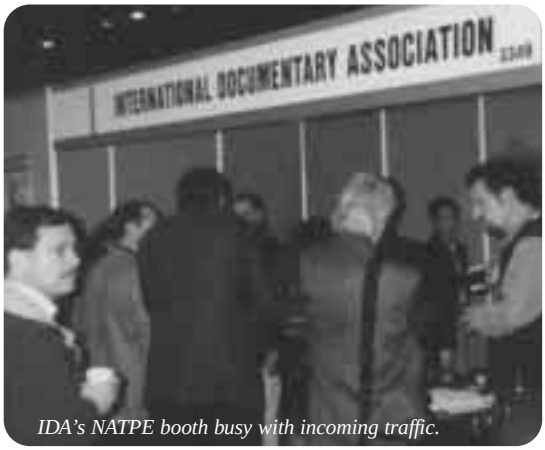
Confessions of NATPE Neophyte

A HARD SELL *in the* BIG EASY



IDA's NATPE booth busy with incoming traffic.

BY GREG REITMAN
WITH ADDITIONAL COMMENTARY
FROM JEFFREY LERNER

It was 6:30 a.m. I knew because I threw my alarm clock across the room trying to squeeze an extra two minutes before the morning wake-up call. Before I could think, I rushed out to my car, lacking that all-too-crucial first cup of coffee. I picked up my partner, Jeffrey Lerner, who I am sure got the few extra minutes of rest I craved. Our mission this early Sunday morning was both simple and complex. First, we had to catch our plane to New Orleans—and without leaving the car in short term parking. Second, and more importantly, we had to pull out all the right stops, bust a few moves, call in a number of personal favors, and hustle to get the most out of our first NATPE experience in order to sell our documentary series, *The Mysteries of the Islands,* to the networks, as well as setup our international distribution network.

We came prepared with the limited-resources at hand. We traded in our Mardi Gras beads for three piece suits and prayed that bad juju was not against us. We were happy to find that our brochures, catalogues and infamous three-minute trailer of Catalina Island were intact. We checked into the Hampton Hotel and surveyed the grand view of New Orleans. Yes, we were poised for greatness. That lasted for all of about 30 seconds. I realized that I had forgotten that very special piece of luggage at the airport—my suitbag. Extremely frustrated, I headed back to the airport to pick up the clothing that would surely elevate my stature in the community. I might be able to get away with going naked on Bourbon Street, but the NATPE floor is another story.

It finally dawned on me that I wasn't attending the Sundane Film Festival. I was attending the largest TV cable show in the country, where all the major buyers and key decision-makers would be in attendance. Man, this is serious business!

With scarce resources, and no relatives in the biz, we decided to partner up with the IDA and utilize the Documentary Pavilion as our impromptu headquarters and showcase for our production company, Blue Water Entertainment. For the next three days we ran around the massive market, pitched our show, and introduced ourselves to a number of buyers from around the globe. We learned a lot about the market, especially what time the networks put out their lavish spreads for breakfast and lunch.

We realized early on that the key to a successful show was making appointments well in advance and scheduling important meetings outside the convention center, away from intrusions and other frustrated producers. Fortunately, for our big meeting, we were able to head to Bourbon Street for a tasty and very productive lunch.

Throughout our stay at NATPE, we were extremely glad that we utilized the services that the IDA had so graciously offered. We had access to a phone and message service. Pleasant, helpful, and supportive people were always around the IDA booth. We know that the exposure of our company and product to the more than 22,000 people in attendance was well worth the nominal fee to participate in the Documentary Pavilion. Thank you, IDA! (And yes, we paid our dues for the year).

Today, we are back in LA, after travel nightmares worthy of the Twilight Zone! As for our documentary series, it's now up to the networks. We know it's pretty much a crapshoot at this point, and an expensive one to say the least. But at least we went out swinging.

For more information on **Blue Water Entertainment** and *The Mysteries of the Islands Series* e-mail Greg Reitman at *bwe@attglobal.net.*

Attention: ALL IDA MEMBERS

Let the Flicks Begin—Catch up on a year of great documentaries.

Volunteers needed to serve on pre-screening committees for the 2000 IDA Distinguished Documentary Achievement Awards. Good collegiality, good flicks, and good food . . . offered to dedicated individuals who have an evening a week for couple months or so.

Call by MAY 15

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