WELCOME TO KinoIU

Drawing inspiration from one of cinema’s great formalists, Dziga Vertov, KinoIU is a new annual publication from IU Cinema designed to foreground our varied work as an organization committed to using film and cinema studies for intellectual emancipation and cultural edification within, and across, the IU and greater-Bloomington communities.

We all know IU Cinema is a special place, but it also holds a unique role in both the ecosystem of the art house exhibition industry and the academic study of film. Designed by its founders to be a leader in cultural programming and cinematic exhibition as well as an academic unit contributing to the advancement of cinema studies, IU Cinema functions as a connecting node between the professional and academic film worlds. This is a rare position to be in, and one that most communities don’t have access to. We take this role seriously, and strive to push our academic, programmatic, professional training, community, and original intellectual contributions to greater and greater heights.

Simultaneously, we are keenly aware that we have a wide range of constituencies that engage with the Cinema on different levels. As such, KinoIU is constructed to share our work holistically, converging our endeavors across film programming, industry training, student intellectual and professional development, original intellectual efforts, and more. Following Vertov’s kino-eye maxim that “the movie camera was invented in order to penetrate deeper into the visible world,” KinoIU brings us all together to penetrate deeper into the world and work of IU Cinema.

—Dr. Alicia Kozma
Director, IU Cinema

“Kino-eye = kino-seeing (I see through the camera)... Kino-eye is the documentary cinematic decoding of both the visible world and that which is invisible to the naked eye.”

—Dziga Vertov
IU CINEMA STAFF

Indiana University Cinema staff are a collective of intersectional individuals who recognize that we benefit from a variety of privileges and power. We refuse to accept inequity as status quo. We hold ourselves and our organization accountable to tangible, material outcomes in the service of purposefully cultivating transformative educational, cultural, and community work that centers and materially benefits peoples and communities traditionally excluded from power.

IU Cinema acknowledges that our building—and all our work—takes place on the unceded lands of the Myaamiaki, Lénape, Bodwéwadmik, and Saawanwa peoples. We are honored to work on these lands.

Dr. Alicia Kozma
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David Michael Kortes
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Ebenezer Eserowve
Projectionist

Meet Palan
Projectionist

Maxwell J. Moore
Outreach and Engagement Assistant
OUR MISSION

Indiana University Cinema is an academic unit and leading-edge art house theater dedicated to using film and cinema studies for intellectual emancipation and cultural exploration.

IU CINEMA: IN FRAME

AVERAGE AUDIENCE MEMBERS SERVED YEARLY
28,553

AVERAGE 243 FILMS SHOWN PER YEAR

AVERAGE ANNUAL TICKET SALES
$58,352

GLOBAL CURATION, GLOBAL CULTURE
IU CINEMA HAS PLAYED FILMS FROM MORE THAN HALF OF THE WORLD’S 195 COUNTRIES
Alexander Sokurov’s *Russian Ark* (2002) may be one of the few “experimental” films that legitimately feels like a controlled experiment of sorts: the film is composed of a single, unbroken, 95-minute Steadicam shot which moves through 33 rooms in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, a site which also encompasses the Winter Palace. Though this awesome technical achievement can be seen as a formally radical gesture on Sokurov’s part, it is paradoxically brought toward a subject and a social milieu which could justifiably be seen as traditional or conservative: the aristocratic history of czarist, pre-Revolutionary Russia. In considering *Russian Ark*, one is immediately confronted with a certain paradox at the heart of the project, a shotgun marriage between radical and conservative aesthetics.

Putting aside for a moment the impressive nature of the film’s technical feat, which probably would have made dear old Max Ophüls proud, I’d like to explore the film’s mobile camera style in relation to its status as a work of historical pageantry. In 1959, Jean-Luc Godard claimed that a tracking shot was a question of morality. Though this provocative assertion might seem hyperbolic to some, it’s true that the visual forms of narrative cinema have long been tied to certain ideological tendencies. Many great auteurs of classical Hollywood cinema, especially figures like Ophüls, Otto Preminger, and Vincente Minnelli, have long been celebrated by visually sensitive critics primarily for their achievements in camera movement and the spatial language of mise-en-scène rather than for their editing procedures.

In fact, it was Preminger’s early noir work at Fox that inspired Jacques Rivette, in a *Cahiers du cinéma* piece on *Angel Face* (1952), to seductively define mise-en-scène in this way: “The creation of a precise complex of sets and characters, a network of relationships, an architecture of connections, an animated complex that seems suspended in space.” For me, a crucial aspect of Rivette’s definition is his use of the word “animated”: the arrangement of bodies and objects within a particular space that’s defined by the camera, but a space that’s constantly being redefined each time the camera moves. For some critics, notably the first-generation auteurist critics who revered Hollywood commercial cinema, this kind of filmmaking, predicated on complex, mobile compositions with minimal cutting, represented a kind of platonic ideal of what cinema could be.

Sokurov’s forefathers of Russian cinema, however, have historically tended to be much more interested in the expressive possibilities of montage and other editing techniques than in the classicism of spatial movement and mise-en-scène. Sergei Eisenstein, probably the most well-known of all Soviet filmmakers to this day, built on the editing language developed by Lev Kuleshov in classic Soviet films like **Jean-Luc Godard attempted to synthesize some of the effects of montage and mise-en-scène in Goodbye to Language (2014)**
Battleship Potemkin (1925) and October (1927). For Kuleshov, the juxtaposition of two unrelated images through cutting could conjure a tertiary idea (or ideas) not present in either image on its own. Eisenstein’s features expanded and refined these theoretical adventures in montage; here was a formal approach that could embody a kind of comparative dialectic, a generative clash of opposing forces. Dziga Vertov and Alexander Dovzhenko were two other key figures, quite different from Eisenstein but both with a kind of experimental approach to film editing as well.

Soviet montage became associated in popular film criticism with the spirit of leftist and communist filmmaking, the formal apparatus of the great Soviet filmmakers, while in the more commercially oriented cinemas of the United States and Europe a different aesthetic took shape. This context should be seen as both bold and significant in relation to Russian Ark, a Russian film dealing with Russian history that speaks to us in a visual language staunchly removed from its own cinematic traditions. The critic J. Hoberman has even called it “the anti-October.”

In Sokurov’s work, three centuries of Russian art and historical images are glimpsed at amid a kind of uncasing dance, a ballet of movements performed by actors and the camera alike through the chambers of the museum. The absence of the cut gives the film its sustained, hypnotic power and, perhaps more importantly, harshly severs it from the formal patterns of Soviet cinema.

This hardly seems like a coincidence for a work that accords paramount importance to historical memory as a subject. Rather, it seems that Sokurov has the directorial intelligence to know that camera movement is the best form possible in cinema for exploring the kind of vanished, aristocratic world that the Hermitage embodies in Russian culture. This film is not about a clash of ideological forces; instead, it is a kind of communion with ghosts, with cultural memories, ideas and images that perished under the dreams of the twentieth century. Sokurov’s grand spectacle of movement ultimately feels like an attempt at historical séance—reviving old spirits through the acting out of uncanny movements.

Jack Miller, an IU alum, is Establishing Shot’s resident film canon and auteur expert. His film tastes range from Howard Hawks, to Hitchcock, to Jacques Tourneur and John Ford.
IU Cinema is privileged to be the steward of several endowed funds dedicated to film programming. The impact of endowed funds cannot be underestimated, as they afford IU Cinema that elusive mix of stability and flexibility that is the core of innovative programming. While most of our programming-specific endowed funds focus on different areas, they all have a common core: reflecting and advancing the multifarious nature of IU Cinema programming.

**ENDOWED PROGRAMMATIC SERIES**

The Cinema is exceedingly lucky that we have generous supporters whose cinematic tastes range far and wide across space, time, form and format, genre, and theme.

Beyond this foundational nucleus, many of our programming-specific funds share cinematic ideologies.

Exploring film and culture from the perspective of artists, makers, and craftspeople. The Roberta and S. James Sherman Inspiring Conversations Fund supports programs in the IU Cinema involving conversations between film industry professionals, academics, critics, and other film experts. Similarly, the Marsha R. Bradford and Harold A. Dumes Art and a Movie Film Series Fund showcases our artistic world onscreen by drawing broadly from the world of fine arts to bring a variety of artistic practices to the IU Cinema screen.

Honor the cinematic visions of the leaders who first brought us IU Cinema.

The Michael A. McRobbie Film Series Fund supports IU Chancellor Michael McRobbie’s—an enduring cinephile—semesterly film selections that represent some of the masterworks of cinematic art that are screened in IU Cinema’s theater. Comparatively, Jon Vickers Pics supports IU Cinema Founding Director Jon Vickers in curating a screening of his choice.

Keeping film history alive in the present. The Michael W. Trosset Archival Print & Restoration Exhibition Fund champions IU Cinema’s programming of rarely screened films in 16mm or 35mm film print formats, as well as high-quality digital restorations of classic films regardless of format. Relatedly, the Grafton Trout Fund for the IU Cinema offers broad support for illuminating film history on our contemporary screen, with a particular interest in classic Hollywood films (especially shown on 35mm!).

Bringing the world to Bloomington. IU Cinema has three programming funds focused on curating the best of global cinema for our local audiences. The CINEkids International Children’s Film Series Fund brings a selection of international children’s films that you won’t see at the local movielplex or on home streaming services. The series takes a broad approach to children’s films, running the gamut from animation to comedy to drama and more. Both the Dr. Gregg A. Richardson Fund for IU Cinema’s International Arthouse Series and the Paula W. Sunderman International Film Fund support IU Cinema’s programming of new films from the global art house community.
In 2021-22, these programming-based funds allowed IU Cinema to screen the following films:

- *Iphigenia* (Michael Cacoyannis, 1977)
- *Magnificent Obsession* (Douglas Sirk, 1954)
- *Laura* (Otto Preminger, 1944)
- *Irma Vep* (Olivier Assayas, 1996)
- *Faya Dayi* (Jessica Beshir, 2021)
- *Electra* (Michael Cacoyannis, 1962)
- *Heaven Can Wait* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1943)
- *Lured* (Douglas Sirk, 1947)
- *The Trojan Women* (Michael Cacoyannis, 1971)
- *Irma Vep* (Olivier Assayas, 1996)
The Michael W. Trosset Archival Print & Restoration Exhibition Fund supports film screenings of rarely screened films under optimal conditions. As such, the Trosset Fund helps to support the screening of archival film and “film on film,” or screenings that take place via 35mm or 16mm projection. Importantly, this fund also supports new digital restorations of existing celluloid prints. The caveat for new digital restorations is critical, as older archival prints, obscure but crucial films, foreign films, and classics are restored more and more regularly for digital projection. Restoration for digital projection can offer the possibility to see films that have all but disappeared from the screen, leaving a cultural blind spot behind them. Nowhere was that more evident in our 2021-22 programming than with the restoration and screening of New York Ninja.

Transformed into a vigilante after shattering personal tragedy, average guy-turned-ninja John (John Liu) is on a mission to clean up the mean streets of 1984 New York City. Hell-bent on justice, John soon finds himself the target of every criminal in the city, including the mysterious Plutonium Killer. Can John survive to be the hero NYC desperately needs?

In 1984, Taiwanese actor and martial artist John Liu wrote, directed, and starred in his only American production, an action comedy shot on location called New York Ninja. Once filming was completed, however, the project was dropped with the footage abandoned in a film lab with many of its materials missing, including a soundtrack. It seemed that the world would never see New York Ninja… But then, in 2020, home-video distributor Vinegar Syndrome acquired the footage and took on the herculean task of creating a reconstructed cut of the film. With no access to any original audio, storyboards, or scripts, they recorded and dubbed new dialogue with the voice talents of genre favorites like Don “The Dragon” Wilson (Bloodfist), Linnea Quigley (Return of the Living Dead), Michael Berryman (The Hills Have Eyes), Ginger Lynn Allen (The Devil’s Rejects), and Cynthia Rothrock (China O’Brien), and released the now-completed New York Ninja in November 2021, 37 years after its inception.

New York Ninja is a testament to the indomitable spirit of independent filmmaking and the importance of preserving all kinds of films. While it has become an instant cult classic, it’s also an important document in understanding the challenges non-U.S. filmmakers can have transitioning to a U.S. film production environment and functions as a cultural time capsule of New York City in the mid-1980s. Its incredible 4K restoration made for a truly one-of-a-kind experience for IU Cinema patrons and became one of our most popular events of the spring 2022 semester.
After years of wonderful discussions, provocative ideas, and lots of unabashed movie love, IU Cinema’s podcast Footage Not Found (formerly A Place for Film) released its last episode in December 2022 as we said goodbye to our podcast editor/producer/host, Aja Essex. Although Footage Not Found is on temporary hiatus, our archive of almost 80 episodes offers interviews and conversations on everything film, including IU Cinema programming, with an emphasis on erasing our listeners’ cinephilic blank spots with episodes full of goofy jokes, serious discussions, reviews, film histories, and more movie recommendations than you can handle.

Episode 69: A Conversation on Speed Racer with Margot Stacy

Margot Stacy is a self-proclaimed tastemaker. She has been a film critic and cinephile, now apostate. Once a premiere novelty shirtmaker, she now deals in images on Instagram (@miscenscene). Margot is primarily interested in the cross-sections of fashion, film, and what’s unseen; how motion pictures are composed in the still; and how we all move through time, affixed to celluloid or jpeg. In this episode, Aja spoke with Margot Stacy about Lilly and Lana Wachowski’s magnum opus Speed Racer, getting into the nitty gritty of how the film serves as a major turning point not just in the Wachowskis’ career but also in film history.

Episode 66: SECS Fest Midwest with David Church

David Church is Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Gender Studies at Indiana University and the author of four books: Grindhouse Nostalgia: Memory, Home Video, and Exploitation Film Fandom (2015); Disposable Passions: Vintage Pornography and the Material Legacies of Adult Cinema (2016); Post-Horror: Art, Genre, and Cultural Elevation (2021); and Mortal Kombat: Games of Death (2022). SECS (Seattle Erotica Cinema Society) Fest co-founder and programmer David Church visited Footage Not Found to talk about the ins and outs of programming a sex-positive film festival, the history of SECS Fest, and how it came to end up at IU Cinema.

Final Draft is a program exclusive to IU Cinema, where notable film industry professionals visiting the Cinema answer a series of questions designed to uncover the artistic, philosophical, and emotional core of their practice. Final Draft provides insightful, succinct, and surprising conversations that give a rare glimpse into the mind of renowned, and evolving, cinematic luminaries. These conversations ask film professionals to reflect on the power of film as art and practice, the importance and experience of theatergoing, the artistic and cultural landscapes that have impacted their work, their considerations of audience and legacy, and other queries built to enlighten audiences, colleagues, and new generations of film artists.

While all Final Draft interviews are archived and available on the IU Cinema YouTube channel, transcripts and publication of these interviews—like the one below—are generously funded by the Dr. Gerald Duchovnay Post Script Fund for Scholarly Publication.

Final Draft: Nia DaCosta on Film

Nia DaCosta is a writer and director who launched onto the filmmaking scene with her acclaimed independent crime thriller Little Woods (2018). An alumna of the Sundance Screenwriters and Director Labs, DaCosta followed up Little Woods with Candyman (2021), whose debut made DaCosta the first Black woman to have a film open at the top of the theatrical box office. Her next project, The Marvels, makes her the youngest filmmaker to direct a Marvel film to date.
I don’t try to make films that everyone will like, but I think I like to make films that anyone could sort of engage with and empathize with the characters. I try to make films that are human, so they’re character-based and people-based as opposed to trying to tell someone you know, give someone a moral or something like that. But yeah, I think everything, every part of the filmmaking process, like why I make them and who they’re for, it’s all about connecting. But I think something I’m passionate about is just making movies about unconventional, interesting women, and their unconventionality making them dangerous in some way, whether it’s physically and it’s a genre film and they’re, like, assassins or something or it’s like, you know, socially. People are like, “Oh, you’re freaking us out with all your differences.” [laughs] I think those are interesting, not-often-told stories.

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Do you have a film experience that changed your life or direction as a filmmaker?

My earliest film, like [movie] theater, memory is crying so much my dad had to take me out of Jurassic Park when I was three or four... I remember that so clearly because now it’s one of my favorite movies and I can watch it anytime it’s on television, but I don’t know what I thought was happening. I was just like, “I don’t like dinosaurs.” [laughs]

Just whatever has been around has been a big thing for me, as opposed to Netflix where you go on and you’re like, “Okay, I can choose anything.” The VHS tapes that were just at my house and my mom watched; American Beauty was a big one. Apocalypse Now was one of the VHS tapes in my high school dorm. I remember watching it and thinking, “This is amazing and insane.” Just how casually these things were a part of the ecosystem I think really influenced me. And in junior high school, the big one was Casablanca. It was just hanging out next to Grease, you know, in the VHS stack. But I guess if I did have one prominent experience, it would have been watching Apocalypse Now and understanding, “Oh, you could do anything.”

Why or what are some of your artistic influences?

So, I’m really influenced by paintings; I love going to museums. Sometimes it won’t even be about a specific artist, but I’ll see characters in the paintings and I’m like, “Oh, that’s really interesting.” Or there’ll just be certain situations that I find really fascinating. There was a painting by Ángeles Santos called Tertulia or something, it’s a Spanish painting, and that influenced an entire play that I wrote. It’s four women sitting in a living room, they’re all wearing different colored shirts, and I was like, “I wonder who those women are.” So, I wrote this whole play about four women living in Spain.

On the music side? Oh man... It’s tricky to say because I kind of go in search of certain moods or feelings to help me fill out the rest of the story that I’m telling. Novelists, I think, would be the biggest thing for me because it’s other storytellers. Virginia Woolf is a huge one. A lot of southern gothic writers were influential to me when I was growing up, just because they have a sense of place and the place being so important, but also amazing characters. And I love anything that’s kind of about American decay, I find that really fascinating. Jane Austen is a huge one. I read this book Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe, which is I guess his seminal work. I remember I was kind of maybe too young to be reading it, because my mother was studying English at the time. So, books and literature have always been really important in that way.

Was there a moment that you knew you wanted to become a filmmaker?

At 16, I would say I really knew what it meant and what attracted me to a film, and how I wanted to be a part of that. It was when I was watching all those films from the ’70s, and just thinking, “Wow, these guys were able to make these crazy movies.” I remember watching Network and being like, “What?” [laughs] “This is amazing.” It just expanded my mind so much and I was like, “Oh, this is the director, that’s what

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they’re doing, the writers, the directors, that’s sort of—that’s where it’s happening, that’s what I feel like I can bring and what I can give,” and so that’s when it happened. Because I was a writer first, you know? I used to write poetry, then it was prose, and then it was scripts and TV shows and plays—that was my entryway into directing. And it still is, I think, for a lot of it.

What part of the filmmaking process do you enjoy the most?

I like the balance of writing for six months. I write from ten [o’clock] to six or something, and then every night I go see a friend or have dinner, go see a movie or play, and I’m like, “Oh, life’s so peaceful, how wonderful!” And then I start to get a little like, “Okay, I’ve just been writing by myself all day,” and then the film gets me, and I’m directing, and I’m on set, and I’m like pew! pew! Let’s do this thing! There’s lots of people around and lots of stuff to do. So, I love the balance of being on set and being alone. It’s a good mix, I think, for my personality, which is the introvert/extrovert thing. The balance of the two is great, but it is exhausting to make a movie. So, it’s lovely to be like, “Alright, I’m gonna go write for six months again or a year or something,” and then kind of go back into it.

What advice would you give to a young or emerging filmmaker?

To do the work. And the work kind of must be enough, in a certain respect, just because there’s no guarantee that things are gonna work out. But even when they do work out, it never goes exactly the way [laughs] you think it will. But yeah, doing the work because that’s why we do it, you know? It is a medium that we need an audience for, but I think just being able to figure out a way to find the space to do it. And the other thing is, when people say write what you know, you should write what you know emotionally, not necessarily where you’re from or what your own personal demographic is. What you know is how you connect to other people because other people know that as well, so I think if you can be honest about what you know emotionally, that’s the best way to connect with people.

What is the importance of moving image archives like we have here on campus?

So, what we did have at NYU was the Avery Fisher Center, which is amazing, so I don’t want anyone to come from NYU saying, “Excuse me!” And I know there’s an archival program there [laughs], but what I think is really cool about your archive is how much it deals with things that aren’t necessarily cinema. When I heard there were instructional videos and people’s home videos and that sort of thing, I was like, “Oh, that’s amazing,” because when I do research for real people, that’s where I would go. And so having that record of humanity is really interesting, even if it is things people don’t care about at all or didn’t think were that important. I think it would’ve been really cool doing research in an archive like that in college.

What is the importance of a good cinema on a university campus?

I think it’s so important to have a good cinema program because even people who aren’t into cinema, it’s great if they have resources so that they can connect with this fairly new medium—it’s only 100-something years old, which is so amazing when I think about how it’s just kind of taken over the way we experience stories. But I think that’s really important. And also just having a place, especially that’s not in New York or LA, that different people can come to, different types of people than the New York or LA types or people who travel there, so we have different stories.

I think what I love about IU is that you guys have your archive, which is so impressive, and how specific the archive and how special it is and unique. I think that’s really exciting. And for me, I would have loved to have something that amazing to go visit every so often. It’s so important to have a record of the stories we’ve told, so that’s one thing. But then in terms of a good cinema program... I don’t know, people must be able to learn how to tell their stories in film. There’s just so many elements to it; it’s so useful to have the resources and structure.
Each year, IU Cinema is fortunate to work with a wide variety of student, campus, and community partners. These partnerships bring a wide berth of critical perspectives and issues into our auditorium, and allow film edification, entertainment, and education to reach an ever-expanding audience pool. We are so grateful to the partners below whom we were able to work with in 2021–22.

OUR PARTNERS

African Studies Program
Arts and Humanities Council
Asian American Studies Program
Asian Culture Center
Audio Engineering and Sound Production
Big Ten Network
Black Camera
Black Film Center & Archive
Blueline Pictures
Buskirk Chumley Theatre
Center for Documentary Research and Practice
Center for International Studies at MIT
Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies
Center for Theoretical Inquiry in the Humanities
Center of Excellence of the French Embassy in the United States
College Arts & Humanities Institute
College of Arts and Sciences Office of Diversity and Inclusion
College of Arts and Sciences’ Themester
Coolidge Corner Theater
Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies
Department of Business Law and Ethics
Department of Central Eurasian Studies
Department of Comparative Literature
Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology
Department of French and Italian
Department of Gender Studies
Department of Mathematics
Department of Second Language Studies
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Eskewazi School of Art, Architecture + Design
Harvard University
Institute for Korean Studies
IU Athletics
IU Center of Excellence for Women & Technology
IU East Department of World Languages and Cultures
IU Institute for Advanced Studies
IU Libraries Moving Image Archive
IU Presidential Arts and Humanities Program
IU Student Composers Association
Jacobs School of Music
Jacobs School of Music Scoring for Visual Media Program
Kelley School of Business
Kelley School of Business Dean’s Office
Kinsey Institute
Latin American Music Center at the Jacobs School of Music
Latino Studies Program
Liard First Nation Language Department
Mary-Margaret Barr Koon Fund
Music Theory Department
New Frontiers in the Arts & Humanities Program
Paul H. O’Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs
Platform in Global Popular Music: A Research Laboratory in the Arts & Humanities
Seattle Erotica Cinema Society
Sloan Foundation
The Media School
UCLA Center for Critical Internet Inquiry
UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies
Wendi Norris Gallery

Student musicians performing at a Jon Vickers Scoring Award screening
100 YEARS OF ESTHER WILLIAMS

By Michaela Owens

For the past eight years, I have been trying to explain the sheer joy that is Esther Jane Williams. From the moment I first laid eyes on the champion swimmer-turned-actress in Thrill of a Romance (1945), I was transfixed. As I sighed over her delicious chemistry with Van Johnson and marveled at the film’s Technicolor dreamscape, which enveloped my senses unlike anything else I had experienced from a film before, a million questions came into my head. Where did Williams and her films come from? How did such a unique star fit into classic Hollywood? Why did her swimming feel so empowering to me? And why wasn’t she someone whose career was better known? That last question is still something I think about all the time. Here was someone who broke records as a competitive swimmer, reluctantly came to Hollywood on her own terms, helped create a genre of swimming musicals that literally no one else could replicate, and became one of Hollywood’s brightest stars and yet she remains underrated and underdiscussed—a fate that I cannot bear to let happen, especially since August 8 will mark the centennial of this remarkable woman.

Williams was a striking and singular combination of the leggy pin-up, the dutiful mother and wife, the glamorous movie star, the shrewd businesswoman (whose swimsuit company is still going strong!), and the mesmerizing athlete. There is no denying what the main attraction is when watching an Esther Williams musical because every element is there to emphasize her and her persona as a resilient and ambitious woman. While that particular persona wasn’t hers alone—think Barbara Stanwyck, Bette Davis, or Katharine Hepburn—what sets Williams apart is her extraordinary prowess as an athlete. She embodied a type of femininity where a woman could be physically strong without losing her desirability, her mobility, or her agency. Her co-stars seldom had as much clout at the box office as her, enabling her to take control of the film’s focus. With the exception of Fernando Lamas—who was a former competitive swimmer in Argentina—no leading man could keep up with Williams in the water, which helped to define the space as distinctively hers. The water reinforced her strength as it revealed her powerful body and highlighted her inimitable talent, substantiating Williams’s declaration that “it’s alright to be strong and feminine at the same time.”

“Strong and feminine” is an apt description for the way she swam in her films. When she joined Billy Rose’s Aquacade after her competitive career came to an end with the cancellation of the 1940 Olympics, Williams had to adjust from swimming fast to swimming “pretty.” While it looked effortless and graceful, she admitted that swimming pretty was deceptively difficult and physically demanding.

Left: Esther Williams, circa 1950
Facing: Williams in Million Dollar Mermaid
Throughout her career, though, she demonstrated comfort with her body and delight with her swimming, which she believed was one reason why audiences loved her movies. Although her time in the water could be seen as spectacle or objectification, Williams presented her swimming as something that pleased her as well as her audience; you can ogle her body all you like, but the ownership of that body is hers.

Williams radiates a power that muddles the idea of the male gaze because she is so plainly in control of her body and how it is displayed. Part of that control lies in the unmistakable sexual desires of her characters. In *Bathing Beauty* (1944), when she finds herself newly reconciled with husband Red Skelton, she has him carry her over the threshold of his room and implies that she wants to be put on the bed by pointedly looking at it. Disappointed that he nervously put her on a desk instead, she moves onto his lap, stroking his hair and kissing him. *Skirts Ahoy!* (1952) is especially noteworthy because the main conflict between Williams's character and Barry Sullivan's is that she is the pursuer in the relationship and he can't handle it.

*Williams became a star at the beginning of WWII, a time when women were finding more freedom outside of the home. In her aquamusicals, the swimming of Williams's characters was a representation of their autonomy; it gave them the ability to do what they wanted with their bodies and to feel good about it. In most cases, it also gave them an income and financial freedom that wasn’t tied up with a man’s as they supported themselves with livings as actresses, aqua stars, swimming instructors, swimsuit designers, and carnival performers.*

Because she was the only aquamusical star, Williams is differentiated from the other female stars of her time and therefore emerges as someone who didn’t conform to the expected career of a Hollywood actress. This idea extends to her characters as well, such as the aquatic performers she played in *Neptune’s Daughter* (1949), *Duchess of Idaho* (1950), *Million Dollar Mermaid* (1952), and *Easy to Love* (1953); the dairy farmer-turned-English Channel swimmer of *Dangerous When Wet* (1953); and the baseball team owner of *Take Me Out to the Ball Game* (1949). There is also *Fiesta’*s (1947) aspiring bullfighter Maria, whose brother disappears after a family dispute and thus inspires her to impersonate him in the ring in the hopes that it’ll cause him to return. When Maria becomes injured by a bull in one of the last scenes,
her nonconformity is seemingly punished, and yet Maria’s ability to accomplish what she set out to do—bullfight, find her brother, restore her family’s reputation, and marry her fiancé—regardless of the consequences can’t be ignored. Whether it be physical hardships, romantic complications, or even a threat to her life, Williams’s characters overcome whatever obstacles or consequences that arise and get the happy endings they want.

An Esther Williams character was never clumsy, ditzy, or bad at what they do. With her boldly executed stunts, like the dive in Million Dollar Mermaid that broke her neck, and her absolutely solid image of intelligence, confidence, and practicality, it wouldn’t have been believable if she had tried to play someone who was easily flustered or adorably naïve. Williams’s women voice their desires, freely move about any space they are in, and frequently stay career-driven, all while achieving professional and personal, specifically romantic, success. It wasn’t just Williams’s acting and athleticism that informed these characters, it was also her influence on her films’ screenplays. She would attend script meetings and had no qualms about jumping in with her own ideas, like the terrific conclusion to Dangerous When Wet’s climactic Channel race. One of her most important collaborators ended up being screenwriter Dorothy Kingsley, who welcomed Williams’s revisions and often included details in her scripts that were directly inspired by Williams’s life.

It would be a mistake to think that because the aquamusicals are escapist fare they don’t deserve serious attention. By the end of her long life, Williams survived mental abuse, sexual assault, professional betrayals, a misogynistic industry, and personal heartbreak. Not a day goes by that I’m not in awe of this woman. Studying her career and watching her dazzling work has brought more to my life than I ever expected, and after eight years it feels like there is still so much to uncover and explore. I don’t know if I’ll ever be able to write the right words to express my love for this woman, but when someone has changed your life, maybe those words never come. For now, though, I think I’ll keep trying.

Williams was unapologetic in her ambition and her power, but she was also just a magical human being. She loved swearing and could talk for hours. She was terribly nearsighted, which made her fear that people would think she was snubbing them when the reality was she couldn’t make out who they were. She was perpetually late to everything, even her second wedding. After experiencing constant cruelty from director Richard Thorpe on several films, she used her newly gained influence to make sure he never directed her again; a few years later, she threatened to have another director, Sidney Lanfield, removed from Skirts Ahoy! because of his bullying of co-star Vivian Blaine.
There is much that makes Indiana University Cinema unlike any other arthouse movie theater, including our Industry Experience Program (IEP), a set of educational initiatives designed to give students essential, real-world experience in cinema exhibition, programmatic curation, event production, and arts management.

INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

A foundational program for IU Cinema, the IEP offers hands-on knowledge that many other campus cinemas don’t provide. Students in the program are immersed in the work of the Cinema, building personal and professional networks and developing critical résumé-building skills. The IEP offers four pathways for student involvement:

Programmatic Curation. Students work with Dr. Kozma and Managing Director Friesner to conceptualize, plan, execute, and promote film programs for both campus and community audiences. As curators, students must determine the artistic and cultural needs of a given community, work with industry entities to secure screening rights and materials, manage a budget, and develop and execute a marketing plan. Key programs include the City Lights and Underground film series.

Cinema Projection and Technology. IU Cinema’s student projectionists receive an exceptional education courtesy of Director of Cinema Technology B. Elena Grassia, who has more than 35 years of experience in film presentation.

THE HISTORY OF THE CITY LIGHTS FILM SERIES

In 1998, with the help of Professor Emeritus James Naremore and the support of the Film Studies department, Comparative Literature students Drew Todd and Eric Beckstrom co-founded the City Lights Film Series after realizing there were no film series dedicated to classic world cinema on campus despite IU’s strong film program. Screenings happened in Ballantine Hall and the Radio-TV Building with films drawn from the Film Studies department’s 16mm collection and the occasional rental from the University of Iowa Libraries. “Our audiences were spectacular, and spectacularly enthusiastic,” Beckstrom remembers. “One regular attendee gave each of us a butterscotch hard candy at every screening. [Drew and I] both recall often burning our fingers on film as it sped through projectors because we had one decent projector and another that jittered the film if we didn’t keep a finger on it to increase the tension.” With a small budget from the newly created Department of Communication and Culture, City Lights continued until it found a home at IU Cinema, where it is now curated by a committee of graduate students whose selections are inspired by the holdings of the Lilly Library’s David Bradley Collection.

Posters from past City Lights film series programs
Trained in state-of-the-art cinema program projection, students handle not only digitized films but 35mm and 16mm celluloid as well, in addition to live-music events and rare presentations like Andy Warhol’s *Chelsea Girls*, which requires two projectors running simultaneously.

**Event Production and Arts Management.**
In partnership with the Master of Arts Administration program in the O’Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs, the Cinema employs graduate students each year in positions that train them in event planning, production, and management; community outreach and engagement; arts program administration; and fundraising and fund development. Depending on the student’s focus during their time with the Cinema, they are afforded the opportunity to work with a variety of Cinema staff, including Dr. Kozma, Managing Director Friesner, and Director of Events and Engagement Jessica Davis Tagg.

“Working at IU Cinema, I was able to evolve my leadership style. I feel like I gained the tools to really understand what kind of leader I am, and this position taught me how to manage people and run an organization. As cliché as this sounds, the days in the office where we were able to joke around with each other, do an event, and go home at the end of the night feeling accomplished were great. I have so many wonderful memories of IU Cinema... I will be back to visit for sure!”

—David Kortes, Former Events and Operations Assistant

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David Michael Kortes  
Events and Operations Assistant

Maxwell J. Moore  
Outreach and Engagement Assistant

Ebenezer Eserowe Eferobor  
Projectionist

Meet Palan  
Projectionist
Partnered Specialty Programming.
Working closely with two of our most valued campus partners—The Media School and the Jacobs School of Music—this pathway engages students as learners, creatives, and performers in two of the Cinema’s premiere student-centered events, Double Exposure and the Jon Vickers Scoring Award.

• Double Exposure. Double Exposure pairs students as filmmakers, composers, musicians, sound designers, sound engineers, projectionists, house managers, and ushers together for an entirely student-run cinematic experience. Each year, new short student-made films have their world premiere at IU Cinema, bringing audiences an innovative program made possible through collaborative partnerships between IU Cinema, the IU Student Composers Association, The Media School, and Jacobs School of Music’s Music Scoring for Visual Media program and Audio Engineering and Sound Production program. In 2022, more than 65 students took part in this annual co-curricular program.

• Jon Vickers Scoring Award (JVSA). Each year, one student from the composition department in the Jacobs School of Music is awarded a commission to write an original score for a silent film. The score is performed live at IU Cinema by an ensemble of student musicians to a screening of the film, managed in part by student projectionists. The spring 2022 score by student Daniel Whitworth was synchronized with its film, Phil-for-Short, and released as part of Kino Lorber’s Cinema’s First Nasty Women, a four-disc DVD/Blu-ray box set that was released in December 2022. JVSA, named after IU Cinema’s founding director Jon Vickers, is a Cinema-exclusive program produced in partnership with the Jacobs School of Music, generously endowed by former IU Trustee the Hon. P.A. Mack Jr.

THE HISTORY OF THE UNDERGROUND FILM SERIES

About five years after the establishment of the City Lights Film Series, a group of Communication and Culture grad students petitioned the department to create a sister series that would focus on experimental and avant-garde cinema. Thus, the Underground Film Series was born. With the guidance of Professor Joan Hawkins—whose husband, Skip, sometimes even ran the projector—Underground held its screenings in the Radio-TV Building until IU Cinema opened its doors in 2011. “The IU Cinema has given very generously and has enabled us to show things we’d never been able to previously screen,” Prof. Hawkins told IU Cinema’s blog in 2017. “And, of course, the Jorgensen Guest Filmmaker Series has enabled us to bring filmmakers here—unthinkable back in the day when we were carrying projectors, lenses, and film cans across campus.” Now a longtime regular series at the Cinema, Underground continues to be curated by graduate students and offers audiences the ability to see countless unique, strange, and little-known films.
Watching a film at IU Cinema is an experience unlike many others, thanks in large part to our dedicated cadre of yearly volunteers. Whether they are greeting you at the doors, making sure you find your favorite seat, promoting our films, staffing campus outreach events, writing our Establishing Shot blog posts, or chatting with you after a film about that one perfect shot, their energy, enthusiasm, and love for IU Cinema makes our theater everything that it is.

Volunteering at IU Cinema also affords our team one-of-a-kind opportunities to meet visiting filmmakers and other film professionals, experience the behind-the-scenes process of film distribution and exhibition, engage with a wide variety of community and campus groups—plus, watch all the movies they can manage for free. Our volunteer program has even led to career opportunities; a few of our employees started out as volunteers!

Our volunteers are an integral part of not just the IU Cinema experience, but also of how we are able to operate effectively and efficiently. IU Cinema staff is a small team, and volunteers help us extend our reach, bringing new ideas, perspectives, and energy into the Cinema while helping us maintain financial sustainability. During our 2021–22 programming season, IU Cinema volunteers donated a total of 1,036 hours to the Cinema, an approximate in-kind contribution of over $27,000!

We cannot thank our volunteers enough, and the next time you are at the Cinema, we invite you to thank them too! Volunteers in good standing at the end of fiscal year 2022 are acknowledged below.

“Each viewing becomes a family: in this one place at this one time for this one film, we’re in this together. Patron or volunteer, you’re welcome. It’s a place for you.”
—Kathie Durkel, volunteer

“I always feel that when I step into the IU Cinema, time stops. Without moving from my chair, I am allowed to travel, learn, listen to different languages, personalities, worldviews, and stories... Without moving from my chair, I am challenged to think, I experience adventure and I grow, every time.”
—Clara Vazquez, former volunteer

Join this amazing roster of volunteers! Anyone is welcome to be part of our volunteer family—reach out to us at iucinema@indiana.edu to learn more.
Graciously funded by film lover and dedicated IU Cinema patron Tina M. Jernigan, the Tina M. Jernigan IU Cinema Student Scholarship provides critical funds to support the educational goals of students who work or volunteer at IU Cinema. This year, we were thrilled to award the scholarship to two individual recipients, Hannah Madura and Meet Palan.

Hannah Madura is a member of our volunteer usher program. She is a Film and Television Production major heading into the BFA in Cinematic Arts program this coming fall semester. She is also a mixed-media artist, a musician who plays both the flute and trombone, and a member of the Student Cinema Guild. Hannah is excited about making her own work and is particularly interested in the onscreen representation of gender, race, and social class.

“I’ve lived in the United States for five years, yet I still feel like an outsider at times. The inclusion at IU Cinema, on the other hand, makes me feel at home in a way I’ve never felt before in the United States.” —Meet Palan

Meet Palan is an IU Cinema student projectionist. Originally from India, he is a Master of Science student in the Human Computer Interaction Design program. Meet is a lover of storytelling and plans to work as a designer of digital interfaces that use empathy to understand and improve users’ experiences with technology and wants to use his skills to leverage technology for social welfare.

Participants use Hand Eye Coordination (2002) to explain what it means when a film is “handmade.”

If we’re talking about experimental film, the term “handmade” usually refers to techniques like direct animation, processing film at home instead of sending it to a lab, or otherwise directly manipulating your negative or film print (bleaching, dying, etc.).

“Hand Eye Coordination” is the 2002 exploration of the importance of handmade techniques in experimental filmmaker Naomi Uman’s work and how her unique approaches highlight the strong relationship between materiality and subject matter.

What does it mean when a film is “handmade”?

Naomi Uman engages in all these techniques. Her most well-known film is probably Removed (1999), which involves direct animation of found footage. Uman took pieces of a 1970s German porn film and bleached out the nude female figures, frame-by-frame, with nail polish remover. The women perform pleasure in ghosted images, frustrating the original intent of the pornography.
Handmade films draw the viewer away from focusing solely on the content of a film and instead shift at least some attention to the means of production. Hand-processing renders the emulsion itself visible as the image flutters with inconsistent contact with processing chemicals. Direct animation pulls us out of the immersive world of the photographic by making the hand of the filmmaker obvious.

In experimental cinema, “handmade” often connotes analog—sometimes as an opposition to digital—and makes a claim to intimacy between a filmmaker and their materials. It is a kind of mythos that has sprung up around this mode of production, but that intimacy is not always experienced by the viewer. *Removed* is a good example of this tension. Any frame-by-frame animation technique involves some degree of intimacy between the filmmaker and their subject, and Uman would have had her hands on every single frame of this film. But as a viewer, intimacy is precisely what we are denied. *Removed* introduces distance between us and its subject, prompting many viewers over the years to reflect on objectification and the male gaze.

However, there are times when the experience of the filmmaker and the viewer more closely align. In documentaries like *Leche* (1998) and its 2003 sequel, *Mala Leche*, Uman brings us into a world instead of pushing us out of it. *Leche* was shot on black-and-white film stock, processed by Uman herself and hung to dry with clothespins. We can see ripples and scratches on the emulsion, artifacts of home-processing, but in this case it echoes the content rather than undermining it. Uman features close-ups of hands working: milking cows and making cheese. Our focus is on Uman’s subjects, not necessarily on the film technique itself, but the technique still makes itself known from time to time.

The idea of handmade can be fraught and contradictory (just like its sister concept, “authenticity”), but there’s a reason why there are still filmmakers who gravitate toward it. There is an element of wild chance in handmade techniques, true experimentation. Much of filmmaking involves precise mechanical processes, and the allure of working directly with your materials with your hands is seductive, a cultivation of intimacy.

Laura Ivans holds a PhD in film from IU and an MFA from Boston University. A filmmaker in her own right, Laura is skilled in translating the academic concepts of cinema studies for broad audiences and is the author behind the illuminating video essays on Establishing Shot.
An industry leader in exhibition and curation, IU Cinema cultivates unique artistic, educational, and intellectually enriching programs. This manifests in many forms, including but not limited to film series; visiting filmmakers and other industry professionals that give students and the wider community unparalleled access to some of the most influential global artists; conferences and symposia; student-film showcases, internships, and practical industry experiences; and community engagement.

Every semester, our audiences demonstrate how hungry they are for new and inspiring cinematic experiences and the necessary conversations and comradery that accompanies them. It’s a challenge we heartily accept, and we thank you, our patrons, for providing us with constant motivation to bring you bigger and better experiences.

If you’ve found some aspect of the Cinema’s programming and work stimulating, please consider donating to the IU Cinema Fund or establishing a planned gift to help support what we do. The IU Cinema Fund provides a critical foundation for all aspects of the Cinema’s work, from film programming and events to student and community engagement; from master classes and visits with film professionals, to film education and writing; and so much more.

The entire IU Cinema team remains steadfast in our dedication to using film and cinema studies for the intellectual edification and cultural enrichment of the IU and Bloomington communities.

For more information regarding donor opportunities, visit our website at cinema.indiana.edu/support-cinema.

VOICES FROM THE INDUSTRY

Filmmaking is the culmination of a broad array of talent—from directing to cinematography to screenwriting to scholarly research and production and sound design. The art of film would not be possible without the collaborative effort of numerous experts and craftspeople.

IU Cinema values every piece of work that goes into making great film and is committed to highlighting the breadth of this work through its invited guests. We know the best way to discover the myriad skills that inform filmmaking is to provide our audience with firsthand, extraordinary opportunities to engage with visionary and inspiring film-related experts and artists.

Visiting guest programming is an essential aspect of the Cinema’s commitment to providing transformative cinematic experiences. In 2021-22, the flexibility of virtual programming made possible a wealth of opportunities for our audiences to hear directly from those who bring so many brilliant stories to life through the moving picture. By providing such exclusive access to guests, both in person and over Zoom, we hope to give our audiences not just a broader understanding of what goes on behind the camera, but an invaluable, expansive, and unique kind of education that excites and enriches you, regardless of whether you’re a serious student of film, a casual moviegoer, or anywhere in between.

“Thank you to everyone for your organization and just a wonderfully well-thought-out conversation. Definitely up there with one of my favorites for Vai.”

——Marina Alofagia McCartney, filmmaker

Noah Amir Arjomand
filmmaker

Enrico Bartolucci
filmmaker and producer

María Magdalena Campos-Pons
artist and filmmaker

Mata Freshwater
filmmaker

Amandine Gay
filmmaker and writer

Abby Ginzberg
filmmaker

Kristin Hahn
producer

Kim Jong-Kwan
filmmaker

Adam Isenberg
producer

Jawshing Arthur Liou
artist, filmmaker, and professor

Marina Alofagia McCartney
filmmaker

Graham Reynolds
composer

Kevin Weaver
filmmaker
Part of what makes IU Cinema so special are the educational components we add to our events. With pre-film introductions, public talks, and post-screening Q&As, we hope to better contextualize the films we share while also providing access to industry professionals and other experts to offer rousing ideas that you never considered before, and glimpses into worlds and perspectives that are different than your own.

None of this would be possible without the time, talent, and care of the many scholars, students, faculty, programming partners, and others who have given introductions, collaborated with us on programs, participated in Q&As, presented lectures, and more. Thank you for helping IU Cinema be not just a place for film, but a place for knowledge and expertise.

Akin Adesokan  
IU Media School  

Caleb Allison  
IU Media School  

Hussein Banai  
IU Dept. of International Studies and MIT Center for International Studies  

Brandon Barker  
IU Dept. of Folklore and Ethnomusicology  

Rob Bilott  
lawyer and subject of Dark Waters  

Anke Birkenmaier  
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Vincent Boucher  
IU Dept. of French and Italian  

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Eskonazi Museum of Art  

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College of Arts and Sciences’ Themester  

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IU Dept. of Gender Studies and co-founder of SECS Fest  

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Writers Guild at Bloomington  

Abby Cox  
costume designer  

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IU Dept. of Central Eurasian Studies  

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Harvard University Dept. of Mathematics  

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Institute for Korean Studies  

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Kelley School of Business  

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University of Miami Dept. of Cinematic Arts  

Kathleen Gilbert  
IU professor emerita  

Henry Glassie  
subject and co-writer of Henry Glassie: Field Work  

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Jacobs School of Music  

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IU Dept. of African American and African Diaspora Studies and Anthropology  

Joan Hawkins  
IU Media School and Center for Theoretical Inquiry in the Humanities  

Satsuki Ina  
subject of And Then They Came for Us  

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IU Dept. of Higher Education and Student Affairs and board member of Empowering Pacific Islander Communities  

Susanne Schwibs  
IU Media School
IU Cinema’s work would not be possible without the collective contributions of time, financial support, creative and intellectual energy, and dedicated work of our many supporters. The generosity of IU Cinema donors is unparalleled, and one small gesture of our thanks is this public acknowledgment of donors who have supported the Cinema at the $1,000 level and above*.

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Right: Deborah Landis and Linda Pisano
Bottom: Henry Glassie and Pravina Shukla (right)

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We apologize if we’ve inadvertently left any name off this list.