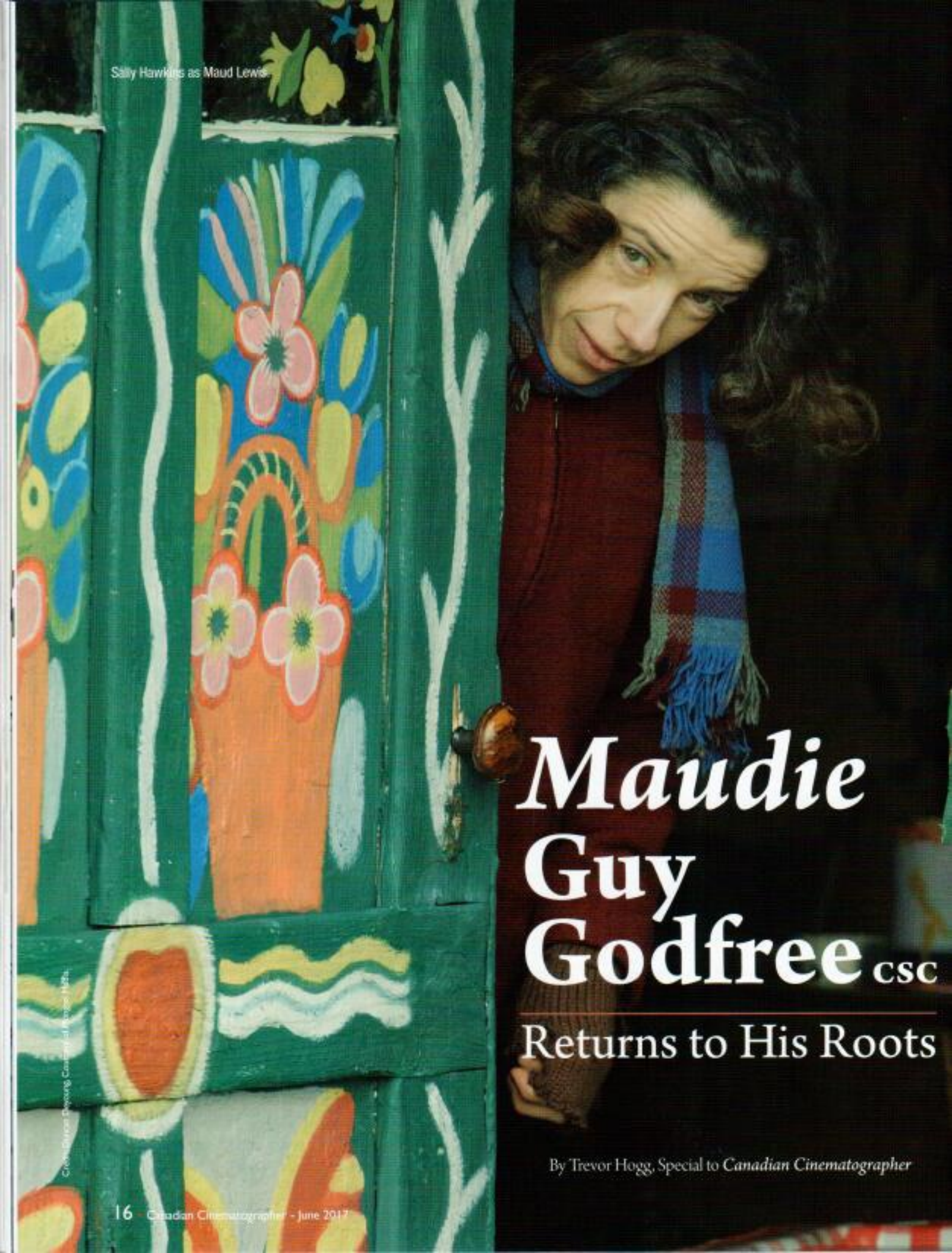


Sally Hawkins as Maud Lewis



Maudie
Guy
Godfree CSC
Returns to His Roots

By Trevor Hogg, Special to *Canadian Cinematographer*

Maudie, a biopic about a crippled and impoverished housekeeper for a cantankerous recluse who becomes a folk artist sensation enabled New York City-based cinematographer Guy Godfree csc to experience a homecoming. "Similar to Maud Lewis, I grew up in rural Nova Scotia. My mother's painting and art has a similar colourful style to [Lewis'] in what she paints. It felt close to home and with *Maudie* being set between 1936 and 1967, I was excited to have an opportunity to film a period piece," Godfree says. "Nova Scotia is a beautiful place, but it's also on the Atlantic Ocean. I felt that the way to make *Maudie* was not as a postcard, but instead to embrace the rugged rural terrain. To portray that would help highlight the beauty in how Maud Lewis sees the world, and to bring forward the quality that made her artwork special to begin with. It was an opportunity to make a movie set in Nova Scotia but in the way that I felt best represented this story."

Substituting for the Maritime province during the principal photography was Newfoundland. "Ultimately, we managed to find fantastic locations just outside of St. John's that felt like the rolling hills of the Annapolis Valley and the farmland of Digby County," Godfree notes. "The house that we built was situated in the Goulds, and some shooting was done in Witless Bay along with about a week's worth of work on the Bonavista Peninsula in Keels and Port Rexton." Five weeks were allotted for the cinematographer's preproduction work, with the 28 main unit shooting days concluding on Halloween. "We left the little house in the Goulds with a security guard after wrap and returned in January to film two days of winter material. It's a luxury that you don't often get. [Director] Aisling Walsh and the producers made a strong effort to do so because it was valuable to broaden the feeling of time in the story."

"Very early in the process, there were discussions about building the exterior shell of the house on location and the interior of the house in the studio," Godfree reveals. "However, after seeing the location, production designer John Hand said, 'We should put it out there and do it all in the one set.' Maud painted the house over the course of her years so there were three versions of that house that had to be made for the inside and outside. John Hand and the art department team built the house so that the inner wall panels could be pulled out and replaced with pre-prepared walls for the 1950s and 1960s. Briefly, we talked about having a way to pull the wall off so that we could get a camera back in the corner, but we never did. It would take too much time and we always wanted to feel the confines of the house. We spent a lot of time

with the camera under the stairs, tucked into corners and up against walls. Because of the house painting scenes, I still have green paint on my jacket and raincoat!"

Maudie was the last film to have received lighting and grip equipment from PS Atlantic in Halifax which closed after Nova Scotia discontinued a provincial tax credit. In providing equipment, PS worked in partnership with local Newfoundland Atlantic Studio Co-Operative and the late Bob Petrie. "I had a great lighting crew led by gaffer Flora Planchat and key grip Micah Martin," Godfree remarks. "With only one window and one door, both on the same side of the house, there was a nice opportunity for a simple lighting approach, albeit a challenging one. We had to push light in through the window and door in order to get light in the back of the little house. Flora came up with this idea of a Zoom Boom lift where we under hung an 18K lamp, and Micah put a diffusion cloth on a 6 x 6 frame and hung it on the other side of the bucket. We could drive that in. The base of the lift was parked down the road a little bit. The light was armed over and down just out of the top of the frame so it would push into the house below,

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allowing Sally Hawkins [who plays Lewis] and Ethan Hawke [who plays Everett Lewis] to go in and out of the door with no problem. I like to work in a way where you bring light into a set and passively work it from the inside rather than having a lamp beside the camera pointed at an actor's face. I don't want people to watch the movie and recognize that it's lit like one."

Because of the natural lighting approach, and a desire to defeat the sharpness of the digital image, a special filtration system needed to be produced to help hold those textures in the extreme highlights and shadows. "[SIM's] Craig Milne and I did early testing on an internal camera filter system for the ALEXA XT," remarks Godfree, who made use of Cook S4 lenses and an aspect ratio of 1.85:1. "We landed on using a Black Frost internally in combination with the 1/8 Digicon in front of the lens. We tested different filter styles. Craig had a custom Digicon internal filter made for the ALEXA, but we determined it was more effective in front of the lens. That filter combination became our day interior and exterior setup. For the night work, we changed the Digicon out for an Ultra Contrast 1/4, which



Capturing a scene in the snow.

gave us even more lift to the toe of the image.”

The movie was shot ProRes 4444 XQ to cards because the dailies needed to be pipelined from Newfoundland to the postproduction facility in Ireland. The colour grading was handled by Gary Curran of Outer Limits Post Production located in Dublin. “Early on, Aisling and I talked about one of my favourite movies, *Ain’t Them Bodies Saints*, shot by Bradford Young. That movie was influenced by *Days of Heaven*, which itself was inspired by the paintings of Andrew Wyeth. We drew a lot of inspiration from all of those references for the colour palette,” Godfree says.

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“We spend a lot of the movie in 15 foot by 14 foot room with a proper ceiling, which was a 6 foot 4 inches high,” he notes. “Our biggest challenge was to find a variety of ways to film all of those scenes in that one room without repeating how you lay out the action or the shot. Aisling and I prefer to let the actors play it out and see what they want to do. Ethan

and Sally were great for that because they were only going to do what felt right. I would sit in the blockings and we would work out the scene as a group.”

There is not a large amount of camera movement in *Maudie*, Godfree, who won the 2017 CSC Theatrical Feature Cinematography Award for *Maudie*, points out. “We chose simple and efficient places to be with the camera and let the action take us there,” he says. “But when Maud paints, that was one of the few times we would shoot handheld because it was a moment when she was expressing herself, and the intimacy the handheld gave us helped with that.”

A CBC documentary about Lewis made on 16 mm film, which plays at the end of the movie, needed to be recreated. “We had to shoot some of that material to put on the television in the movie. My focus puller Mark Cyre and I thought, ‘Why don’t we take an ALEXA and stick an old 16 mm zoom lens on it that breathes, falls apart and has funky aberrations,’” Godfree explains. “The 16 mm zoom lens does not cover the full sensor so it was like looking down the barrel of a telescope or through a tunnel, but we only needed to sample out the middle 4:3 square in the centre of the sensor as the footage was going to be degraded down to look like 16 mm TV.”

“In prep, there were three to four people in the art department trying to do versions of Maud’s style of painting,” he says. “We all quickly learned how difficult it was to paint simplistically. That was one of many moments during the film when we realized how unique Maud’s work is.”

An important part of the process for this film was making sure that all of the scenes and contributions of the various departments come together to produce a cohesive cinematic journey for the audience. “During prep, we were in one open room with the art department, Aisling had a desk in one corner and I had another beside her. Then there was John



Ethan Hawke and Sally Hawkins in *Maudie*. After their wedding, Maud is pure happiness and Everett is his usual stoic self.



Sally Hawkins as Maud Lewis and Ethan Hawke as Everett Lewis.



From left to right: stand-in Shannon Crotty, gaffer Flora Planchat, Guy Godfree csc, dolly grip Jay Andrews, boom operator Mark Neary and stand-in Darryl Hopkins.

Hand and [art director] Owen Power. We were surrounded by location photos, art references, sketches, and colour palette references. We would sit in that room day in and day out and talk about the ideas among ourselves and how we were going to do things. That's the way I would like to work on every movie from now on. We were all respectful, keen and flexible about everybody's job as it pertains to the overall goal and what our contributions to that would be. None of us were precious. You can't be. 🍷

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Best Cinematography in a Television Movie

Bruce Worrall *CSC* *From Straight A's to XXX*
 Ryan McMaster *CSC* *Operation Christmas*
 Neil Cervin *CSC* *Sandra Brown's White Hot*

Best Cinematography in a Short Drama

Brad Creasser *AFFILIATE* *Cinophilic*
 Tony Mirza *ASSOCIATE* *I Love You So Much It's Killing Them*
 Dan Carruthers *ASSOCIATE* *The Cameraman*
 Stirling Bancroft *CSC* *The Goodnight Kiss*
 Kim C. Miles *CSC* *The Letter Carrier*

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John Bartley *CSC, ASC* *Bates Motel* – "Forever"
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 Michael Wale *CSC* *iZombie* – "Salvation Army"

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 Ian Kerr *CSC* *Spirit Unforgettable*

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Ian Kerr *CSC* *Facing* – "Facing Putin"
 John Banovich *CSC* *Wild Rockies* – "The Borderlands"

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Best Direction in a Television Movie

Vic Sarin *CSC* *Summer in the City*

Best Short Drama

Brendan Uegama *CSC* (co-producer) *Black Chicks*

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