

UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG'S WEEKLY URBAN JOURNAL

# THE **UNITER**

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## **MANITOBA LOVE SONGS**

Singer-songwriter Del Barber releases his sophomore CD

**ARTS & CULTURE**

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## **DEAR WINNIPEG,**

We love you/wish you would smarten up

**COMMENTS**

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Mayoral candidate  
Judy Wasylycia-Leis on  
**WOMEN IN POLITICS**

**NEWS**

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## FILM



Ⓜ Praised by Roger Ebert as "one of the best movies about theatre I've ever seen," *ME AND ORSON WELLES* involves the Mercury's (the company of Orson Welles) first production, a Julius Caesar set in Italy, 9 p.m. at Cinematheque each night from Wednesday, June 2 to Saturday, June 5.

Celebrate the 10th annual GIMLI FILM FESTIVAL with a launch party on Thursday, June 10 at the WAG Rooftop Sculpture Garden. Advance tickets are \$20 at On Screen Manitoba and Gimli Box Office or by phoning 204-642-8846.

Cinematheque presents *Sifting History: The Work of Paula Kelly*, a retrospective look at the Winnipeg filmmaker's career. On Friday, June 11 at 7 p.m., see *THE NOTORIOUS MRS. ARMSTRONG*, which follows the political career of working class mother Helen Armstrong, a radical agitator who lived in the early 1900s and whose endeavours often landed her in jail. On Saturday, June 12 at 7 p.m., see *Kelly's APPASSIONATA: THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE & MUSIC OF SONIA ECKHARDT-GRAMATTE*, a documentary portrait of the titular woman who defied all barriers to become one of the most intriguing contemporary composers of the 20th century. Free admission both nights.

Thirteen Indigenous grandmothers form an alliance as a result of a shared concern for the planet in the documentary *FOR THE NEXT 7 GENERATIONS*. It plays at Cinematheque 7 p.m. each night from Friday, June 18 to Sunday, June 20.

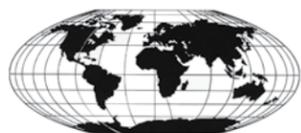
Cinematheque hosts a panel discussion featuring Deco Dawson, Jeffrey Erbach, Danishka Esterhazy, Sean Garrity and Paula Kelly titled *THE ESSENTIALS OF BEING A FILMMAKER*. Check it out Wednesday, June 23, 7 p.m. Free admission.

Cinematheque gets into the Jazz Fest spirit with *CHARLIE HADEN: RAMBLING BOY*, an intimate look at the music and life of legendary jazz bassist Charlie Haden. Thursday, June 24 at 7 p.m.

*LESLIE, MY NAME IS EVIL* is a 2009 Canadian film loosely based on the trial of Charles Manson. See it at Cinematheque Friday, June 25 at 9 p.m., Saturday, June 26 at 9:30 p.m. and Wednesday, June 30 to Thursday, July 1 at 9 p.m.

The 6th annual 48 HOUR FILM CONTEST starts with registration on Friday, June 25 at 5:30 p.m. at Cinematheque and end with the screening at 7:30 p.m. on Sunday, June 27. More info at [www.winnipegfilmgroup.com](http://www.winnipegfilmgroup.com).

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## FILM REVIEWS

## Manitoban Gothic

Local filmmaker's dark and stirring debut is a beautifully-shot historical potboiler

**SAM HAGENLOCHER**  
VOLUNTEER STAFF

### *Black Field*

Directed by Danishka Esterhazy, 2009  
80 minutes  
Playing at Cinematheque Friday, May 28 at 7 p.m. and 9 p.m.; Saturday, May 29 to Sunday, May 30 at 7 p.m.; Tuesday, June 2 to Sunday, June 6 at 7 p.m.; and Wednesday, June 9 at 7 p.m.

★★★★☆

It is a dark night on the prairies. A horse shrieks in its stable. Two young women scurry towards a barn with a lantern to see what the trouble is. As the eldest shines her flickering light on the stallion in dismay, she sees the blood covering its head.

The horse is sick, and it's their only one. Without batting an eye, she tells her sister to leave. She knows what has to be done.

"I'm so sorry," she repeats, tears streaming down her face as she raises her shotgun towards the beast and fires.



REBECCA SANDULAK

So begins *Black Field*, the feature debut from Winnipeg filmmaker Danishka Esterhazy. Set in 19th century southern Manitoba, the film follows the lives of two sisters living alone on the prairies.

Since their father passed away from typhoid years previous, Maggie (Sara Canning) has been forced to take care of her young sister Rose (Ferron Guerreiro) by herself. When a charming, mysterious young French Canadian named David (Mathieu Bourguet) arrives at the isolated farm, seeking a place to stay for the night, it sets off a series of events that will

change the girls' lives forever.

Esterhazy's tragic tale of lust, desperation and isolation was inspired by the Victorian gothic novels of the Bronte sisters, who, like Maggie and Rose, experienced tragedy firsthand at a young age — their eldest sisters also fell ill and died suddenly.

While Esterhazy wears her dark inspiration on her sleeve, she weaves a perfectly unique and watchable yarn of her own here, creating characters of surprising depth and purpose.

Newfoundland-born actress Sara Canning deserves high praise

as well, digging deep into the heart of Maggie, Esterhazy's protective and strong but vulnerable protagonist. The hopelessness in Canning's eyes is palpable and captivating, as Maggie desperately fights to hold their lives together when her sister suddenly goes missing and she must seek help from her distant neighbours.

***Black Field* is a perfect example of independent cinema done well: a simple story featuring deeply convicted characters worth investing in.**

Winnipeg cinematographer Paul Suderman does phenomenal work here as well, with a style reminiscent of the legendary Roger Deakins (*No Country For Old Men*, *Fargo*), perfectly capturing the harsh beauty of the prairies.

As the film twists and turns into its tragic climax, it is clear Esterhazy cares deeply about the characters she has created, delicately pushing them towards their destination. *Black Field* is a perfect example of independent cinema done well: a simple story featuring deeply convicted characters worth investing in, executed with precision and affection. Bravo.

## Going off the rails

**TIMOTHY PENNER**  
VOLUNTEER STAFF



### *Last Train Home*

Directed by Lixin Fan, 2009  
85 minutes  
Playing at Cinematheque Friday, June 11 to Saturday, June 12 at 9 p.m.; Sunday, June 13 at 7 p.m.; Wednesday, June 16 to Thursday, June 17 at 7 p.m.; and Saturday, June 19 at 9 p.m.

★★★★☆

Lixin Fan's documentary film *Last Train Home* is many things: an exploration

of China's migrant worker culture, a study in multinational economics and a contemplation of the struggle between work and leisure.

But most importantly, it is a beautiful look at a family attempting to stay together under unimaginably difficult conditions.

Seqin and Changhua are two out of 130 million migrant workers in China. They spend most of the year living away from home, only returning for a few days during the Chinese New Year celebrations. This is done to ensure that their two children, who are raised by their grandmother, are able to stay in school, and will have a better chance of escaping the peasant life.

The suffering associated with this sort of existence is well documented by Fan,

who spent years with the family. He achingly captures the parents' heartbreak when they hear that their eldest daughter has left school in order to work, as well as the violent eruption that takes place when the normally reserved father can no longer abide the same daughter's disrespect for her parents and the sacrifice they've made.

In a poignant scene, the grandmother tells the children that it is important to taste bitterness in order to fully appreciate the sweetness of life.

Fan's film captures the bitterness of this family's struggle so well that we are left wondering, as the credits roll, whether the sweetness will ever arrive.

## Behind the Beat

**TIMOTHY PENNER**  
VOLUNTEER STAFF



### *One Fast Move or I'm Gone: Kerouac's Big Sur*

Directed by Curt Worden, 2009  
98 minutes  
Playing at Cinematheque Friday, June 25 to Saturday, June 26, and Wednesday, June 30 to Thursday, July 1 at 7 p.m. each night.

★★★★☆

In 1961, Jack Kerouac was about to hit a wall. His 1957

book *On the Road* had made him a cultural icon of the Beat movement; but his popularity had gotten out of hand, and he continued to sink deeper into alcoholism.

Finally, when he had had enough of the New York scene, he set out across America yet again, ending up at a secluded cabin getaway along the Pacific coast in California. The trip nearly cost him his life, but it also produced one of his greatest works, *Big Sur*.

Curt Worden's film *One Fast Move or I'm Gone: Kerouac's Big Sur* attempts to understand Kerouac by contemplating his book. As well, the film works with the story and riffs off of it with the hope of creating some-

thing new in the process.

We watch as Worden — through a series of interviews from many of Kerouac's contemporaries, as well as later artists who have been influenced by him (from Tom Waits to Ben Gibbard) — attempts to deconstruct the identity of Kerouac in order to gain some understanding.

Worden's camera work, knack for tastefully incorporating archival footage and acute sense of pacing make for an enjoyable and contemplative piece.

However, it is the masterfully written prose of Kerouac himself, read periodically throughout, which provide the most beautifully poetic moments of this highly lyrical film.

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