

Mr. Saul's Home Movies

Welcome to the grand re-opening of YAAG: the Yellow Argyle Art Garage. We suffered a fire two years ago and have now re-built.

This evening, on the theme of "Home", I am presenting a series of super-8 films, digitally remastered, made by me in my alter ego "Mr. Saul". Now this Mr. Saul fellow has some interesting characteristics. We discover, through listening to him narrate his home movies, that he has an exceedingly high opinion of himself. He is designed around the "ideal" father of the 1950s; a confident man who leads his family on the successful path of life. The idea from this character came from my own research into 8mm home movie filmmaking and the notion that home movies would be narrated during their presentation and the narrator would naturally be the person who filmed the images. Early cameras were technically complicated and, it being the 1950s, were thought to be in the sole purview of the male. Consequentially, the father in the household became the official documentarian of the permanent filmic record of the family. He would choose when the camera would be used (vacations, birthdays, and holidays) and what people should be doing in the movie (being happy, celebrating, opening gifts, seeing great sights). With this series of films, I explored and pushed the limits of these stereotypes.

The character of "Mr. Saul" is imperfect, but he does not know it. This makes him one of my favorite characters to play. He wakes up every morning with complete confidence that his thoughts are the best thoughts he should have, the decisions he will make will be the best decisions he can make, and the people around him will respect and admire him as much as he respects and admires himself. He lives in a utopia of his own design.

When one pays attention, flaws might become apparent in this character. If you do notice and inconsistency in what is being said and shown, Neither I nor Mr. Saul are interested in hearing about it. The project rides on irony.

The first of these films was made for the One Take Super 8 Event in 2005. It would have ended there but for the enthusiastic coaxing of Seema Goel who was curating a Fine Arts faculty exhibition at the MacKenzie Art Gallery that year. I followed up with a multi-roll version later that fall. Four more short films followed between 2006 and 2009, some of which were performed live. In 2016 I created one more super-8 version of this series, this one about how certain troughs cannot be returned to.

In 2012, the Mr. Saul character began to work with video instead of super-8 film and I created 26 web videos in the first six months of that year. Two videos followed in 2014 and 2015. These videos are all available online and not presented here tonight.

List of films to be screened, YAAG, May 25, 2023

Summer Day With Mr. Saul and His Family 2005 (3:30)

Mr. Saul's Definitive Portrait Of His Family 2005 (11:00)

Mr. Saul Takes His Family on an Educational Outing 2006 (3:30)

Mr. Saul's Day At The Beach 2006 (3:30)

Mr. Saul on How To Be A Father 2007 (5:00)

Mr. Saul's Ultimate Getaway 2009 (5:00)

Mr. Saul and Son 2016 (5:20)

Links and further information can be found at

https://uregina.ca/~saulge/saul/saul2008_film_page_mr_saul_utopia.html

This has been presented as part of the Cathedral Village Arts Festival. Special thanks to Margaret Bessai and Sarah Cummings Truszkowski.

This project is about Mr. Saul's family ("Missus" and "Son") and about my family (Margaret and William). They are all wonderful and tolerant. We both thank you.