



**RENDEZVOUS
WITH MADNESS**
FILM FESTIVAL
NOVEMBER 6 - 14, 2015



For Immediate Release October 15, 2015

**RENDEZVOUS WITH MADNESS AND WORKMAN ARTS ANNOUNCE
ALL-DAY SYMPOSIUM ON SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7**

TRANSFIXED: ADDICTION AND TV
THE PUBLIC ADDICT, AFFLICTION FICTION, NET FIX
<http://www.rendezvouswithmadness.com>

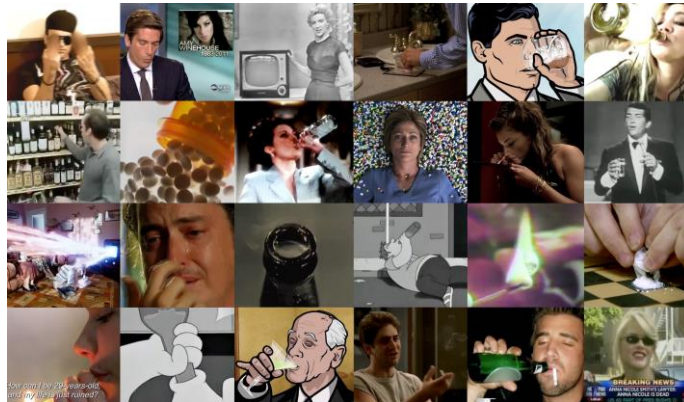


Photo Credit: artist Thea Jones

The first and largest mental health film festival in the world, **Rendezvous with Madness (RWM)**, presented by **Workman Arts (WA)**, returns to **TIFF Bell Lightbox** alongside the **Bloor Hot Docs Cinema** and **Workman Theatre** from **November 6 - 14** for its 23rd edition. The nine-day festival showcases 20+ programs with almost 40 feature and short films, a multi-media installation exhibition and full day symposium with a spotlight on television and addiction. Most screenings are followed by a discussion with artists, mental health professionals and/or people with lived mental health experience. RWM presents powerful, entertaining and compelling images of mental health from around the world. These diverse viewpoints capture the global discussion surrounding mental health and encourage the breakdown of stigma across many cultures.

On **Saturday, November 7, 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.** at the **Workman Theatre**, 651 Dufferin Street, RWM's annual symposium moderated by **Geoff Pevere** takes place. This year's theme is entitled **Transfixed: Addiction and TV**, that includes three panels addressing the symbiotic relationship between digital media and addiction, at 10 a.m., 12:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m.. Tickets are priced at \$40 with lunch and \$30 without and can be purchased by **telephone** between 10 a.m. - 7 p.m. at **416-599-TIFF (8433)** or toll free at **1-888-599-8433**, **online** at



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rendezvouswithmadness.com, or **in-person** at the TIFF Bell Lightbox, 350 King Street West, Reitman Square, Toronto between 10 a.m. and 10 p.m..

These days, you can't turn on a TV show without confronting addiction. Hosted by critic, author and RWM Program Director Geoff Pevere, the year Rendezvous will devote an entire day to the discussion of how this has happened, why it has happened and what it means. From a first-person discussion of what it's like to be dealing with addiction under TV's hot spotlight, to case studies in the dramatic representation of the addicted character, to the increasingly pressing digital-age question of whether TV itself is an addictive substance, the Transfixed symposium will scan the gamut of pop culture's primary function.

SYMPOSIUM

10 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. - THE PUBLIC ADDICT

It is a common wisdom of recovery that staying clean and sober requires contemplation, honesty and release from the ego. But it is a common practice of celebrity to magnify one's experience into a 24/7 form of constant spectacle. And being a star — even if only in your own life — has never been a more tantalizing ambition. What is it like to face addiction and recovery under the unblinking eye of media scrutiny, when the whole world is watching? Our panel shares personal reflections and testimonies.

Panelists

- Sheldon Kennedy is a Canadian former professional ice hockey player and is the Lead Director at the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre.
- Steve Leckie is foundational figure in the Toronto punk and Queen West art scene, an artist, musician, songwriter and lead singer of the Viletones.
- Jowita Brydlowska is a journalist and an author of a bestselling memoir *Drunk Mom*. Her next book, *GUY (Why Women Love Me)*, a novel, is coming out Fall 2016.

12:30 P.M. - 2 PM - AFFLICTION FICTION

Time was, the only people on TV who had substance issues were jovial drunks teetering on bar stools or singing behind the bars of a drunk tank. And drugs? Those were what were either advertised as good for you during commercial breaks or what turned long-haired kids into drooling lunatics on all those cop shows. What a world away that seems. Today you can't tune in to a show without confronting somebody's fictional version of an addict. Recovery and addiction are everywhere and entire shows — *The Wire*, *Nurse Jackie*, *Weeds*, *Breaking Bad*, *Mad Men*, *Shameless*, *Mr. Robot* — have been built on the foundation of dependency. But how accurate are these depictions and what impact do they have?

Panelists

- Norma Coates is an Associate Professor of Music and Media Studies at Western University and a recovering alcoholic.
- Ken Rogers is an Associate Professor in the Department of Cinema & Media Arts, School of the Arts, Media, Performance & Design at York University.
- Sarah Metheson is an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication, Popular Culture & Film at Brock University and co-editor of Canadian Television Text and Context.

2:30 P.M. - 4 P.M. - NET FIX

We now have TV anywhere, any time and as much as we want. There is nowhere to turn without being confronted by screens, and if they're not staring us in the face, they're right there in our pocket. There are no longer any limits on our access to distraction and the very idea of doing without is, for many, unthinkable. What has that constant presence of choice, amusement and instant gratification done to our brain chemistry? Or to our expectation of being gratified immediately? Distraction is at our fingertips, satisfaction a second away. Are we digitally addicted?

Panelists

- Nigel E. Turner, Ph.D., is an independent scientist at CAMH. He has spent the past 20 years conducting research on addictions, mostly focusing on behavioral addiction such as gambling and video gaming.
- Scott Henderson is Chair of the Department of Communication, Popular Culture and Film at Brock University, and co-editor of Canadian Television: Texts and Contexts.
- Dr. Bruce Ballon, is an Associate Professor of Public Health and Psychiatry for the U of T's Faculty of Medicine and Adjunct Professor for the University of Ontario Institute of Technology's Faculty of Health Sciences.
- Alissa Sklar, Ph.D. runs risk(within)reason, a Montreal consultancy project focused on teens, technology and risky behaviours.

Moderator: Geoff Pevere

Geoff is the Rendezvous With Madness Film Festival Program Director. He has been writing, teaching and broadcasting about movies, media and popular culture for more than thirty years. A former movie critic with the Toronto Star and columnist with the Globe and Mail, he is also the author of several books about film, music and pop culture, and has acted as movie critic on many TV and radio programs over the years. Geoff's teaching experience extends to several Canadian universities and campuses and he remains as transfixed as ever.



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MULTI-MEDIA INSTALLATION:

we now return you to your perpetual pleasure programming

Jaene Castrillon, Claro Cosco, Joey DAMMIT! and Thea Jones

<http://www.rendezvouswithmadness.com/exhibits/>

Returning this year, November 6 – December 6, is a multi-media and collaborative installation, which responds to the 2015 festival symposium theme of ‘Transfixed: Addiction and TV’. A video/animation component will be displayed on digital screens and presented from November 6 - 14 at the opening night VIP event, Bloor Hot Docs Cinema and at TIFF Bell Lightbox prior to the film screenings.

This multifaceted artistic interpretation of how our brain works, survives and suffers through addiction reframes the excess of substance abuse seen on TV. In order to portray how normalized we have become to the viral image of addiction, images of addiction from mainstream television flash on the monitors alongside an overabundance of content gathered from the internet, movies and TV’s history. It creates a construct of a giant aggregate mind-presenting viewers with a snippet of the bliss and banality in the face of addiction. Furthermore, you can’t stop watching!

we now return you to your perpetual pleasure programming was commissioned by Workman Arts for the Rendezvous with Madness Film Festival

About Rendezvous With Madness (RWM)

The first festival of its kind in the world and currently the largest, **Rendezvous with Madness** was founded in 1993 and is produced each year by **Workman Arts**. RWM investigates the facts and mythologies surrounding mental illness and addiction as presented by both Canadian and international filmmakers, as well as by visual and media-based artists. The festival provides filmmakers and artists with opportunities to exhibit work that may not otherwise be seen; facilitates discussion between artists and audiences on these cinematic and media representations; and increases awareness of, and advocacy for, mental health and addiction issues among the broader public. Our 23rd Festival runs November 6-14, 2015, for more information please visit: www.rendezvouswithmadness.com

Workman Arts (WA) is the longest-running multidisciplinary arts and mental health organizations in North America. WA facilitates aspiring, emerging and established artists with mental illness and addiction issues to develop and refine their art form



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through its arts training programs, public performance/exhibit opportunities and partnering with other art organizations. As well, WA promotes a greater public understanding of mental illness and addiction through the creation, presentation and discussion of artistic media. Workman Arts thanks their patrons Her Excellency Sharon Johnston, C.C. and Dr. Barbara Dorian & Dr. Paul Garfinkel, and is a proud partner of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH).

Accreditation is now open:

<http://www.rendezvouswithmadness.com/accreditation/>

FOLLOW US:

<https://www.facebook.com/RWMFilmFest>

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www.rendezvouswithmadness.com

We are presently confirming interviews. Thank you!

MEDIA

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