

CHICAGO FILM SOCIETY 2025 ANNUAL REPORT



"Films of All Gauges for People of All Ages"

OUR MISSION

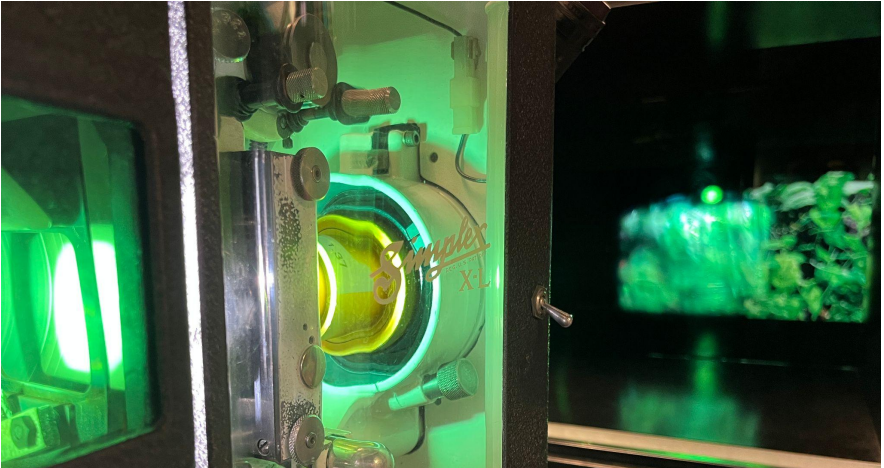
Founded by projectionists in 2011, the Chicago Film Society promotes the exhibition and preservation of film in context. CFS screenings provide access to the restoration efforts of archives, studios, and private collectors, the work of artists exploring the film medium today, and the experience of seeing film projected live in a theater, with an audience. As physical artifacts, the film prints we show hold the stories told by films — but also the stories of the industries that produced them, the labs that printed them, the places where they were exhibited, and the people who watched them. Through screenings, writing, film preservation projects, and workshops, CFS works to make all of this context visible and accessible to the public.

2025 Survey Results: "What do you like most about CFS Screenings?"



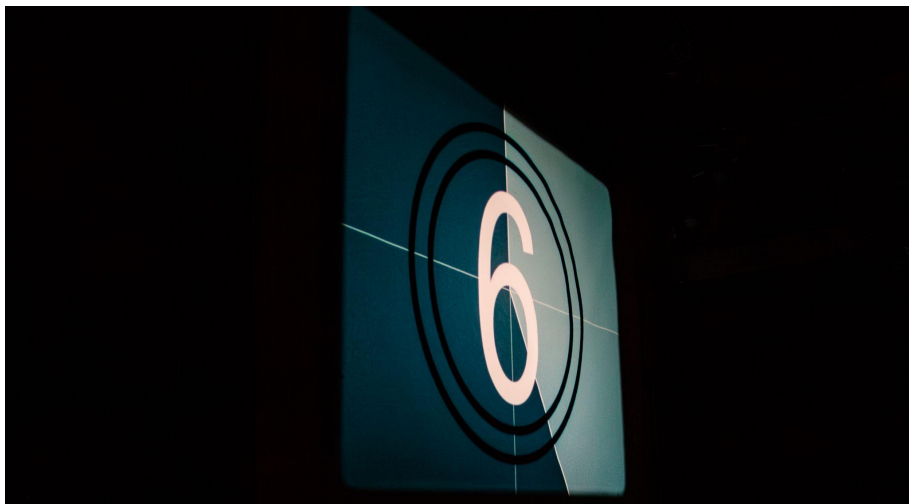
- "Superior programming; warm, personal, amusing, informative introductions."
- "I love the context the presenters give before the screenings. I love going in blind to a CFS screening knowing that the introduction will put me in the right frame to thoroughly appreciate the film. Whoever is presenting, I can tell they care about what they are doing and that sort of enthusiasm is contagious."
- "I really can't emphasize how much I appreciate CFS programming. The great care in the curation of the film seasons, the thoughtful introductions before films, and the clear passion for the medium comes through at each screening. CFS is an absolute gem in the Chicago (and national) film space. It has nurtured my great love of projected silent cinema. It has exposed me to artists and types of film I otherwise might not seek out, thinking 'if CFS thinks it is worth seeing, it probably is'."
- "I love the sense of discovery, learning about the cool shit I wouldn't know about if it weren't for you fabulous folks. I love the shorts programming before the showings and the pre show remarks—I always learn something. I love the vibe of being in a room with other people excited about the same stuff, and the great nerdy passionate vibe you guys create. Basically I feel a lot of gratitude at CFS screenings and that's a nice feeling!!!"
- "Being around strangers who love this as much as I do."
- "The chance to see amazing films with other folks for affordable prices."

2025 Survey Results: "What do you like most about seeing movies on film (16mm, 35mm, etc)?"



- "The lights, the colors, the narcotic embrace"
- "An escape from the digital hellscape. Connecting to a physical object with a real history."
- "It feels that much more special... the texture of the images and the colors and the specificity of a movie as a historical object living in time, now."
- "I appreciate the history, the genuine connection of something living: ephemeral yet lasting."
- "I feel like I learn more about seeing movies on film with each new one I watch, whether they are scratched up and been around the block a few times or totally pristine. I think it's very important to have a continued place in our culture for film projection and try to support CFS as much as possible: you do great work!"
- "Personal connection. More of a sense of a creative brain behind the film, better connection to the actors captured by it, and a communal connection in a theater with a projectionist whose love for the film is projected as well."
- "The colors. The focus. The socially shared experience. The authorial intent. The whirr of the projector in the background. The physicality of the print (especially when it was printed from a negative that was not digitally remastered)."

2025 IN NUMBERS



Average daily cost of running CFS: \$510

OUR 2025 SHOWS

Total attendance at CFS screenings: 9,641

Total number of linear feet of film screened: 435,370

Individual films screened: 145

Individual screenings held: 60

Year when the oldest *print* we screened was made: 1953

Year when the oldest *movie* we screened was made: 1914

Number of films screened with live musical accompaniment: 9

Longest distance a print traveled to screen at CFS: 6,552 miles

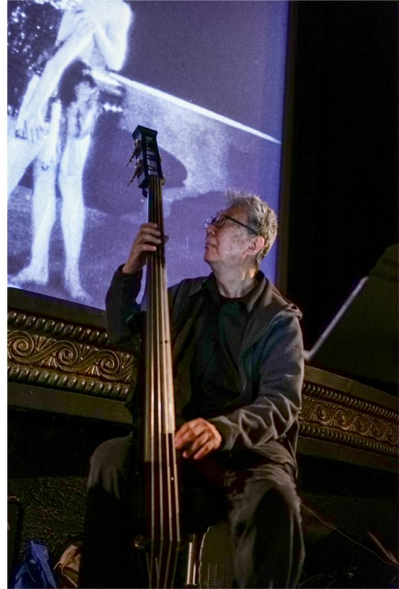
OUR OTHER 2025 PROGRAMS

Film projection and filmmaking workshops held: 5

Number of Chicagoland analog film screenings promoted as part of our Celluloid Chicago project: 1,500

Number of people who saw CFS collection prints screened at other venues, via our print loan program: 5,861

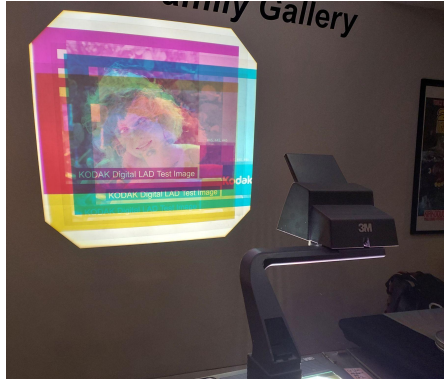
PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS - SILENT SERIES



CFS continued its monthly silent film series at the Music Box, with a mix of local musicians accompanying archival and imported 35mm prints.

David Drazin interpreted Erich von Stronheim's *Blind Husbands* and Howard Hawks's *A Girl in Every Port* on piano, while the **Alvin Cobb Jr. Trio** presented an original jazz score for Oscar Micheaux's *The Symbol of the Unconquered*. The **MIYUMI Project Japanese Experimental Ensemble** (pictured above) provided extraordinary improvisation to a 35mm print of Mikio Naruse's *Every Night Dreams* imported from the National Film Archive of Japan while **Whine Cave** joined the CFS roster with a new restoration of Tod Browning's *The Unknown* and Alexander Dovzhenko's Ukrainian classic *Earth*.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS - TECHNICOLOR WEEKEND



CFS staff member Becca Hall explains how color separation works using a custom printed test image and an overhead projector.

Held at the Gene Siskel Film Center and now in its third year, Technicolor Weekend celebrates the conservation work of archives and private collectors, and the beauty and longevity of original Technicolor prints. Our 2025 edition featured extraordinary prints of *The Birds*, *Mary Poppins*, *Black Belt Jones*, and *The Parallax View*, and audience members were invited to wind through examples of Technicolor prints from the CFS collection in the lobby.

Many of the prints screened in this program were over 60 years old!



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS - CELLULOID NOW



We held our third edition of Celluloid Now in September 2025, which included 55 short films on 16 and 35mm from artists and filmmakers all over the world.

Special programs included **"Celluloid City Seoul"**, a program of recent films made in Seoul co-programmed by Chae Yu, **"Celluloid City Chicago"**, a program celebrating recent work by Chicago based analog filmmakers, and **"To the Lamphouse"** an interactive workshop and screening focused on light and optics for film projection.



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS - ORIGINAL WRITING



Every CFS program booklet features original writing on all of the films we screen. Our “capsules” are thoughtfully written, meticulously researched, and offer context about the films we’re showing to audience members both local and remote. In the age of AI, we’re very proud to produce a printed program booklet of “*New Yorker* quality.”

We print about 3000 copies per season, and publish 3 booklets per year. Booklets are printed locally by Lowitz + Sons and distributed locally and to our mailing list all over North America.

BANNED WORDS, PHRASES, AND STYLISTIC “QUIRKS”:

- One film in a season can be a “masterpiece” or “singular” or “one of the best ____ ever,” but not every other film. Same goes for “iconic” and “staggering.”
- “a gem”
- “award-winning” (must specify the award, otherwise it’s meaningless puffery)
- “a little film”
- “winner of ____ Academy Awards” (don’t just rattle off stats; if Oscar trivia is included in a capsule, it should be in the service of a larger argument — e.g., “...Thelma Ritter, the only performer to smuggle out an Oscar nomination under Samuel Fuller’s termite direction ...”)
- No more than two egregious alliterations permitted per booklet. Allowances made for exceptional cases.

Excerpt from the CFS Style Guide.

PRESERVATION HIGHLIGHTS



Executive Director Julian Antos and Heather McAdams At the National Gallery of Art.

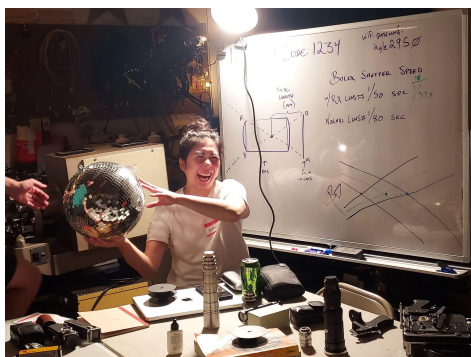


Our preservations of *The Scratchman* (1980), *Holiday Magic* (1985), *Meet ... Bradley Harrison Picklesimer* (1988), and six other terrific films from Heather McAdams toured America in 2025. The new 16mm prints played at: the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles, the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC, the Roxie in San Francisco, the Speed Museum in Louisville, the Wisconsin Film Festival, and the Dryden Theatre in Rochester.

We even met Bradley Harrison Picklesimer himself at the Academy Museum! And we've received an Avant-Garde Masters Grant from the National Film Preservation Foundation and The Film Foundation to restore eight more McAdams wonders, including fan favorite *Jay Elvis* (1991).

The National Film Preservation Foundation also awarded CFS a Matching Grant to restore Fred Camper's Super 8 feature *SN* (1976 - 1984), a chimeral legend that's only had three public screenings in the last forty years.

WORKSHOPS



We can't stop working with analog film... in 2024, we offered our first **Intro to 16mm workshop**, and thanks to voracious interest from our students, we now offer these workshops quarterly.

We also offered 3 **16mm Projector Repair and Presentation workshops** in Winter of 2025. Students learned how to diagnose projector issues and make sure their machines don't damage prints.

"I've learned so much from a single workshop. I am no longer intimidated by my projector and am confident in my ability to take care of it and my prints. I actually feel comfortable now looking at my projector, seeing what needs to be done, reading the service manual and taking things apart and putting them back together."

— 16mm projector maintenance workshop student

In May of 2025, we hosted Brazilian filmmaker Tetsuya Maruyama for **a two day workshop using 16mm pinhole cameras** using vintage Japanese matchbooks. Students were able to process their film in class and watch the results on screen!



COLLECTIONS & FILM LOANS



Over the past decade, CFS has built up one of the largest collections of 16mm and 35mm prints in the midwest.

In 2025, we loaned prints from our collection to: The Hi-Pointe Theatre (St Louis), Toronto International Film Festival, 5th Ave Cinema (Portland), Winnipeg Film Group, Metrograph (New York), The Brattle (Boston), Olympia Film Society (Washington), The Roxie Theater (San Francisco), The Academy Museum (California), Speed Art Museum (Louisville), The British Film Institute, The Plaza Theatre (Atlanta), The National Gallery of Art (Washington, DC), Doc Films (Chicago, IL), UW Cinematheque (Madison, WI), Austin Film Society, The Campus Theatre (Lewisburg, PA), and George Eastman Museum (Rochester, NY).

With the help of The Museum of Modern Art and Harvard Film Archive, we commissioned NEW 16mm prints of two short films by Hal Hartley: *Theory of Achievement* (1991) and *Ambition* (1992), both printed at FotoKem.

We're grateful to the University of Chicago Film Studies Center for housing some of our most precious prints in their climate controlled vault (pictured above)!

VENUE CHANGES



CFS ... not known for travelling lightly.

In May of 2025, our 10 year residency at Northeastern Illinois University came to a close. We're incredibly proud of the hundreds of screenings we held in the University's beautiful auditorium most Wednesday nights from 2015-2025 (with some necessary pandemic-era pauses).

Our current program takes us all over the city, from Hyde Park to Humboldt Park to Downtown to Lakeview, and while we love the geographic spread of our venue partners, we also recognize the need for a permanent and consistent home for our programming. As one patron put it "It's like you have a radio show on a different station at a different time and day every week."

At the end of 2025, we began working with our consultant Andrea Yarbrough on a feasibility study for a year-round permanent venue for CFS, determining the costs involved, possible strategies, and evaluating the needs of our organization and Chicago audiences. **Although this project will likely be several years in the making, we're excited by the possibility of a beautiful, permanent, and sustainable home for analog film screenings and workshops.**

2025 BUDGET

INCOME

Grants \$83,575

Ticket Sales \$32,981

Individual Donations \$40,697

Workshops \$5,300

Film and Equipment Rental and Sales \$19,743

Film Distribution & Loans \$10,093

Other Earned Income \$11,052

INCOME TOTAL: \$203,441

EXPENSES:

Staffing \$65,159

Rent and Utilities \$33,435

Film lab & preservation services \$22,583

Operations Expenses \$12,505

Film Rights, Rentals, and Purchases \$15,430

Other Program Expenses \$7,690

Shipping \$12,725

Program Booklets, Website, and Handbills \$7,833

Supplies, Equipment, and Repairs \$8,698

EXPENSE TOTAL: \$186,059

SUPPORTING ARTISTS AND ORGANIZATIONS

We may not have boatloads of money, but we DO have boatloads of projectors, film, sprockets, and decades of collective knowledge on all things analog cinema.

In 2025, we:

- donated several thousand feet of film to artists and filmmakers for found footage projects
- provided projection equipment and installation services for exhibitions at Gertie and Corbett vs. Dempsey.
- provided equipment and screening facilities to Chicago Film Archives, the Filipino American Historical Society of Chicago, and the Not-So-Ordinary project.
- hosted office visits from Kobe Planet Film Archive, aemi (Dublin), the Museum of Modern Art, University of Illinois at Chicago, and DePaul University.
- lectured at the George Eastman Museum, New York University, and Landmark College (Vermont).

We also continue to offer the following online resources:

Analog Film Exhibitors Directory analogdirectory.org

A comprehensive list of theaters, festivals, and organizations screening analog film on a regular basis, publicly viewable online.

Celluloid Chicago celluloidchicago.org

An online listing promoting and documenting every analog film screening in Chicago since 2013.

Leader Ladies Project leaderladies.org

A digital collection of "leader lady" lab calibration images, making visible the layers of hidden labor that go into making a film print.

Sprocket School sprocketschool.org

A public online wiki for information related to film projection, film handling, and film history.

THE CREDITS

CFS Staff

Julian Antos, Executive Director
Rebecca Hall
Rebecca Lyon
Tavi Veraldi
Kyle Westphal
Cameron Worden

With Help From

Gabriel Wallace
Kathryn Wilson
Hannah Yang

Board

Julian Antos, CFS co-founder
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Lori Felker, DePaul University
Tim Hunter, Filmmaker
Brian Meacham, Yale Film Archive
Andy Uhrich, University of Colorado, Boulder

Funders

Illinois Arts Council Agency
The DEW Foundation
The National Film Preservation Foundation
The National Endowment for the Arts

We are also profoundly grateful to the 93 individuals and households who donated to CFS in 2025, to our 141 Patreon supporters — and to every person in the audience who buys a ticket.