



**OFFICIAL SELECTION**  
San Francisco Independent  
Film Festival 2005



**OFFICIAL SELECTION**  
World of Comedy International  
Film Festival 2005



**OFFICIAL SELECTION**  
Nickel Independent Film  
and Video Festival 2005



# **AUTOMATIC VAUDEVILLE STUDIOS**

**OF MONTREAL ★ ★ ★ SINCE 1998**

**PRESENTS**

**A Film by Owen, Perlmutter & Slutsky**

# **THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

**A New Comedy About Violence & Literature**

*“It’s hard to say whether the Vaudevillians are an inspired  
troupe of jokers or an enclave of genuinely misunderstood  
cinematic innovators.”*

*—NOW Weekly, Toronto*

**CONTACT:** Mark Slutsky, (514) 844-2986, [autovaud@gmail.com](mailto:autovaud@gmail.com), or visit  
our website at [www.autovaud.com](http://www.autovaud.com)

# THE RECOMMENDATIONS

From Montreal's Automatic Vaudeville Studios comes a shocking new comedy about plagiarism, blackmail and voodoo. *The Recommendations* is a fictional documentary about Montreal's literary community and a strange and brutal series of events that shakes it to its very core.

Made for a pittance – somewhere in the neighborhood of \$400—*The Recommendations* is the latest collaboration from guerilla filmmakers and noted buffoons Mark Slutsky, Daniel Perlmutter and Seth W. Owen.

*The Recommendations* is perhaps the most disturbing and thought provoking “fictional documentary” that Automatic Vaudeville Studios has ever made. It is a story torn from the headlines and flung onto the movie screen with an uncompromising brute force.

*The Recommendations* has screened at the San Francisco Independent Film Festival 2005, the World of Comedy International Film Festival 2005, and the Drake Hotel's Notes From the Underground film series in Toronto.

## The Synopsis

When Philip Swan's debut novel *Susannah's Wake* is published it immediately establishes him as a major literary talent. The book defines a generation, and touches many hearts... but what many don't know is that *Susannah's Wake* is a novel plagued by accusations of plagiarism. The man behind these claims: a struggling author named Gordon Gary Ross. Ross' obsession with Swan triggers a whirlwind of revenge, blackmail and violence that nearly brings Montreal's literary community to its knees, and ultimately leads to a shocking and brutal act of violence.

Automatic Vaudeville now dares to bring this notorious true-life saga to the screen, featuring interviews with some of Canada's biggest literary talents and the full participation of both Ross and Swan. *The Recommendations* is Automatic Vaudeville's boldest, most uncompromising work to date.

## **About The Filmmakers: Automatic Vaudeville Studios**

*The Recommendations* is a collaboration between three filmmakers: Seth W. Owen, Daniel Perlmutter & Mark Slutsky, who together conceived, shot, and edited the film. These bold young men are also known for operating Montreal's groundbreaking movie micro-studio, Automatic Vaudeville.

Automatic Vaudeville Studios has been thrilling Montreal audiences for over five years with its wildly eclectic mix of captivating no-budget entertainments and bold showmanship.

With a collection of over fifty short films in the vaults—from Westerns to monster movies to musicals—and over 15 Hi-Class Picture Shows under their belts, AVS has established itself as Montreal's number one underground movie studio. Automatic Vaudeville believes in offering the movie-going public something it has so sorely been missing: real ol'-fashioned entertainment.

Mobilizing a small army of Montreal's finest actors, musicians and artists behind their wildly prolific slate of no-budget projects, Automatic Vaudeville is possibly the most major micro-studio in Canada. And now, with a "genuine masterpiece" on their hands (*The Recommendations*) and a whole new batch of shorts, Automatic Vaudeville is working even harder to make sure you get all the thrills, chills and laffs you deserve.

Automatic Vaudeville has recently begun to make headway in its quest for global domination. After our successful series of Hi-Class Picture Shows in Montreal, we have screened our wares in Toronto, London England, and at various film festivals across Canada. At The Nickel Independent Film Festival in St. John's Newfoundland, AVS' *Spanked: The Ron Friendly Story* won awards for Best Short Film and Best Screenplay. *Schandfilm* recently made waves at the first "FilmPOP" sidebar at white-hot music fest Pop Montreal. In addition, AVS and *The Recommendations* have been featured in October's "Underground Issue" of *Maisonneuve* magazine and on the cover of Toronto's *NOW Weekly*, which noted that "behind their huckster charm, camp hyperbole and hammy Keystone antics is a rebellious, almost earnest urge to disrupt the placidity of cinema, to liberate independent film from its Sundance ghetto and to reinvest it with the playfulness of the silver screen's teething years."

Though Automatic Vaudeville Studios is comprised of a vast network of stars, musicians and behind-the-scenes players, Daniel Perlmutter, Seth W. Owen, & Mark Slutsky are the three young men that make it their day-to-day business. They are very nice, extraordinarily good looking young men who are willing to do "what it takes" to get some goddamn press.

## About the Production

The idea for *The Recommendations* came from the filmmakers wanting to address one of their favorite themes—delusional behaviour—in the context of a story about plagiarism. Several real life incidents also influenced the film, namely the strange “*What’s the frequency, Kenneth?*” beating of news anchor Dan Rather in the 1980s, and a subsequent article in Harper’s that posited the attack was masterminded by experimental novelist Donald Barthelme.

*The Recommendations* was shot in the spring of 2004, with the filmmakers (all three of them!) directing the cast from a detailed treatment. This improvised, no-budget approach to the “mockumentary” form had been used by Automatic Vaudeville before, in films like *Young Cons* and the award-winning short *Spanked: The Ron Friendly Story*. After primary shooting was completed, the filmmakers proceeded to create the huge amount of “archival materials” that permeate the film.

All shooting, editing, and special effects were done in house by Owen, Perlmutter and Slutsky using the filmmaking tools at their disposal. All told, the film cost somewhere in the neighborhood of \$400.

## About the Cast

The cast assembled for *The Recommendations* is a talented assortment of amateurs and professionals, friends and colleagues, who generously donated their time and talent to see the film get made.

Among the large cast are rising comic stars Paul Spence (*FUBAR*) and Joe Cobden (*The Aviator*), joined by a motley crew including syndicated food writers (Sarah Musgrave as Deborah Beach), rock stars (*Pony Up!*'s Laura Wills as Jasmyn) and many members of Automatic Vaudeville’s stock company, including Thea Metcalfe and Laura Perlmutter. The filmmakers also made it a point to craft some memorable characters for themselves, and all three appear in the film.

## About the Music

*The Recommendations* is blessed with a phenomenal and evocative score by Constellation Records recording artist Frankie Sparo, aka Chad Jones. Jones’s music is an incredibly precise “parody” of documentary scores in the vein of Philip Glass’ work for Errol Morris, and contributes a great deal to *The Recommendations*’ authenticity as a “documentary.”

As Frankie Sparo, Mr. Jones has released a number of albums on Constellation, including *My Red Scare* and *Welcome Crummy Mystics* and toured throughout North America and Europe. This is his first motion picture soundtrack. Mr. Jones also appears in the film as boarding house tenant and jewelry maker Daryl Sofa.

## Recommended Reading:

### Selected excerpts from “Susannah’s Wake” & “Recommending Shauna”

#### **Susannah’s Wake** by Philip Swan

##### SYNOPSIS:

The sudden, violent death of Susanna—a graduate student studying mythology—sends shockwaves into the lives of her loved ones. Our narrator is Keith, an ex-boyfriend of Susanna’s who—along with eight of Susanna’s friends spends an emotional week at Susanna’s family’s cottage. Here Keith will struggle to make sense of Susanna’s death, and her life, and come to terms with his own past, present and future.

From the *Canadian Review of Books*:

*“Susanna’s Wake manages to define a generation effortlessly and without any of the hipster grandstanding that has marred similar attempts. That Swan’s Herculean accomplishment achieves the emotional resonance it does is a testament to the young writer’s invigorating discovery of the small details of life and how – in the end – these details are not so far from Susanna’s “mythologies” as we might first suspect.”*

##### EXCERPT

And what when memories are done? When they die out to the disease of ambivalence? I had seen it take hold of my father, stuttering around the beach house without a flicker of anything passing behind his eyes. Mother wrapped up in the despair of not being known by the man she had dubiously stood by through all the horseshit lies and bad investments, the cocktail waitresses with panties down to their ankles by the time they said hello. That Great Man, reduced to nothing but his wine cellar and a breeze from the sea. What did he hold in his heart but its own purposeless beating?

Memories are not the captives of the soul, it was something I believed now. Had it been something Susannah had said to me once, when I feigned interest, when I had marshaled all of my boyish desire behind the illusion of listening? No, it was true, memories were themselves the keepers of the crypt, and behind the gate nothing but flesh and bone and rot and loss.

#### **Recommending Shauna** by Gordon Gary Ross

##### SYNOPSIS

Shauna Stevens is the talk of Wall Street—a shrewd *arriviste* whose potent skills and unbeatable instincts make her a killer businesswoman. But Shauna has a secret. Years ago, as an innocent young girl, she had a torrid affair with Jock, a brilliant artist who disappeared under mysterious circumstances. Shauna thinks she knows who is responsible—the self-appointed king of Wall Street, Isaac Isaacson. And she’ll stop at nothing until she finds the truth.

*“Recommending Shauna is clearly the work of a troubled mind. A troubled, incompetent mind.”* – Morris Stahl, critic.

##### EXCERPT:

Isaac padded off in his two-thousand-dollar *[sic]* Gucci flip-flops. *He looks like a baby seal. A baby seal lolling around in his crib like a wealthy baby.* Shauna heard Isaac change the CD, to a Bachmaninoff *[sic]* concerto. *My favourite. He knew. He knows everything.* Shauna thought. *[sic]* But then that was Isaac’s business. A high-tech information broker, he had agents all over the grid—at least two thousand, and all over the place. He knew the president’s shoe size and the addressee’s *[sic]* of every famous movie star in Hollywood CA. But Shauna wasn’t interested in that data, the kind of data that had made Isaacson the king shit monkey of Wall Street. She was interested in something else. She was interested in *people*.

In one person in particular.

In Jock.