

BOSSSES

boss

Function: noun

Etymology: Dutch
baas - master

- 1: A person who exercises control or authority; specifically: one who directs, supervises and controls workers
- 2: American slang - dictator

A new film
by Rosie Dransfeld

“At the dawn of civilization, mankind was divided into two subspecies: bosses and underlings...”

Thus begins Rosie Dransfeld’s “Bosses,” a light-hearted but circumspect one-hour documentary showing us the foibles and realities of living in today’s society – where all of us are either bosses or underlings.

Combining elements of reality style television with cool animation, “Bosses” is a provocative, fast-paced exploration of the modern workplace in North American society. There’s no being bogged down with talking head shots as the film’s constantly moving camera style captures the subjects, both bosses and underlings, at three unique workplaces.

By following three successful bosses, each with a different style of leadership, we will have reinforced several truisms of employer-employee relationships. Writer-director Dransfeld’s irreverent style captures both the absurdities that abound in today’s workplace world as well as some basic facts that will resonate with each of us.

SYNOPSIS

“Bosses” leads us through the unforgiving world of leaders and non-leaders, featuring the dark side of 9:00 to 5:00. It shows us the relationships, the give and take, the rules and the dynamics that occur between three successful bosses and their employees.

The first boss we meet is Ernie Feuchter, a hyperactive alpha male who, along with his wife Barb, operates Barb & Ernie’s Country Inn, a popular restaurant: Tense, loud and bossy, Ernie runs the establishment in a manner that recalls his days of working as a cook for the German army. Always on the move, Ernie has greeted his customers with the same shtick for three decades and he loves to hire teenagers with little or no experience, enabling him to forge them into underlings that will keep his restaurant exactly as he wants it. With Ernie the rules are strict! There are no excuses for hangovers. As he eloquently states, “We have a saying. He or she what can party can damn well work.”

The second boss is Eveline Charles, president of a chain of Eveline Charles Salon-Spas in Western Canada. A former small town hairdresser, Eveline is a demanding and controlling ruler of her empire, who brings her strong will, passion and drive to everything she does, from expanding her business to marathon running. Her cosmetic/hairstyling corporation employs over 280 underlings with three locations in Edmonton, three in Calgary and one in Vancouver. Here you will meet some of the most devoted underlings you could ever imagine. Her employees are true believers.

Our third boss is Gord Hunter, who runs Lennox Welding and Supply, a company that has grown for decades with the Alberta oil patch. Today we are in an era where a journeyman welder can walk around the corner and get hired instantly by another employer. So Hunter, who used to be known as ‘the screamer,’ has had to adjust his management style for economic reasons to avoid an exodus of underlings from the workplace. With an eye on retirement, Hunter himself says, “Once I was a bad boss, but I think I’m a better boss now.” However, he still thinks that it is okay to yell at employees. There’s nothing wrong with that!

“Bosses” shows each of the three leaders in a variety of situations, both in and away from the workplace environment. We see these captains of industry dealing with their underlings, their individual hiring processes and how they respond to those different crises - some minor and some major - that bosses have to contend with. And we discover what they think of underlings and what constitutes an ideal employee.

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The documentary never stays too long with any one boss and in doing so we are always seeing different chapters in each of their daily lives. Ernie seems to constantly be in need of new teenagers to hire, Eveline has to keep her employees embracing her steadfast vision and Gord can't seem to find one of his employees. Oh, the energy that is required to keep underlings in tow.

The contrasting styles and different personalities of these three reinforce the principles and rules of those "bosses" we are exposed to every day. Loaded with energy and attitude, the film employs 2D animation using boss-underling figurines, enduring the viewer knows this is a fun exercise in looking at the barons who run our lives.

There are millions of bosses the world over. Here are three unique yet somehow familiar examples. These bosses are classic stereotypes of leadership models, found anywhere from Vancouver Island to St. John's. Watch as Rosie Dransfeld's camera - capturing every one of their moves - exposes each of them for what they really are. Rosie calls it *auto exposure*.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Have you ever wondered about the absurdity of our everyday lives, where an often not even respectable superior is allowed to tell you when to work, when to take a break and even when to eat? Observing the relationships between bosses and underlings, writer /director Rosie Dransfeld has conducted a one-hour zoological field study of a peculiar kind.

Dransfeld, a notorious freelance filmmaker, has never been employed in her whole career (ergo never had to deal with bosses). So, not unlike Jane Goodall venturing into the darkest Congo to learn about the species of apes and chimpanzees, Dransfeld ventures into the well-lit North American workplace, to study the not so elusive subspecies of bosses and underlings. She captures their hierarchical structure, measures aggression, submission and dominance, and examines their life skills and position in the food chain. The viewer will get a good sense of the bosses' habitat, and of their excellent survival instincts.

Dransfeld explains where the idea came from. "Mainly out of curiosity I typed *bad boss* into the Google internet search engine in December, 2004. In recent months I thought back on how many people had told me bad boss stories. Friends, employees at supermarkets, in offices or even at my car dealership, would take me aside and whisper something about their supervisor in my ears. So when I googled I was amazed to find nearly forty-four million hits. How is this possible? We live in a democracy, for God's sake! We have unions and labour laws, but some of the stories I listened to almost had me convinced we were still living in Charles Dickens' world."

"So with all that misery out there, with millions of people suffering at the work place, I felt as a filmmaker I would love to give them the tools to laugh about their sad reality," Dransfeld says, adding, "A lot of strength and bravery comes from laughter."

Hence a journalist was hired to help Dransfeld find outgoing, successful bosses who would be amenable to having a camera in their workplace. The director said she didn't want to focus on any struggling businesses that might be looking for exposure, so only successful companies were considered.

The differences between the three workplaces selected - a welding shop, a restaurant and a cosmetics chain - should enable everyone who watches "Bosses" to identify with someone in the

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film. We have a blue-collar workplace (Lennox Welding), a service industry (Barb & Ernie's Restaurant) and a labour intensive industry run by a woman (Eveline Charles).

"I wasn't looking for 'bad' bosses. That would have been too easy," Dransfeld says, adding "I simply followed these three bosses as they went about their daily lives and I made a documentary that I hope will make us look at ourselves and the absurdity of our existence. I believe ninety percent of life should be amusing and this is what I try to do in my films."

To punctuate the light-hearted and tongue in cheek nature of "Bosses," 2-D animation is employed, using six-inch plastic figurines made by the Toronto-based company Happy Worker Inc. The company manufactures one figurine known as Bossman - with megaphone in hand, ready to bellow "You're fired! Get out of here!" - who became the perfect symbol of animated authority for the documentary.

Dransfeld, who worked on a satirical program in Germany for over six years, loves to shift perspective on her subject matters. Dividing mankind into two subspecies and observing them like some critters in a zoological field study enables the viewer to see the ridiculousness in our everyday modern life existences. "It's an old trick used in comedy and satire," Dransfeld says, adding, "It works well. "Bosses" is loaded with funny stuff. Every time you watch the doc again, it gets even funnier."

Almost everyone can relate to the topic of being a boss or being bossed. In "Bosses" you can laugh at or with this peculiar element of modern day society.

"Bosses" is receiving its premiere screening on Monday, September 25 at the Globe Cinema in Calgary, as part of the 2006 Calgary International Film Festival. It will air on CBC Newsworld's The Lens on October 10, in time for National Boss Day (October 16, 2006).

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ABOUT THE CAST

Ernst (Ernie) Feuchter



Ernie is 59 years old, and arrived in Canada from Germany in December 1968. He remembers it being 38 degrees below zero. Ernie, who used to cook for the German army, married Barb when he was 19 and she was 17. Today they have four children and four grandchildren, but when they first came to Edmonton only Thomas (seen in the film), was around, then at two years of age. Together they run their family restaurant.

Ernie has his journeyman papers as a chef while Barb is a drafts person with an architect's degree. Ernie wrote a book "Simply Homestyle," and has appeared in over 150 television shows. Both he and Barb love to travel. He also enjoys horseback riding and as well as taping and editing home videos.

Eveline Charles

Eveline Charles has established EvelineCharles Salons-Spas as an innovator in the salon and day spa industry. She brings strong vision, infectious passion and immense drive to every endeavour, from building guest relations, to creating branded product lines, to expanding throughout Western Canada. "Think Big, Grow Big" is the motto that Charles stays true to; the company employs over 250 employees with three locations in Edmonton, three in Calgary and one in Vancouver.

The EvelineCharles Academy trains and instructs the rising talent of the hair and cosmetics industry. Future expansion plans includes Vancouver, Winnipeg Montreal and across Alberta.

Along with Eveline's passion for business is her passion for life and her family. She is a great host and loves to entertain with lots of family gatherings. She enjoys time with her husband Barry and their two sons Taylor and Max.



Gord Hunter



Gord has been an Albertan his entire life. He was born in Calgary in 1950, grew up in Sherwood Park and has lived in Edmonton most of his adult years.

Lennox Welding and Supply Inc. is a family business, started by Len Lennox in the early 1950's. Gord's father, Ted Hunter joined the company in 1955 and took over the entire business in 1970. Ted semi-retired in 1992, and was still active in the operation until his death in 1997. Gord became the full owner of the company in 2000 after his brother left the business.

Gord, who is married with no children, is working towards semi-retirement himself. Besides being an avid golf fan he enjoys fishing.

ABOUT THE CREW

Rosie Dransfeld (Writer/Director/Producer)

In a body of work that includes more than 300 short films and numerous documentaries, German-born producer/filmmaker/writer Rosie Dransfeld searches for 'the truth behind the curtain'. Charming, funny and irreverent, Dransfeld continues to redefine the art of documentary filmmaking with her often-surprising ideas and always-unexpected approach.



Dransfeld has worked on feature stories and documentaries as a TV-journalist, director/producer/writer and host for 6 years at NDR Hamburg, a subsidiary of ARD, one of the largest public TV stations in Europe. In 1997, she made her award-winning documentary "Im Keller der Hauptstadt" ("In the Cellar of the Capital") about the forbidden world of bunkers, tunnels and caves under Berlin. After moving to Canada, she has produced documentaries for the CBC and for CBC Newsworld.

"Beaverman," a National Film Board of Canada production and "Mothers of Courage," co-produced with the NFB, aired on CBC Newsworld's Rough Cuts in 2002 and 2003. Another Rough Cuts production, "Crash Course Alberta," was part of the documentary series that won a Gemini Award in 2003. Since then Dransfeld has produced two documentaries for German television (ARD).

For the Life Network, she was the writer for "X-Weighted," a 13-part documentary series - the follow up to the Gemini award-winning series "Taking it Off." Currently she is co-producing, writing and directing a feature length documentary in co-production with the National Film Board of Canada entitled "The Dogwalker."

Barbara North (Narrator)

Barbara North is an award-winning stand-up comic and writer featured on national television and radio. When she was growing up her father was a Canadian Air Force officer, so North spent her childhood as a self-described army brat, moving from one military base to another, across Canada, in the US and in Europe. She says constantly moving and losing friends and having to make new ones was tough, but it provided her with an arsenal of comedy for her stand-up routines.

Among North's many accomplishments - she was the creator, star and head writer for the CBC TV comedy show "Army Brats," acted in the recent MOW "For the Love of a Child," was the announcer for "Teletoon" and CHUM network stations and has done extensive stand up routines, including gigs on W Network's "She's So Funny" and "Just For Laughs."

She also performs corporate comedy shows for companies in all areas of industry in Alberta and across Canada.



Lisa Fryklund (Director of Photography)

Lisa Fryklund has over 20 years of television cinematography experience in documentaries, reality programs, commercials, corporate, news, sports and multi-camera productions. She has had her own company since 1998. Prior to that, from 1994-1998 she was the director of photography for Vicom Media, filming broadcast and corporate productions. Before that she honed her camera skills at several television stations in Alberta and Manitoba.

Recent documentaries Fryklund has worked on include "Shredded" and "At My Mother's Breast," both for the National Film Board, as well as "Adoption Stories," "Surviving in the Wild," "The Science of Sleep" and "Embryo Adoption," all for Discovery Health.

Television programs Fryklund has photographed include "Fixing Dinner" for the Food Network, the CBC's "Barrage - Live in Europe," and "The Undiscovered Country" for CMT. She has also shot numerous corporate videos, music videos and commercials.

Fryklund took the cinema, television, stage and radio arts program at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology in 1984 and further trained at the University of Oklahoma. She resides and works out of Calgary.

Becker (Original Music)

Since 1977 Michael Becker has composed music and produced sound designs for over 300 productions. He taught theatre sound at Grant MacEwan College and the University of Alberta and was the head of sound at the Shaw Festival in Ontario. He has performed on stage as a musician, a musical director and had several small acting rolls. He has won several awards for his work in the theatre and received a Genie nomination in 1992 for Best Music Score for "Solitaire." Becker has twice won the SOCAN award for the "children's" music category. Some directors he has worked for include Michael Attenborough, Nicol Williamson, Robin Phillips, Bob Baker, Jim Guido and Miles Potter.

Productions Becker has scored include Rosie Dransfeld's "Beaverman," Francis Damberger's "Solitaire," the Nelvana series "Jake & the Kid," 91 episodes of Great North's ½ hour series, "Acorn the Nature Nut," as well as numerous CBC radio dramas and programs.

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BOSSSES - CREDITS



WRITER & DIRECTOR
Rosie Dransfeld

NARRATOR
Barbara North

EDITOR
Scott Parker

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY
Lisa Fryklund

ORIGINAL MUSIC BY
Becker

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Daniel Robinson
Christine Weidlich
Jeff LeDrew

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Leah Iwaniuk

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Daron Donahue

SOUND RECORDISTS
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Gerry Clarke
Larry MacDonald
Carey Oppen
Mike Sanders

AUDIO POST PRODUCTION
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Randy Risling

ON-LINE EDITOR
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Carey Komadina

FOR CBC NEWSWORLD
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Commissioning Editor

ACTION FIGURES PROVIDED BY
Happy Worker Inc.

Shot on location in Alberta, Canada

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EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
Brian Dooley

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Canada

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