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TERRY FORD
1958 - 1960

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cover photo of victoria iconography collaged by jp meldrum (also the editor)

A Thorough Analysis of Victoria's Cinemas

By Ella Matte

For a city of its size, Victoria has a notable variety of movie theatres. Victoria has its fair share of rep theatres, including **The Vic Theatre** and **The Roxy**, which have each become the home to arthouse, cult classics, and indie films. Both cinemas are over 50 years old, and long-term residents would describe them as Victoria staples. On the contrary, Victoria has two Cineplexes (**Cineplex Odeon** and **Silvercity**) and **Capitol 6**, which contain multiple theatres and predominantly showcase new theatrical releases. Once in a blue moon, these larger theatres will program a special event or anniversary screenings of classics, but mainly they show the latest Hollywood has to offer. Featuring a diverse selection of new and old films, as well as a healthy dose of documentaries, **IMAX Victoria** in the Royal BC Museum boasts the largest screen in the entire city. However, while its screen does not have the scale and scope of the museum theatre, the University of Victoria's **Cinecenta** is an unforgettable gem with some of the most diverse programming in Victoria.

For this cinema examination, I'll be looking only at ones in the City of Victoria, not Greater Victoria, and cinemas that seat over 100 people (sorry, Sidney's Star Cinema, Odeon Westshore, and Intrepid Theatre). Additionally, for each of the seven cinemas reviewed, I will describe the best and worst viewing experience I've had at each theatre.

The Vic Theatre

Without a doubt, this is Victoria's most iconic theatre. Now owned and operated by the Victoria Film Festival, this theatre first opened in 1974 under the name Towne Cinema. The cinema opened at its Douglas Street location in the heart of Victoria's downtown, where it still remains today. While The Vic Theatre has only one cinema, it seats 213 people, features a 24-foot-wide screen, a new laser digital projection system, and

booming 7.1 Dolby stereo sound. Statistics aside, The Vic Theatre has a large local fan base. It's fair to say that a large portion of seats are filled with folks sporting a little salt and pepper and crow's feet, but its younger followers are slowly growing in numbers.

Notably, The Vic Theatre is the main host cinema for the annual Victoria Film Festival. To add, the theatre's regular weekly programming is solid. Their focus is screening newer indie and smaller movies that don't receive the same theatrical release as large studio films. The Vic Theatre does a good job of timing programming with the lead-up to the Oscars, giving audiences the space to watch movies that are nominated or are in the awards conversation. Additionally, they host a monthly Retromania screening of older cult classics that the average Joe is familiar with. Without a doubt, this is my personal favourite cinema in Victoria due to its unmatched legacy and ability to effectively cultivate a community.

Best Viewing Experience: Pink Flamingos (1972)/The Taste of Things (2023)

Something special about The Vic Theatres' audience is that they possess the maturity to appreciate outlandish and avant-garde films. The Pink Flamingos (1972) screening was a special event The Vic Theatre put on for Victoria's Pride. Those who have seen the John Waters classic know that the movie is anything but tame. There are several scenes in the film that many have found disturbing. However, The Vic Theatres' audience had the etiquette to respect the movie and its message. The audience knew when to laugh and brace themselves through scenes that could make anyone feel uncomfortable. Talk about a room full of cinephiles.

I love this theatre so much that it was difficult to pick just one experience. The Taste of Things (2023) was shown at the 2024 Victoria Film Festival, and the screening I attended was a full house. This movie was made for romance and food lovers. I had never seen anything like it before. Cooking had never looked this elegant on the big screen. At every sizzle, chop, or saute, the audience oohed and awwed. You could feel an aroma of warmth and complete comfort fill the room. It was the exact opposite of

the atmosphere for the Pink Flamingos (1972). The duality of the two experiences is an example of how open The Vic Theatre's audience is to experiencing a range of cinema.

Worst Viewing Experience: The Summer Book (2024)

By no means is The Summer Book (2024) a bad movie. However, a movie this gentle can easily be ruined if audiences forget to turn off their phones, and that's exactly what happened. I remember at least three phone ringers going off for over 10 seconds, which seemed like an eternity for this type of quiet and soft-spoken movie. This screening was for the 2025 Victoria Film Festival. It was packed for a matinee. This is far from the worst movie theatre experience I've ever had, but it just felt off. What it came down to was that it was not the usual crowd at The Vic Theatre.

The Roxy

Oh, The Roxy, it truly is the little theatre that could. This theatre has been through many different seasons. Opening in 1949 under the name The Fox Theatre, it was a movie theatre showing a diverse range of films (including X-rated flicks in the early 70s) until 2013, when it was sold to Blue Bridge Repertory Theatre. For almost a decade, the theatre became a performing arts space, but returned to screening movies in 2022 when leaseholder Andrew Golin signed a multi-year lease with the owner of the 1949 Roxy building, Strandlund Investments Ltd.

The Roxy has similar programming to that of The Vic Theatre. They screen films that don't have a Victoria release at larger theatres, but focus on the indie films that are receiving festival and awards buzz. The Roxy also shows movies that are burdened with a limited theatrical release and are usually thrown into the streaming world rather quickly. This is the way to a cinephile's heart. The Roxy has a good gauge of which films deserve to be shown on a big screen and uses their programming power for good.

While The Roxy's programming is top-tier, the venue is another story. The venue features a distinctive semi-cylindrical, dome-like structure, originally a repurposed World War II

surplus Quonset hut, known for its unique shape and signature robin's egg blue facade. However, this doesn't always make for the best sound quality. Additionally, the seating at The Roxy could use an upgrade. Back when The Roxy was showing "adult films," it had multiple loveseats in the theatre, but presently, it only has 221 mediocre seats that only hold up for the first hour of watching a movie. Due to this, my piece of advice to anyone going to The Roxy is to bring a seat cushion or pillow to sit on.

Best Viewing Experience: Train Dreams (2025)

The best viewing experience I had at The Roxy this year was watching Train Dreams (2025). The average age of the audience in the theatre was 45 years old. There was a sizable turnout of 30 folks in the theatre, which was quite good for a Monday evening. I got a seat at the front on the left side of the theatre, which was the perfect spot for watching Train Dreams because it allowed me to bask in the spectacle of the film's cinematography, while also letting me hide off to the side so my endless sobbing wasn't a distraction to the rest of the audience during the movie. To add, I only thought about how uncomfortable the seats were once because the movie was that good.

Worst Viewing Experience: The Piano Lesson (2024)

The true test of how bad a movie is, is how physically uncomfortable you are by the end of it in The Roxy's seats. Out of all the movies I've seen at The Roxy, this one takes the cake for the worst. I watched the movie with my partner, and we were the only ones in the theatre, seated front and centre. For the last thirty minutes of the movie, we debated whether we should leave early, and I highly considered it. However, we stuck it out until the end, and it barely paid off. This experience also did not benefit from the fact that I forgot to bring a seat cushion, blanket or any pillows. Plus, with the lack of body heat inside, on a cold October day, I did not account for how cold it would be in the theatre. Ultimately, The Roxy has a special place in my heart. While the theatre could use a bit of TLC, it stands not only as an essential part of Quadra Village, but as a theatre that deserves the love and attention it once had from Victoria.

Cineplex Odeon

The Cineplex Odeon was first opened as the Odeon Theatre in 1948. Eventually, in the 80s, it became another Cineplex venue after the company bought Canadian Odeon Theatres. This cinema features the typical programming of Cineplexes across Canada, except it occasionally screens new releases, Bollywood films, or international films. This is aimed at the theatres' slightly more urban and multicultural audience, compared to the suburban SilverCity Cineplex.

There are seven auditoriums at the Cineplex Odeon, and they all have comfortable recliner seats. However, what is not consistent is each of the auditorium's layouts. Some auditoriums are average, but a few are very long, and the screen is extremely far away. My least favourite of the auditoriums is the wide ones. While the screen can appear bigger in these auditoriums, the seating arrangement is very odd. If you decided to go to a popular movie with four other friends, finding five seats next to each other could be a challenge. The worst part about this theatre is that the view from many of these seats was blocked by railings dividing the seating sections. However, although I am excessively complaining about this auditorium, it truly is not a horrible seating arrangement. These auditoriums would not stop me from going to the Cineplex Odeon.

Best Viewing Experience: The Brutalist (2024)

It was a sunny, beautiful Sunday afternoon, and I thought no better way to spend it than going to a dark room to watch the three-hour-plus feature film *The Brutalist* (2024). It was a glorious, powerful, and intense experience. I watched it in one of the Cineplex Odeon's longer auditoriums and sat at a perfect distance from the screen. I was captivated the whole time. Plus, the intermission in the midst of the movie was greatly appreciated, respecting our attention spans and small bladders.

Worst Viewing Experience: Godzilla x Kong: The New Empire (2024)/Honey Don't (2025)

Watching Godzilla x Kong: The New Empire (2024) in one of the Cineplex Odeon's wide theatres was not ideal. A railing blocked the lower third of my view. Depending on the movie, this might not affect the film too heavily, but for a movie that's almost all action-driven, it matters. It was a very frustrating watch.

On the other hand, my viewing experience watching Honey Don't was not impacted by imperfections in the seating or structure of the auditorium. If anything, the seats were too comfortable. Before watching the movie, I was tired, and I made the mistake of not ordering coffee at the concession. I'm sure at this point you can do the math, but I fell asleep while watching Honey Don't (2025). I fell asleep during the last third of the movie, but I don't have any regrets, since I did not like the first two-thirds of the film very much. Anyways, I suppose comfortable seats have their downsides as well.

SilverCity Cineplex

Why yes, if it isn't for the sweet ol' SilverCity Cineplex. The cinema opened in 1999 with 10 auditoriums, each with standard stadium-type seating. In 2011 SilverCity was upgraded with one screen having IMAX capability. This cinema is in the heart of suburbia. It shares a parking lot with Tillicum Mall and Montana's. If you're an avid Victoria movie theatre-goer like myself, you may even be a little too acquainted with the Montana's menu, but that's a story for another time.

SilverCity mirrors the programming of its sister theatre, the Odeon. Except they don't have the occasional Bollywood/international flick. Instead, SilverCity focuses on programming for families screening more animated movies. A unique thing SilverCity has done, along with other Cineplexes across the country, is a secret screening of unreleased movies. Typically, they are on a Monday night and at a reduced price. It's not a bad marketing tactic and has brought a sizeable crowd to the movies. Overall SilverCity has become a charming residential staple in Victoria.

Best Viewing Experience: Zodiac (2007)

The Best viewing experience I've ever had at SilverCity was watching Zodiac. It was a late 10:30 PM screening for the over two hour and a half movie. It was in one of the largest auditoriums in the cinema, it was dark, and it was perfect. After leaving the theatre at around 1 AM, stepping into the desolate parking lot was very eerie. The whole experience made for a great conversation on the car ride back home. It was the dream experience for anyone into late-night or midnight madness screenings.

Worst Viewing Experience: Nosferatu (2024)

My viewing experience of Nosferatu (2024) was hardly bad, to be honest. I saw it at a sold-out screening on Christmas day and the energy in the room was high. To my left were classic horror movie fans, and to my right was a film critic writing with a pen that had a flashlight on the end of it. The experience was excellent right up until the climax of the film, when someone sitting in the front decided to record the movie on their phone with full brightness. Shoutout to the woman seated directly above her, calling her out; she did what we were all thinking. Unfortunately, this slightly took me out of the movie, but overall I left the theatre liking the film.

Capitol 6

The people's choice, Capitol 6. While The Vic Theatre captures the hearts of cinephiles, Capitol 6 is usually the public's first place to look if they want to see a movie. The cinema is kitty-corner to the Cineplex Odeon. However, location is not the only thing these two theatres have in common. Their programming is very similar, showcasing the latest Hollywood has to offer. Expect Capitol 6 is great at finding the films that slip through the cracks of both the Victoria Cineplex's programming and screen slightly more independent films.

The original Capitol 6, then known as the Capitol Theatre, was built in 1921. The theatre was closed and demolished in 2013.

However, the current Capitol 6 we know and love was built and opened in 2016. Fittingly, Capitol 6 features six auditoriums, each equipped with recliner seats and Dolby Surround sound, with a total seating capacity of 502. Personally, Capitol 6 is the theatre I pick for blockbusters, and I've rarely been disappointed with the venue.

Best Viewing Experience: Babygirl (2024)

Babygirl (2024) was electric. I don't think you could have filled the theatre with more feminine energy than this. For the first hour of the movie, every time Harris Dickinson was on the screen, everyone ooo'd and aww'd. The peak of the experience was the George Michael, Father Figure needle drop and everyone in the theatre gasped. At the very least, it was a good day to be a girl or a gay at the movies.

Worst Viewing Experience: Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning (2025)

The fact that Capitol 6 is usually the general public's choice cinema means that all types of people come to watch movies there, including those who lack theatre etiquette. This screening of Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning (2025) was non-stop interruptions. I don't enjoy doing this, but I had to remind the gentleman on my left twice of how distracting his extremely bright phone screen was. Additionally, the row in front of me was on their phones too and at times recording the movie. It was a distracting screening, but at least it was a Mission Impossible movie, so it wasn't rocket science to keep up with.

IMAX Victoria

Located in the Royal British Columbia Museum (RBCM), this IMAX screen is 61ft high by 85ft wide, making it over six stories tall and filling your entire field of vision with its massive projection area. The programming at the Victoria IMAX is half documentaries, a quarter of new blockbusters, and the last

quarter being old classics. What is also noticeable about the IMAX Victoria is that the mini donuts at the concession are out of this WORLD! Movie theatre managers, if you are reading this, PLEASE consider adding mini donuts to your concession. It's a game-changer and an excellent alternative if you want a break from popcorn. Or, it makes for a great gluttonous pairing with popcorn! Anyways, props to you IMAX Victoria, you're doing something right over there.

Best Viewing Experience: The Shining (1980)

Picture this: twelve mini donuts in my left hand, large buttery popcorn on my lap, right hand free for stuffing my mouth with said mini donuts and popcorn, and frame of view LOCKED into The Shining (1980). Halfway through our screening, my roommate beside me reaches for the mini donut bag, and there are only clumps of sugar left. It doesn't get better than this. That's all I have to say.

Worst Viewing Experience: Don't have one

Besides The Shining (1980), the only other time I've been to the IMAX Victoria is to watch Interstellar (2014). That was another great experience with only good things to report. I plan to return to IMAX Victoria as soon as I can.

Cinecenta

Cinecenta, the University of Victoria's cinema, opened in 1971. The theatre was first used to show student films. Due to the theatre's popularity in 1975, the 300-seat cinema Victoria knows today was built. To my knowledge, the cinema hasn't had any major renovations since it first opened. However, the seats are still relatively comfortable. Cinecenta's programming has a large range. They program new releases, especially those that are independent, international, and have a hot festival circuit that year. To add, they screen loads of cineplie classics and independent movie must-watches.

It's a place for its younger audience to watch cinema essentials in a theatre instead of at home on streaming. Speaking of the cinema's audience, it's mostly students and young adults. However, you can spot all walks of life at Cinecenta. For many Gen X and Baby Boomers, the theatre is a place of nostalgia,

screening their favourites from when they were students at the university.

Best Viewing Experience: Stop Making Sense (1984)

My first and favourite experience at Cinecenta was watching David Byrne's live concert film Stop Making Sense (1984). Not many folks were there for the Friday afternoon screening, but those who were were dedicated Talking Heads fans. By the end of the film, we were moving and grooving as much as we could in those old chairs. The cherry on top was that after the screening, it was still bright outside. The screening was a delightful cup of tea, much like Cinecenta can be.

Worst Viewing Experience: Riff Raff (2024)

Riff Raff (2024) was screened at Cinecenta as part of the 2025 Victoria Film Festival. It was a packed theatre with excitement in the room as it was one of the last screenings of the festival. I have no complaints about the audience and venue, but this comedy was not good, with many of the jokes falling flat. Throughout the screening, there was mostly half-hearted laughs. Obviously, Cinecenta can't help that this movie happened to be shown at this location during the festival, but it just happens that I've been lucky to have no bad experiences at this theatre. Keep it up, Cinecenta.

End Note

I'm not going to rank each of these cinemas because each they deserve love from Victoria. However, what's important is keep going to the theatre and continue to support your local community. Until then, see y'all at the movies.

PS: Shout out to <https://cinematreasures.org>, they helped me get the exact stats on local Victoria cinemas.

The best permanent menu items at Smiths Pub, R.I.P.

Benjamin Wil
January 2025

Smith's, often stylized as Smiths, R.I.P., was a beloved basement pub located at 777 Courtney Street, a short walk from the GVPL downtown branch; actually, a short walk from a lot of places. On Thursday, April 11, 2023, the bar closed suddenly, posting just a simple print-out on the front door: "Smiths is Closed / It's been a great run, a very great / run, and we're so appreciative to all / our staff, friends, customers and / everyone that supported us over 17 / years // We didn't want to go out like this, / but things happen // -Smiths." Yeah, all things come to an end. The Old Bailey Pub, once in the same space, also came to an end, over 17 years ago, and Smiths kept their sign behind the bar as a kind of omen. Now the Smiths sign lives in the beer garden at Boomtown, another downtown space whose days are very likely numbered.

If you'd never been to Smiths, you might not know the serpent-shape it took in the hotel-building it resided in: the guts of the main floor, east of a pool and parkade, and then upstairs was its sister bar, the Argyle Attic, and their shared kitchen. Somewhere in the bowels was a passageway leading into the courtyard, where a secluded patio, maybe the fourth-best patio in town, welcomed dogs and medium-sized groups of people when the weather was reasonable. Depending on the time of day, the time of year, Smiths was a dive; a place to have lunch with your parents; a laid back date location; a sports bar only during the World Cup; a place to wait out the lines and the rain at the nearby clubs; and sometimes a club of its own. The clientele ranged from elderly single men who'd exclusively order four to six PBRs four to six times per week before dinnertime, to Blundstone-wearing craft beer neckbeards, to clubgoing teenagers who yell a lot. It was never a "bartender's bar" in the way that many of its neighbours had tended to be over the years. Instead, it prioritized a short list of inexpensive, classic cocktails and a very well-curated rotating list of ten-ish craft beers on tap. Yeah, often you'd come for the beer but then you'd stay for the surprisingly not-awful food menu. The regulars all knew that this was Smiths true appeal: pub fare to rival even the nicest downtown bars, even though it was just a wacky dive with a bulldog statue and famous writers's names graphic-tee-wallpapered over the walls like some kind of early 00s nightmare.

Well, now that you've been reminded of the late great Smiths, the light that never goes out but did go out, let me present to you an opinionated list of the best permanent menu items that we should continue to sob about and demand the likeness of from our surviving downtown water-holes.

1. The kale caesar. It's exactly what it sounds like. Available in both a small and a large size, and both, I believe, under fifteen dollars. In my long life I've had many pub-caesar salads, and Smiths was consistently the least slimy, the most capery, and reasonable caesar salad for your buck.

2. The happy hour grilled cheese. I won't lie that the four-dollar pricey is doing a lot of the work, but the beauty is that, yes, it's a cheap, easy comfort eat that is entirely uncomplicated and it goes down a lot easier than the four-dollar pub-pickle or pub-pepperoni stick you might get somewhere else.
3. The chicken katsu sandwich. It wasn't the best chicken katsu sandwich or the worst one, but until Ukatsu opened nearby it was the only chicken katsu sandwich relatively close, and certainly the only chicken katsu sandwich you could get a bar. For twelve dollars, a substantial normal-bread sandwich on a menu mostly dedicated to pubby hamburgers (honourable mention: the chopped cheese) was refreshing.
4. The happy hour Driftwood Arcus Pilsner. Getting us back closer to the reason we walked into Smiths in the first place. A six-fifty true-size pint of Arcus Pilsner was a pretty good deal in 2023, and almost unimaginable now. Blue Buck was the other permanent tap on happy hour, which is another totally good and reasonable happy hour pick. We can mostly all agree on these easy-going local beers that are both about the same age as Smiths had been.

And now we gotta pour one out, R.I.P., to Smiths, one more time, as in April this year we'll have lived in a world without it for three whole years. I hope to see you at one of our remaining chill watering holes where we can reminisce once more about how OP Smiths had been.

1999 BC Transit strike by Leigh Rutherford

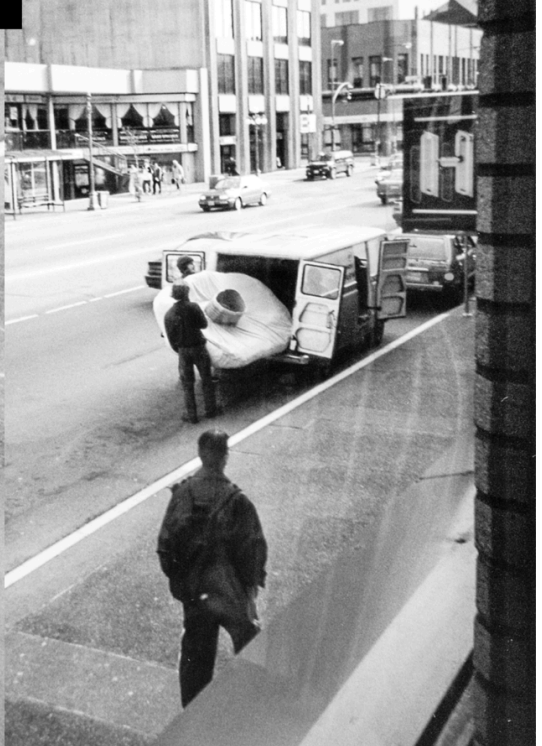
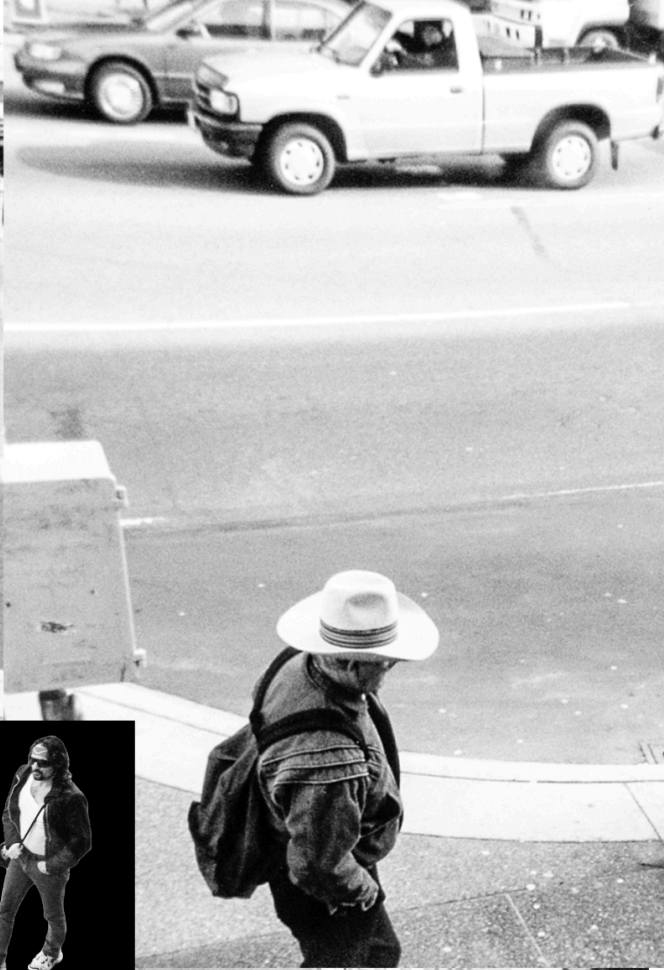
I was 19 during the 1999 BC Transit strike. I was not living downtown (I was living in Gordon head near McKenzie and Cedar Hill), but that's where I spent most of my time. To get there while buses weren't running, I walked or hitchhiked (drivers picked up strangers during the strike!).

Downtown was empty other than regulars and residents (mostly artists, punks and low income folks; the only housing consisted of two large apartment buildings, and flats above stores in old buildings... now mostly high-end apartments and condos, or completely gutted and rebuilt via façadomy).

I took a roll of film from upstairs in Cafe de la Lune at the corner of Douglas and Pandora in the Hotel Douglas (the now-destroyed 6-foot high second floor of The Palms): these are a few of my favourites.

Notes on photos:

- The Shuffling Cowboy: he had difficulties walking and took small shuffling steps (that jean jacket...)
- Mushroom delivery from a sweet van
- Cool dude. Tight pants. That's it. I hope he doesn't track me down. (full pic and cropped)



A Collage of Photographs taken in Victoria by Yoanna Kraleva and Nikki Wa



A Report on a Near Dark Show - 02/01/2026

by JP Meldrum

at Oaklands Community Center with Really Loud Free Jazz, schnudlbug, and Ryosuke Kiyasu

Last year, Nick and I put on 23 events as Destroyed, ranging from our little Secret Cinemas in the back of Colage to a ten-band one-day festival at Oaklands Community Center to a sold-out show at The Roxy Theatre. Despite our own events-game running strong, I've never been the most avid attendee of shows - maybe 5 or 6 local shows a year with another 4 or 5 bigger shows in Vancouver (outside of the one's I play or do sound for). Part of it, I'm certain, is the nebulous feeling of a 'scene'; like some kind of aesthetic, ethical, taste, and demeanor is a barrier for entry never say well with me, though if I had to pick one I've always been sitting firmly on the outskirts in the world of noise and experimental alongside my cohorts at Near Dark Shows. Near Dark excels in blurring lines between esoterica, virtuosity, and vernacular/outsider art; and creating a safe place in which 30+ year old freaks like me, Max, and Lauren can revel in controlled chaos alongside an all-ages crowd with the weirdo baggage of yesteryear. I'm hoping, and planning, in 2026 to be a broader attendee of local events, beyond ones that involve me, though perhaps this first one isn't the best example - I play tenor sax in RLFJ and was loosely merch-guy and sound-guy at this one. If you know anything about me and my obsessive list-oriented posterity, you'd not be surprised that I aim to attend 52 shows this year.

The first gig of the year was a weird one; for the second time Kiyasu and his viral snare-drum noise-jazz solo act has blessed the island. and I could feel those distinctions being blurred, deconstructed, and built back up throughout the night.

Really Loud Free Jazz started the night off with one of their most locked-in sets yet; at times, their music sounds like three different people practicing different niche extended techniques simultaneously, but tonight, it felt like some fucked

up mix of Primus and Ayler - someone on TikTok apparently said it was akin to "like Ornette Coleman and Merzbow fighting in a train bathroom"; Lauren, of Near Dark fame, has tapped into the uncanny world of TikTok noise music afficianotos. Kids were playing twister during our set and Ska-dancing as free-jazz grandpas stroked their chin in amused contemplation. Do these fuckers actually know how to play their instruments? (Yes!!!!)

Next up was schnudlbug, a filmmaker and electronic artist living in Ladysmith currently, who played a short, almost interlude-like laptop set of heavy chopped DnB and explosive Max MSP plunderphonics. A high-grade, quick-punch of Ableton wizardery akin to peak Oneotrix Point Never.

Finally, the star of the show, Dr. Ryosuke Kiyasu took the stage. I asked what he wanted sound-wise, and he simply said "loud" before he began to rip his snare drum apart atop one of Oaklands fold-out tables - his contact mic carefully hidden away for the climax. I've seen Kiyasu before, but it was seated at the Intrepid Theatre - here people stood in a circle around the snare virtuoso as he began tapping away at the drum. I noticed the crowd - who I deduced largely came because of his viral-bait Instagram reels that beget ironic comments and 'real musicians' humdrumming about 'chops' - is that any semblance of bad-faith spectatorship evaporated. Kiyasu has jazz chops, relentlessly restrained extended technique, and a real sense of pace before culminating in a viral-friendly screaming-into-a-snare-and-wresting-a-table schtick. Minds were blown.

You had to be there.

Gigpit Interviewed by Nick Workman

all photos by Toni Jaclynn



[Victoria-based band, Ghost Darling, performing at the Coda for the Gigpit Offline Party] [Victoria/Halifax-based band, Steel Cut Oats, performing at the Coda]

1) Could you start by telling me what Gigpit is?

Gigpit is a local music discovery and free ticketing platform built to support underground and grassroots scenes. Our core goal is to build real capacity for local music communities through ethical, equal promotion - no pay-to-play, no algorithmic favouritism, no ads. The site is a community curated space where artists, organizers, venues, music journalists, and fans can post and find upcoming shows. One of our core components for local music discovery is the hundreds of artist profiles that enable fans to listen to artist's music while they look for the show they want to go to. Above all, we want discovering local music to feel as easy and intuitive as using big platforms like Spotify, but without the exploitation - grounded instead in equity, transparency, and genuine local scene-building.

2) There are a lot of media discovery platforms out there - from small Instagram accounts to traditional media sources to global platforms. What makes Gigpit different?

We've been finding music on Instagram forever and got sick of being baited into a 30-minute doom scroll just to learn about a show. The work that independent pages and writers are doing is irreplaceable, but it's scattered and locked behind algorithms. We wanted to build a space that centralizes that energy without flattening it.

Gigpit lets anyone discover their local scene without needing to be tapped into the right group chat, follow the right accounts, or feed the algorithm. You shouldn't need social capital to know what's happening in your own city.

Most "music discovery" platforms are really ad platforms - pay-to-win systems that sell visibility back to the people who created the culture in the first place. We're not interested in that. Instead of paid ads or suggested content, we're committed to actionable information, we list shows and artists equally in chronological order so when you go to the

home page planning your next night of music is one click away. We're able to do this without ads through free ticketing funded by optional attendee tips, not by charging artists or venues rent for existing.

At the end of the day, we're building in direct opposition to corporations that extract value from local scenes every time we interact. If the scene survives on community, the platforms supporting music discovery and ticket sales should have a meaningful role in community building.



[Vancouver-based artist, Joe Abbott, performing at Fort Tectoria]

3) You've recently expanded beyond Victoria into Vancouver. Are there other markets you're looking at?

Absolutely. We've had specific requests from fans hoping to have Gigpit in Nanaimo, Kamloops, Edmonton, Montréal, Halifax and a few other cities in Canada.

Canada is massive, spread out, and brutal to tour compared to most countries. Scenes end up isolated, even though they're dealing with the same struggles. As we expand Gigpit city by city we're hoping to help connect Canadian scenes to each other, and give emerging artists more real momentum without asking them to burn themselves out just to be seen.

To anyone reading this, if you think Gigpit would help your music scene please reach out!

4) Tell me about the featured artist program.

The long-term vision is an incubator for under-discovered artists who are actually building a career (not dabbling) and who we believe have real potential beyond their current audience.

In Victoria, the closest thing is Zone's Band of the Month, which does important work, but it's still a radio station and that naturally limits genre scope. We're not interested in that kind of narrowing. Singer-songwriters, noise projects, death metal... if it's good and it's honest, it belongs.

A big part of the program is live-off-the-floor recordings. Artists need that material to get into festivals, start conversations with labels, and prove they exist beyond the internet. It's something we can offer while also spreading the word about Gigpit. We call it mutual aid marketing, and we're always looking for ways to practice it.

We also want to shout out Once More With Feeling, Blue Light Sessions in Vancouver, and CFUV's Basement Closet Sessions. They're huge inspirations, they've been doing this right for a long time, and they deserve your attention.



[Koby Andrews from CFUV for Gigpit Live Sessions Elbow Kiss Interview]

5) You started off by wanting to help people discover local music in their city. You've now added a ticketing system to the platform, community resources, and have taken on helping touring acts book stops. Are there any other features you're working on that you'd like to include?

There are hundreds. The roadmap is being written by the community in real time. If people want something, we want to hear about it.

Right now, things in the pipeline include email alerts for shows your favourite artists are playing, deeper artist discovery tools, and better features for tours and festivals. That list keeps growing.

We're a small team of five, all with full-time lives outside of Gigpit, so we're careful not to promise timelines we can't hit. But we move fast, we build what's actually useful, and we're committed to letting the community steer where this goes next.

6) Will Gigpit be coming in the form of an app?

If you think you want another app, you're probably lying to yourself... I'm mostly joking of course. We get asked all the time, and yeah, it's on the long-term list.

That said, Gigpit is already built to feel fast, clean, and app-like without asking anyone to download more stuff or give up more attention. Most apps are designed to keep you scrolling with notifications and dopamine tricks. That's not what we're here for.

Our goal is simple: hop on Gigpit.ca - discover something cool, grab a ticket, and go to a show. A few good minutes, then real life.

7) Final question - Why does this matter now?

Before recorded music, the only way to hear music was to go out and hear someone play it live. Records, tapes, and CDs changed that. They let artists reach beyond their city and actually make a living doing it. A real middle class of musicians existed because people paid for music.

Streaming flipped that on its head. Spotify wasn't built to support artists, it was built as an ad platform. Music was the payload because it's cheap to store and endlessly consumable. It made global discovery frictionless, but local discovery nearly impossible.

Now artists are pushed to compete for streams that barely pay. A million streams earns roughly \$3,000, which is often not even enough to cover recording costs. And streams don't actually measure value. You might listen to one song once a year and another every day, that doesn't mean you value them differently. It just means one fits better into an algorithm. The result is a system where the most digestible music wins, not necessarily the most meaningful.

Gigpit is about rebuilding the local loop, helping people discover what's happening in their own backyard and encouraging real support: listening intentionally, showing up, buying merch, telling friends, repeating the cycle.



[Gigpit team celebrating a success first Offline Party at the Coda]

Just love in 1801 chambers st.

We're having a vacant spaces and abandoned houses epidemic and there's never enough sneakers hanging on the telephone poles. I only ever loved her because she was haunted and dazzled me momentarily. Is this city dead or sleeping? If we were to get into a fight over who's more sensitive in our non-gendered super gay not gay enough relationship on grant and chambers st. would we wake up to the ghosts singing in the upstairs of 1801? Would I have my own throne with them? wearing studded boots: velvet cheetah: ripped tights from the roses, all wrapped in ivy? Maybe the all watchful blossom tree would finally have something to say to me: I could ask her if we are all part of her private collection of suffering lovers? Have you ever noticed how many desperately romantic poems there are written in this city? It's pathetic and overly hopeful that I asked someone downtown who just told my boyfriend *back up someone just tried to stab me* to write JUST LOVE on my knuckles, could you imagine an affair with your old love for her? If I run around 1801 three times over and walk down Pandora will I have enough fight in me to do something punk like write a song or cry on the curb with a cigarette? I hated what I was wearing when I was running down Cook st. hoping the ghosts would eat me whole, are you still haunted? Let's meet by the Johnson St bridge to watch the Empress light up her poor naive city and walk to the train tracks to play monsters one more time.

There's too many bad noise shows in Fernwood and too many cringe DJs behind supermarkets and there's never enough glitter in my drink to make me feel like I'm in love again. There's too many shitty chatterboxes behind vintage stores and too many awkward painters and full time losers. I love the view from the Bay st bridge too much. It makes me sick how beautiful the gravel pits are. I hate how the industrial noise melts itself into waves. I've peed on the garbage cans behind 50/50 too many times and once I had a conversation with a dead rat. I love the rats in our walls too much. My friends are all sewage rats in major swag. I hate this city because she's breaking in my chest. If we were lesbian lovers we would have to break up now.

by yoanna kravelva



Birds of Victoria by Noah Leverton



Anthesis

By Juliana Sech

Anthesis is a visual narrative of pause in ever-changing times, based off collected observational ex(in)ternal studies on *lækv' ænən* territory, from January-May 2025. A multimedia installation, consisting of experimental digital methods of photography, found material, and written word into conceptual layered compositions.

The story of song birds chirping outside lace curtains, calculating the price of dopamine, silverware left on the bedside table, self-regeneration, a wealth of anticipation, a petal for each that loved and lost her, hyper fixating on para-social relations via the internet, thawing frozen ground, and a promise of muddy boots. A collision and collaboration of the self and the collective.

The dance of material obstruction through burning, preserving, shrivelling, melting, dismantling, expelling, sewing, transferring, fusing with the other, and dust built and broken, in evidence of time. Embodying the resilience and fragility of life, as it all exists, simultaneously. The quiet process of transformation—how we adapt, heal, and regenerate.

Which objects touch your skin, in this moment?

What words have entered your brain, or have they slipped out onto a surface nearby?

Have you already forgotten them?

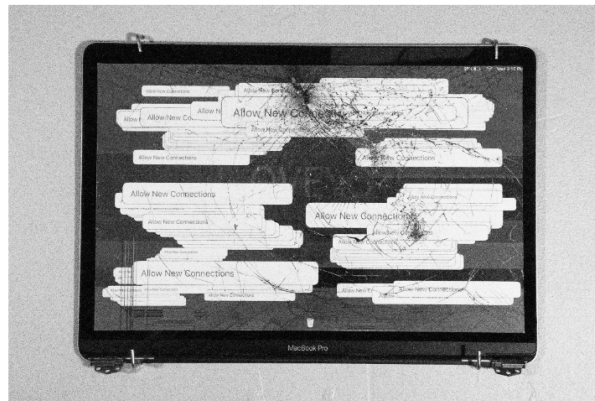
This multi-media exhibition invites viewers to witness the gentle forces of renewal that shape us and to find meaning in the delicate, intricate layers that form through Anthesis.



chapter four: the lingering scent
of Jasmine

2025

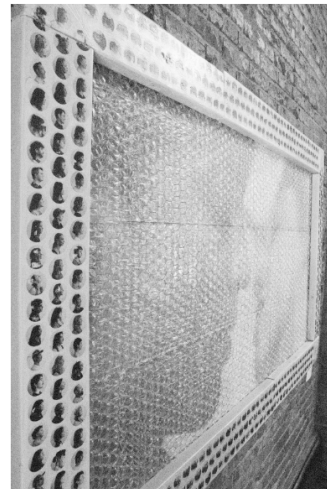
pink dress in resin on plumbing
pipe, mod podge, resin, writing
on glass box, dirt, silver coins,
jasmine flowers & essential oil.



chapter five: can my heart open
in this city again?

2025

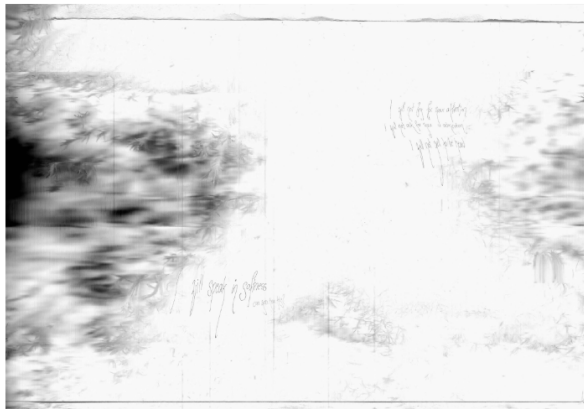
digital collage on MacBook Pro
screen.



chapter six: "I feel like I've seen you before"

2025

community portraits on wooden baseboards of demolished home, bubble wrap, chicken
wire, plywood, and digital photographs.



chapter one:
the loudness
of a gentle
whisper

2025

scanned wet
moss, writing
on transparent
paper.



chapter two:
the wider I open
my eyes, the more
tears come out

2024

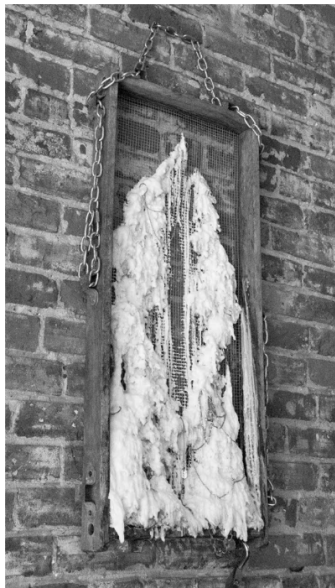
typed rose petals,
onto used napkin.



chapter three: a petal for each who loved and lost her: an ode to
Grace

2025

typed rose petals held in soldered metal, silver chain, typed
words on sheer curtain, used rod, found stained window.



chapter
seven:
slipping off
silver, as I
look into her
eyes

2025

melted
paraffin wax,
silver
jewellery,
resin,
hardware
cloth in found
wooden
structure,
held by
industrial
chains.



chapter eight: anthesis

2025

soldered flower petals.



prologue & epilogue: here

2025

soldered broken mirror, chain.

Juliana Sech (she/they) is a queer interdisciplinary artist, where a work's concept informs the medium chosen. Photography is used to document life and humans as-is, performance is met with a video camera, and conceptual installations, tied with loving fingertips, are composed of reclaimed and abandoned objects. Through visual studies, Juliana explores human relations, emotion, and intimacy, experimenting at the intersection of material, language, documentation, and concept.

Daughter of immigrant parents from Ukraine and Poland, Juliana was born and raised in "Canada". She is currently based—with deep respect and recognition—on the unceded lands of Lekwungen peoples: those of the Songhees, Esquimalt, and W̱SÁNEĆ nations, also known as Victoria, BC. They earned a BFA (Honours) in Visual Art from the University of Victoria in 2023, with a minor in Psychology, which continuously shapes and influences their work.

For any inquiries on these pieces, opportunities, or to follow Juliana's artistic path, you can find them via:
sech.juliana1@gmail.com
@julianasech_

A Day of Local Sound in Victoria as Experienced by Annalysse Shefski

By Annalysse Shefski

November, 2025

I bumped into my friend Leo in the loft during a show at Cinderbloc on November 6th. He was looking for a spot to leave his handheld tape recorder before the next set started. One thing about Leo is his authenticity and love for the analogue, which shines through everything from his stapled together boots to the calm rhythm of his storytelling.

After the show, Leo handed me a glossy, double sided poster artfully collaged with drawings and images. Words in sharpie loosely strung together information for the launch of his project called Greenwood—at a house show in his basement, and a concert back at Cinderbloc the following day. I could never pass up a chance to listen to live music in such an organic way, especially if the event was organized with Leo's brand of care and thoughtfulness, so I promised my presence.

On the morning of the show, I accidentally arrived an hour early. I saw Leo and his parents unloading drums and amps from their vintage van in the bright overhead sun. I walked down to the water to kill time and strolled along the sea wall single file with families and seniors and a curious amount of Scottish Terriers. It was the first cold day with clear skies, which tends to make breathing a little easier.

I opened the door to Cinderbloc an hour later. An immediate wave of warm synths and ambient waves radiated down the stairwell as I ascended to the studio. At the top of the narrow stairs,

Cinderbloc revealed itself as a small cathedral of local love and sound. A shower of winter sunlight draped down on a casual stage cluttered with instruments, cords, amps, and suspiciously healthy looking tropical plants.

Situated at a small table in the middle of this garden of noise was the first performance of the day led by Mt. Logan, an experimental ambient free improv duo and hosts of the CFUV broadcast called "True Peaks".

Mt. Logan playfully tossed dissonant wavelengths and pulses of sound from their open laptops and fingerboard, which moved across a small audience in folding chairs. In one of these chairs sat Leo, wearing an oversized pair of sunglasses and cradling a mug of steaming coffee.

“[Greenwood] is a composition of written live music experiences based off of the recollections of a romantic in Love with Harmony, Light, and Sound.” Leo tells me later on. His endeavor is abstract in nature; the experience of live music shared with other people is so holistic that it doesn’t seem to fit inside labels like “event organization” or “promotion”.

Instead, Leo has created something far more tangible in the spirit of sharing; a physical space to create and listen to music, and a grassroots, zine-style self publication featuring his writing based on these experiences. After Mt. Logan’s set, he goes behind the bar to brew me a fresh french press.

The tickets for Greenwood’s first show were sliding scale, and available on Gigpit. If you are reading this, it is safe to assume you’re already aware of the website, but if not you’re in luck; a few days prior to the concert, I spoke to Josh Taylor—the cofounder and lead software developer at Gigpit. He started the website as a hobby project about 2 years ago, and officially launched the site alongside 4 other cofounders in June of this year.

“I even quit my job to try to do this full time after the initial response... It’s pretty exciting.” Says Josh.

The locally developed website is based on a thesis by Josh’s cofounder Aidan Polgase, who found that despite the selection of websites which do event promotion and ticketing, the two services have never been done together successfully without steep fees and a bombardment of advertising for users.

“If we can use the whole event promotion to help bring users to the ticket, where the money actually comes from, then we don’t need to populate our site with a tonne of ads. That’s pretty much the whole idea.”

Inspired by underground music venues in Vancouver like Green Auto and Take Your Time Back, Josh and his team made their ticketing fees “pay what you can” for their service. This financially accessible sales model is not only good for the consumer, but it recycles whatever profits are made back into the local music scene. “Rather than that money going to Silicon Valley, it goes to people in town who can re-invest it in the music in town.” Josh says.

Back at Cinderbloc, the afternoon light fades as the sun sinks behind the buildings across the street. The next performance has started; the third ever appearance of a new Vancouver based DIY trio named Human API.

The band consists of three humans and an electronic modular synth drumset lovingly nicknamed '3-CPO' by member Chris Bede. Alongside his brother Nicholas who plays bass guitar, and their friend Ivan who plays keyboard, Human API craft a full body sonic experience live in front of their audience, then break the fourth wall by inviting the audience to step in. After the show, I managed to chat with Chris while they loaded their precious 3-CPO back in their spaceship- I mean van.

"The sound I hope to output is... dynamic, maximal, beautiful. I don't know. But also like abrasive... beautifully abrasive. I really like distortion, so I want everything to be distorted, but I want a visceral feeling when I'm playing the instrument. It's kind of like it's never enough, but that's kind of good to me because I'm trying to push it further. It sounds a little pretentious maybe." Says Chris.

The set up is similar to another project led by Chris in Vancouver named Ears, but featuring different members.

"Jamming is probably my favourite thing to do in my life right now... The system that I'm playing was designed to be the ultimate jam tool... it just feels like the inspiration is pulled out

of you sometimes. When someone goes into and starts jamming on the rig, it's kind of like they fit in already. The idea is for someone to jump in and just be instantly inspired by what's going on and make something new together and have a stronger connection than just 'you are watching me play'. With Human API, I think we'll settle into something that's uniquely our own, but I really like involving our audience."

As an artist coming from the DIY scene in Vancouver, Chris is well aware of the hoops some people need to jump through in order to discover local underground music and participate in it.

"It used to be that live music was the only way you could listen to music. But now there's so

many ways to listen to music... It's really hard to be a promoter and get the word out, because there's so many people that would love to go but don't know [it's] happening... [The Instagram account] This Week in Van is a good way to find that."

Chris also understands the hesitancy in leaving the gates wide open.

"I don't want to gatekeep anything, but also it kind of sucks if you're playing a show and the energy of the crowd is like, hook up culture or something... That's a whole subject of making shows safer because traditionally in the past, rock stars are like, you know, sex gods or whatever. Thank god that's dying. From what I've seen in the DIY scene, it's a lot less about that, which is sweet. It's more about people watching music and sweating, you know... something that we never knew we could create all together."

Following Human API is the final performance of the day from The Magic Triangle, another Vancouver based group whose sound exists somewhere between psychedelic brass circus tunes and funky latin groove. Before their set, the folding chairs were carefully parted to make way for a professional dancer who accompanies their songs.

"I think it went perfectly." Leo reflected on the show the following week. I was surprised to learn that I was the only attendee to actually purchase a ticket from Gigpit.

"Besides monetarily, I thought everything was performed as well as it had to be or could've been. I'm grateful and praise all the contributors for making that weekend possible; and I'm excited to regroup and enter this realm on steadier grounds. Y para los preceptores, te quiero sinceramente, tuo bellissimo riflesso."

**KENNETH J. BISHOP &
VICTORIA'S B-MOVIES OF THE 1930s
by John Ledingham**

HOLLYWOOD NORTH-WEST

*Vancouver and Victoria, those otherwise
sedate cities of British Columbia, are in the
throes of excitement as wild as that which
attended the California gold rush of '49. The
movies are comin'! The movies are comin'!*

— *The Hollywood Vagabond,*
June 23, 1927

In spite of the hype, Victoria did not join Vancouver in becoming a hub for filmmaking. Actually Vancouver didn't really become one either until the 1970s and the so-called tax shelter era of Canadian cinema, during which 100% of production investment could be tax deductible. But what *do* they shoot in our city? They being the large moneyed machines, not the indie DIYS, the odd *Meat Market* (2000) or *Church of the Flying Saucer* (2024). I worked briefly on a low budget streaming horror in 2023 called *Mannequin*. Then there was *Monkey Up* (2016), a family comedy whose lead monkey wears human clothes, skateboards, and rides in an RC car, following suit of the early 2000s primates-sports films like *MVP*, *MVP 2*, and *MXP* produced by the likes of Mirimax and shot around Vancouver, Squamish, and Whistler. There's the Mel Gibson movie *Bird on a Wire* (1990) that makes nice use of Fan Tan Alley for a bike chase (with surprisingly good spatial continuity.) And if you go way back to New Hollywood you get a couple movies like *Five Easy Pieces* (1970) which sees Jack Nicholson hitch-hiking up from California along island highway to his family's country house in Saanich, and concludes with him heading back down the highway to California (North, up

Island Highway, outside the Red Rooster diner by Chemainus, still open to this day.) A lesser known James Colburn caper *Harry in Your Pocket* has an episode of Colburn's gang taking the ferry from Seattle to Victoria for a day trip of picking pockets around the streets of Victoria, outside Irish Times and the Empress hotel. Probably the best time capsule of our city's history I've seen in a film.

There are others. *Final Destination* (2000), *Cats and Dogs* (2001), *White Chicks* (2004) and *Scary Movie* (2002). But those are all still one offs. And Hallmark doesn't count, cause Hallmark's tendrils reach anywhere, everywhere. An essentially nomadic machine.

Where is *the Victoria movie machine*? Come and gone— at least one of them, in the form of Willows Park Studio which produced b-movies out of Oak Bay in the 1930s.

It turns out CanCon's nothing new. The British *Cinematograph Films Act* of 1927 called for 7-20% of all movies shown in Canadian theaters to be either British or Canadian product. This lasted till 1938 for Canada. In the interim, practically mandated the purchase of any old schmuck who had a movie to sell.

Production doubled in over the next decade, from ~800 British (or Canadian) movies in the 1920s to ~1600 in the 30s, despite the increased trouble and cost the introduction of sound in 1927¹ had brought things. Course London had its share of good directors in these days already. Hitchcock was already 8 films into his career at Gainsborough Studios by the time the *Cinematograph Act* went into effect. London also got its share of opportunists now cranking out so-called "quota quickies."

And here's Victoria. Not a studio in sight. A movie made here could practically guarantee British quota sales and still be close

¹ Thanks to Al Jolson's minstrel hit *The Jazz Singer*. Within a couple years the silent film would be dead as a commercially viable form. Even Chaplin adapted.

enough to do good, cheap business selling disposable b-movies to theaters in Hollywood. And there are perks to being the only game in town.

CHEAPSKATE MOGUL

So here comes Kenneth J. Bishop (1893 - 1941) from Sutton, England to set up his Willows Park Studio on a patch of Oak Bay previously reserved for fairgrounds, now the site of L'ecole Willows Elementary. Not much is known about Bishop's life, but he's sometimes described as a failed actor, and a bit of a con. Maybe a bit in over his head opening a studio. Not that that stopped him.

Between 1933 and 1938 Bishop's Central Films Company managed to rattle off *14 commercial features*. These were quick and dirty b-movies. Regional imitations of American genre pictures, westerns, gangster movies, and melodramas. Featuring RCMP as pulp heroes, intrigue on the US-Canada border, lands of violence and opportunity in the greater Saanich wild. Not to mention, plenty of snatches of downtown, showing almost 100 years later certain corners of Victoria look the same as they ever did.

Bishop hired American directors and stars, and filled out his quotas with local actors and crew. A young Rita Hayworth played in Bishop's films between 1936 and 1938 before her big break with *Only Angels Have Wings* in 39. Directors like the Ontario-born Del Lord, director of many of The Three Stooge's most well-known shorts, and Fred C. Newmeyer, director of Harold Lloyd comedies including the great *Safety Last* (1923) were part of a rotating stock of hire-ons. Only Leon Barsha served as a consistent director for Bishop, whose credits outside of Willows Park Studio number just a few low budget American westerns. Bishop struck up a distribution partnership with Columbia, who took him under their wing in

advising Hollywood standards of production. He didn't always make the quota, as in his first two films, and the record suggests his movies were not real well received upon release. But the rate of production, and the fact of its keeping up till Canada's eventual exclusion from the Cinematograph Act in 1927 suggests Bishop's studio was making a profit. But when the quota quickies dried up, Bishop dropped right off the map. Maybe he packed up and retired, maybe he was ducking out from debt collectors. The studio carried on without him, cranking out a few more movies till it closed its doors in 1942, after one final picture, *Commandos Strike at Dawn*, a timely WW2 movie.

Kenneth J. Bishop did not leave us a stash of forgotten classics. But he did leave a body of work unique to Canadian cinema, colorized and played on TV in the 1970s and 80s, and celebrated in 1984 at Toronto's Festival of Festivals (now TIFF) with a retrospective screening of *Lucky Corrigan* (1936). Several of his movies might be lost to time. Even finding basic info on most of these movie was difficult, given the jumbled and conflicting sources online, but two of his films have had DVD releases at some point in the past, and I did find 5 of Bishop's 14 movies on YouTube², most of them probably transfers of video taped off of TV broadcast. I watched the 5 I could find, and though I wouldn't recommend them to anyone the way I recommend a movie like *2001: A Space Odyssey* or even *Things*, for a Victoria local with a curiosity for these kind of film artifacts, they're not *not* worth a looking.

² *Convicted* (1938) appears to be on YT, but this is a mislabeled upload of a 1931 film also called *Convicted*. I watched the whole damn thing before finding out.

SECRETS OF CHINATOWN (1935)

Set in Vancouver's Chinatown but shot in Victoria's (all except the first shot of the film, a pan across the Kwong Yee Lung Co building at 100 East Pender in Vancouver) this movie is both a kind of funny-bad occult caper, and a totally tasteless barrage of racist stereotypes, racial paranoia, asian actors playing satanists and white actors playing "good" Chinese in yellowface.

It adapts a 1927 pulp novel by British writer Guy Morton, which explains the plot that feels like an unedited first draft. Let me condense: opium smuggling, mind-controlling, demon worshipping Chinese villains murder a good doctor Sen, setting private detective Donegal (Raymond Lawrence) onto their trail, infiltrating their ceremonies in yellowface, and working with about 4 or 5 interchangeable supporting white characters to get to the bottom of this and repeatedly rescue the repeatedly kidnapped blonde woman Zenobia (Lucille Brown.)

The dialogue's almost inaudible (though that could be the version) with some really bad dubbing (not the version), the camera's flat and planted in every shot, the cuts are clunky, the sets look like paper mache, and nobody seems to be taking their parts all that seriously. The movie's rough. Really rough. And like I mentioned, this from the director of the great silent comedian Harold Lloyd's *Safety Last*. (You know, the famous shot of the guy hanging from the clock tower?) The sound era was not kind to Fred Newmeyer to land him this gig. He must have been directing with his eyes closed.

But hey, are we here for *Goodfellas*, or are we here to see something like the CAPITAL IRON building at 1900 STORE STREET? As seen from CATHAM and GOVERNMENT? 1826 Government, now housing an architecture

company is mostly unchanged too. This is cool, people. I don't know if you realize how cool.



Let it be on the record: I picked out the shape of that Capital Iron building out all by myself. Yessir. I also picked out Fan Tan Alley, (here referred to as Pender Alley, I guess playing off Vancouver's Chinatown, but does that actually refer to any historic landmark alley?) where one of our crew of white guy heroes is knocked out and Chinese-mind controlled into becoming a *Manchurian Candidate* style reprogrammed killer.

For the final act, our Donegal pulls out a map of Vancouver Island and points to the badguys' opium lair in "False Ears", what he calls the dual inlets spanning Chamiss Bay and Fair Harbor, — probably in what's now known as Snawsaddle Mountain, in Strathcona Park. I'm a little confused by the logistics of this operation, but it's going to take a bigger brain than me to parse them. This climactic raid on the back country island cavern base plays exactly like the earlier Vancouver downtown basement base raid, almost directly repeating the scene, and offers no excitement or sense of adventure whatsoever.

As the police surround the master of evil ceremonies he is revealed to be Donegal's once-friend Chan Town Ling, (Harry Hewitson) the one asian actor to be credited and to play a

positive character who goes now goes from friendly sidekick to villain, but also immediately congratulates and even thanks the police for their service, then kills himself with poison before they are able to arrest him. The rest of the cultists chase our heroes out of the cave onto presumably Willows Beach, where police cruisers have come some 400 kilometers up from “Foul Bay Grocer” to Snowsaddle, where they must have heard the sound of gunshots HQ back in Victoria.

LUCKY CORRIGAN (1936)

This is really the outlier in the batch. From Lewis Collins, director of nothing but American low budget westerns is this genuine Canadian lumberjack adventure. Set and shot on cut blocks around Lake Cowichan, the movie follows travelling worker Bruce Corrigan (William Gargan) from the job board to a rough and tumble camp with a reputation for danger up island. Corrigan hops a train on the old island corridor line (only shut down 15 years, maybe not so novel to you but seems like a real relic to me) to a corny logging camp set, where he meets a folksy cast of bit characters over the big communal logger’s breakfast then gets to work on the block.

Here we get the heart of the movie, basically a whole lot of docufiction showing real Lake Cowichan crews scaling old growth in spurs, limbing trees, felling trees with hand axes, two man saws, and explosives. Bucking trees, machine piling and loading trees, and shipping them off to the mills. Whatever you think of our forestry industry, this stuff is awe-inspiring to see, and a real novelty to have shot like this, and integrated as well as it is into a fictional narrative. It doesn’t feel jarring. You don’t feel the cut. There’s even a climactic scene of fighting a seemingly real brush fire, once again with hand tools, pulaski axes, the way they still

do it today³, clearing combustible fuel and digging guard.

The plot finally goes from Steinbeck-y travelogue to a kind of logger’s *Fistful of Dollars*, (where I wish it went more *Moby-Dick*, or even *Golden Spruce*) with crews feuding for acreage, one sabotaging the other’s operations and hurting their profits. Corrigan comes to the defense of his boss (David Clyde) in this time, and also falls in love with the boss’ daughter, (Molly Lamont) whose meet cute involves her firing a hunting rifle from him and skips from there to salmon-fishing, then marriage, which coincides with the punch-out defeat of the rival crew for a happy ending. It’s a bit simple, sure, but that doesn’t bother me so much as taking a working class story like this, so clearly in love with the world of logging, but not being able to bring it to any kind of collective victory, or ending that affirms the value of Corrigan’s way of life for its own sake, not just something to escape by marrying into ownership of the operations. Maybe these were not the kind of endings a producer of safe, commercial b-movies wanted to give people, but for the accidental art *Lucky Corrigan* ends up being, a better ending might have gone a long way.

If you want to watch one Kenneth J. Bishop movie, this is the one I’m recommending. It’s still a not-great b-movie, but there’s something special about it. A place and time like I’d doubt any other movie’s captured. And all you EI humping tree planters out there, you’ll love this. And all the true blue WFP loggers reading *Destroyed Cinema*— you guys even more so.

³ What they definitely don’t still do today is set forest fires for the sake of a movie. But if that’s up your alley— there’s a great Soviet movie called *Letter Never Sent* about some geologists in Siberia who get entrapped by a fire. Incredible stuff. Mikhail Kalatozov.

AND THE OTHERS...

I watched 4 other Ken Bishop movies to more or less diminishing returns. I won't go over them all in as much detail. *Stampede* (1936) stands out for being a western, but the three crime dramas sort of blur together, with *Special Inspector* (1938) being the most fun. As a general trend, I saw Bishop's movies get more and more polished the further they got from *Secrets of Chinatown*. Less and less identifiable location shooting though.

They all followed more closely stock crime plots, even the western *Stampede*, starring Poverty Row veteran Charles Starrett, (of over 140 movies, mostly low budget westerns) whose feuding good guy-bad guy ranchers, land developer gang of cattle rustlers, and lovely rancher's daughter feels as much like genre madlibs as a shoot em up variation on *Lucky Corrigan*'s script. *Stampede* at least *looks* a little different from its American counterparts, making some nice use of Vancouver Island's exteriors, rolling mountains, craggy forests, and rural fields to play the wild state of Montana. But still feels so much like going through the motions in its wooden action, the movie drags at just 56 minutes.

A couple times I got the feeling they were shooting in Mt. Doug park, in the trails on the beach park side, but despite my digging, I couldn't find any info on where the thing was actually shot. Just newspaper articles reporting the stars seen in hotel lobbies, and one narrowing the shoot down to "Southern Vancouver Island."

Murder is News (1939) is a pretty weak murder mystery off an admittedly pretty amusing setup: A newsman (John Gallaudet, talking fast-forward like a wiseass in a screwball comedy) anonymously tipped off to a finance man's murder discovers the man's body in his apartment and calls the cops to report it, right before being knocked out— and waking up to

the police, the body gone, and himself trespassing. What a pickle.

But I got two problems with this movie: 1) is the plot just spins its wheels. You get like 10 minutes of setup, 40 minutes of an investigation that goes nowhere, and 5 minutes of sudden reveals. And 2) is it's *too damn dark!* This might be the transfer, but I kind of don't think so. It feels like they were going for *German expressionism* but ended up with two bozos conversing in an unlighted room. Just a little strip of slightly lighter black through the middle of frame. Shot after shot like this. Totally ugly, totally hard to see.

Anyway the great ending is this one guy explains he was the murdered man's business partner and hid his body to close a stock market deal without the death of his partner influencing prices. The movie presents and takes this as a perfectly reasonable non-criminal explanation for things. The *real* villain then reveals *himself* to be a rival businessman, who committed the real murder *in order* to mess with stock prices and do something like murder-fueled insider trading.

One highlight is a scene of cop cars racing one way down what looks like Wharf Street, then later cut back to racing the other way back along the same street — seemingly trying to stretch the one setup into two different cutaways but with no respect for left to right continuity, so it looks like a *Scooby-Doo* gag where the cops are turning tail.

What Price Vengeance? (1937) started with a pretty cool prison break but lost me shortly after. This one was directed by The Three Stooges' regular Del Lord, and shows a bit more dexterity and inventiveness than the other movies. Not everything's one same flat setup. You get objects in the foreground, objects in the background, dolly shots for dramatic effect. It's really something. This is sometimes listed as shot in Hamilton, ON, which I can only

imagine is where they might have shot the opening prison break.

Even so the story of a shamed cop going undercover as a crook to exact his revenge didn't live up to the hard-edge of the premise, really lost me with the introduction of an annoying kid character, a lot of putzing around, and a sudden, undramatic finale.

To go out on a better note, *Special Inspector* follows a crime plot of furs being stolen from a Canadian company and smuggled across the border for contraband sale.

A US-Canadian border that seems to be in a major city and so would be Vancouver but is never named. The first inspector put on the job is killed (accidentally? by carbon monoxide inhalation while hiding in the back of a transport truck?? did I get that right???), and his sister, played by Rita Hayworth, takes up the task of doing some investigating herself. She gets caught up with the second guy on the job, (Charles Quigley, an American, playing an American, flattering the Columbia pictures audience no doubt) and together they set out to save the Canadian fur industry and American border security. The crime's finally solved when it turns out a company boss was doing the smuggling all along. Really not very interesting stuff, almost laughably underplayed, but also kinda nice in that? I watched it early Saturday morning with a couple coffees and some pancakes in bed. And I had a good time with it. If there's a way to best enjoy these today, that's probably it, like a Saturday morning cartoon.

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Accidental double exposures shot in and around Victoria

by Alex Skorochid

"Maybe they have something to say about the multiple realities of the city, or maybe they just look kind of cool, I dunno."

