

I'm not afraid of hard work. Terrified, would be the appropriate adjective. And so, that delicate sensibility, plus my desire to ascend to the fresh-baguette-every-day strata of Niceois society provoked the usual question : "How can I make some serious money here?" Believing I had a small talent for putting words and pictures together, a film was the obvious answer. But a film of stories! Pretty pictures are the icing. Stories are the cake. Think about it. What are myths? Legends? Folklore? - Stories. The Bible? The Koran? The deeds of Buddha? - Stories. How do the great Lawyers win cases? - with stories. Human existence, past, present and future, is a never ending story! Although I had no idea what the stories would be, or how told, I did know they needed an authentic, famous, English speaking Frenchman. Someone who was the essence of cool, sauve and de-boner. Oozing Gallic charm from every pore. My short list was short. Just two words. Yves. Montand. Who else? Did he not possess all of the above? Did he not make movies in America? Did he and Marilyn not.....well.....you know?.....Fortunately, for the exotic wannabe director from

the far away lands, Yves, at this time was alive, well, and nearby. Scant kilometres North. In the trendy hilltop village of St. Paul De Vence, where he was a silent partner in the equally trendy Auberge - "Le Columbe D'Or." The "Golden Dove" has long been a favourite grazing/drinking stop for artists. It was here that various deadbeats, renegades and unemployables like Picasso and Chagall installed themselves for as long as possible, eating and drinking as much as possible. Then, leaving the proprietors with dirty dishes, empty bottles, and a painting. Across from Le Columbe D'Or, on the hard dusty dirt of the village square, Men to whom fifty is a fond memory of youth play Pentanque, or Boules. This is a "male escape game" (like fishing) that involves rolling palm sized steel balls into each other. Basically lawn bowling without the lawn or the pins. On the other side of the square is the inevitable bar/caf . Where you can sip your pastis and watch it all go by. That's what Yves was doing when we arrived. He was tall. At least six five. With the relaxed assured manner of an ex-athlete to whom the years had been kind. Adding weight equally. Not just behind the belt

buckle. Sporting the regulation Pentanque tweed jacket, cap and plaid shirt, Yves was the cat's pajamas of studied casualness. Jus' a regular guy. But, the only "regular guy" getting waves and smiles from a parade of centrefold escapees in eye friendly dresses. (Yves Montand, at any age, curling up at night with a good book? - I think not!) A fair question now would be : "What are we doing here?" How did these bozos get a date with a French icon/International movie star? Purely the immense charm of Capt'n Bob. He managed to find and telephonically schmooze Yves agent in Paris.....and viola! Breaking the ice was not a problem. Yves did it for us. "All they offer me lately are these.....police films" He scowled. "Your film isn't a 'shoot 'em up' I hope?" "More of a 'drink'em up' was Bob's instant reply. "Excellent" Yves shot back. Then, gesturing to his pastis with a smile - "As you can see.....I'm a natural!" Smiles and laughs all around. "You'll join me, of course?" "Absolutement" I blurted out. "So you speak French." Yves responded. With seemingly genuine surprise. (If I didn't blush, I meant to.) Pressing what I deemed to be my advantage, I stepped up to the plate.

"Mr. Montand...." "Please"...Mr. Montand purred. "Yves." "Yves", I smiled demurely. (A masculine demure, bien sur.)..Would you consider working in Hollywood again?" Suddenly thoughtful, Yves replied : "Well,.....I'm a actor.....and my job is to take the.....  
..most.....attractive.... work available.....wherever it takes me."  
Sensing that perhaps this wasn't the answer I'd expected, Yves attempted another spin. "My time in Hollywood was.....interesting .....and I feel that.....in all modesty.....I acquitted myself reasonably well." "You're too modest" Bob interjected with respectful enthusiasm. "Some of your work in that era virtually defined romantic comedy." Yves smiled demurely.(Like me, a masculine demure) "You're very kind....but.....I think.....that.....like fashion, styles and tastes change.....which I think is a good thing.....so that what was funny in 1950 is.....we could say.....without humor today."  
Communal silence; as Bob and I nodded approvingly. Then Bob picked up the bat. "Are you going to continue your television talks?" The romantic giant smiled and shrugged."Pas encore. It depends on many things.....yet.....unresolved." A long pause. "But....it is very strange when you consider that as an actor.....in the world of fiction...."

you know.....it's always up and down. One film does well.....another does not. But when I appear on television, as Yves Montand, private citizen to speak of things non-fiction.....more people are watching than would perhaps see one of my films in a year!" "True" Bob agreed."But are they not tuning in principally because you're a celebrity? "Well.....yes.....I suppose that's true" Yves(dare I say?) demurred. I saw my opening. "I think that's part of it" I offered. "That's what gets them in the tent.Curiousity. They want to know what this actor is all about. What he thinks. What he believes. And when they see you - Yves Montand, private citizen.....and hear you.....they realize you are a man of character. With firm opinions, clearly expressed. And it's....I think ....this.....honesty.....and a sense of great natural dignity.....that compels them to return. The same quality that informs your acting."( Pause.) "Which is why we're here." Silence. Two long beats. Then Yves fixed me with his sincerest actor smile. "You're too kind." He didn't blush. But I'm sure He meant to. After a few more slurps of pastis, the moment, to paraphrase Gerry Spence - "I longed for and dreaded" - finally arrived. Yves leaned back in his chair, crossed his arms and smiled. "So.....tell me about your project."

(Thought bubble -"uhhh.....love to Yves.....if only I knew what it was!") So, I did the only thing I could do. The one thing all the Hollywood heavies say you must never do. I pitched him - "Super Cold." A brief overview of the star maker machinery is necessary here. When you attempt to sell a script/story idea to a movie studio, You explain/act out the "concept" in a sales pitch("The Pitch") to a studio executive. You have three to five minutes only to convince this gentleman(rarely a lady) that you are someone he could happily invest a year of his life, and several million dollars with. (Insider Tip : Always pitch after lunch. Otherwise, guess what he's thinking about?) Usually a pitch is based on a screenplay or a "treatment."( A screenplay on a diet.) Or, at the very least, an outline. Or points on a page."The Pitch" is religiously, exhaustively, rehearsed and role-played with colleagues. Until it is the tightest, punchiest, most exciting and shortest version of your contribution to cinematic history. Oh well! Lacking all the preceding, I plunged in at the deep end. Super Cold. Realizing that to talk plot/genre would be to manufacture my own quicksand, I offered emotions. Suggested options. Proposed concepts.

and let Le Grande Acteur, fill in the blanks "So.....it's kind of a love story?" was Yves' first response. "I knew you'd see it immediately" the super cold pitch-man replied. And so it went. Communal "connect the dots" screenwriting. With ample quantities of liquid inspiration. And Bob, furthering bonding with Yves. Embellishing my b.s. in French. After twenty minutes or so of this collaborative creativity, Yves leaned forward and intoned in his sincerest baritone : "You have a very interesting project.....and I hope we can work together." Of course, we never saw him again. His agent's kiss-off letter was the usual blah-blah. Except for the last line : " M. Montand was very impressed with your presentation." The moral of our tale, dear reader, is not that bullshit is best. But, rather, that spontaneity, like cash flow, is King.

"Only fast work is any good"

- Ray Bradbury -