

Bruce Saunders and Movie Monday: Bringing Community to my Neighbourhood

October 11, 2012 by [Ben Ziegler](#) · [Leave a Comment](#)

Watching a movie can be so much more. I'm a huge fan of Bruce Saunders weekly [Movie Monday](#) showing at the Eric Martin Pavilion Theatre, here in Victoria. I'm a fan not just because of the movies shown at Eric Martin, though they tend to rock. It's a community event, where neighbours and nearby citizens connect for conversation, with film as the catalyst.

The films may be hot off the press, or they may have been circulating for a while. No matter. They are handpicked by Bruce, and all connect in some way or another, with the place in which they are being presented. The Eric Martin was for over half a century home to Victoria's psychiatric hospital. Only recently have patients moved to a new facility.

Movie Monday movies get you thinking about our differences. And, they provide a theme for the evening.

Here's an example. One week in September just gone by, Bruce showed [Rain Man](#), the 1980's flick, about autism, starring Tom Cruise and Dustin Hoffman. It was a groundbreaker, for autism, in its day.

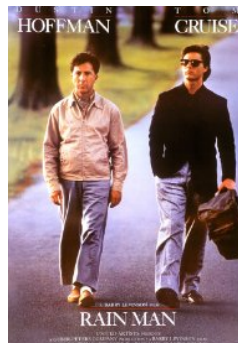
The movie was only part of the evening. The evening flowed like this, for me...

I arrived at 6:25 pm. The movie was scheduled to start at 6:30. Even before entering the building, I noticed a rare [1949 Buick Roadmaster](#) parked out front. Only 8,000 of these cars came off the Flint, Michigan production line. This car, or at least its sister car, was the car driven by Tom Cruise, as he and Dustin Hoffman, traveled the country, in Rain Man. The car was driven to the theatre by Michael May, a past owner of the car. A wonderful touch, accompaniment, for the evening.

Once inside the building, I was greeted by some Movie Monday volunteers, doling out popcorn, for less than a \$1. I entered the theatre. No charge, thanks to generous sponsors. It's a small theatre, seating about 100 or so people. It was about 2/3 full this evening.

Bruce warmed us up. He laid out a bit about the movie, some things to watch for, and introduced guests who would be leading a conversation, afterwards.

Those autistic guests included: a visiting University of Victoria professor and two activists / leaders in the local Aspergers'



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community.

Fast forward to the post-movie session. Most of the audience stuck around, to listen and interact with Bruce and guests. The conversations were honest, personal, and relevant. The speakers knew autism very well, given their own experiences living with it. Each brought their own perspectives. It was a 2-way exchange. The audience contributed. Post-movie conversation is typical of Movie Monday. In fact, every time I've attended, there has always been a post-movie debriefing of the film, leading into a broader community conversation. Sometimes the guests are there in-person. Other times they are brought in via the phone.

Upon leaving the theatre complex, there were further interchanges, and appreciations.

I walked home, 2 blocks away! If I wanted to watch the movie again, I could walk 3 blocks to an independent video rental store, that Bruce has a connection with, and pick up a copy of the film, or any other previous Movie Monday showing and there are a lot!

Bruce has been running Movie Monday for 20 years. I previously wrote about Bruce, his own journey, and Movie Monday, [here](#).

What he does is pure community building, in creative collaboration and partnership, with like-minded folks and supporters. Bruce is bringing community to my neighbourhood. His initiative is a stimulant... to ideas, possibilities and community building, in other situations and contexts.

Bruce is a true [community connector](#). Needless to say, I/we are better off for it!

Whose bringing community to your neighbourhood?



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