

Highlights of Last Year at Movie Monday ...

Victoria's Arts & Entertainment Weekly, Monday Magazine, awards Movie Monday as the "Favourite Screening Night". As the article describes "a consistently interesting program and a chance to discuss each film after it screens –it's no wonder Movie Monday was the most popular pick among readers".

In Vancouver, Bruce Saunders is awarded the Communications Award from the B.C. Association of Clinical Counsellors, and award that "recognizes a member or an individual/organization from the media field who has provided regular, continuing or special assistance in promoting counselling and/or mental health issues in the community." The program states:

What could be more important than mental health education? Enter Bruce Saunders, AKA the **Movie Monday Society**. What an innovative initiative to improve the quality of life for people with mental illness in Victoria. Movie Monday (yes, a different movie every Monday) has been structured to tackle stigma, dissolve labels (on any given night, the audience will have folks from the inpatient ward, former patients living in the community, skateboarders, hippies, students, some families, white collar professionals as heterogeneous a gathering as your likely to find in Victoria), showcase recovery (week after week, Bruce stands up to introduce the film, often reflecting on his own experience or that of others who have been hospitalized and proving that someone who has been hospitalized and been severely suicidal can live, create and produce change in the community), educate the public and create alliances.

The BC Minister of State for Mental Health, the Honourable Doctor Gulzar Cheema, acknowledged the continual success of Movie Monday and the Reel Madness Film Festival: "To address the stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness, we need to talk openly and honestly about mental illness. I believe your programs help foster that discussion, and I hope that you will continue with your efforts".

A model for other cities? Movie Monday is being booked in other cities to present our innovative program.

- Bruce Saunders travels to Winnipeg where he is booked to present a film series and discussions.
- In Vancouver, Movie Monday inspires and supports the development of the monthly Frame of Mind program organized by UBC's Dr. Karlinksy with Pacific Cinematheque.
- Organizers in both London England and London Ontario have asked and will use the Reel Madness Film Festival title in their cities.
- Also inquires for film suggestions from Portage La Prairie, Manitoba and Duncan, BC for which I could recommend Canadian independent films.

Live teleconference calls are a hit with both filmmakers and audiences. With a little organizing and in-house technology we have devised a creative and affordable way to facilitate post-film discussion between audiences and filmmakers. We have hooked up with Zacharias Kunuk following our showing of Atanarjuat and even as far as Newfoundland to talk to Gerry Rogers about her film My Left Breast, among others.

Movie Monday plays an integral role in supporting the hugely successful Victoria release of Nettie Wild's FIX: The Story of an Addicted City. By working in a local coalition, not only did our showing of FIX bring out hundreds of people, but we supported the film's release at the downtown Odeon theatre – a run that lasted three weeks and during the first weekend actually out-grossed the five other blockbuster films showing in the multiplex. Of course we showed the film in our own way, in our own theatre, as well as organizing an afternoon Director's Workshop.

A programming highlight was our First First Nation's Film Festival, which brought out audiences for four days of films by Aboriginal filmmakers and films focusing on Aboriginal issues. The festival included ten films, including a special release of a local film created for the Victoria Native Friendship Centre on First Nations communities and HIV/AIDS (on World AIDS Day). Our showing of the popular Atanarjuat began with an Inuit drummer leading the audience in song and a teleconference hook-up with Zacharias Kunuk.

Our Reel Madness Film Festival focused on the relationship between addictions and mental illness. Over five days of films, discussions and Director's Workshops, we developed audiences, showcased filmmakers, facilitated critical discussions and addressed a current community health issue through independent film.

Our Director's Workshops were a highlight for local, emerging filmmakers. Scott Smith provided a day-long workshop that drew on his past feature rollercoaster and his upcoming feature, an adaptation of the Barbara Gowdy novel, Falling Angels. The interactive workshop provided great insights in directing a feature, adapting a book to film, working with young actors and included handing out pages of script and showing the subsequent film clips. Nettie Wild and Dean Wilson provided a wonderful seminar on the ethics and dilemmas of filming in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside from both sides of the camera.