

◀ Hegedus stick to their subjects like white on rice, appearing to shoot every moment of the 20-hour days that Tuzman and Herman spent building the business. Even by the access-all-areas documentary standards that reality TV has accustomed us to, the camera feels extraordinarily invisible and ubiquitous, stooped beside Tuzman's bed at ram as he calls his mother, or tucked into Herman's lap with his small daughter while he braids her hair. Domestic touches like these are also a tip-off that the documentary's real subject isn't the construction of the company, but the *Odd Couple* relationship between the beefy, bullshitting, fairground barker Tuzman and the touchy-feely techie Herman. This high level of access for the filmmakers, and the amount of gung-ho posturing on-camera, particularly from Tuzman, at first give rise to a feeling that reactions are being restaged for the lens. Then, after watching the two greenhorns blow a huge venture capital deal because they can't raise their lawyer on the phone, there is an *aha* moment: these two aren't posturing for the camera, they're posturing for the backers, the workforce, and each other. And for President Clinton, to whom Tuzman has the gall to slip a business card after a CNN roundtable. Suddenly they stand revealed, as Tuzman's girlfriend notes, as 28-year-old kids in businessmen's suits.

Deeper into the story, with both the business and the founders' relationship toppling, the film's cramped shooting style (it takes place almost entirely in tiny offices and apartments, or in the backseats of cars) gives a claustrophobic, hothouse feel, intensifying the shrill denunciations and juicy rationalisations that the boys bandy back and forth. Tuzman, making such pronouncements to his partner as "You don't respect my authority!", starts to sound more like *South Park's* Cartman than the Silicon Alley Master of the Universe persona he presents at his staff pep rallies. Riding shotgun with both warring parties, eavesdropping on the anguished fallout after Herman's summary ejection from the company, the film becomes a merciless record of the betrayals and bravura self-justifications that precede the implosion of a friendship, as well as a business venture.

While it's a compelling, sharp-eyed snapshot of an internet Icarus, *startup.com* doesn't stand comparison with *The War Room*, Hegedus and *startup.com* producer D.A. Pennebaker's previous documentary, which followed Clinton's 1992 campaign trail, also centred around a mismatched pair, the charismatic James Carville and the calmly preppy George Stephanopoulos. Its heady combination of high-stakes political gambling and low backroom strategising gave off a heat that the misfortunes of Wall Street wannabes can't match. No matter how giddy their climb, how steep their fall, how bruised their friendship ("The saddest fallout was us!" blurts a chastened Tuzman as a sign-off) the story of govWorks ultimately amounts to nothing more than *Kaleil and Tom's Excellent Adventure*.

Kate Stables

Women Talking Dirty

USA/United Kingdom 1999

Director
Coky Giedroyc

Producers
David Furnish
Polly Steele

Screenplay
Isla Dewar
Based on her novel

Director of Photography
Brian Tufano

Editors
Patrick Moore
Budge Tremlett

Production Designer
Lynne Whiteread
Music
Elton John

©Magnolia Productions
Inc and Sweetland Films
B.V.

Production Companies
a Jean Doumanian
production in
association with Rocket
Pictures

Executive Producers
J.E. Beaucaire
Jean Doumanian
Elton John

Co-executive Producers
Letty Aronson
John Logigan

Line Producer
John Kay
Associate Producer
Lucy Darwin

**Head of Production for
Jean Doumanian
Productions**
Adam Schlesinger

Production Co-ordinator
Colleen Hughes
Production Manager
Sarah Jolly

Location Manager
Michael Higson
**Post-production
Co-ordinator**
Caroline Hamlen

2nd Unit Director
Polly Steele
Assistant Directors
Dominic Fysh

Siobhan Tucker
Matthew Carver
Additional:
Drew Cain

Bill Brennam
Mark Murdoch
David McClean
Script Supervisor
Dee Taylor

Casting
Celestia Fox
ADR Voice:
Louis Elman

Camera Operator
Additional Camerawork:
Bob Shipsey
Steadicam Operator
Additional Camerawork:
Alexander Sahla

Rain Effects
Edinburgh:
John Booth
Special Effects
London:
Mark Holt

Ellen's Cartoons
Bob Dewar
Supervising Art Director
Tim Ellis

Art Director
Tom Bowyer
Set Decorator
Penny Crawford

Draughtsman
Steve Carter
Costume Designer
Michele Clapton

Wardrobe Supervisor
Rose Goodhart
**Crowd Wardrobe
Supervisor**
Emma Fryer

Hair/Make-up Design
Frances Hannon

Hair/Make-up Artists
Tracy Lee
Fae Hammond

Titles Design
Ryan O'Hara
Matt Symonds
Titles/Opticals
Cine Image

Conductor/Orchestrator
Terry Davies
Orchestra Leader
Thomas Bowes

Music Producer/Arranger
Simon Boswell
Music Co-ordinators
Abi Leland

Dan Rose
Soundscape
Recording Engineer
Geoff Foster

Soundtrack
"Love Is the Devil";
"Angry Angel"; "Getting
Scared" - Imogen Heap;
"Jolene"; "It's All Wrong,
But It's All Right"; "Salt
in My Tears"; "Speak of
the Devil" - Dolly
Parton; "Venus" -
Bananarama; "Mad about
the Boy" - Dinah
Washington; "Home" -
Sheryl Crow; "Mambo
#5" - Pérez Prado;
"Cumban Chero" -
Rubén González; "I'm
Still Alive" - Trisha
Yearwood; "No 6 in E Flat
Major" by Sergei
Rachmaninov; "Tressa
Lux" - Naked Funk;
"Popsicle Toes" - Diana
Krall; "Higher State of
Consciousness" - Josh
Wink; "What a
Wonderful World" -
Marianne Faithfull; "Talk
to the Hand" - the
Honeyz; "Hey Stranger" -
Lulu; "Rocket Man" -
Kate Bush; "Peace" -
Sabrina Johnston; "In the
Navy" - The Village
People; "Fuzz"; "Tango
Cubana"; "Puerto
Havana"

Sound Recordist
Richard Flynn
**Additional Sound
Recordist**
Martin Belshaw

Supervising Sound Editor
Colin Miller
**Supervising Dialogue
Editor**
Max Hoskins

ADR
Mixer:
Ed Colyer
Foley
Artists:
Peter Burgis
Andie Derrick

Mixers:
Ed Colyer
Kevin Tayler
Editors:
Chris Ackland
Ben Barker

Food Stylist
Gina Craig
Stunt Co-ordinator
Richard Hammatt

Cast
Helena Bonham Carter
Cora
Gina McKee
Ellen

Eileen Atkins
Emily Boyle
Kenneth Cranham
George
James Nesbitt
Stanley
James Purefoy
Daniel
Ken Drury
Bill O'Brien

Julien Lambroschini
Claude
Barbara Rafferty
Janine

Elaine C. Smith
Irene O'Brien
Richard Wilson
Ronald

Freddie Highmore
Sam
Bertie Highmore
Col

Steve Street
man in flash car
Jackie Balfour
midwife

Maggie MacRitchie
doctor
Caroline Young
Charlene the barmaid

Carter Ferguson
Jake
Karen Kyle
Sharon

Nicole Marie Hood
Alice
Julie Austin
Katy

Ian Hanmore
Donald Samuel
rescuing drivers
Hugh Bellamy
Luke Bellamy
Sam, aged 6-9 months
Thomas Hudson
Joshua Hudson
Sam, aged 18 months

Certificate
15
Distributor
United International
Pictures (UK) Ltd
8,745 feet
97 minutes 10 seconds

Dolby
Colour by
DeLuxe

Edinburgh, the 1990s. Cora is a high-spirited young woman in her first year at university. She is made pregnant by her French boyfriend, who subsequently leaves her. Meanwhile shy, artistic Ellen falls for and marries gambler and lothario Daniel; she wants a family, but he only wants the "fabulous" life.

The two women meet at a local pub and become fast friends. Ellen assists at the birth of Cora's baby. But motherhood proves overwhelming for Cora, who has dropped out of university. One evening she tries to ring Ellen, but the phone is answered by Daniel, who secretly decides to keep his wife's lonely friend company at the pub. He introduces himself as 'Freddy' and proceeds to seduce her.

Only when she is pregnant with his child does Cora discover Daniel's true identity. Advised by her older friends in the neighbourhood, Cora decides not to tell Ellen what happened. Daniel, hunted by loansharks, skips town, leaving the lovesick Ellen to pine for him.

Three years pass, and Daniel unexpectedly returns, threatening Cora that he will reveal their secret. Ellen throws her first dinner party, at which Cora, fuelled by vodka, blurts out her secret: that Daniel is the father of her second son. Ellen is furious; everyone goes home. Ellen and Daniel spend a night together. As he is leaving the next morning, she catches him reaching into the sofa, hunting for something. When Daniel leaves she discovers his hidden stash of cash. Cora finally persuades Ellen to resume their friendship. They split the £25,000 Daniel had hidden. He returns for his money but Ellen has squandered her share on an unpromising bet.

Women Talking Dirty seems to have set out to fill an available movie niche: the women's buddy film set in Cool Britannia. It probably looked good on paper: a hot lead actress (Helena Bonham Carter); a superstar executive producer (Elton John); and veteran *Trainspotting* DoP Brian Tufano, who at least makes the film visually gratifying. But much of the detailing is familiar New British Film

cliché. Graphic artists live in lofts; ecstasy colours the drab lives of impoverished young Brits; and so on. Occasionally the film gathers some momentum – it's unusual, for example, to see a women's film with scenes of giving birth and early motherhood. Gina McKee, meanwhile, brings some life to her role as arty Ellen, managing to make some of her lines ("Do we take up with people just because they make us feel sexier?") sound almost like meaningful contributions to the battle of the sexes.

The film is at best watchable, but the question is who will actually watch it? *Women Talking Dirty* premiered at the Toronto Film Festival in 1999, and seems to have languished unseen ever since. Its portrayal of contemporary Britain is unrecognisable. The adorable courtyard flat which unemployed Cora shares with her two children in central Edinburgh is a far cry from *Trainspotting's* concrete council hell.

The only novelty here is that the 'Love Will Prevail' idiom which drives recent, Hollywood-friendly British films (*Notting Hill*, *Bridget Jones's Diary*) applies to the unbreakable bond between the two central women. Like a standard romance, the film draws together an unlikely pair – self-conscious Ellen and uninhibited Cora – then throws misunderstandings and obstacles in their path. In the opening scene Ellen and Cora joke that yes, they're great friends, but no, they're not lesbians. In the same way, *Women Talking Dirty* flirts with surprising its audience, but shies away from anything so edgy it might scare away the tourists. Instead of a satisfying dramatic pay-off, the film's supposed climax – Ellen and Cora's falling-out at the dinner party – is quickly and unceremoniously smoothed over. Despite its aspirations to offer a view of hot young Britain, *Women Talking Dirty* already feels dated, thanks not least to Helena Bonham Carter's inexplicable Cyndi Lauper circa 1982 wardrobe. All kooky hats and vintage cocktail dresses, she works very hard – embarrassingly so – to shake off the Merchant-Ivory corset as wild, salty-mouthed Cora. But like everything else about the film, she is straining to achieve a youthfulness which isn't quite there.

Gilda Williams



Party line: Helena Bonham Carter