

Pinball wizard Roger Sharpe will be attending TRIFF 2023

PINBALL: THE MAN WHO SAVED THE GAME | THE STORY OF ROGER SHARPE



In 1976, Roger Sharpe pulled back the plunger of a pinball machine in the New York City Council chambers, proving to a hostile council that pinball was a game of skill and not a game of chance. That moment broke the downward trajectory of the pinball industry and brought pleasure back to pinball enthusiasts around the world.

In 2020 the directorial team, The Bragg Brothers (Austin and Meredith Bragg), stumbled upon Roger Sharpe's story while researching a previous project. They were quickly inspired to reach out to Sharpe and together produce a historical fiction film about his life.

The fruits of their labor paid off in *Bonus Points*, with all the required components blending beautifully. Story structure, cinematography, pacing, sound design and most especially acting are among the many characteristics the selection committee of

the Tryon International Film Festival (TRIFF) look for.

The film is finely edited down to meticulous precision, projecting the details of the electromechanical marvel's inner workings, artwork, and actual sounds, including the flippers, bells, and that smooth rolling ball.

Veteran actor Dennis Boutsikaris portrays the older Sharpe, who is looking back on his life, while narrating in a *fourth wall* performance convention, alongside the younger Sharpe played by Mike Faist, his love interest Ellen (Crystal Reed) and her son Seth (Christopher Convery).

"It is a heartwarming and humorous, coming-of-age film, that is both uplifting and educational. It's also fun and enjoyable to watch," reports Kirk Gollwitzer, Co-Founder of TRIFF.

In the mid-70's lawmakers, including the likes of Mayor La Guardia, considered pinball a mafia-run racket, stealing money from children: La Guardia convinced the public that "Pinball is a racket--- dominated by interests heavily tainted with criminality --- robbing from the pockets of schoolchildren in the form of nickels and dimes given to them as lunch money."

The moral panic ignited the religious right to deem the game of pinball as a tool "from the devil," destined to corrupt the precious youths of the day. Enter Roger Sharpe, a young writer for GQ Magazine, with a deep passion for the game and a burning desire to save the game from extinction.

Sharpe, who humbly considers himself an historic footnote, relishes the fact that the film was made about his life. Sharpe also worked closely with the team during story creation and film production.

Even now, 47 years later, after fully ingesting the game of pinball into his soul, Sharpe continues to devote his life to the pleasures of the game as an advocate, consultant, and player. He competes in pinball leagues around the country and plays alongside his sons while maintaining the stature of one of pinball's strongest saviors.

Incidentally, **South Carolina** is the only state in the nation where a pinball prohibition remains on the books.



“PINBALL: THE MAN WHO SAVED THE GAME” has been selected to be the gala opener for TRIFF 2023, scheduled for the evening of October 6th at the Tryon Theatre. Roger Sharpe will be on hand for an audience Q&A following the film. For more information, visit www.tryoninternationalfilmfestival.org.

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Photo Credit: The Bragg Brothers