

Nomad No More

Cincinnati World Cinema finds a home at the Cincinnati Art Museum

Interview By **Jane Durrell**

Cincinnati World Cinema, despite the all-embracing title, has had no fixed home for most of its five-year existence. Floating no more, CWC is now the resident film programmer at the Cincinnati Art Museum's recently renovated and well-equipped Fath Auditorium, where 35mm, 16mm and digital projection are available along with surround sound.

Executive Director Tim Swallow says CWC will offer occasional special programs elsewhere, but they're delighted that their presence at the museum will afford regular screenings in a regular location. This can only be a boon for moviegoers: CWC often presents films that otherwise might not make it to Cincinnati.

First up is Jean-Pierre Melville's ***Army of Shadows***, which screens at 7 p.m. Jan. 30-31. (Note: Use the DeWitt Entrance south side of museum for the Fath Auditorium. Parking is free and secure.) This 1969 film, a poignant examination of patriotism under the worst of circumstances, was released in the U.S. for the first time last year and is shown in a restored 35mm color print.

The museum's breadth of equipment is welcome, Swallow says. "We've previously had to pass on some terrific films simply because we did not have access to a venue with reliable 35mm."

Army of Shadows is frequently listed among the best films shown in this country in 2006. It focuses on ordinary people involved in an extraordinary task, the dangerous and difficult operations of the French Resistance during World War II. Director Melville co-wrote the script with Joseph Kessel, author of the book. Both were themselves members of the Resistance. Simone Signoret, the best-known cast member to Americans, stars along with Jean-Pierre Cassel, Claude Mann and Paul Crauchet.

You might want to get your tickets (\$8; \$6 for CAM members and students) early. CWC has a history of sell-out screenings.

"More than two-thirds of our films sell out," Swallow says. "But remember: We have far fewer screenings than commercial houses, and we're notoriously picky when it comes to selecting quality films."

CWC looks for films that "make people think, make them feel and make them want to make the world a better place," Swallow says.

CWC has shown more than 250 films since its inception, ranging from Midwest premieres of Afghanistan documentaries and a winner of the Venice Film Festival's Grand Masterpiece Award (*Christ in Concrete*) to a week-long film festival in 2004 showing "independent cinema, nine screening sessions, 43 films" and the annual Oscar-nominated short films.

CWC's loyalty to the Oscar shorts has paid off -- this year they'll show the 2007 nominees Feb. 20-22, *before* the Academy Award ceremonies, a considerable coup. Again the advantage of the museum comes up, as showings can be scheduled for three nights instead of only one. Many people had to be turned away from December's single night of the 2006 Oscar shorts.

Swallow was a movie fan early. A family connection gave him unusual access to the grand Cincinnati RKO theaters of his youth. He can summon up a *Cinema Paradiso* kind of recollection of the huge 35mm projectors and other equipment and is pleased to say, "One of my prized mementos is the original velvet theater curtain rescued from the Albee before its demolition."

Later, living in New York and Northern California and then in South America, Swallow experienced "a heavy diet of foreign language and independent films, stimulating an appetite difficult to satisfy in Cincinnati."

A systems integration consultant who took early semi-retirement, he found a natural ally in James Kesner, a research scientist who's equally drawn to the movies. The pair founded Cincinnati World Cinema in January 2002.

As it grew, Swallow took on the executive director's duties. But Kesner, who has a full-time job, continues to advise and help with film research and occasional facilitation of post-film discussions.

Swallow sees a regular schedule ahead, with at least one and frequently two screening events each month.

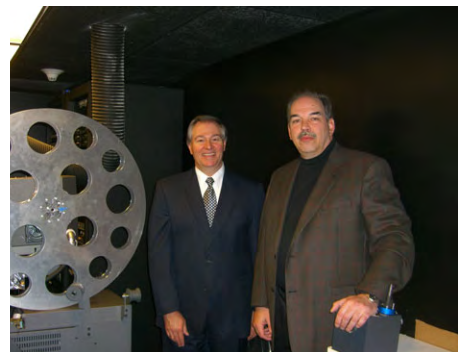


Photo By Joe Lamb

Cincy World Cinema's Tim Swallow (right) gets comfortable in his organization's new space with the Cincinnati Art Museum's Stephen Bonadies.

"There are so many worthy films out there that we will show on, say, the second and the fourth Tuesday and Wednesday of each month," he says. "In addition, we will offer occasional Saturday or Sunday matinees."

The matinee option will be in place for CWC's world premiere of Cincinnati Melissa Godoy's documentary ***Do Not Go Gently***, to be shown Feb. 27, March 3 and 4. Godoy's ambitious documentary explores creativity in old age.

Also upcoming are screenings of **"Romantic Shorts"** Feb. 14; the Paddlefest Film Festival (at the Cincinnati Museum Center) March 18, which features white-water documentaries; and the acclaimed ***Iraq in Fragments***, an objective look at the native Iraq peoples, on March 20-21.

CWC is an all-volunteer operation, with room for more volunteers as its schedule expands. People with A/V technical experience are especially welcome; a 35mm operating tutorial is in the works.

Strong Internet search skills can be put to use researching potential films. Marketing and publicity know-how are needed and also marketing communications and graphic design experience, Swallow says.

The museum's amenities make for "a dynamic environment for film presentation and related post-film events, such as dinner-and-a-movie under the same roof and post-film receptions," he says.

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Army of Shadows screens at 7 pm Jan 30-31 at the Cincinnati Art Museum's Fath Auditorium. Call 859-781-8151 or visit www.cincyworldcinema.org for details.