

'Death comes in a flash, and that's the truth of it, the person's gone in less than 24 frames of film.'

Martin Scorsese

Revere is a silent four-minute colour film, shot in Standard 8mm, that aims to explore the beauty and power of celluloid film. It investigates the idea that before we die, our lives might be distilled in a series of moments. *Revere* effectively expresses this through its structure; a series of 'point of view' shots, imagining how the main character, Tom, would have experienced his life and memories, with the camera acting as Tom's eyes. I wanted to engage the audience in the complete experience of cinema as to capture the original intentions of early film. The aim of film, derived from the early films of the late 1800s and early 1900s such as A Kiss in the Tunnel¹, Come Along, Do!² and The Story of the Kelly Gang³, was to immerse the audience into a narrative, expressed through a series of continued motions, from cut to cut. Furthermore, such films aimed to replicate natural movement as accurately as possible, something not previously rendered conceivable in other artistic technologies such as photography and art. Thus, the purpose of my Major Work is to combat Damian Sutton's fear that "[film's] artistic potential is always in danger of being lost"⁴, by capturing the initial awe of captured movement and visual narratives experienced by the earliest cinema audiences.

¹ Smith, G. A (1899) *A Kiss in the Tunnel*
George Albert Smith Films, Film

² Paul, R. W (1898) *Come Along, Do !*
Robert W. Paul, Film

³ Tait, C. (1906) *The Story of the Kelly Gang*
J. & N. Tait, Johnson and Gibson, Film

⁴ Sutton, D. (2009). *Photography, Cinema, Memory: The Crystal Image of Time*.
Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p.3

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Hugo⁵, by Martin Scorsese, originally inspired the choice of form for *Revere*. Scorsese's transitions between digital movie and celluloid film, took his audience from the world of the digital movie, and transported them into the world of celluloid film, in his recreation of the films of George Méliès. The montage of Méliès' films in Hugo serves to contrast the slickness of the digital footage with the flickering frames of celluloid film, effectively presenting the power and emotional intensity that film contains. The colours and movements of the celluloid film, whilst not as clear or precise as digital, are rich in nostalgia and charm. It is in that flickering movement that the audience is drawn into what Virginia Woolf termed a character's "moments of being"⁶. *Revere* aims to capture these moments where a person experiences a heightened sense of reality or profundity.

The form of *Revere* inspired its content, with the primary aim to capture the "moments of being" in one character's life, and elicit a sense of nostalgia within the audience. My content was formulated based on what I perceived as relatable and socially-conventional moments in one's life. Thus childhood memories became the springboard for the conceptual ideas that would follow. Further information on how we remember was collected from the AstraZeneca Nobel Medicine Initiative documentary The Mystery of Memory⁷. Scientifically, the nature in which we remember is conducted through hormones in the body, such as adrenaline. Memories are stronger when we experience fear or excitement, both emotional responses to the

⁵ Scorsese M. (2011) *Hugo*
Paramount Pictures, Film.

⁶ Coined by Virginia Woolf: events or instances in which a person experiences a sense of reality or profundity, rather than "non-being" which is the consciousness of the present.

⁷ The AstraZeneca Nobel Medicine Initiative. (2010) *The Mystery of Memory*
Kikim Media, Documentary Film.

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adrenaline. Therefore all of the memories featured in *Revere* contain the essence of either excitement or fear, exemplified when Tom is caught doodling on his page in school and the excitement and apprehension Tom experiences when approaching his eventual wife, Alice, for the first time.

The memories in *Revere* are set from 1944 to 2013, all contained within the meta-narrative of Tom, aged 76, watching his memories on a projector in 2016. The film is structured chronologically, similar to the opening montage contained in the movie Up⁸, as we trace Tom's life through his memories, beginning with the young male gaze of Tom chasing his friend through a park and blowing out birthday candles. The gaze of the entire film remains inherently male and matures with Tom, as viewers recognise the close relationship the subjects in the film have with the camera operator. For instance, the opening shots of Tom's friend running towards the camera and the mother being willing to share her happiness for her son, suggest the subjection of the film's subjects to the gaze of the operator.

Central to the film's purpose is the manner in which the audience is intended to experience the film as viewers. Rather than utilising non-diegetic sound, it is envisioned that the staccato sound of the projector, coupled with the hand-held "shaky-cam style" associated with home videos, allows the audience to experience the film as if the memories of Tom are their own, and to reflect on the similar memories they have collected throughout their lives. This experience is highlighted in Film and

⁸ Docter, P. (2009) *Up*
Walt Disney Pictures, Film.

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the Public Memory: The Phenomena of Nonfiction Film Fragment⁹ which notes that motion pictures make film “practically indistinguishable from our personal memories and an extension of them.”¹⁰ Such viewing conditions will also enable my audience to consider and appreciate the characteristics that define celluloid film.

I chose to use Standard 8mm film, released in 1932, rather than Super 8, released later in 1965, as it is contextually appropriate with the era Tom was born, and his character would have been familiar with the aesthetics of this type of film. Both the conceptual idea of memory and the chosen form of celluloid, combine to give *Revere* the aesthetic of a series of home videos. All the shots and images in *Revere* were filmed by me on a 1939 Revere Ranger hand wound movie camera, hence the title *Revere*, including the shots of the Montmartre in Paris. I edited the film on an Alpex splicer using Kodak film cement. Consequently most of the transitions are harsh jump cuts, which reinforce the traditional techniques of early film editing as seen in the Odessa Steps Montage¹¹ from the film Battleship Potemkin¹².

The narrative span of 72 years called for appropriate casting, costuming, styling and props. Certain colours, such as the pink-orange of the roses in Tom’s son’s wedding scene were employed to showcase the richness and depth that this film stock renders. Contrast in costuming and make-up was also utilised to highlight the differences between Tom’s love affairs, such as using older, red-lipped girls for the ‘ex-

⁹ & ¹⁰ Moyer, J. F (2007) ‘Film and the Public Memory: The Phenomena of Nonfiction Film Fragments’, *Contemporary Aesthetics*.

¹¹ & ¹² Eisenstein, S. M (1925) *Battleship Potemkin* Goskino, Film.

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girlfriend’ sequence, whilst employing a ‘doe-eyed’ actress as his first love to highlight her innocence and sweet nature.

For accurate silent film script conventions, I used a copy of the script for The Artist¹³. This was used as a template of how to convey the visual ideas of a silent film into a script, despite the fact that The Artist contains a score, whereas *Revere* does not. The style of Hazanavicius’ script for The Artist allowed me to visualise my film more effectively, in comparison to early Charles Chaplin’s screenplays such as City Lights¹⁴, due to its detail and format.

The intended audience for *Revere* are 8mm film enthusiasts. While hunting down film stock for my Major Work, I discovered a group of celluloid film makers from across the country. This gave me insight into the type of people that *Revere* would attract. Festivals such as the *LIFT Regular 8mm Film Festival*, held in Toronto, is one such place my Major Work could be shown. Furthermore, due to its experimental nature, the absence of opening or closing credits and the fact that most of the examples of this specific form are old home videos, the film will hold more resonance with the generations that grew up surrounded by such filming practices, rather than my generation who have grown up in a digital culture and would not experience the feelings of nostalgia *Revere* aims to conjure in its audience. Due to its content and subject matter I believe *Revere* would be given a PG classification, due to its content, non-controversial subject matter and its translation to younger audiences.

¹³ Hazanavicius, M. (2011) *The Artist*
The Weinstein Company, Screenplay.

¹⁴ Chaplin, C. (1931) *City Lights*
Charles Chaplin Productions, Screenplay.

Upon studying English Advanced Module C- History and Memory, I gained a greater understanding as to what my film was doing conceptually, as I experimented with the ways memory can be represented. Due to its nature as a film, *Revere* gives the facade of being a true and indelible history, much like Peter Carey's The True History of the Kelly Gang¹⁵. However, like all representations that explore the nature of memory the editing process required considered construction and selectivity, and as a composer the choices I made inevitably affected my final product and the way it is perceived. This act of construction highlighted to me the way narrative cinema operates, as well as the ironic nature of film; celluloid film is an unstable medium, as it degrades over time and images can be lost, thereby reflecting the nature of memory itself.

The challenges in making a Standard 8mm celluloid film are many. This is not a medium that is instant. It took a great deal of time to become accustomed with the filming technique, as I learnt to recognise the sound and feel of film running cleanly through the camera. The nature of the medium is fragile, similar to our memories, and as such many shots were initially lost and had to be reshot. Yet, despite the challenges presented with this form and the extensive time devoted to editing *Revere*, I'm extremely satisfied with the final product and believe that it portrays the double-definition of its title, one representing the mechanical aspects of film, and the other depicting the esteem we give our memories.

¹⁵ Carey, P. (2000) *True History of the Kelly Gang*
Brisbane: University of Queensland Press