternoon, however, Jesse left the living room to put on his custom-made Elvis

suit to show Marv and Scott, and Scott took Jesse's mike and began to sing as never before. He had been inspired by the older performer--either that or threatened. I was able to film a scene that I was very happy with, Scott singing his most convincing Presley, Marv photographing Jesse, who was parading around the room in his bizarre suit.

Before the Jesse scene was processed, I shot two more brief scenes which were never considered for use in the film. I had the feeling that the film was complete with this new peak at Jesse's, but it had been over a year from the start and I wanted to make sure that I was indeed through, that I would no longer have to call Marv and beg him for an audience. I wasn't sure if the film needed an "explanation" of Marv by Marv; I thought not, but decided to try it anyway, to cover all possibilities. I met Marv at his office (he was running a cable radio station and putting out a small entertainment newspaper) and filmed him as he cut out and pasted copy. Then I asked him to show me the paper, talk about it and anything else he wanted to talk about. This was not my style, nor was it his. Nor was it the style of the film. Marv was nervous and so was I. It was the first time I had tried to film him when he wasn't doing something that was more important than being filmed. Furthermore, he had begun to see the film not merely as my "school project" but as an opportunity to be seen and heard on TV, a forum in which

to build his public image and air some gripes he had about certain people--mostly critics or announcers in the music business that he felt ignored him. I shot him for awhile as he spoke of his interest in jazz and "good music" in a tone that said, "Now here is the REAL me," and he named certain promoters who had thwarted his efforts in that direction.

Not only was this a side of Marv which I had never seen, and had never been even implied in his actions or words, but it was a side of Marv in which I did not believe; I felt he was being carried away by the "interview," one reason I'd never wanted to use it. And it was inconsistent in form with the rest of the movie, in which information was accrued not by statements but by word and deed in real-life situations. I knew there was no way for me to be sure of who Marv really was, but I had to trust my intuition and perceptions. Although there was a chance that this monologue had revealed a valid side of him, and that I did him an injustice not to include it in the film, I did not use the scene.

The last time I filmed Marv, he was cablecasting a live radio show from another Mafia disco. Marv was urging his listeners to "come on down here: we're having a ball," when there were really only two or three people at the club. By this time, I knew that this fact (that the club was empty) would be extremely difficult to convey in film, because of

the darkness of the room, so I didn't shoot very much.

When I got back this new batch of footage from the last three shoots, I saw the strength of the scene with Jesse Garon, and realized that this scene could function as a sort of climax of the film if correctly placed. I decided that with this scene, the film could indeed be centered around Marv and Scott's relationship with each other--this bizarre world of tacky clubs and deluded entertainers--making scenes like the last two incongruous. The film, up to this point, had been arranged chronologically in the editing, because the events had occurred in a logical sequence: first Scott recorded his song, then they went to New York to sell it. Then Scott appeared on Marv's Showcase lip-synching the record, and there was a party for the release of the record. Scott practiced his Elvis tunes at Al Vega's and then performed them at Marv's second Showcase. One problem with the edited rough cut was that it was too heavily weighted toward the two club scenes (at the same location) in the last half of the film. I tried to alter chronology by placing the first Showcase after the recording session, which would have been a logical progression. But the problem with this change was that going from the studio space to the club space reinforced the claustrophobic feeling that was already in the film and brought it to a point at which it felt unbearable. I needed to separate these two scenes by New York, in which there were

outdoor shots, walking shots within the ASCAP building, and transitions like the signing into the hotel. Another problem was that although Scott's Elvis act was mentioned at the first Showcase, the first two-thirds of the film were related to Scott's record and the last third was about Scott's Elvis routine. The Elvis theme seemed to come out of nowhere and some viewers asked, "What about the record?" I decided that by placing the Jesse Garon scene after the first showcase and before the rehearsal for the second, I would have found a way to "introduce" Scott to Elvis Presley (even though this was a fictionalization) and to give Scott the stimulus (Jesse's imitation of Presley) to sing well, to become enthusiastic about performing, and to do well at the rehearsal which I would place after the Jesse sequence. I saw this sequence as creating the kind of build the film really needed. I decided that with this upward movement, I could end the film with the letdown at the second showcase. The characters would have moved full circle, with Marv and Scott ending where they had started, with the father frustrated, trying to get Scott back on key. By placing this scene between the first and second showcases, I was also breaking up the closed-in feeling that dominated the last part of the movie; the scene with Garon was shot in his living room and outdoors.

As I continued to edit, I made some other changes in chronology. I decided to start the film with a performer

at the Vogue Lounge as an introduction before going to the title. I took one of the more unusual performers from the second showcase and put her in a montage of acts in the first. But the film still began with the first scene chronologically: picking up Scott at school and taking him to the recording studio. And for the most part, I kept scenes in the order in which they'd been shot, at a length that enabled me to use much of my "good" footage. Because I shot the film sporadically for a year, and edited each sequence as the footage returned from the lab, I cut each scene separately as an individual chapter rather than as an integral part of a larger design. I began to edit, in fact, with no clear idea of what form the film would eventually take; I was not even aware of what the content would be, although I assumed Marv and Scott would not be given a contract by Warner Brothers or appear on the Johnny Carson Show. So each scene was cut on what I saw as its own merits, and attached to the next, mostly in the order in which it had been shot. This first stage of editing lasted until I had to give up the film for a month for a possible grant, and had to take a rest from my myopic relationship with it, or from my love affair with every shot that was in focus and properly exposed. When it was returned to me after that time (with a polite letter from the funding source), I felt that I could see it clearly as a whole for the first time. It was then that I felt as

though I was able to cut it with a lack of sentimentalism about removing shots that I had felt attached to. It was also at this time that I began to feel a freedom from chronology and a lack of restraint in extracting the essence of a scene. I found that scenes were actually more effective when pared down. In the studio, for example, I cut out a scene in which Marv calls to Scott, "Just make it sound like you're alive." In fact, he had already said almost those exact words moments earlier and this was a repetition. I left in the feeling of the repeated takes, Marv's repeated badgering of Scott, without making the viewer feel as if he (the viewer) were being badgered.

I was feeling that the first showcase, which was about ten minutes long, was a kind of bottomless pit, making the movie sag in the middle. Besides, it was a bit confusing in terms of location. I decided to begin the film (after the introductory performer and the title) with the setting-up-the-show part of it, thus immediately establishing the Vogue Lounge as a location and Marv as the small time impresario. It worked to explain who Marv was and where he was taking Scott in the scene that follows, and it aided the development of Scott's character as well. In the first scene, Marv is making plans with the cameraman and the bandleader, and Scott stands by his father as a silent observer. With each successive scene in the film--the studio, New York, the

first showcase, Jesse's and the rehearsal with Al Vega--he has more to say and becomes more assertive and willful. In the final scene, he is once again not carefully considered by his father, and the film ends with Scott once again an observer.

The film that I have made about Marv and Scott Cutler is not a report about the facts of their lives. Nor is it a story that bears out all my original assumptions about them. A TV producer has questioned the last scene as being unclear in terms of my own feelings and conclusions. I do not consider this a flaw in the ending, but rather an honest summing up about my conflicted feelings about Marv and Scott. Just as preconception was irrelevant in shooting this unscripted documentary, there were no pat answers or rigid conclusions to be drawn or created in the editing. I am satisfied to have suggested the complexity and ambiguity of real life as it unfolds.