



## **P.O.V.'s "Following Sean"**

By Ralph Arlyck

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### **Filmmaker's Statement**

In 1969 I was living in the Haight Ashbury district of San Francisco and taking graduate film classes at San Francisco State, where tactical-squad cops were swarming over the campus and University President S.I. Hayakawa was theatrically yanking speaker wires out of student protesters' sound trucks. I needed a film project and decided that Sean, my barefoot 4-year-old neighbor upstairs in the Cole Street apartment, would make a good subject. He was a delightful kid: smart, droll, and outspoken about things that were happening in the Haight and in his family's own revolving-door crash pad. It took me five months to make a 14-minute black & white short that wound up being shown all over the world (in theaters, festivals, and a White House conference) and which made Sean somewhat famous (or, to some, notorious).

Thirty years later I went back to San Francisco to find out what had happened to him and his boisterous family. I had no idea, when I started out, what the adult Sean would be like, and that it would take 10 years to complete the new documentary feature that eventually became **Following Sean**. Fortunately, he liked the idea of an update and we were off and running again. The title, as is often the case, has a double meaning — the act of following Sean, both as a child and as an adult, as he lives his daily life, as well as the question of what happened to me (and to some extent, to my generation) in the years that followed those heady days of the 60s.

If you take 10 years to complete a movie, there'd better be some compelling reasons for the delay and your persistence. Aside from the endless search for funding that preoccupies most independents, there was the long and knotty job of figuring out what the movie was really about. My fellow producer, Malcolm Pullinger, and I knew we didn't want to make a straight bio pic or a nostalgic trip down memory lane. (Malcolm is of a younger generation and was not having any misty reminiscing; plus I had some ambivalence about those culturally enshrined glory days.)

It was a challenge to find the real movie within the many hours of archival and contemporary 16mm film, but I think we eventually did. The upside of all this is that when you take a long time to finish something, a few surprising and wonderful things will happen to your characters.

— Ralph Arlyck

