

Director had no time to attend film school

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THE GAZETTE

WESTMOUNT – Independent filmmaker Barbara Doran tends to go for heavy subjects: brutal assault, sexual abuse, murder.

Dressed in black tights, a thigh-length cotton sweater, dangling African earrings, and at least a dozen silver bracelets on one wrist, the petite Doran, with her close-cropped dark hair, looks more like a funky artist than the hard-hitting women's-rights activist that she is.

"I've been involved in the women's movement since the 1970s," said Doran, 47, of Westmount in a quick interview at her apartment last week.

She was in a hurry to catch a train to Toronto to attend a documentary film festival, but there was enough time to serve herbal tea, fragrant with cinnamon, and to puff on a stinky cigar.

"There's no point in smoking the little ones," said Doran, lighting a fat Cuban stogie. "If you're going to smoke a cigar, smoke a cigar."

Her latest documentary about women who kill their violent partners, titled, *When Women Kill*, is being screened this week in Montreal as part of a series by the National Film Board, paying tribute to 20 years of Studio D film-making.

Her previous film dealt with the issue of AIDS.

The Newfoundland-born Doran didn't set out to become a film-maker. Or to leave St. John's, for that matter.

She was living in St. John's with her husband, working as a CBC broadcaster and completing a master's degree in women's studies when the NFB asked



GAZETTE, TEDD CHURCH

"If you're going to smoke a cigar, smoke a cigar," Barbara Doran says.

her to do research for a series on battered women, *The Next Step*.

"In 1984, I came to Montreal for three months and I've been here ever since," said Doran, who worked with director Tina Horne.

"(Horne) knew little about battered women and I knew nothing about making films – a perfect combo."

The walls of her Lower Westmount apartment testify to her success – decked with posters advertising Doran films

that have appeared in festivals in Cannes, Paris, Bombay, Lyon, New York and other locales.

It's a colorful home, overflowing with giant African paintings and batiks, hand-carved masks, sculptures plus antique furniture, gathered up along her travels.

When not working, Doran shops at nearby Atwater market, or cycles on the Lachine canal. She's also fond of reading fiction.

The long stretch in Montreal helped

dissolve her marriage.

"He called up one night, after two years, and said 'You're not coming home, are you?'" Doran said of her husband. They have two children.

"He was funny. So very British. Like the wife who goes out for a loaf of bread, is gone for two years, and the husband finally discovers she's gone."

He did move to Montreal for a while. "But he hated it here and I couldn't go back."

In 1987, Doran founded Morag Productions Inc., and has since directed more than 10 productions, including *African Market Women*, a series of three films on the economic role of women in East Africa, and *A Harbour Symphony*, a short featuring a fog horn concert by ships docked at St. John's port.

The leap from broadcaster to her current role of film-maker, producer and director, is simply the Doran way of doing things. "If I want to make a film, I go out and get the money and I direct."

"I would have liked to go to film school. Maybe one day."

She also has a talent for parting people with their money.

"Looking for funds to build a women's shelter or to make a film about a shelter is not that different," she said. "I like to convince people that (a film) is a good idea."

When Women Kill will be screened, March 3, 4 and 5 at the NFB Montreal, 1564 St. Denis St. For information, call 496-6895.