

# Movie Monday

## Bruce Saunders puts his dream to the Hollywood test

By David Lennam  
News editor

The magic of movies has helped get Bruce Saunders back on his feet.

The 46-year-old gardener, family man and manic depressive has screened nearly 200 films and put his Movie Monday on the cinemaphiles map since he began the project in 1993.

And for those unaware, Movie Monday presents free showings of a variety of motion pictures in Eric Martin Pavilion's 100-seat theatre every Monday night at 6:30.

The movie idea began as an inspiration from the inside.

Three-and-a-half years ago Saunders was in hospital. A major depressive episode, as he refers to it, sent him to the Eric Martin

psychiatric hospital for recuperation.

**B**ut Saunders, an Oak Bay resident, found EMP to house a less-than-therapeutic atmosphere. A large open space, where patients are meant to spend time healing and visiting with family and friends, was bookcased by two television sets at either end. They were set on different

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channels and the conflicting volumes resulted in an annoying cacophony.

"It's kind of a nasty place to be," he said, then helped change it.

Saunders, who is married with two teenaged sons, has been a low-level sufferer of manic depression all his life. His sister, also afflicted, committed suicide 23 years ago.

"I always felt somewhat depressed," offered Saunders, explaining that his melancholic became manic depressive with 'hypo-manic' episodes, meaning he'd get tons of energy and was constantly busy doing something.

While hospitalized, Saunders' illness manifested itself into a positive, fast-paced lifestyle.

"I went around making birthday cakes for other patients and talking really fast, swimming 40 lengths of the pool and getting back for breakfast and not sleeping and planning great things."

And his depression precipitated two suicide attempts.

The discovery that EMP's theatre, with its steeply raked rows of nicely upholstered seats, wasn't being used as a cinema, inspired Saunders, channeling his energies toward a creative, therapeutic goal. He began screening films there using EMP's low-tech video projection unit salvaged from Expo '86.

On June 14, 1993, *Cannery Row* was the first movie



David Lennam photo

### Saunders' flix pix

Bruce Saunders provides this list of his top ten movies (qualifying that the choices represent "some" of his favorites).

1. *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*
2. *Cannery Row*
3. *The Communitents*
4. *Moscow on the Hudson*
5. *Dead Man Walking*
6. *Strictly Ballroom*
7. *Exotica*
8. *Dr. Strangelove*
9. *Peter's Friends*
10. *Rain Man*

The most popular Movie Monday movies thus far? *Sense and Sensibility*, *Secret of Roan Inish*, *Ghandi*, *Star Wars*, *Awakenings* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

shown on the big screen, though the image was a mere 6x8' compared to today's 8x12'.

"It was fluttering and flickering and I decided if I was going to get the program going I'd have to get a reliable machine."

For that he needed to raise about \$7,000 and did with help from private donors, the Hospital Auxiliary and Sony. The money also helped Saunders re-wire the theatre for stereo sound.

Early crowds consisted solely of EMP patients and ex-patients, but by the fall the public started to show up.

Attendance last year averaged 72 per show with plenty of sell-outs.

For movie buffs the attraction isn't only the free admission, it's the opportunity to see films other theatres don't show.

Saunders' eclectic vision means plenty of

art house and small studio stuff like Atom Egoyan's *Calendar*, *Thirty Two Short Films About Glen Gould* as well as classics like *Casablanca*, mixed with the *Apollo 13s* and *Ghandis*.

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Another quirk which sets Movie Monday apart is, as Saunders puts it, "a fair salting of films about mental illness," such as *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Mr. Jones* and *Dead Man Walking*.

Several Movie Monday nights feature facilitated discussions following the film, giving insight and reflection upon what has just been watched.

The series, says Saunders, provides entertainment for many people shut out of the regular movie crowd. Movie Monday regulars include plenty of low income fans, mental patients and ex-patients, plus movie buffs keen to see films they cannot see elsewhere.

For the founder it represents therapy through dedication. "People think if you have a mental illness you're unreliable. I show up on time 200 times. I think just because I keep showing up means I'm changing people's attitudes about that."

And yes, there are popcorn, pop and snacks for sale, just like they are at the 'real' movies. Call 595-FLIC for information and show times.

## Water board may raise Sooke dam after all

By Tracy Smythe  
News staff reporter

Councillor Nils Jensen, Oak Bay's water board rep, said there doesn't appear to be any evidence that the Greater Victoria Water Board couldn't proceed with preparation work on raising the Sooke dam.

Jensen said, "Certain decisions taken by this board were valid, binding decisions."

The board, he added, has a legal obligation to follow through and it would be irresponsible not to.

Yet, the board will ask Finance Minister Andrew Petter for clarification of his request that the board, "defer all new activity relating to the Sooke Lake reservoir dam", until the newly structured board is in place.

The key words are "new activity", for the water board says it began preparation work in November 1995, prior to the provincial government decision to restructure the water board.

Petter said that although the provincial government does not want to make a deci-

sion on the Sooke dam, he also does not want to see the board follow through on anything that could prejudice the decisions of the newly structured board.

The issue came before Oak Bay council in the form of a letter from Esquimalt council asking for support from Oak Bay and municipalities of Greater Victoria, for their resolution recognizing the need to raise the dam.

Council decided to wait for a report back from Jensen before making a decision to Esquimalt's request.