

Tom Berner Award Support Letters

-How great an idea do I think an award in the name of and going to Tom Berner is? Well first of all, I don't think I would ever have made even one film without Tom. He not only shepherded me through the unbelievably complicated world of film post, he also sat down and recut my film for me recognizing that alone, I would probably never make it. Tom subsequently helped me make two more films, and when I heard that he had resigned the first thing I thought was how the h*^l am I going to make my next film!! In any event, guardian angels only come along once in a lifetime and I'm sure glad that I was in the right place at the right time to have Tom Berner as mine. **Siobhan Devine**

-I think that the creation of an award in Tom Berner's name is a fantastic idea. I was very saddened when he retired so suddenly and I had not had a chance to properly thank him for all the advise, encouragement and of course deals he had given me over the years. He helped me immensely in making my first film , *From morning on I waited yesterday* , but it is as an editor that I experienced him mostly over the years. He was an incredibly kind and enthusiastic supporter of artists at the first at Film Arts, then at Film House and finally at Deluxe. I feel he fully deserves this recognition and I wish you best of luck with your project. **Wiebke von Carolsfeld**

-I am writing to express my wholehearted support for the creation of an award to honour the lifelong work and dedication that Tom Berner has shown to the independent film community in Toronto and beyond. He is a true friend to filmmakers who found a great ally in someone who struck a fine balance between the craft and artistic demands of filmmaking with the budgetary ones, and somehow made it all work for us. I hope you will also support this award in honour of Tom, whose integrity and love for independent Canadian cinema can be seen in all the work he helped to foster. **Helen Lee**

-In regards to Mr. Berner. Yes there definitely should be an award in his name and thank god he doesn't have to be dead in order for someone to recognize his contribution. If Tom had a number and Deluxe had rafters it should be raised there.

Unfortunately I only had the opportunity to work with Mr. Berner on a couple of projects; however, he made a lasting impression. When you are working on your first film and walk in green to a Deluxe environment a kind, supportive face is what you need and Tom was that. Even though it always looked like he was extremely busy (four pages within one meeting) he always had time and never made you feel like your project was less important. Even though he was giving you something well below book rate.

Tom loves cinema and contributed so much time and energy to helping emerging filmmakers get their film's finished as well as providing a showcase for their work. I am sure many Canadian filmmakers have similar stories to mine. Tom was a kind, helpful face within the harrowing gauntlet of post-production. His selfless contribution should be recognized as well as his centered attitude within this too often self-obsessed, ego inflated film industry. He also bought me a pint once.

Michael Dowse

-I think the Tom Berner Award is a fantastic idea. Starting back in 1995 when I was trying to get my first film (*Why I'll Never Trust You...*) off the ground, Tom was supportive in every way possible. Even though I knew absolutely nothing about film production or post-production, he treated me with kindness and respect and was always available to provide advice or assistance. He held my hand every step of the way and gave me breaks - financial or otherwise - that made it possible to get my film done.

I remember running with a wet release print in my hands from the lab on Adelaide up to TIFF print revision, my first screening just hours away. Tom's support continued as I went on to make two other films. I can't imagine producing three independent short films without his help. In the scary (and expensive!!) world of commercial post-production, Tom Berner was a friendly face and someone who always had time for independent, emerging filmmakers. **Cassandra Nicolaou**

-Tom taught me everything I needed to know about post-production and in the process, how to produce film. Without his help in the first few projects I did, I would have failed with flying colours because there is no training available anywhere that I can see in Toronto for indie producers. You just jump in and hope for a helping hand once you're in over your head.

My first short film, *The Fairy Who Didn't Want To Be A Fairy Anymore*, won a Genie Award and it wouldn't have even been completed without Tom Berner's guidance and wonderfully warm self. I always felt he was in my corner. Never too busy - no matter how busy he must have been. He never gave a hint of exasperation which he was righteously entitled to. And that is why he is platinum. I feel for new filmmakers having to get a start without him. **Karen Lee Hall**

-As an independent filmmaker I must put my vote forward for the creation of the Tom Berner award. As a new producer I have found Tom to be one of the most helpful guides in this industry. Despite his busy schedule and ongoing demands he always found the time to deal with those of us who were new to the process. I think that this is a wonderful gesture to a truly deserving candidate of such an honour. **Kim Bozak**

-I actually didn't know Tom was retiring, and was very sad to hear the news. Throughout my time studying film at OCA, and as a member of LIFT for over six years, I met Tom several times. I remember first coming to Deluxe years ago with a built-in inferiority complex because I knew Deluxe did most of their business in feature films and series, and I assumed short, independent films were just a hassle to them.

I was always surprised that Tom Berner remembered my name, and he always gave me a lot of support, and a quote that I could afford. He is someone that I will remember for being one of the most enthusiastic supporters of independent film in Toronto, and a wonderful, wonderful man. Tom truly deserves this award, and the future recognition that comes with it. **Brenda Kovrig**

-Tom was instrumental in helping so many independent filmmakers. Every indie filmmaker who's ever done anything to do with post in Ontario (actually across the whole country) has come into contact with Tom Berner. Tom was the one who led me through the pitfalls of my first post production experience, patiently guiding and teaching me all the way. He always had time to explain each step and process and treated each new filmmaker as an individual to be respected (and educated). I'm happy that Tom gets to enjoy his retirement, but I miss his continual and unfailing help and understanding! **Jessica Bradford**

-I couldn't think of a more deserving candidate of the Tom Berner Award- than Tom Berner! - or the 'Godfather of Independent' film, as we like to call him. I first met Tom while still in film school, working at Deluxe part time, and was immediately impressed with how seriously he took me as a filmmaker, even then, when I was only a student. I remember him watching one of my student films and giving me professional - albeit constructively critical -feedback. He was the first person in the 'real world' to critique my work as a peer. It was really empowering.

He continued to encourage my work through film school, and indeed, became a real fan. He was always approachable and respectful - not often characteristics one runs across when one is still a student. Over the last several years, I've had the pleasure of working with Tom on both my short film projects, initially at the development stage, as he was on both the NSI and OMDC boards and was therefore involved in selecting my two scripts (*Twisted Sheets*, *Moving Day*) for production. In both situations, Tom worked tirelessly with myself and all the filmmakers - to meet deadlines, to make the film we wanted with limited cash - and most importantly to offer sound advice drawing upon his years of experience, during each stage. I'll always remember Tom at the airport as we all flew to Local Heroes, holding onto the one or two films - still wet- that had just squeaked past the deadline, fully aware of how precious each was to its creators. And while some board members clearly approach this yearly trip as a duty, Tom was truly invested in, and truly seemed to enjoy sharing the filmmakers' big moment.

Again, I can't stress the respect Tom has always shown young directors and producers. He has never patronized or dismissed. He has always made us feel like players in the industry, no matter how green we were - and that's a rare and special thing. He has also shown up for more indie events than anyone. No matter how small the screening or how short the film, you can count on spotting Tom somewhere in the audience, showing his support. I simply can't say enough about Tom Berner, and I only hope his retirement doesn't signal an exodus from the Canadian film scene altogether! **Chris Deacon**

-I am in total support of the "Tom Berner" award. Being from Vancouver and having heard of Tom Berner across the country, I actually called him for advise on one of my short films. He was quick to respond and didn't seemed surprised at all that I wascalling from across the country looking for advise. He spent time with me and walked me through the process that I was

questioning. He was amazing. Thanks Tom Berner...I hope this encourages more people to be aware of what he did for the independent film industry and encourages more people to be like him! **Tracey Boulton**

-Aside from being a personal help to me on more than one project, Tom Berner was a name synonymous with independent film. He was one of the few names who regularly came up in conversation as someone you "must talk to" when making an indie, and it would be impossible to count the number of times he has been credited under "Special Thanks to". He was an excellent resource, with practical, realistic advice and generous support of new and up-and-coming filmmakers. He will be sorely missed in the community and one can only hope that there will be someone as active and generous to replace him! **Christopher Ball CSC**

-Tom Berner helped me with my first two films, *Oxanna* and *Killing Time*, giving me advice and great deals at DeLuxe. He introduced me to a sound mixer that I developed a great relationship with, and took the time to explain the whole post process to me when I had no idea what I was doing. He rules! I fully support the award idea - maybe it will encourage industry people to remember the importance of indie filmmakers and give newcomers a helping hand. **Paula Tiberius**

-Tom Berner has been like a patron saint of emerging filmmakers for as long as I've been on the scene. Not only is he a sympathetic soul on the business side of post-production, but a crucial source of technical expertise on the whole post process to countless producers, directors and editors. Tom would put one of our reels up on the bench and check it himself if he thought the leader might be the wrong length, or to personally hunt down a potential technical problem. More than once I found him with a pencil between his teeth, hands on the rewinds. His character, skill and generosity should be permanently acknowledged. **Jim Allodi**

-This is an excellent initiative and deserves broad based support. Jennifer and I are behind it absolutely as Tom has been as integral to the formation of our careers as he has been to so many film makers and important Canadian films. **Nick de Pencier**

-This is a letter of enthusiastic support for the Tom Berner Award. I've produced 3 independent short films in Toronto in the last 5 years, and I honestly can't think of any one single person who helped us more, or whose support was more integral to the completion of these projects. Basically, Tom is one of those rare people who cares passionately about those up and coming artists who would get close to nothing accomplished without someone like him around. My friends and colleagues have come to call Tom Berner "the patron saint of Independent film making". He really worked tirelessly, and joyously to do everything in his power to do the one thing that's key in the art of filmmaking: Finishing the damned thing. I for one salute Tom, and would be thrilled to see him honoured. This award seems to be a wonderful way to pay tribute to a man who gave so much back. It's time that we did the same. **Jill Riley**

-I would like to add my support towards the creation of a special award honouring the tremendous assistance that Tom Berner has provided for many years to the independent film community. Tom is indeed the "patron saint" of independent filmmaking in this country. Through his position at Deluxe, Tom has been responsible in providing critical completion services to hundreds of films that would not have otherwise been finished. Through Tom's initiative and compassion, he has made a significant contribution to both the careers of independent filmmakers and the development of the film industry in this country. **Peter Starr**

-I fully support the idea of creating a Tom Berner award. Tom has been incredibly helpful to me personally over the years. He single-handedly fixed sync problems on my Drama Prize film - for which I will be eternally grateful! As an out-of-town filmmaker, labs can seem like foreign and unfriendly places - Tom was always a smiling, encouraging constant. I also worked with him in the NSI Drama Prize program where he was always so generous with his advice and know-how. His raison d'etre was to support

independent Canadian filmmakers - a true rarity in a profit-driven industry! Tom deserves our thanks. **Penny McCann**

-How awesome is that. I remember some vague drunken conversation where we were talking about a big Tom thank you night. But you've gone a step further. Please let me know if there is anything that I can do to support your effort. As for stories. Well, mine is simply the epic tale of one little film geek (me) who managed to literally move into Film Arts for over one year two cut two short films. I never paid Tom a dime and he never asked when I was planning on leaving. It's one of the most selflessly generous acts that anyone has ever done for me. He gave me a huge boost at a time when no one outside of family and friends would support my film work. **Vincenzo Natali**

-What a fantastic idea The Tom Berner Award. My own experience with Tom, apart from getting way too many favors at the lab, was his total support of a screenwriting program that I created with the Atlantic Film Festival. "Scripts Out Loud" is a screenwriting workshop for intermediate screenwriters from the Atlantic Provinces, and we've been successfully running it for the last six years. Tom was an early supporter and came to our script reading each year, met with the writers, and was a constant source of encouragement and inspiration. A film lab supporting a screenwriting program might seem like an odd fit but it was evidence of Tom's total and complete commitment to independent film making in Canada, offering support and a kick start to film makers at the earliest stage of their career. **Al Magee**

-I think formal recognition for Tom Berner is a wonderful idea and long overdue. There are generations of independent film makers whose work would never see the light of day had it not been for Tom's generosity of spirit and patience. Over the past few years, low budget independent film making has been receiving support through formal programs and institutions -- but in the dark days before the Calling Card programs and before the Film Centre -- there was Tom.

Tom who would answer your calls, help you figure out the best and cheapest way to do something and would seldom bat an eye when you told him how little money you had budgeted for

post. My film *The Cockroach That Ate Cincinnati* could not have been made without the generosity and commitment of people like Jane Tattersall (who continues to support indies, and should be nominated to receive the award next year) and our man Tom. I wholeheartedly support this initiative. If there is anything I can do to help make it happen, please let me know.

Michael McNamara

-I definitely would support this award, and having sat with Tom on many OMDC calling card juries as well as speaking with him about numerous projects that he supported over the years, plus from personal producing experience, can attest to his devotion to the makers and creators of independent film. He was tireless with his commitment and advice giving and was always answering questions and queries from the most neophyte through to the most senior level of filmmakers in this country. Let me know what else you need to get this award initiated and I will be more than happy to assist. Good for LIFT for recognizing one of the true selfless devotees of Canadian film. **Laura Michalchyshyn**