



June 23, 2022

An open letter to fans of the IFS:

July of 2022 marks my 25th anniversary at the helm of the International Film Series. I will be stepping down from this position the following month at the end of August. As I told my friend and boss, Chair of the Department of Cinema Studies, Ernesto Acevedo-Muñoz, it has been a singular privilege and one of the highest honors of my lifetime to oversee and program the longest-running, continuous arthouse calendar film series west of the Mississippi.

Having been raised in Boulder I was able to attend shows at the IFS since I was a child. It was a habit that continued in my years as a young adult and onward to my current status as an old and cranky Gen X geezer. Helming the IFS for so many years was, for me, a dream come true. The IFS is an oasis for true film lovers, and I'm very proud of the fact that the IFS is the only place in Boulder that still regularly shows 35mm films in their full repertory glory, and does this alongside new digitally-projected titles that bring to a large auditorium the best of what can be found on the film festival circuit. Despite the many costs involved (performance and shipping rights can exceed a thousand dollars per title), the IFS has always tried to keep admission rates affordable so that everyone, not just the well-to-do, could enjoy a quality night out at the movies.

Were it not for extenuating circumstances, I might have stayed at my post until keeling over and being taken out two-feet first on a stretcher. That's how much I love this job. That being said, my undivided attention is now required at home and it is time for me to pass the torch along to someone else, ergo my decision to take early retirement. My departure from the position does not require any special farewell ceremonies as I plan on continuing to attend IFS shows long into the future. That's something I can write with confidence thanks to planned equipment upgrades happening this summer as well as a small yet stable operating budget. The latter, importantly, grants a bit of immunity from the marketplace and it is one of the reasons IFS screenings, unlike most multiplexes, don't pollute your cinematic experience with a constant barrage of pre-movie advertisements, or the absurd half-hour allotted to trailers, which criminally now include ads and so-called PSA's that are nothing but attempts to ransack your wallet by getting you to load up on sugar water and junk food. Conversely, at the IFS, the focus has traditionally been on making it possible for an audience to enjoy the main attraction without those distractions. Another IFS tradition that I hope continues is that of making sure there is always an usher in the audience to protect lovers of the darkened arena from the scourge of people so addicted to their phones that they use them during a movie.

Having recently celebrated the 80th anniversary of the IFS I'm glad to report that there's enough stability currently in place to be optimistic that the IFS will be able to celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2041. Of course, that will only be possible with the ongoing support of many key players at CU, including the faculty at the Department of Cinema Studies, donors, and you: the audience. Yes, you, the folks who come despite parking woes and bad weather. The IFS has always been a great resource for lovers of world-cinema, arthouse fare, independent titles, cult-classics, repertory packages, reel-to-reel celluloid screenings, must-see-on-the-big-screen experiences, and a long list of extraordinary special events involving a kaleidoscope of visiting filmmakers and cinematic artists. All that magic, however, should never be taken for granted. It requires an audience or it will cease to exist.

I have a lot of specific people to thank and plan on doing just that over the course of the next few months in ways both public and private. I'm tempted to end this with a line from the great Douglas Adams by saying "So long, and thanks for all the fish!" But the truth is this: I'm not going anywhere and you'll still see me at the movies. The more appropriate quote belongs to Vera Lynn:

"We'll meet again. Don't know where, don't know when. But I know we'll meet again some sunny day."

Pablo Kjolseth
(IFS Director & Coördinator, 1997 - 2022)



*Pablo Kjolseth at the Stanley Kubrick Exhibit in L.A.
Photo: Eric Stough.*