This week at CCA (January 12-18), we are opening one of the big hits of the film festival circuit, *American Fiction*, a comedy drama about image representation in the media that so delighted the audiences at the Toronto Film Festival that it won the coveted People’s Choice Award!

Then, CCA is taking you on a trip into Canada with two films that show the strength and diversity of that country’s cinematic wealth.

First, we are screening a 4K restoration of Guy Maddin’s 1990 masterpiece, *Archangel*. Literally a film like no other, this weird, wild, and extraordinary photoplay is both melodrama and deadpan parody that tells a WWI tale of obsessive love from one of Canada’s (and the world’s) most original filmmakers.

And second, we’re showing *Before the Sun*, a beautiful and very moving documentary that profiles Logan Red Crow, a young Siksika woman who is preparing to compete in the male-dominated Indian Relay horse race. If you like horses, this film is for you!

What happens when a literary “joke” backfires?

Cord Jefferson’s *American Fiction* is a cagey, cerebral dramedy about a joke that backfires on its author—a stone-faced literature professor named Thelonious Ellison (Jeffrey Wright) who becomes a pseudonymous success by writing a potboiler he loathes—as a
joke. Tweedy, stubborn, and aloof, Ellison, who goes by Monk, specializes in academic reworkings of Ancient Greek plays, *i.e.* books that no one reads.

Monk is enraged by the success of a rival African-American novelist’s bestselling book that becomes an *instant* literary sensation, its street bona fides guaranteed by the liberal use of Black slang and the catchy title *We’s Lives in Da Ghetto*. The White publishing world is agog, tossing out terms like “urgent,” “raw,” and “painfully real,” even though the author graduated from Oberlin and left a job at a tony New York book company to try her hand at penning a bestseller.

Monk decides to try his own hand at writing what the market demands: a novel playing on the most hoary stereotypes of modern Black life – from crime and crack to rappers and meeting one’s inevitable end in police violence. He assumes the alias Stagg R. Leigh and (as a joke) writes *My Pafology*, a barbed meta-critique of the pandering narratives that pass for “authentic” African American literature. But his satire backfires, and *My Pafology* becomes the Next Big Thing after *We’s Lives in Da Ghetto*.

Of course, complications arise as Monk (as Stagg) becomes a publishing sensation and an embarrassment to its author. As adroitly as Cord Jefferson directs *American Fiction*, he might deserve the most credit for giving Jeffrey Wright — an actor who’s virtually always the best thing in every movie he’s in — the starring role he’s so long deserved. Even as a self-defeating curmudgeon, Wright exudes a virtually irresistible appeal. Watching him code-switch between Monk and Stagg is like a master class, not just in acting but in what it takes to navigate a culture that’s both outright hostile and earnestly uncomprehending.

Critic Adam Graham in the *Detroit News* wrote, “Jeffrey Wright, is magnetic in the lead role: commanding, flawed, vulnerable, relatable. *American Fiction* is his movie and will likely (and deservedly) land him his first Oscar nomination.”
A determined sportswoman, a strong horse, and a loving family

From the intricacies of race in America, CCA takes you to a real-life tale of determination, grit, and gifted horsemanship. The documentary, *Aitamaako’tamisskapi Natosi: Before the Sun*, is a thrilling portrait of a young Siksika woman and the deep bonds between her father and family in the golden plains of Blackfoot Territory as she prepares for one of the most dangerous horse races in the world...riding bareback.

A sport for the truly brave, Logan Red Crow is an Indian Relay rider who vaults from horse to horse in short, exhilarating races. She is a champion in the making. Besides her skill and sheer will, Logan has a loving family, an elite group of horses, and a home on her ancestral lands. Those are invaluable, but this rider will need more for victory.

With the dual pleasures of serenity and suspense, lyrical immersion in rural life alternates with thrilling race footage. As she pushes toward her goal, the connections between animal and human, family and community, ancestral tradition and contemporary life are profound and lasting.

Click Here to Buy Tickets

After directing several short films, all filmed in Bella Coola, Nuxalkulme, where she was born and raised, *Before the Sun* is the first feature documentary by Banchi Hanuse. She is the co-founder and station manager of Nuxalk Radio, whose mission is to keep the Nuxalk language alive, assert Nuxalk Nationhood, and promote the stewardship and protection of Nuxalk homelands.

This is Banchi Hanuse’s director’s statement about her film:

From the outside, it looks like it’s only one human individual preparing for a race – it’s so much more than that. The relationship between Siksika people and horses is one that has been cultivated for hundreds of years. The Indian Relay race stems from these relationships. Though this is Logan Red Crow’s story, the horses she races with are central figures. The horses have their own unique

This Native Canadian documentary opens at CCA Jan 12

Logan Red Crow shows how to build the strongest connections with her horses

Logan and director Banchi Hanuse in the stalls during filming
relationships with everyone in the film. The film allows human-viewers to be immersed in the horses’ close physical, spiritual, and emotional connections. The bonds between Logan as rider, the team who takes care of the horses, and Logan’s family have to be unbreakable for Logan to be a contender in such dangerous events. Logan Red Crow has a loving and dedicated family behind her including a profoundly deep connection with her father.

It is the intense journey – the celebrations, the heartbreaks and the teachings – leading up to the races that pulls the audience along intimately with Logan, and the horses, and everyone who has helped them prepare. In essence, the film *Aitamaako’tamisskapi Natosi: Before the Sun* is an Indigenous story about love and one we do not see often enough.

The documentary premiered at the Big Sky Documentary Film Festival in Montana last February where it won the Big Sky Award for films honoring "the character, history, tradition and imagination of the American West."

**Click Here to Buy Tickets**

First in our Auteurs film series – Guy Maddin!

And now from bareback Indian Relay Racing to obsessive love in the aftermath of the Great War.

Take One’s *Essential Guide to Canadian Film*, describes *Archangel* this way: "Maddin’s second feature is a masterpiece—a wistful, luminous conflation of absurdity, high romance, and heroic delusion. Buster Keaton would have approved. Buñuel too."

CCA’s presentation of *Archangel* is part of a new series called *Auteurs*. It was proposed to me by our cinema manager, Justin Rhody (one of the founders of Santa Fe’s famed No Name Cinema). Here is his idea behind the series:
These are works by filmmakers who are widely respected around the world and exhibit a distinctly unique vision, but whose works often exist on the margins of the industry. These films would not be shown by other theaters in town. They will be distinctly “art films”, so as a non-profit, CCA is uniquely poised to present this sort of work with a history of showcasing challenging, daring new voices in the field. No other venue in town has that history.

So, Guy Maddin’s *Archangel* will be the inaugural film in this series. CCA will do this only once a month and they will be limited to TWO SCREENINGS A DAY, in the Studio theater (one matinee and one evening.)

**Archangel**, Guy Maddin’s second feature, is a tale of obsessive love from one of Canada’s (and the world’s) most original filmmakers. Presented in a new 4K restoration, Guy Maddin’s wild and warped *Archangel* (1990) sits between *Tales from the Gimli Hospital* and *Careful* in the Maddin filmography, showcasing his recreations of faux early-cinema aesthetics and surrealist sensibility for which this Winnipeg arch-genius is renowned.

The film sets a delirium-dream tale of obsessive love in the remote Russian Arctic town of Archangel during the World War I. The war may actually be over, but no one’s remembered to tell one-legged Canadian soldier Boles (Kyle McCulloch); beautiful Veronkha (Kathy Marykuca), whom Boles confuses for Iris, his dead love; or any of the film’s other amnesiac characters, all lost in murky, melodramatic memories of lovers lost or misremembered.

“Stylized, convoluted, visionary … A deadpan whatzit of the highest order … Bizarrely romantic … Very delicate in its way—the wilted flowery dialogue and crazed-soap-operatics waft out like incense,” writes film critic J. Hoberman of *The Village Voice*.

“Even stranger [than] *Tales from the Gimli Hospital*….A fascinating festishist delirium, where memories of remote war movies get
recycled into something that’s alternately creepy and beautiful,” says film critic Jonathan Rosenbaum of Chicago Reader.

And remember, *Archangel*, will only have two screenings a day, so if you want to see it take note of its screening times – 1:30pm and 6:00pm daily January 12–18.

And my usual reminder...

Which brings me to my weekly reminder, if you want to see Frederick Wiseman’s *Menus-Plaisirs-Les Troisgros* or *Society of the Snow* you only have two days left – Wednesday, January 10 and Thursday, January 11. Here are the times to catch them:

- **Society of the Snow** at 11:30am, 2:45pm, 6:00pm on Wednesday, and 11:30am, 2:45pm on Thursday.
- **Menus-Plaisirs-Les Troisgros** at 11:00am and 4:15pm.

Join us for a Fifties family satire!

And don’t forget that on Thursday, January 11 at 6pm, we are screening the latest Closer Looks program – master Japanese director Yasujiro Ozu’s *Good Morning* presented by Justin Clifford Rhody. I wrote extensively about this in last week’s newsletter, but just a quick recap – it’s one of Ozu’s few comedies and the one where two boys go on strike and refuse to speak because their parents won’t buy them a TV. It’s a great joy of a film.

Come and enjoy it on the Big Screen in glorious color!!

All the best,

Paul Barnes,
General Manager, CCA Cinemas