

Al Purdy documentary at Bancroft Playhouse

From a desire to tell the story of the campaign to save the ramshackle A-Frame where renowned poet Al Purdy found his voice, Maclean's film critic Brian D. Johnson lovingly crafted the new doc, 'Al Purdy Was Here.'

In Prince Edward County, in 1957, Al Purdy started building the A-Frame that would become the future gathering place of luminaries of Canadian literature. Purdy, dead 15 years now, was the first to admit that the poetry he created before he started the A-Frame was not up to snuff. But something magical happened when he connected with the land of his youth. The magic came out in poetry that has influenced generations of Canadians. The A-Frame, built from salvaged materials when he was down on his luck, is where the legend took off.

Johnson says that his intention was to tell the story of saving the building and turning the space into a residence for poets. And then, as Johnson says, 'Al Purdy took over the doc.'

The film is a retrospective of Purdy's work, the people he inspired, and the art they created as a result. From Sarah Harmer to Leonard Cohen, the film features a long list of well-loved producers of Canadian culture.

'Al Purdy Was Here' will screen in Bancroft at the Village Playhouse on June 8. The film features Purdy's poetry and insights into his colourful life; including what happens when you are single-minded in your pursuit of art.

North of 7 Film Fest programmer Heather Brough also announced that writer and film director Brian D. Johnson will be at the screening to participate in a live Q & A on the Playhouse stage.

'This film has the power to speak to us as people who embrace and crave culture,' Brough says. 'This will be an amazing opportunity for our audience to hear Brian talk about his passion for Purdy, and about meeting all the amazing stars that participated in this project.'

Tickets to the special screening of 'Al Purdy Was Here' are \$10 and they are available online at boxofficebancroft.com, at Hospice, Posies, and Harvest Moon. The film starts at 7pm on June 8 and the Q & A will follow after the closing credits.

The North of 7 Film Fest is operated by Hospice North Hastings with support from TIFF Film Circuit. All proceeds of the screening support the programs and services which they provide free of charge throughout our community.