



TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL



above: Janis Cole's *Bowie: One in a Million*

Bowie: One in a Million Director: Janis Cole

IT'S BEEN 10 years since veteran screenplay writer and documentary filmmaker Janis Cole has directed a film. *Bowie: One in a Million* is clearly a personal project for the writer of the Gemini-nominated *MOW* *Dangerous Offender* and codirector of the feature doc classic *P4W*.

Working on a minuscule budget of \$5,000, raised mainly through a long-delayed grant owed her from the National Film Board for having won the John Spotton Award for Best Canadian Short at TIFF in 1990, Cole has fashioned a hard-hitting indictment on domestic violence. The film is a biography of her friend Cathy Bowie, a French teacher who was killed by her estranged husband in what was termed a "domestic dispute."

"After Bowie was killed in '93," she recalls, "it affected me so much that I started to hear about domestic violence cases all the time on the radio. I started to read about it all the time in the paper. I thought, 'My God, isn't anybody paying attention?' I was devastated that there seems to be a licence to kill your partner, and most frequently it was men doing the killing."

Years passed while Cole let her thoughts and feelings gestate and she worked on other projects. "Then a friend of mine saw Bowie's former husband, out with another woman. I thought to myself, 'She has a life sentence, she's dead. He doesn't have a life sentence, he's out. Who knows if the woman he's with even knows what happened in his past?' That's when I sat down and wrote the narrative."

Using photographs gathered from Cathy Bowie's closest friends and newspaper clippings of "domestic dispute" deaths that Cole had collected, the filmmaker fashioned a film that is divided between the personal and the political. The first half of the film describes Cathy Bowie's life through photos and an intimate voiceover by the filmmaker. In the second part, a collage of radio voices describing spousal abuse is accompanied by visuals of the newspapers Cole has archived.

Cole's hope is that the film will be distributed to "people who work in distress centres, or in shelters, or who work with the United Way or with the foundations that help women."

Marc Glassman