

SPLICE

Winter 2017



40TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Off the Beaten Path | Finding Jean

Bringing the World to Our Screens | Splice on Splice

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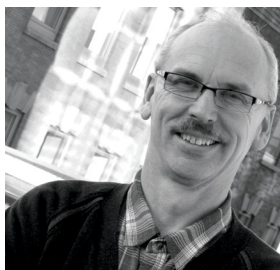
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Splice Magazine is a publication of The Saskatchewan FilmPool Cooperative. The Saskatchewan FilmPool Cooperative is a non-profit artist-run centre that supports, encourages, and assists independent filmmaking in Saskatchewan.

The FilmPool is committed to developing an awareness and appreciation of independent film that reflects the individual and collective cultural expression of Saskatchewan people.



LETTER FROM THE FILMPOOL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

On behalf of the FilmPool, I am very proud to present the very-special 40th Anniversary edition of *Splice* Magazine!

Did you know that *Splice* Magazine has been around for almost as long as the FilmPool? We started publishing issues in 1978, and have published an issue

every year since. It is an incredible accomplishment to sustain the magazine this long and through so many changes to the industry. Its success certainly speaks to spirit and drive of our provinces' independent filmmaking community.

Splice is one of the only magazines in Canada providing a voice for independent filmmaking. We feel it is critically important to continue to share stories based on our own cultural diversity.

Thanks to all the editors, designers and contributors for their time and expertise. And a special thanks to the thousands of independent filmmakers who have created thousands of films with support from the FilmPool over the past 40 years. We are so happy to have the opportunity to profile your accomplishments!

Bravo *Splice*! We hope you enjoy this special anniversary edition!

Gord Pepper

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Anniversaries can really make you think. On the surface, one is presented with the promise of an opportunity to celebrate, but the marking of this passage of time also gives pause for thought: The FilmPool has hit middle age. And middle age looks good on it! With each passing year, the FilmPool gains more experience and, in turn, provides wisdom and guidance for new and emerging filmmakers – while maintaining a home for the more established ones in our province.



It's in great company too: In the years since the FilmPool arrived on the scene, Saskatchewan has developed a vibrant film culture, with exciting and challenging film festivals like mispon, Queer City Cinema, IPUFF, and Pile of Bones – some of which are profiled in this issue. And we don't have to wait for film festivals to roll around every year; we have access to great film screened on

the regular. The RPL Theatre in Regina and Broadway Theatre in Saskatoon have probably done more to foster film culture in Saskatchewan than anything else. Programmers Belinda New and Scott Hamilton bring the best of international and independent cinema to our screens (and very appreciative audiences). We're lucky to have them.

In recent years, we've seen a bumper crop of distinctively Saskatchewanian feature films come out of the province, including *Basic Human Needs*, *The Land of Rock and Gold*, and *The Sabbatical*. We know there is much more to come. There is a lot of potential for film in Saskatchewan – which Jean Oser (remembered in these pages) recognized when he arrived in Regina, and helped to develop the scene we enjoy today.

Splice, too, is embracing the future (while honoring its past). In this issue, we look back at the history of *Splice* itself, and in the coming months, we'll create an ongoing digital archive of the entirety of its catalogue, dating back to its inception – and moving towards creating more online content for *Splice*. We're looking forward to this, and sharing it with you, our readers.

Happy 40 th to the Saskatchewan FilmPool!

Cheers,

Wanda

*Many thanks to Gerald Saul for digitizing past issues of *Splice* for this edition and the *Splice* archive.

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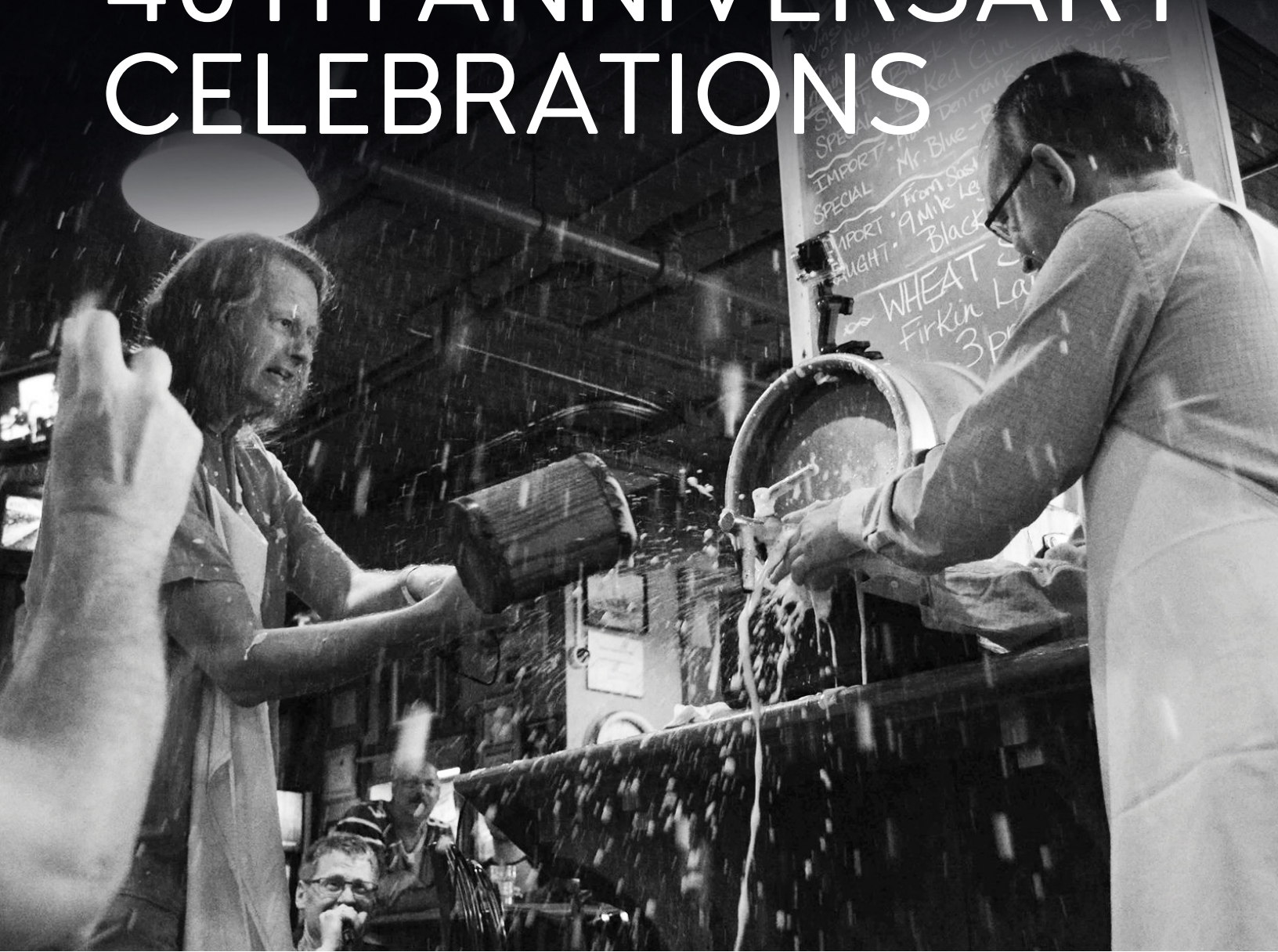


City of Regina



SASKATCHEWAN FILMPOOL COOPERATIVE'S

40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS





Splice asked founding members Don List, Ian Preston, and Brock Stevens to project what they think the scene will look like in 40 years.:

TIME CAPSULE: TO BE OPENED IN 40 YEARS

BROCK STEVENS

I would envision that the Filmpool would be a resource that enables new filmmakers to explore ways to tell their stories. It will foster relationships that will last a lifetime – as it has for the last forty years. The method and the medium, I would hope, will still involve the projection of images.

Brock Stevens

PAGE FOUR FROM TOP LEFT:

Gerald Saul and Brian Stockton tap the keg at the launch of Wheat Soup Weissbier – specially brewed by Bushwackers Brewpub on the occasion of the Saskatchewan Film Pool's 40th anniversary year. September, 2017.

Executive Director Gordon Pepper and Board President Mike Rollo do some heavy lifting.

Filmmaker Brett Bell introduces founding members Brock Stevens, Don List, and Ian Preston, as they toast the Filmpool.

PAGE FIVE FROM TOP LEFT:

Founding members Brock Stevens and Don List.

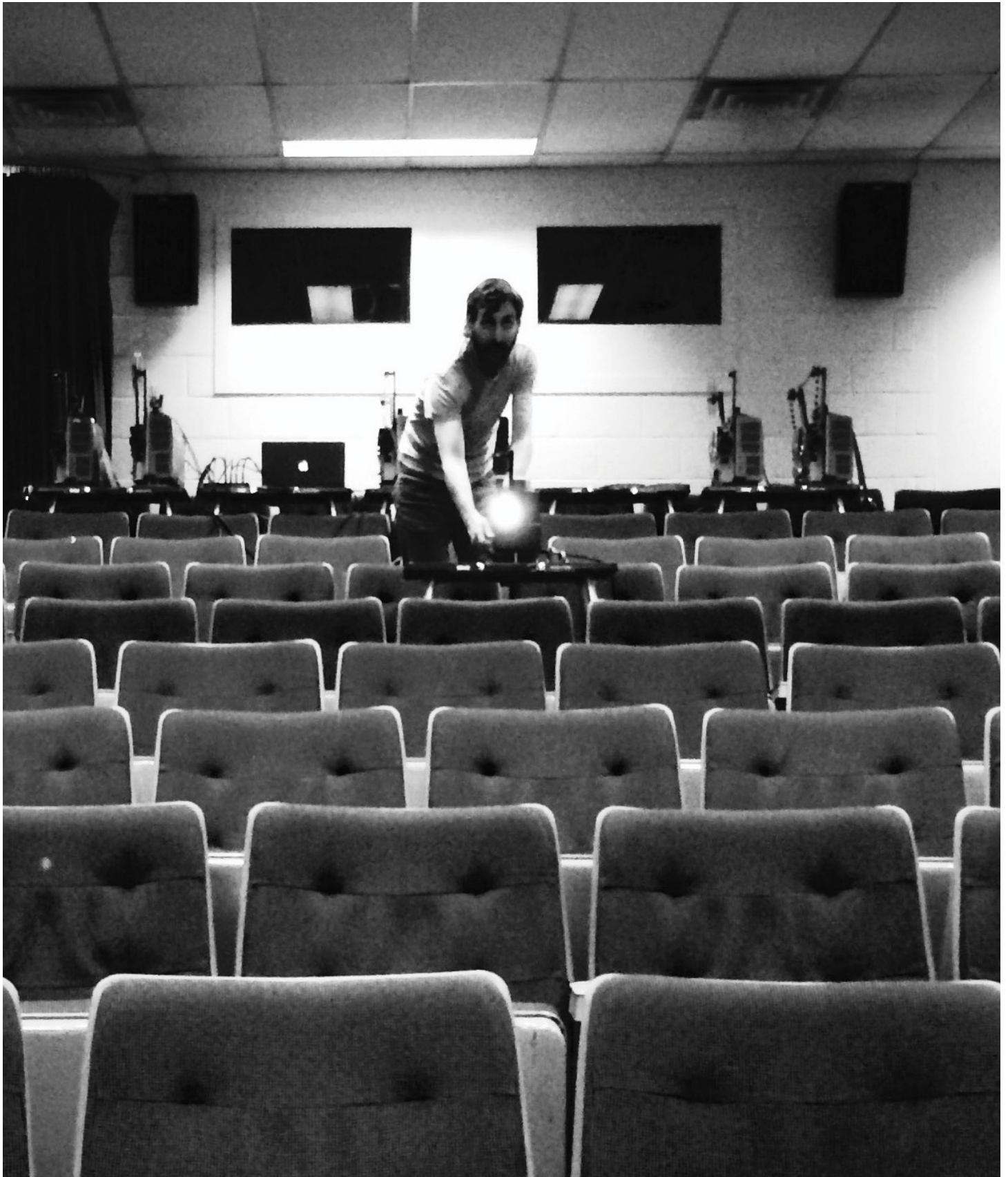
Celebrating at the Filmpool.

Ushering in the keg.

Filmpool faithful at Bushwackers.

Revelers at the 40th Anniversary celebration at the Saskatchewan Film Pool. March, 2017.





Like a sliver of light creeping through the crack of an opening door, experimental film projects its way onto screens – often under-appreciated – and can be viewed either with skepticism or wonder by the public eye.

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

ALTERNATIVE CINEMA IN REGINA

BY MIKE ROLLO

My involvement over the years as a programmer of experimental films with collective groups like Double Negative in Montréal, Independent Visions in Regina, and most recently WNDX in Winnipeg has given me perspective with the intricate considerations and complexities of film curation and specifically the challenge on how to strike a chord with a general public. Like a sliver of light creeping through the crack of an opening door, experimental film projects its way onto screens – often under-appreciated – and can be viewed either with skepticism or wonder by the public eye. However, a small but dedicated group of programmers are building a bridge within the Regina community by presenting films from off the beaten path. The ongoing Queer City Cinema Festival, programmed and curated by Gary Varro; artistic directors Dana Lesiuk and Jon Tewksbury of the Pile of Bones Underground Film Festival; and the curatorial incubator Independent Visions offer a range of diverse film oddities, engaged platforms for invited artists, and various film works that build a dialogue and create a cultural currency with a Regina audience.

I MET WITH DANA AND JON to discuss the second edition of the Pile of Bones Underground Film Festival (PoB) over coffee. Pile of Bones is a single night screening event of overlooked and offbeat productions where the emphasis is placed on experimentation of form and content deviating from conventional cinema. The inaugural festival in 2016 was an exciting experience, with a small but committed audience witnessing an intriguing collection of Canadian film works. These included the multicoloured mosaic of decayed colour film of Guillaume Vallée's *La bulbe tragique* (2016), Bridget Moser's humorous performance video *Memory Foam* (2015), and a dark exploration of a city's obsession with hockey in Connor McNally's hilarious docudrama *McDavid* (2015) – as well as films from hometown talents Jason Britski and Dianne Ouellette.

Jon and Dana's impetus for starting the festival stemmed from serving on film juries, and witnessing work they loved and appreciated rejected for screenings. As Jon notes: "I got tired of my favourite films not being programmed because they were either too silly or not 'professional'". With the ease of new festival-entry platforms such as FilmFreeway, Jon created Pile





Pile of Bones Film Festival. September, 2017



of Bones to share his appreciation of alternative and underground cinema, building a one-off event to highlight works overlooked on the traditional festival circuit.

In our conversation, Jon gleefully opened up about how much he enjoyed remaining anonymous for the first edition of the festival, removed from personal pressure to navigate the waters in local programming. However, when the veil of the clandestine operation dropped, Jon saw local film submissions increase, as a one-night event, it leaves a small window for consideration, and as he programmed work for the second edition this past fall, Jon found himself “entering this weird political sphere” of programming. Jon and Dana follow a scheduled fee template with the Independent Media Arts Alliance (IMAA) which allows for approximately fifteen films for programming, meaning that PoB pays all their artists. Having a single-screening event does pose programming challenges, balancing duration, tone, and content. However, Dana noted that Jon’s conscientious programming skills are rooted in his background as an editor and “allows him to understand rhythm, which is intrinsic to the program.”

I inquired about the website which drew my initial attention to the festival. The site’s minimalist MSDOS design is the antithesis of graphic design work often seen with luminary film festival websites. Jon reflects: “When I was



a kid, I would always go on to those BBS systems, (bulletin board systems) before the internet was around and you could use your phone line to go into another person's computer. It was a local internet with ASCII graphics, and you had to press letters to navigate around. The festival website is based on an old BBS game called LORD: Legend of the Red Dragon mixed with MS-DOS programming." There is no desire to change the website design with each iteration, as Jon is satisfied with the simplicity of its functionality. Jon and Dana's second edition of the Pile of Bones Underground Film Festival was held on September 30, 2017, and there are plans for a third festival in 2018.

QUEER CITY CINEMA'S ARTISTIC DIRECTOR GARY VARRO continues to deliver eclectic programming featuring both films and live performances. Since 1996, Varro has persistently delivered sharp programming of independent, radical and underground queer films and performances to the Regina community. Varro considers programming his personal artistic practice, framing his work "through an art gallery context, that is non-commercial with heavy ideas and thoughtful approaches". Each program stems from reviewing numerous films through an open call process in which Varro identifies congruent themes and relationships, building a coherent framework and focal point for the festival. Varro's programming acts as catalyst and motivator, introducing films by marginalized voices and queer identities to bridge an open dialogue with the Regina community.

Lindsay McIntyre, *Northern Portrait* (2015)

For Varro, the screening space is as important to provide a social gathering that allows for movement and discussion — a free flow of ideas.



Varro refrains from presenting work that is conventional often preferring short independent films that are personal, abstract, poetic, radical, and at times shocking. For Varro, queer cinema cannot rely on traditional modes and styles in telling stories because the subject matter often presented at QCC does not conform to a normative and gendered structure.

Artists included in the festival veer toward more alternative methods and techniques as a means of expression, as Varro quotes from queer feminist filmmaker Barbara Hammer “radical expression needs radical form”.

Varro programs with balance in mind to ensure a platform for expression for all members of the queer community, however, he strives to present the most daring work, screen-based media that pushes boundaries in both content and form, to create the most dynamic programs for an audience. Challenges arise when presenting alternative work to a Regina audience. Varro admits that a certain vocabulary is needed to engage with more abstract work, but all programs are contextualized giving the audience a “gentle push” to discover their engagement and build their own experience with the films. Audience building is another obstacle as the Regina community invested in queer experimental cinema is niche, but the crowds have remained consistent for the size of the community.

The screening space is another important factor in creating a safe and active space for the queer community. Varro also notes that the venue should mirror – and at times inform – the work screened at QCC. For Varro, the screening space is as important to provide a social gathering that allows for movement and discussion — a free flow of ideas. Varro remains satisfied in delivering queer programming to Regina, giving a pulse to city’s artistic scene. Varro quotes John Waters, whom he invited this past June for a talk and retrospective of the



director’s films, “Stay where you are and make it better. Every place is cool now”.

INDEPENDENT VISIONS (IV) was launched in January 2015 in partnership with Jennifer Matotek, director and curator of the Dunlop Art Gallery, with support from the Saskatchewan Filmpool. Our vision was to create a monthly programming series dedicated to presenting experimental film and expanded cinematic performances in Regina. While funding has scaled back the ambition of the programming, our focus continues to provide a unique screening experience. Notable programming from past events includes expanded cinema performances from Alex MacKenzie, Lindsay



Alex MacKenzie, *Apparitions* (2017)

Independent Visions can be a fast and furious production, wild at times, but often rewarding when audience members remain after a screening in awe of what they saw.

accommodates the needs of guest artists in adapting the seating area to stage tables, lay out the cables and accommodate multiple 16mm projectors. Some of the more demanding set-ups have involved the coordination of eleven projectors running simultaneously, projecting visuals and looping sounds. The theatre seats were also covered with plastic drop sheets for bleaching and painting techniques employed during the live projection event. It was mayhem, it was hectic but it worked, and it was fun! Independent Visions can be a fast and furious production, wild at times, but often rewarding when audience members remain after a screening in awe of what they saw.

Regina is thriving with alternative screenings, activating spaces in different and radical ways. With the dedication and conviction of these local programmers, a radical independent cinema coexists with the multiplexes. The curation of independent experimental work is not simply about the exhibition but also explores what cinema is capable of, how it can innovate, invigorate and provide a non-normative presentation of work. /S

McIntyre, and Roger Beebe. Other programs have included mixed packages of short films from Canadian collectives such as the Windows Collective from Ottawa and the Loop Collective from Toronto with Roger Wilson and Dan Browne representing their collectives respectively.

Social media and public outreach help retain an audience, and the screenings and performances at the Regina Public Library Theatre are free, allowing open access for the community at large. The big challenge, however, is usually the staging for the film performance work, as the RPL Theatre space is neither versatile nor easy to change. However, the staff always

MIKE ROLLO'S work explores alternative approaches to documentary cinema — methods which thematize vanishing cultures and transitional spaces through references to memory, history, religion, and autobiography. A founding member of Montreal's experimental film collective Double Negative, Mike has curated the work of prominent international and Canadian experimental filmmakers.





FINDING JEAN

Reflections on Jean Oser:
The Man Who Helped to Establish Filmmaking
as an Art and Industry in Saskatchewan

BY NORA G. GARDNER



It is easy to look back over the long life of another person and see the patterns, habits, and – as is human – the contradictions as well. One thing that is notable about Jean Oser is that he was a good and loyal friend who drew to himself equally good and loyal friends. When I met Jean at the University of Regina in 1985, he had a lot to share in the way of stories about film history and his personal experiences with editing and directing. Having spent a lifetime in filmmaking since the beginning of sound films in Europe that was a considerable amount. However, what is more, he also had a great deal to share about living an artistic life through two world wars, social and economic upheaval, and personal loss.

Jean was born in a small town in France, near the border between France and Germany, in 1908. A few years later, Jean's family moved to Berlin. His mother and father were involved in vaudeville theatre. In Europe, these performances were a fixture in the theatrical community, often having their own dedicated theatres in larger cities. It was Jean's mother, Ella, a

dancer and actress, who encouraged his love of theatre and early picture shows. In his late teens, Jean fell in with the German avant-garde filmmakers Hans Richter and Walter Ruttmann. Once Jean was sure that it was film he was interested in, he asked his father, Arthur, a theatrical producer, to arrange an introduction and facilitate his apprenticeship with Tobis Film. Tobis is a production and distribution company that, despite downturns, exists to this day in Europe. At first the work was unpaid as an apprentice, but Jean excelled and within a few years he was working for G.W. Pabst with whom he had a working relationship that lasted until 1938.

By the early 1930's, in Berlin, it was clear to many citizens with ties to the Jewish community that Nazism was on the rise and that their livelihoods and freedoms were at risk. Jean had already met his wife-to-be, a young dancer and actress named Ellen, and together they left Berlin in 1932 for France. Because Jean was one of only a handful of well-known sound and picture editors in Europe, he had work from all-over the continent until





Jean Oser as a boy with his mother and sister circa World War I (C. 1914 - 1918)

He marched up
and down the base
all day and edited
films all night”

— BELINDA NEW

the official outbreak of the Second World War when he was drafted into the French Army. Sent to the perimeters of French holdings in North Africa, Jean spent three years in the French Foreign Legion. In the meantime, Ellen received a small spouse’s benefit and waited for his return.

Jean often referred to himself as a pacifist, so it seems odd that he would not only join the French Army, but also after he and his wife emigrated to the United States, there too, he would enlist in the U.S. Army Signal Corps. Belinda New, of the Regina Public Library Film Theatre, recalls Jean saying “he marched up and down the base all day and edited films all night” while in the Signal Corps. Many other European artists, writers, and notable thinkers of the time also emigrated to the States. The wave of emigrés and exiles preceding and during World War II was one of the largest population movements in recorded history. This was to change the undercurrent of artistic and intellectual life in North America for decades to come in everything from furniture design and architecture to social theory and film. However, these changes were not without their challenges. Despite this, Jean recalled that he and his wife had “a pretty good life” in New York.

Jean worked with a number of film producers in New York, one of whom paved the way to his winning an Oscar in 1953. Among the great number of commercial and documentary films Jean directed and edited after the war, he also worked on a series of artist biographies for producer Boris Vermont, including *Light in the Window: The Art of Vermeer* (1952). This film won the Oscar in the short subject (one reel) category the following year. Jean was



These days, film students might receive a Jean Oser Award of Merit through their studies in Media Arts at the University of Regina because Jean is remembered for his inspiration of film students in the province.

able to travel the globe working on films, often assisted by his wife. However, it was back in New York City that he was to meet a young man who would later change Jean's destiny by inviting him to Regina, Saskatchewan.

As the story goes, Peter Smollett was knocking on doors in a section of the city known for small theatres and studios when he came to Jean's door. He asked Jean if he had any work for an actor and Jean said "No, but he needed a gofer", according to Eleanor Smollett, Peter's second wife and Professor Emerita, University of Regina. That was the beginning of a relationship that would see Peter apprenticing as a filmmaker with Jean. Later, after years of working as a union organizer and filmmaker, Peter, who had taken work in the late 1960's as a social science instructor at the University of Regina, invited Jean (through the official invitation of Dallas W. Smythe) to screen and talk about *Kameradschaft* (Pabst, 1931) for his class in 1970. After that, Jean's destiny and the destinies of many filmmakers in Saskatchewan were intertwined.

These days, film students might receive a Jean Oser Award of Merit through their studies in Media Arts at the University of Regina because Jean is remembered for his inspiration of film students in the province. Subsequently, independent filmmakers and the community at large can celebrate the Saskatchewan Filmpool Cooperative's 40th Anniversary because Jean's former students and other trainees on the set of the feature-length film version of W.O. Mitchell's *Who Has Seen the Wind* (1977) thought it was essential to start a film co-op in the province. If readers didn't already know, Jean not only provided training in editing for the film, but also facilitated the funding for the entire training program through his position as the Project Coordinator with the Department of Culture and Youth. /S

NORA GARDNER is a semi-retired former English language instructor from the University of Regina who holds four degrees from that institution, and dabbles in media and community arts.

A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR ABOUT FINDING JEAN

2017 marks fifteen years since Jean Oser passed away and I felt it was necessary to commemorate this time with a memorial project that I am pleased to say has come along nicely this past year. Although the project comes to a close at the end of the year; as planned, the website will remain up for as long as possible and the memorabilia and other materials that I have collected this past year will be added to the "Jean Oser Collection" of the Archives and Special Collections at the Archer Library, University of Regina. Of course, I need to thank all the people and organizations who supported and contributed to the project, or gave me leads, or just thought it was a good idea in the first place: Thank-you!

Please visit the site at <http://jeanoser.wixsite.com/findingjean>.

Nora G. Gardner
B.A., B.Ed., M.Ed., M.A.
University of Regina Alumni &
a friend and former assistant to Jean Oser



Jean Oser & Peter Smollett, New York early 1950's, photo courtesy Eleanor Smollett and Norm Sawchyn

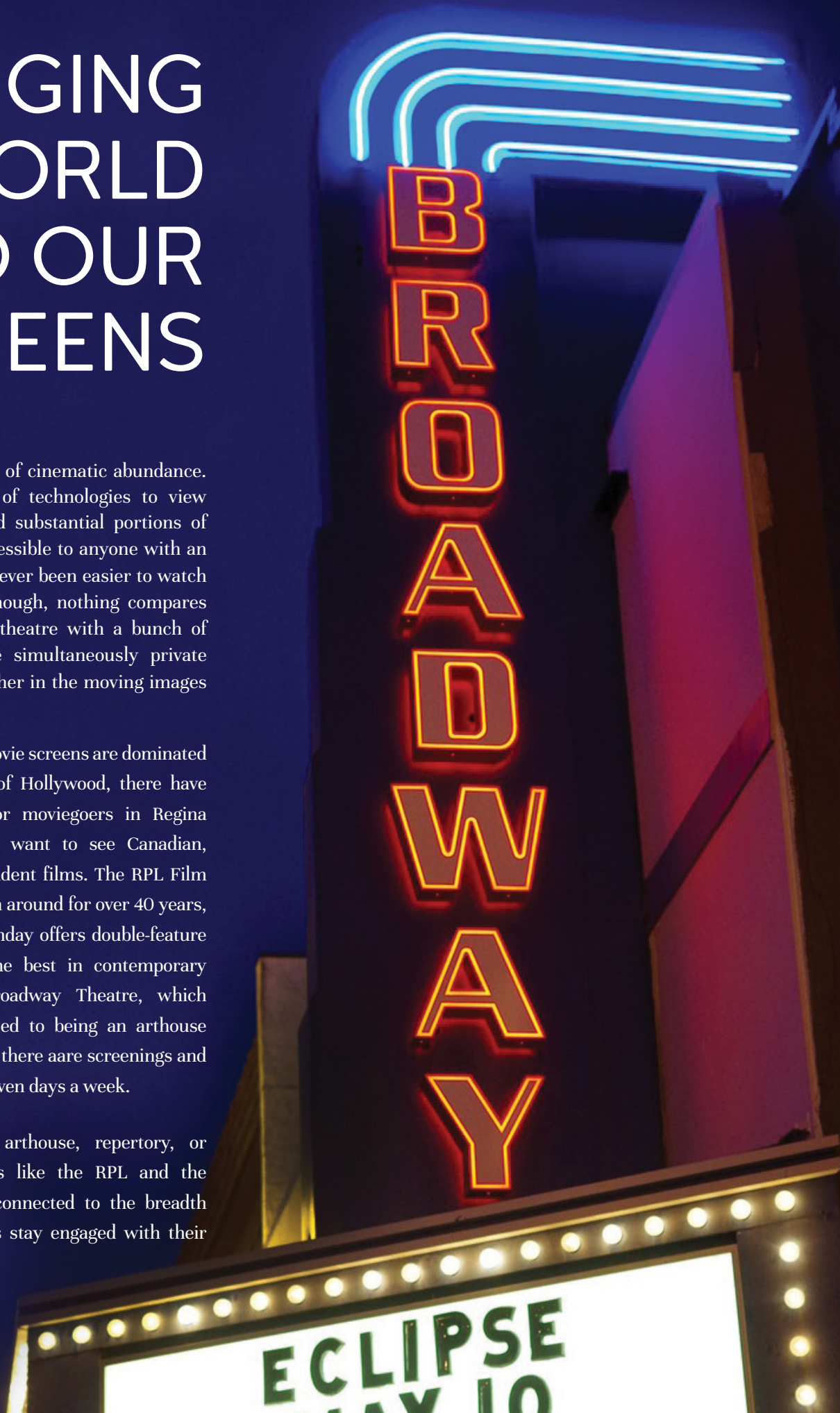
BRINGING THE WORLD TO OUR SCREENS

BY MARK WIHAK

We live in a time of cinematic abundance. With a range of technologies to view movies on, and substantial portions of the history of cinema accessible to anyone with an Internet connection, it's never been easier to watch a film. For my money though, nothing compares to watching a film in a theatre with a bunch of strangers, an experience simultaneously private and communal; lost together in the moving images on the big screen.

While most of Canada's movie screens are dominated by the marketing might of Hollywood, there have long been alternatives for moviegoers in Regina and Saskatoon who also want to see Canadian, international, and independent films. The RPL Film Theatre in Regina has been around for over 40 years, and Thursday through Sunday offers double-feature screenings showcasing the best in contemporary film. At Saskatoon's Broadway Theatre, which opened in 1946 and shifted to being an arthouse cinema in the early 1990s, there are screenings and live performance events seven days a week.

Whether they're called arthouse, repertory, or independent, it's theatres like the RPL and the Broadway that keep us connected to the breadth of cinema. These theatres stay engaged with their



communities through the work of the keen cinephiles who program the films. I posed some questions about the pleasures and challenges of programming to the RPL Film Theatre's Belinda New, and the Broadway Theatre's Scott Hamilton.

How did you get into programming films?

BELINDA NEW: I came at it sideways, from the creative side and from the filmmaker perspective, but also because I just watched hundreds of films! I was at the theatre virtually every weekend as a film student, along with all our film professors, so it was not possible to hide and not do your homework. If there was a film I missed or one that was playing in Saskatoon at the Broadway, friends and I would drive up there to catch it. I had worked for over ten years in the film industry when I came to the RPL Film Theatre part-time, and although I had done many events and festivals as well, the "job" of programming film was, and is, a great experience in terms of diversity, surprise, unexpected hilarity at times, and of course, challenges.

SCOTT HAMILTON: I'll admit to being a touch foggy on why I was asked on board outside of maybe being a local cinephile of note. Just before I joined the team, the Broadway's Executive Director Kirby Wirchenko had been making a lot of moves forward and branching into some non-cinema areas that some of the old guard were leery about, but that I was a pretty vocal supporter of, so he knew that while my heart was rooted in cinema, I also knew how to exercise some long view. Since the theatre was evolving so rapidly the programmer needed to be someone who would maintain eyes on the screen, but was still able to help push other facets of the business up the hill.

What are you looking for when you put together a program?

BN: I'd like to say just...good movies! But it is more complex than that, thankfully. Anticipating what the community might enjoy, what might spark their curiosity or engage



Brenda New



Scott Hamilton

them, cause discussion or just plain entertain people. We exist to screen films yes, but it's the community that more or less tells us the kinds of things they want to see. I get many requests – the viewing community in Regina is pretty diverse and savvy in that they know what's coming, what's out there, what they want us to bring in. And we screen new films every week so we have the advantage of not being tied to obligatory runs of titles. That enables us to screen a lot of films, put on a larger number of innovative events and festivals, often with community partners, and serve a wide variety of tastes.





SH: The balance I'm always trying to strike when it comes to our calendar is demand and pride. There is too much great cinema out there to settle on curating something that isn't either culturally relevant or artistically vital. The former is obviously informed by my patrons, because even if I'm not completely enamoured with a particular title, their enthusiasm is nothing if not compelling. The executive-decision titles that I bring in are those that I want to establish an audience for, and those that I treat as projects.

How do you find the films?

BN: Do the research! Keep up with the trends, the new films coming out. I follow all major and indie film festivals where films are likely to get North American distribution: Toronto, Cannes, Berlin, Venice, Sundance, Telluride, Tribeca etc. Staying in contact with national and international distributors is a critical part of the work.

With the advent of digital film and digital platforms, it's been much easier to acquire special films or programming by going directly to the source, at least for titles that don't have Canadian distributors.

With Canadian films, I try to keep track of what is in production as much as I can, and the work of indie filmmakers across the country. Quite a few filmmakers self-distribute, looking for screening venues across Canada, and they email us. I really enjoy it when we can accommodate a road trip, because I think it's an ambitious way to connect Canadians with their filmmakers – it's a

very grass-roots way to get a film seen, and it's admirable how many filmmakers actually do that. We love our local and national guests at the RPL Film Theatre and have hosted many filmmakers and their films – audiences just thrive on that interaction – it's special, personal, and always successful.

SH: For the newer fare I just try to keep my eyes on news coming out of festivals and trust a few key distributors who know our audience well enough to bring suggestions to the table. When it comes to rep-house programming I exercise a bit more direct outreach to try to figure out what our patrons want to see more of. As appealing as a more selfish-curatorial approach is, the screen needs to reflect the appetite of the community just as much as it needs to reflect my own whims.

If you could program a double-feature of any films made in the past 120 years, what films would you pair?

SH: I'd like to see *Black Narcissus* and an uncut version of Ken Russell's *The Devils* together. I think they would play wonderfully off of each other and that's good enough for me. I'm sure our crowd would consider this obvious as I have a propensity for most anything with themes of faith in varying lights (in recent years for instance we've run *El Club*, *Ida*, *The Innocents*, *Beyond the Hills*, and *The Little Hours*).

BN: This is the most fun but most impossible question! So I chose two suspense movies I am still haunted by years later. One I saw here (RPL Film Theatre), and one I saw at a mainstream theatre. One forever changed everything I had learned about documentary form, and brought home to me the power of film to impact justice or expose injustice. And one changed forever how I thought about what really makes a horror movie scary, and the power of film to impact my carefree lifestyle! Errol Morris's *The Thin Blue Line* and Steven Spielberg's *Jaws*.

I've wanted to do this for a while now, so maybe next year I'll curate a series of film pairings, because as an

audience member I really enjoy that concept. I always want to know why people choose the films they do especially if their choices, like mine, seem nonsensical. A number of years ago I had the good fortune to see the wonderfully biting satire *The Tramp and the Dictator* by Kevin Brownlow along with Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* and I would love to screen those for our audiences.

What's the best film screening you've been to?

SH: When I was 16 I skipped school and attended a student film festival at the University of Saskatchewan that featured back-to-back screenings of *The Exorcist*, *The Shining*, *The Omen* and *Evil Dead 2*. The first three screenings were totally empty and I basically had the run of the auditorium, which I now recognize is a drag for a programmer, but at the time it felt like they were programming the afternoon just for me.

BN: There have been hundreds of films at the RPL Film Theatre over the years where I've just become a kid again and thought 'that was the best film EVER!' I've had that experience at many film festivals and mainstream cinemas too – that sense of discovery. But, I have to say, being a guest with film editor Jean Oser at the Berlinale (Berlin International Film Festival) in 1997, watching the retrospective of G.W. Pabst films from the early 1930s – which Jean had cut – has to count among the most unforgettable experiences I've had. Prior to the screenings, Jean and I toured Berlin; it was remarkable – his memory of events, and detail was dazzling. He brought the early film era right into focus. In a capacity-crowd of several hundred people, watching these historic films was an intense experience, and I felt transported back to that era. Kind of like an old-school version of augmented reality, with Jean narrating scene by scene.

What do you imagine film screenings will be like 20 years from now?

SH: I'll admit that most possible outcomes of that question terrify me. Most of the world's cinema-bucks are tied up in multiplexes full of people who spend half the picture

– that they've paid \$25 to see – with their faces in their phones. It's a bit of a mess. People who genuinely love the art form will continue to produce work, and exhibitors who are dedicated to film as an art form will hopefully continue to showcase it. Dedication to the medium will be the key.



BN: Technology always changes experience of the world and film is not immune. Cynical me thinks people will be watching epic films on some hideously small device, but I think it's been home theatre in general that has had the most impact on viewership. In the future, nobody will ever have to leave their house – for any reason, whatsoever.

I'm going to boldly suggest, or *hope*, film-viewing cycles back around to a less "isolating" experience and to a more publicly immersive one. There is still nothing like watching a great movie in a crowd, whether the crowd is large or a small group of like-minded individuals or contrarians even, coming together for a collective viewing experience and then a discussion. I think people still want to talk about movies, care about movies, and share ideas and opinions on subjects and content. That may sound naïve but I see it every weekend at the RPL Film Theatre and it's still exciting to be in on that experience. /S

MARK WIHAK is a filmmaker and cinephile, who has spent thousands of hours dreaming amongst strangers.





SPICE ON

THE LONG AND THE TALL OF IT

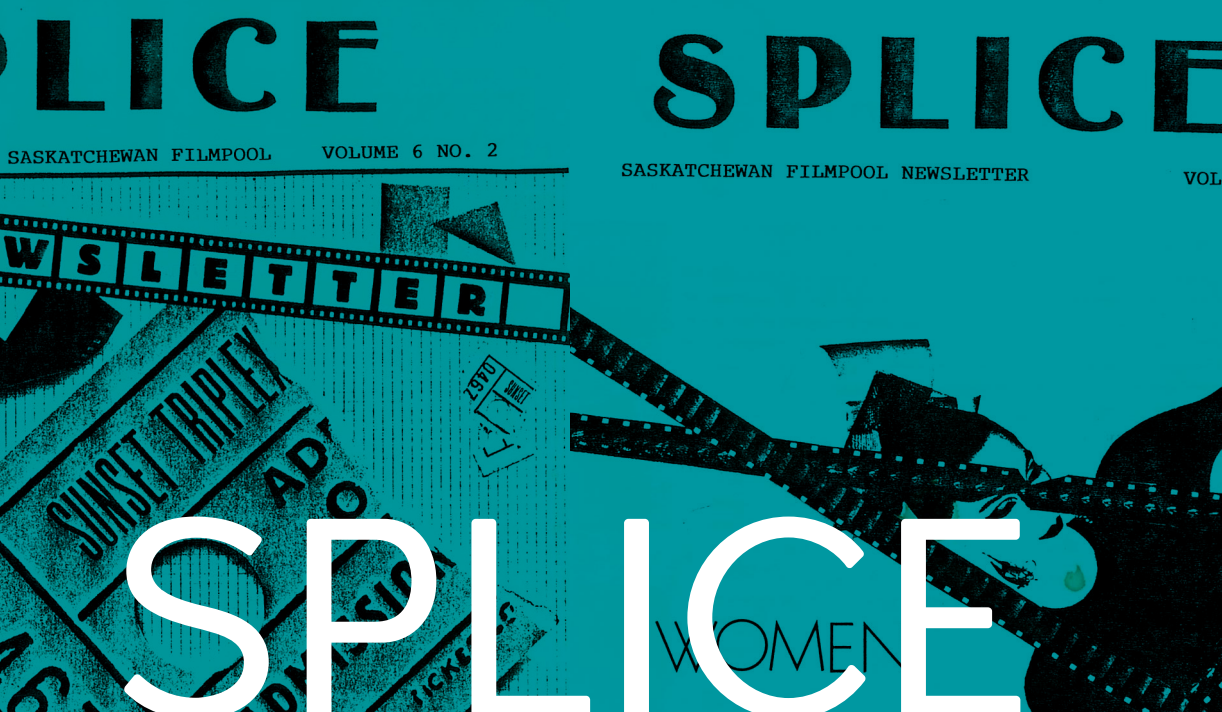
BY GERALD SAUL

Throughout: Various images and excerpts from past issues of *Splice*. Look for these (and more) to be archived online in the coming months.

Splice magazine is synonymous with the Saskatchewan Filmpool. It was first published in 1978, a year into the co-op's history, and has continued to be published ever since. But what is it? It is news, it is communication, it is creative writing, it is critical discourse, it is debate, it is promotion, it is audience building, it is photography, and as it proudly clings to the medium of print nearly forty years later, it is probably a sign of vanity. Through its editors, chosen annually by the Board of Directors, *Splice* has changed and flexed. Just as the membership of the Filmpool changes, just as the film community in the province changes, so does this magazine. Through the lens of the editor, *Splice* creates a portrait of the Filmpool – its members and their interests – and presents it to the world. *Splice* is our mirror and our screen, often gaining the attention of more interested eyes than see some of the films discussed within its pages. It is concrete historical evidence that we were here and we made things, showed things, and built connections. As with all history, it soon might become a relic. Before we relegate paper printing to the vault, I would like to look back at the history of *Splice* and see where its editors have taken us.

At first, *Splice* was a newsletter headed up by early Filmpool manager Joanne Reilly to inform its membership about events or to disseminate short reports on what has happened in the film/arts community. While frequently this meant simply reprinting writings from elsewhere, it also gave members the opportunity to discuss local or creative subjects in print. As the Filmpool held monthly meetings in those days, the need for communication was different. These early issues were an extension of the memory of the collective, acting as a social media to summarize and share highlights of how the Filmpool and its cohorts in other cities were growing and maturing.

By the mid-1980s, the editing of *Splice* was passed to Nora Gardner who took it from a simple and well-meaning newsletter, and turned it into a magazine. For Nora, editing *Splice* opened up new opportunities and was her way to be involved in the Filmpool. Even though



the publishing was still in the form of hand-collating photocopies run on an extremely temperamental machine in the co-op's office, Nora treated the magazine and her role with utmost professionalism. Rather than being a collection of disparate news clippings, Nora started assigning different themes to each issue, generating and soliciting sophisticated articles and interviews. Aided occasionally by her guest editor Martin Rumsby, *Splice* became the voice of experimental film on the prairies. Highlights included coverage of the Stan Brakhage & Bruce Elder Talks where these two legendary filmmakers met for the first time, speaking on and presenting films over a week in Regina. Culturally momentous, *Splice* under Nora Gardner contained the only print coverage of this event. While the magazine remained low-tech under her watch, the leadership Nora brought to *Splice* paved the way to it being treated as a more professional publication in the years to come.

The late 1980s were a time for tremendous growth for the FilmPool with expansions to both space and staff. For a couple of years, *Splice* was helmed by staff, but by 1991, the Board decided to once again elect the editor from its members. John Kennedy took on the role, unaware of the dire circumstances that the institution would soon be facing. John's issues had a playfulness to them, filled not only with relevant articles about local filmmaking, but also with light-hearted interviews and member-drawn comics. This approach and tone served the group well in 1992 as the FilmPool was struggling to recover from the financial crisis which nearly closed its doors.

As John summarizes, getting an issue of *Splice* into people's hands was a "way of telling the community we were around and relevant, and we're fighting like crazy to regain our credibility".

TIME CAPSULE: TO BE OPENED IN 40 YEARS

DONALD LIST

In the year 2057, will FilmPool still have a Moviola?

Motion pictures and for that matter human existence will be nothing like it is today. For my generation of filmmakers it started with celluloid film, then video, and now digital media. FilmPool was created to provide the technology and the human and financial resources to assist the community to tell their stories, big and small.

The passion for storytelling lies at the foundation of all that is good about this Co-op. That aspect of the FilmPool, I can only hope, will never change. I also trust that the FilmPool mandate, goals, and services will evolve to reflect the human condition and needs of the next generation.

There will be awkward times in adapting to the new social and economic environment of 2057, and this surely will challenge the membership. My ego wants to say, "that we have done good," and that over the generations, FilmPool has added value to the community. Only time will tell.

Donald List (a founding member)





In the late-1990s, *Splice* practically belonged to Robin Schlaht. As a highly active member and prolific filmmaker with interests in critical film discussion, photography, and design, Robin reshaped *Splice* into something that was not just of interest to local filmmakers, but with a unifying visual design it was beginning to be indistinguishable from commercially produced magazines. Schlaht's issues also increased the distance between newsletter and magazine by ridding it of much of the extraneous member-specific updates. More time-sensitive material was being better disseminated using Filmpool's "infoshot" mail-outs, which allowed the magazine to focus entirely on bigger stories of interest to a wider readership. *Splice* print runs increased with the magazine being distributed in an increasing number of local businesses. The film industry in Saskatchewan was on the rise and *Splice* was there, drawing attention to its less commercial producers.

At the turn of the millennium, Dianne Ouellette, with co-editor Jason Britski, took charge of *Splice* for four issues, driven by her interest in the "documentation of the history of Independent film and filmmakers in Saskatchewan". While working diligently to do so, Dianne also needed to learn about design and printing, knowledge that immediately began to serve her as she began putting together promotional material for her own films. Ultimately, the most important thing about *Splice* for Dianne was how it allows for "the expression of the small voice, the little film on the prairie that otherwise may never have been heard of."

In 2003, as a relative newcomer to filmmaking, Ken Wilson offered up his skillset which included a degree in English and experience editing a poetry journal in Ontario. As editor, Ken hoped to generate greater critical discourse on films in and around the Filmpool. While this didn't grow as quickly as he'd hoped, one great success was how *Splice* gave a voice to many in the Filmpool membership in the debate over the controversial shift from film to video use in the co-op. During this time, the magazine's profile increased with colour covers and permanent displays in a number of custom magazine racks installed around Regina. The budget of *Splice*, which has been a concern for most of its history, forced Ken's plan of disseminating

issues at a local cinema to be abandoned due to the reality of how many more copies would need to be printed.

Encouraged by Ken Wilson, David Geiss took over as editor in 2006. David says that he "wanted to continue it as a conduit for both in-depth articles as well as an outreach tool for Filmpool programing". At this time, Filmpool was changing. Its original role as primarily a supplier of equipment had become of lesser importance in the 21st century digital age, and Filmpool was left to refocus on its other programming; on workshops, exhibition, and advocacy. David Geiss's *Splice* would not only be relevant, but it would grab the reader's attention. More graphic elements would be added including large-scale photos and several wrap around covers. The pinnacle of *Splice* under David's editorship was the historic 30th anniversary issue which included a die-cut window on the front cover that reveled a DVD containing thirty short films (one minute each) commissioned by the Filmpool.

Kelly-Anne Riess became the *Splice* editor during the film tax credit cancelation. Never was there a more important time to promote independent filmmaking, to prove to everyone that film can and will go on. Articles published in Kelly's issues included coverage of Brian Stockton's *The Sabbatical*, Lowell Dean's *Wolf Cop*, the Prairie Puppet Underground Film Festival, and Steve Suderman's *Over Land*. In considering what the editors have done for *Splice* and for the community, Kelly recalls what *Splice* did for her as an editor. While most editors expressed frustration over not getting articles delivered on time, Kelly remembers how inspiring the articles could be when they did arrive. In one case, the essay she had asked Steve Suderman to write about his first documentary, impelled her to pick up a camera herself and get to work on her own documentary. She credits Suderman for this significant turning-point in her career. That's some great writing!

Splice at 39 years of age is still produced on paper, still struggles with deadlines, and it still costs a lot, but it also continues to measure the pulse of the membership, putting the voices and images of Saskatchewan independent filmmakers into people's hands.

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Joanne Reilly 1978–1983

Nora Gardner 1984–1988

Brian Stockton 1989

Staff including Roy Cross, Jason Nielson,

and Darryl Kessler 1990–1991, 1995

John Kennedy 1991–1994

Robin Schlaht 1996–1998

Gerald Saul 1998

Dianne Ouellette 1999–2000

Leslea Mair 2001

Jason Hujber 2001–2002

Ken Wilson 2002–2005

David Geiss 2005–2009

Terry Mialkowski 2010

Kelly-anne Reiss 2011–2015

GERALD SAUL is the head of the Department of Film at the University of Regina, a prolific filmmaker, and a long time Filmpool member.

TIME CAPSULE: TO BE OPENED IN 40 YEARS

IAN PRESTON

Because we don't know where technology will lead us in 10 years, let alone 40, it's difficult to talk about specific physical aspects of change, so I'll stick to the more human side of things.

One thing I've noticed over the years is that many arts (and other) organisations that sprung up in the 70s are now struggling or have gone by the wayside due to dwindling membership. This is often because of a failure to attract young people into those organisations. That isn't necessarily the fault of the people in charge but also because younger people have so many other distractions and interests now. I believe that the Filmpool is in a good position because there has always been an influx of new young members. This is partly due to the proximity of a film program at the U of R and, of course, the lure the media has for young people, but also because of the Filmpool's embracing of new technologies as they come along. For many years there was a reluctance to add electronic media to the mix, at the time for good reason. That position has obviously evolved over time for the better.

I really have no idea what the Filmpool can be in 40 years, but I think the disconnection from mainstream production has played a part in its continuation, I believe that's one of the reasons it still exists. Some members, including most of the founders, have ventured into mainstream production in one capacity or another but there has always been a strong base for the coop.

I was also one of the founders of SMPFA, but where is it now? I'll probably get flack for this because, of course, it still exists; but after the infamous tax incentive cuts it is not the vibrant organisation it once was.

In answer to the question posed, I find it difficult to suggest where I'd like to see the Filmpool in 40 years so I'm wimping out a bit on that. If it continues to have a strong base for members and stays in touch with both youth and technology the Filmpool will be well situated 40 years from now.

Because arts groups are usually dependent on funding from outside sources there will always be tough times to weather during periods of harsh financial cuts. I believe the Filmpool is in a position where, while it might go through periods of hardship in the future, it should be able to weather any storm.

And hey, I probably won't be around in 40 years, so it really doesn't matter what I think.

Keep up the good work!

Ian Preston (a founding member)



About the Editors:

NORA GARDNER is a semi-retired former language instructor from the University of Regina who holds four degrees from that institution and who dabbles in media and community arts, and the social sciences.

JOHN KENNEDY is the Executive Director of the Saskatchewan Cultural Exchange and part owner of Radiant Press an upstart Literary Press based in Regina. He is also tall, but not as tall as Gerald.

ROBIN SCHLAHT has produced and directed award-winning films that have screened across Canada and around the world. His projects include the documentary *To Be Romeo and Juliet*, the feature film *Solitude*, and the TV series *A Few Good Men & Women*.

DIANNE OUELLETTE is an independent filmmaker, currently working at the University of Regina, who has been making films in Saskatchewan for over 20 years.

KEN WILSON recently completed an MFA in Theatre at the University of Regina. He's currently a member of the Saskatchewan Filmpool Cooperative's board and teaches English and Film Studies courses at the University of Regina.

DAVID GEISS grew up on a farm in Treaty 4 territory, studied film at the University of Regina and the University of Victoria, and fondly remembers the *Corner Gas* and *Moccasin Flats* boom times of the Saskatchewan film industry. He currently teaches film studies and screenwriting at UVic, and is the Executive Director of CineVic Society of Independent Filmmakers.

KELLY-ANNE RIESS is wrapping up production on a Canada 150 Lost Story historical film in partnership with Concordia University. Her first feature-length documentary, *Finding AI*, aired nationally on CBC.

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