



INTERVIEW WITH *UNDER THE SEA 3D* PRODUCER TONI MYERS

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BMZ chats with Producer Toni Myers on her latest project, *UNDER THE SEA 3D*, which captures some of the most exotic underwater creatures for the IMAX screen.

Producer and editor, Toni Myers, has been part of IMAX since its inception. In her latest underwater project, *Under the Sea 3D*, she reunites with the team that brought the IMAX 3D film *Deep Sea 3D*. IMAX's latest underwater adventure features some of the most exotic undersea creatures and isolated locations found on earth.

***Big Movie Zone:* Hi Toni. Thank you for doing this Q&A with us. I understand you've been a part of IMAX since its beginnings in Montreal's EXPO '67. What first interested you in IMAX and what continues to keep your interest in this genre?**

Toni Myers: Working with Graeme Ferguson (co-inventor of IMAX) on the EXPO '67 project was very exciting because almost all of the films there were experimenting with new formats with multiple projectors and dramatic screen arrangements. It was fun to be part of that exploration process, learning and discovering as you went along. The IMAX format which came into being a short while later was a natural outgrowth of that, and when Graeme asked me to edit his film *North of Superior* for the IMAX debut at Ontario Place in 1970, I was thrilled and signed on immediately. IMAX's inventors wanted to use the incredibly immersive picture to take audiences places they couldn't normally get to, doing daredevil aerials in a small plane, exploring the oceans, experiencing space and life in zero-gravity, and being onstage with the Rolling Stones. Many astronauts we've trained have described IMAX as "the next best thing to being there" and that's exactly what appeals to me too. More recently, the invention of IMAX3D has provided a new, even more intense way to explore our surroundings and a challenging way to tell a story. With

each and every film you learn lots of new things -- besides, it's too much fun to stop!

BMZ: I felt the photography in *Deep Sea 3D* really set it apart from other underwater films. Will *Under the Sea 3D* retain the same vibrant imagery, and can you tell us a bit how this is achieved?

TM: Howard Hall, the Director and Cinematographer of both these IMAX3D films, as well as the first in the series, *Into the Deep*, is a supremely talented natural history filmmaker to start with, and IMAX3D is the perfect medium to showcase his genius. After *Deep Sea 3D*, I wouldn't have thought it possible to do it any better, but Howard and his superb team really have raised the bar again with *Under the Sea 3D*. The locations in the Coral Triangle are home to the most spectacular coral reefs and the most astonishing array of creatures on Earth. Howard has amazing patience and an uncanny instinct for turning the camera on just when an animal is about to display some amazing behavior. (Producer's comment: this is a great instinct to have, because each roll of IMAX3D film lasts only 3 minutes, and is not cheap!).

Many of the close-ups are shot with the 80mm lens which has an incredibly narrow depth of field -- it seems a tolerance of about an inch -- you can imagine how difficult it is to keep a moving animal in focus, and Howard and his cameraman Peter Kragh do this with great skill. In most situations they work with lights which enhance the amazing colours and textures in 3D.

BMZ: Ocean life is a popular subject for IMAX documentaries. How would you distinguish *Under the Sea* from other underwater films?

TM: *Under the Sea 3D* introduces the public to more exotic and unusual creatures than any of its predecessors. Animals ranging from the puppy-like bottom crawling Epaulette shark, to the Sea Snakes, the Garden Eels, and the exquisite Weedy and Leafy Sea Dragons are ones that many people will never have seen before. Similarly, to watch Cuttlefish changing their skins' patterns and texture before your eyes is utterly magical. There are many scenes in this film that Howard in all his years of diving had never seen before.

Another aspect that sets *Under the Sea 3D* apart is that it is the first IMAX film to alert us to the phenomenon of Ocean Acidification (*Ed.: see below for more detail on ocean acidification*).

BMZ: How did you go about choosing which sea life to feature? Was it based on your shooting locations, or vice versa?

TM: The animals dictated the locations. Many of them are found only in the Coral Triangle (Indonesia and Papua New Guinea). Giant cuttlefish, Australian Sea Lions and Sea Dragons are unique to South Australia.

BMZ: Did you have any footage that you would've liked to be in the film, but had to be edited out due to time constraints?

TM: Howard's films always provide an embarrassment of riches, and are great fun to edit. I could happily have edited a 50-minute film, but 40 minutes seems to be the length of choice for distribution. We were all very fond of a delightful creature called a Wonderpus, but he is very small, very active and completely impossible to keep in focus. Sadly he didn't make the cut.

BMZ: The film also has a very strong environmental message. What are some of the greatest threats to these ecosystems, and how do we keep them from disappearing?

TM: In *Deep Sea 3D*, we dealt with the threat of over-fishing. That remains an enormous threat to the health and stability of the oceans, and unfortunately new studies are showing that that ocean life is depleting even more rapidly and on a greater scale than we could have imagined even a few years ago.

The message in *Under the Sea 3D* concerns the effect global warming is having on ocean life. The most well known aspect of this is that warmer water causes corals to bleach white, and die. As a result, each community of animals supported by the reefs also disappears. Increasing water temperatures are displacing animals who are forced to seek cooler waters. In the case of the animals of South Australia, there is nowhere further south for them to go.

But now we are only just beginning to learn about the phenomenon of Ocean Acidification. This is an emerging field of study which has shown that the increasing amount of CO₂ we are putting into Earth's atmosphere is affecting the acidity of the oceans (ph balance). This affects animals with calcium carbonate shells or skeletons, and even the coral itself. If left unchecked, the acidity could eventually cause the shells and the coral to dissolve. It's a very powerful message.

BMZ: You've created many classic space films (*Space Station, Destiny in Space*). Which is more difficult to film, the void of space or the bottom of the ocean?

TM: The obvious thing to say about both these environments is that they have much in common!

- Both are airless
- Both are astonishingly breathtaking and beautiful
- Both are risky and difficult environments in which to work, and require highly specialized, skilled and brave folks to explore them with an IMAX3D camera.
- Both require challenging logistics and special technical equipment support
- Successful films made in both environments are the work of hugely talented teams. If it weren't for Howard and Michele Hall and their team of "aquonauts" we couldn't explore the wonders of the oceans in such a stunning way. And if it weren't for many talented astronaut crews, we'd

all still be experiencing space on TV only. Luckily for me, through them, and with the help of Warner Bros., I have the great pleasure and fun of working in both environments!

BMZ: Can you tell us a bit about IMAX's next upcoming project, *Hubble 3D*?

TM: This is the story of the Hubble Space Telescope, and its astonishing discoveries that have changed the way we think about our Universe. In May 2009, the IMAX3D camera will launch on the shuttle mission to perform the final service of Hubble. We'll have a front row seat as the spacewalking astronauts refurbish this amazing instrument. And for the first time in IMAX3D, animating the wondrous mother lode of Hubble data, we can fly to the edge of time itself!

BMZ: What other subjects do you hope to explore through IMAX? Do you think the public will tire of underwater films?

TM: I hope not ... I certainly haven't tired of them! As for other subjects, got my hands full at the moment!

BMZ: Thanks very much again, and congratulations with the film!

TM: Thank you also for this opportunity. And thanks always to Graeme Ferguson and his partners for inventing IMAX!!!