



PRESS NOTES

DAWSON CITY: FROZEN TIME

A FILM BY BILL MORRISON

PRESS & INDUSTRY SCREENINGS

SEPTEMBER 4	SALA VOLPI	20:00
SEPTEMBER 4	SALA CASINO	22:00

PUBLIC SCREENINGS

SEPTEMBER 5	SALA DARSENA	17:00
SEPTEMBER 6	PALABIENNALE	15:00

IN VENICE

Bill Morrison, director 31/08 - 10/09
Madeleine Molyneaux, producer, 31/08 - 10/09
Alex Somers, composer, 04/09 - 09/09
John Somers, sound designer, 04/09 - 09/09

Production Contact:

Picture Palace Pictures
picturepalacesale@yahoo.com

DAWSON CITY: FROZEN TIME
U.S., 2016, 120 minutes, DCP, 5.1

Hypnotic Pictures & Picture Palace Pictures

present

In association with **ARTE – La Lucarne**
In association with **The Museum of Modern Art**

A film by **Bill Morrison**

Directed/Written/Photographed and Edited by
Bill Morrison

Produced by **Bill Morrison** and **Madeleine Molyneaux**

Music by **Alex Somers**

Sound Design by **John Somers**

Associate Producer: **Paul Gordon**

Title Design: **Galen Johnson**

Synopsis

Dawson City: Frozen Time, a feature length film by Bill Morrison (U.S.) pieces together the bizarre true history of a collection of some 500 films dating from 1910s - 1920s, which were lost for over 50 years until being discovered buried in a sub-arctic swimming pool deep in the Yukon Territory.

Using archival footage to tell the story, and accompanied by an originally composed and enigmatic score by American musician composer, musician and artist Alex Somers (*Captain Fantastic*), ***Dawson City: Frozen Time*** depicts a unique history of a Canadian gold rush town by chronicling the life cycle of a singular film collection through its exile, burial, rediscovery, and salvation – and through that collection, how a First Nation hunting camp was transformed and displaced.

Dawson City, located about 350 miles south of the Arctic Circle, is situated at the confluence of the Klondike and Yukon rivers and rests on a bed of permafrost. Historically, the area was an important hunting and fishing camp for a nomadic First Nation tribe known as Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. The town was settled in 1896—the same year large scale cinema projectors were invented—and it became the center of the Klondike Goldrush that brought 100,000 prospectors to the area. The Dawson Amateur Athletic Association (DAAA) opened in 1902 and began showing films and soon, the city became the final stop for a distribution chain that sent prints and newsreels to the Yukon. The films were seldom, if ever, returned.

By the late 1920s, 500,000 feet of film --500 films-- had accumulated in the basement of the local Library, under the care of the Canadian Bank of Commerce. In 1929, Clifford Thomson, bank employee and treasurer of the local hockey association, moved the films to the town's hockey rink, stacked and covered them with boards and a layer of earth. The now famous Dawson City Collection was uncovered in 1978 when a new recreation center was being built and a bulldozer working its way through a parking lot dug up a horde of film cans.

The films are now housed in the Canadian Archives in Ottawa and at the US Library of Congress, which jointly restored all the titles to 35mm preservation masters.

Director's Statement: Bill Morrison on *Dawson City: Frozen Time*

The story of the Dawson City film collection is a story that combines many contradictions specific to the 20th century. It is a story full of bitter ironies, where the promise of one thing often delivers just the opposite:

First nation people had used the encampment at Tr'ochëk for hunting and fishing for hundreds, if not thousands, of years before the Klondike Gold Rush of 1896. The Gold Rush brought change overnight. Tr'ochëk was renamed Dawson City in 1897, and boomed to a population of 40,000.

The discovery of Gold promised quick and easy riches, yet spurred a hugely expensive, and physically demanding migration by the hopeful. Most of them arrived after all the mines had been already claimed.

The prospectors then followed the gold strikes to Alaska, leaving Dawson City as a depleted and disillusioned town only a few years after gold was first discovered there.

But as the prospectors left, motion pictures arrived. Not only did films find their way to Dawson, Cinema took the North Woods as its subject matter, portraying this new landscape and its wilderness stories as one of its favorite, if most wildly romanticized, genres.

The films that arrived were not returned to their distributors. Instead they were stored in a library, before being disposed of in a defunct swimming pool, ultimately returning the gold, and the silver that followed it, back to the same earth that yielded it.

Despite this, subsequent shipments of nitrate films caused the fire that destroyed the theater decades later. Just as gold was the town's making and undoing, film fueled both the theater's creation and destruction.

Ironically the only films that survived were those early ones that were buried in a subarctic swimming pool and then discovered 50 years later.

Those films revealed the stories of an invasive culture that was woefully misplaced in its new environment, and even more woefully unaware of its trespasses.

It is a story that is told, using these same films from the collection. It is both a cinema of mythology, and mythologizing of cinema. Gold and Silver, forever linked and following one another, drove the narrative in a unique chapter of human civilization.

The story of the Dawson City film collection is well-known among film archivists, even if there remains little written about it outside of an article by Sam Kula, the director of Canada's Audiovisual Archives, that was first published in *American Film* in July 1979.

I first became aware of it in the early 1990s when I began to draw on archival material exclusively to tell stories in my own films. In my past work, especially in the short "The Film of Her" (1996), and later, with the feature length film "Decasia" (2002), archival film became central to both the form and content of the film. The former used archival film to tell the story of an ancient film collection. The latter used decaying archival film as a metaphor for mortality.

"Dawson City: Frozen Time" shares some of the same approaches and aesthetics of these two earlier works. The new film has the additional context of being about globalization - firstly through the discovery of Gold, and by extension, Film, which always followed the money.

The films that arrived in Dawson were not returned to their distributors. Nor were they watched again. Instead they were stored in a library, before being disposed of in a defunct swimming pool, ultimately returning the gold, and the silver that followed it, back to the same earth that yielded it.

Subsequent shipments of nitrate films fueled the fire that destroyed the theater - and most of the film collection that had accumulated there - decades later. The only films that survived were those early ones that were buried in the pool, and then discovered 50 years later.

The films are now housed in the Canadian Archives in Ottawa and at the US Library of Congress, which jointly restored all the titles to 35mm preservation masters. The titles almost certainly fared better than any of the other prints of their time. As nitrate filmstock is given to self-destruction, these prints became some of the last surviving records of titles from studios such as Essanay, Rex, Thanhouser, and Selig.

I worked closely with Paul Gordon and his team at the Canadian Archives in Ottawa to digitize this footage at the highest resolution possible (4K); this has been combined with the use of period photographs, chronicling the region and Yukon residents, from special library collections.

--Bill Morrison 2016

Producer's Note

The films of Bill Morrison combine a documentarian's thirst for uncovering hidden histories with an archivist's obsession for recovering hidden cinematic treasures. These twin passions, combined with an acute and abiding connection with some of the most innovative and progressive music of the time--from Phillip Glass to Jóhann Jóhannsson, have yielded a body of work that is singular and essential.

The films have been critically acclaimed and widely disseminated-- *Decasia* (2002) has been heralded as one of the best films of the decade, with Errol Morris asserting it as "the best film ever made"; *The Miners' Hymns*, a document of the Coal Mines in Durham, UK throughout the early 20th century from 2011, features nameless real life personages that become characters, saved from historical obscurity as it were through Morrison's recovering of archival footage originally produced by the National Coal Board's Film Unit. It was called "quite simply one of the best and most beautiful films of the year" by the *Huffington Post*. Manohla Dargis points out in her *New York Times* review that he is "a miner himself of a type". His collaboration with Bill Frisell in *The Great Flood*, represents perhaps his most overtly political film to date, as it recovers footage in and of a world of the American South in 1927.

Dawson City: Frozen Time expands the history of cinema (the material recovered) and simultaneously inhabits the lateral history of cinema exploitation, an investigation of how early cinema was diffused, colonized and buried. The impact of this recovered footage is vast and universal.

--*Madeleine Molyneaux, Producer, Picture Palace Pictures*

Filmmaker Bill Morrison: Biography

"*One of the most adventurous American filmmakers*" - Variety, 12/11/11

Bill Morrison (born Chicago, November 17, 1965) is a New York-based filmmaker and artist. His films often combine rare archival material set to contemporary music, and have been screened in theaters, cinemas, museums, galleries, and concert halls around the world. He attended Reed College 1983-85, and graduated from Cooper Union School of Art in 1989. Trained as a painter, his work reflects a deep and abiding attention to the celluloid image.

He has collaborated with some of the most influential composers of our time, including John Adams, Maya Beiser, Gavin Bryars, Dave Douglas, Richard Einhorn, Erik Friedlander, Bill Frisell, Philip Glass, Michael Gordon, Michael Harrison, Ted Hearne, Vijay Iyer, Jóhann Jóhannsson, Kronos Quartet, David Lang, David T. Little, Michael Montes, Steve Reich, Todd Reynolds, Aleksandra Vrebalov, and Julia Wolfe among many others.

Decasia (67 min, 2002), a collaboration with the composer Michael Gordon, was selected to the US Library of Congress' 2013 National Film Registry, becoming the most modern film named to the list that preserves works of "great cultural, historic or aesthetic significance to the nation's cinematic heritage." Morrison's films are also in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, Walker Art Center, and the EYE Film Institute.

Morrison is a Guggenheim fellow and has received the Alpert Award for the Arts, an NEA Creativity Grant, Creative Capital, and a fellowship from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts. His theatrical projection design has been recognized with two Bessie awards and an Obie Award.

His previous work has been distributed by Icarus Films in North America, and by the British Film Institute in the UK.

A mid-career retrospective was held at the Museum of Modern Art (NY) in 2014; Morrison has also had retrospectives at the Walker Art Museum, Minneapolis; the Vila Do Conde Short Film Festival, Portugal; the Adelaide Film Festival, Australia; and the Aarhus Film Festival, Denmark. Upcoming include Valdivia (Chile) and Jihlava (CZ).

Bill Morrison: Selected Filmography

FEATURES

Dawson City: Frozen Time
(2016, 120 min, B/W & color, HD)

The Great Flood
(2013, 78 min, B/W, HD)

Tributes - Pulse
(2011, 65 min, B/W & color, HD)

The Miners' Hymns
(2011, 52 min, B/W & color, HD)

Spark of Being
(2010, 68 min, B/W & color)

Decasia
(2002, 67 min, B/W, 35mm)

SHORT FORM WORKS

Back to the Soil
(2014, 18 min, B/W, HD)

Beyond Zero: 1914-1918
(2014, 40 min, B/W & color, HD)

All Vows
(2013, 10 min, B/W & color, HD)

Re:Awakenings
(2013, 18 min, B/W & color, HD)

Just Ancient Loops
(2012, 26 min, B/W & color, HD)

Release
(2010, 13 min, B/W, HD)

Every Stop On The F Train
(2008, 5 min, color)

Dystopia
(2008, 30 min, B/W & color)

Fuel

(2007, 25 min, color)

Who By Water

(2007, 18 min, B/W)

Porch

(2006, 9 min, color)

The Highwater Trilogy

(2006, 31 min, B/W, 35mm)

Outerborough

(2005, 8 min, B/W, 35mm)

Gotham

(2004, 25 min, B/W & color)

Light Is Calling

(2004, 8 min, color, 35mm)

The Mesmerist

(2003, 16 min, color, 35mm)

East River

(2003, 5 min, color)

Trinity

(2000, 12 min, B/W, 35mm)

Ghost Trip

(2000, 23 min, B/W, 35mm)

City Walk

(1999, 6 min, B/W, 16mm)

The Film of Her

(1996, 12 min, B/W, 35mm)

Nemo

(1995, 6 min, B/W, 16mm)

The Death Train

(1993, 17 min, B/W, 16mm)

Footprints

(1992, 6 min, B/W & color, 16mm)

Producer Madeleine Molyneaux: Picture Palace Pictures

Madeleine Molyneaux is an independent creative producer based in New York and Los Angeles. Through Picture Palace Pictures, founded in 2004, she works closely with emerging and established artists, both in North America and abroad, to develop, produce, and represent films, video projects, installations/exhibitions and curatorial initiatives. She is engaged in the realization of genre narrative, experimental cinema and creative documentary/hybrid projects that often defy easy categorization and co-exist within experimental film and contemporary art contexts. Many of the projects are dedicated to the diffusion of film in a contemporary art context/continuum (and vice versa).

Her long association with the fiercely prolific artist/filmmaker Kevin Jerome Everson (U.S.) recipient of the 2012 Alpert Award in Film/Video, has included the production of seven feature films, numerous award winning shorts and the organization of retrospectives and solo exhibitions at the Centre Pompidou, Visions du Reel, Nyon, Viennale and the Whitney Museum of American Art. In addition to Everson's work, she has produced recent films for the visual artists **K8 Hardy** (*Outfitumentary*, an Official Selection of *Rotterdam*, *Outfest* and *Era New Horizons* 2016); **Pierre Bismuth** (*Where is Rocky 2?*, a French/Belgian/Italian/German co production, Art Basel, Locarno and Hot Docs 2016) and **Phillip Warnell** (*Ming of Harlem: 21 Stories in the Air*, winner of the Georges Beauregard Prize at FID Marseille 2014 and distributed in the UK by Soda Pictures).

Her collaboration with filmmaker David Jacobson includes, as producer, the independent American feature *Tomorrow You're Gone* (2012) a neo-noir starring Stephen Dorff, Michelle Monaghan and Willem Dafoe, and as creative consultant on the 2005 feature *Down in the Valley*, starring Edward Norton, Evan Rachel Wood, Bruce Dern and Rory Caikin, which premiered at Cannes Un Certain Regard in 2005. They recently produced two episodes for *National Geographic's* critically acclaimed TV series *Breakthrough*, directed by David Lowery (*Pete's Dragon*, *Ain't Them Body Saints*) and Ana Lily Amirpour (*The Bad Batch; A Girl Walks Home Alone At Night*).

Composer: Alex Somers

Alex Somers, born 1984 in Baltimore, Maryland (US) is a composer, musician, producer, and artist who splits his time between Reykjavík, Iceland and Los Angeles. He first rose to prominence in 2009 via his ambient album. Alex had previously toured America in support of Jónsi's band Sigur Rós with his own outfit Parachutes, having previously attended Berklee College of Music in Boston to study composition.

Following the highly-acclaimed *Riceboy Sleeps* project, he went on to play keyboards and guitar in Jónsi's touring band, having already co-produced tracks on his 2010 debut solo album, *Go*. Somers then started expanding his production work at his studio space in Reykjavík, co-producing Sigur Rós's 2013 album, *Valtari*, and producing albums for Subpop's *Death Vessel*, vocal experimentalist Julianna Barwick, Briana Marela and Icelandic bands *Pascal Pinon* and *Sin Fang*. In 2014 he mixed Damien Rice's *My Favorite Faded Fantasy*.

In 2015 he and Jónsi scored the first season of WGN's atomic bomb drama *Manhattan*.

Somers is also a visual artist, exhibiting his work with Jónsi around the world, as well as co-creating the sleeves for Sigur Rós's *Takk* and *Riceboy Sleeps*. Recently Somers scored the critically acclaimed *Captain Fantastic* starring Viggo Mortensen (Un Certain Regard, Cannes 2016). His score for Bill Morrison's *Dawson City: Frozen Time* was recorded in Iceland. He plays a variety of instruments on all tracks. His brother John Somers is the film's sound designer.

Credit Roll

DAWSON CITY
FROZEN TIME

A film by
BILL MORRISON

Produced by
BILL MORRISON AND MADELEINE MOLYNEAUX

A
HYPNOTIC PICTURES
and
PICTURE PALACE PICTURES
Production

In association with
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Music Composed, Produced, Engineered, & Mixed by
ALEX SOMERS

**Piano, Mellotron, Sampler, Celeste, Metallophone, Bowed Vibraphone,
Harp, Guitar, Sub Bass, Percussion, & Vocals**
ALEX SOMERS

**Drums, Percussion, Kalimba, Psaltery, Andes, Ukelele,
Tuned Gongs, Piano, and Sampler**
SAMULI KOSMINEN

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ÓLAFUR BJÖRN ÓLAFSSON

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MARÍA HULD MARKAN SIGFÚSDÓTTIR
HILDUR ÁRSÆLSDÓTTIR

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SALKA ÞORRA SVANHVÍTARDÓTTIR
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Samuli's Parts Engineered
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Strings Engineered
BIRGIR JÓN BIRGISSON
at Sundlaugin Studio

5.1 Mix
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Clare Wright

THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING

Laurie Olinder

IN MEMORIAM:

Sam Kula (1932-2010)

Bill O'Farrell (1954-2008)

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