

AMATEUR NIGHT: HOME MOVIES FROM AMERICAN ARCHIVES

Directed by Dwight Swanson

(© 2010, 84 minutes, 35mm, sound, b&w and color)

Produced by the Center for Home Movies with support from the National Film Preservation Foundation, the Louis B. Mayer Foundation, the Haghefilm Foundation and Cineric, Inc.

See www.amateurnightmovie.com for more information.

BLURB

Dramatic, funny, poignant and even strange, AMATEUR NIGHT presents 16 amateur films from the collections of American film archives. Piecing together family moments, historical scenes, animation, drama, comic routines and travelogues dating from 1915 to 2005, this groundbreaking compilation demonstrates the eclectic array of entertainment, innovation and enlightenment found in home movies. Featuring films by average Joes alongside notables like Alfred Hitchcock, Richard Nixon, animator Helen Hill and Smokey Bear, AMATEUR NIGHT adds to the images archival audio, commentaries from family members, and newly-recorded music, including an original score for the dazzling short OUR DAY by Rachel Grimes, formerly of the band Rachel's. Blown-up from the original reels to 35mm, AMATEUR NIGHT is a feature length big screen journey into the eclectic past of small-gauge filmmaking.

SYNOPSIS

What do you think of when you think of home movies? Whatever the answer, chances are that it is mostly correct, but also incomplete. AMATEUR NIGHT, a compilation of 16 home movies and amateur films culled from the collections of film archives is a journey into the eclectic past of home-based filmmaking. While countless filmmakers have incorporated home movies into their own films, this is likely the first feature-length film made up entirely of unedited amateur films, foregrounding them not as illustrative footage, but as complete works to be viewed on their own terms.

A mixture of excerpts and complete reels, the films are allowed to stand on their own with their occasional mistakes intact. The films come from a variety of sources, including 8mm, super 8, 16mm and the rarer 9.5mm and 28mm formats. Three films come with their original soundtracks (all narrations recorded by the filmmakers), while the remaining films have been supplemented with new tracks, including archival sound and music and newly-composed musical scores by 4 Five VI, an ensemble that specializes in innovative silent film accompaniment, and Rachel Grimes, formerly of the Louisville, Kentucky band Rachel's. Five of the films include commentaries recorded specifically for the film by relatives of the late filmmakers, such as Patricia Hitchcock O'Connell, who shares memories of her father Alfred Hitchcock.

Family life has long been at the heart of home moviemaking, and it is represented here in many forms, including the Hashizume family in the Heart Mountain internment camp in Wyoming during the Second World War; the multiethnic life of Mort Goldman, a New Jersey chicken farmer; a comedic sketch by the Minnich family of Knoxville, Tennessee, and Alfred Hitchcock cavorting with family and friends at his country home in England.

Amateur filmmakers also covered historical events in their uniquely personal ways, such as an atomic bomb test in the Nevada desert, filmed by a Georgia newspaper man; footage of Richard Nixon's visit to Idaho Falls in 1971, filmed with a degree of intimacy that only his staff members (armed with a super 8 camera as they looked over his shoulder) could manage; the Last Great Gathering of the Sioux Nation, filmed in Nebraska in 1934; and the late filmmaker Helen Hill's portrait of her beloved New Orleans, shot during her return following Hurricane Katrina.

AMATEUR NIGHT includes not just raw home movies, but also examples from some of America's most talented amateur filmmakers, including the National Film Registry title OUR DAY, a finely crafted portrait of life in small town Kentucky; FAIRY PRINCESS, a charming movie by award-winning Chicago filmmaker Margaret Conneely, combining live-action sequences and pixilated animations; and WELCOME SAN FRANCISCO MOVIE MAKERS, a portrait of a filmmaking club from 1960.

FILM SELECTIONS

(see www.amateurnightmovie.com for more information)

Welcome San Francisco Movie Makers [excerpt]

How-to film for amateur filmmakers

Dir. Dr. Frank S. Zach

San Francisco Media Archive

1960

Original soundtrack

Butt Shakers [excerpt]

Jarret Collection

Pittsburgh African American home life

Dir. David H. Jarret

Orgone Archive

1961

Silent

Alfred Hitchcock home movies

Dir. Alfred Hitchcock

Academy Film Archive

1930

Commentary by Patricia Hitchcock O'Connell

Baby Squirrel and Chicago Bus Ride

Dimond Collection

9.5mm films

Dir. Stuart Dimond

Walker Arts Center

1927-1928

New musical score composed by 4 Five VI

Day on the Featherlane Farm: Meet the Neighbors

Multiethnic New Jersey rural life

Dir. Mortimer Goldman

National Center for Jewish Film

1948

New musical score composed by 4 Five VI

Naushon Sheep Drive

Forbes Collection

28mm home movies from Naushon Island, Massachusetts

Dir. Alexander Forbes

Northeast Historic Film

1915

New musical score composed by 4 Five VI

Heart Mountain Relocation Center [excerpt]

Hashizume Collection

Japanese internment camp home movies

Dir. Naokichi Hashizume

Japanese American National Museum

1945

Commentary by Kimie Hashizume Ouchi

Last Great Gathering of the Sioux Nation

Dir. Arthur P. Howe

Nebraska State Historical Society

1934

Archival musical score

Innsbruck [excerpt]

Morris Margolin collection

Travel footage of post-World War II Europe

Dir. Morris Margolin

Archive of Documentary Arts, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collections Library, Duke University

1953

Original soundtrack

Atom Bomb [excerpt]

Record of Nevada atomic bomb test

Dir. Louis C. Harris

Walter J. Brown Media Archives, University of Georgia Libraries

1953

Commentary by "Hap" Harris

Fairy Princess

Award-winning pixilated comic film by Chicago filmmaker Margaret Conneely

Dir. Margaret Conneely

Chicago Film Archives

1955

Original soundtrack

The Coker Avenue Gang

Minnich Collection

Comic sketches

Dir. C.C. Minnich

Tennessee Archive of Moving Image and Sound

1930

New musical score composed by 4 Five VI

Smokey Bear home movies [excerpt]

Dir. Homer C. Pickens

New Mexico State Archives

1950

Commentary by Jimmy Pickens

Nixon Visits Idaho Falls [excerpt]

Nixon White House home movies

Nixon Presidential Library & Museum

(National Archives & Records Administration)

[Nixon White House Staff]

1971

Archival sound recording

Lower 9th Ward

Helen Hill Home Movies

Post-Katrina New Orleans Lower 9th Ward cleanup by the late filmmaker and animator

Dir. Helen Hill

Harvard Film Archive

2005

Commentary by Paul Gailiunas

Our Day

National Film Registry Title

Dir. Wallace Kelly

Center for Home Movies

1938

New musical score composed by Rachel Grimes

CREDITS

Producer and Director

Dwight Swanson

Production Coordinator

Diana Little
Cineric, Inc.

Title Sequence designed by Kerry Laitala

Music by Lylas

Archivists

Ruta Abolins
Liz Coffey
Margie Compton
Paul Eisloeffel
Karen Glynn
Steve Greene
Haden Guest
May Haduong
Kirston Johnson
Lynne Kirste
Sibel Melik
Stephen Parr

Gemma Perretta
Greg Pierce
Rich Pontius
Bradley Reeves
Sharon Rivo
Melissa Salazar
Amy Sloper
Louisa Trott
Jill Vuchetich
Nancy Watrous
David Weiss

Sound recording

Claire Huie
René Pinnell
Mark Rance
Peter Sheffer

Sound editing

Robert Salyer

Soundtrack

Chace Audio by Deluxe

Thanks to

Jennifer Accardo
Andrew T. Betzer
Fran Bowen
Paolo Cherchi Usai
Paul Gailunas
Rachel Grimes
Hap Harris
Bob Heiber
Bohdan Hilash
Kelli Hix
Martha Kelly

Jeff Lambert
Andrew Lampert
Linda Margolin
Balázs Nyari
Kimie Ouchi
Jimmy Pickens
János Pilényi
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Mike Riley
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Thanks to the Haghefilm Foundation

Funding provided by

The National Film Preservation Foundation and The Louis B. Mayer Foundation

Film stock courtesy of Kodak

Special thanks to Cineric. Without their contribution, this project would not have been possible

STILLS

High resolution versions available on www.amateurnightmovie.com



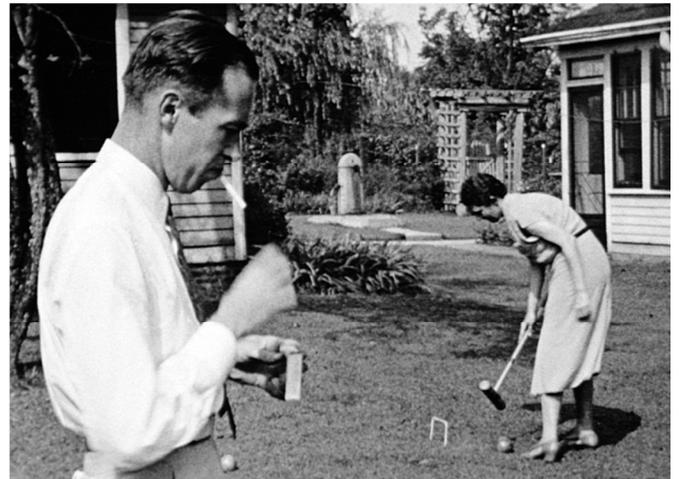
Amateur Night title sequence, designed by Kerry Laitala



Still from *Butt Shakers*, courtesy of Orgone Archive



Still from *Welcome San Francisco Movie Makers*, courtesy of San Francisco Media Archive



Still from *Our Day*, Courtesy of the Center for Home Movies

CONTRIBUTING ARCHIVES

[Academy Film Archive](#) (Los Angeles, CA)

[Center for Home Movies](#) (Baltimore, MD)

[Chicago Film Archives](#) (Chicago, IL)

[Duke University Libraries](#) (Durham, NC)

[Harvard Film Archive](#) (Cambridge, MA)

[Japanese American National Museum](#) (Los Angeles, CA)

[National Center for Jewish Film](#), Brandeis University (Waltham, MA)

[Nebraska State Historical Society](#) (Lincoln, NE)

[New Mexico State Records Center and Archives](#) (Santa Fe, NM)

[Nixon Presidential Library and Museum](#) (College Park, MD and Yorba Linda, CA)

[Northeast Historic Film](#) (Buckport, ME)

[Orgone Archive](#) (Pittsburgh, PA)

[San Francisco Media Archive](#) (San Francisco, CA)

[Tennessee Archive of Moving Image and Sound](#) (Knoxville, TN)

[Walker Art Center](#) (Minneapolis, MN)

[Walter J. Brown Media Archives & Peabody Awards Collection](#) (Athens, GA)

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Dwight Swanson, Producer and Director

Dwight Swanson resides in Baltimore and maintains the home office of the Center for Home Movies. He was one of the producers of the DVD *Living Room Cinema: Films from Home Movie Day, Vol. 1*. He has a B.A. in history from the University of Colorado and an M.A. in American Studies with an emphasis on popular and material culture from the University of Maryland. His initial training was in photographic history and museum studies. Since graduating from the L. Jeffrey Selznick School of Film Preservation at the George Eastman House he has served as the archivist for regional film and video collections at the Alaska Moving Image Preservation Association, Northeast Historic Film and Appalshop, as well as working on projects at the Human Studies Film Archives and Historical Society of Pennsylvania. He is a specialist in amateur film and regional film production and has lectured and written extensively on home movies and amateur film, including presentations at the Orphan Film Symposium, the Northeast Historic Film Summer Symposium, the University Film and Video Association, and the Association of Moving Image Archivists' annual conferences. He is a past member of the National Film Preservation Board, and is past co-chair of the Association of Moving Image Archivists' Small Gauge and Amateur Film Interest Group and the Regional Audio-Visual Archivists' Interest Group.

The Center for Home Movies

www.centerforhomemovies.org

MUSICIANS

Lylas

lylas.net

Rachel Grimes

www.rachelgrimespiano.com

4 five vi

www.4fivevi.com