

'Train Dreams' movie and discussion coming to the Panida

Movie and book fans will have a chance to see the Oscar-nominated movie Train Dreams on the big screen, when the Panida Theater shows the film March 13 in an event that will include a discussion of the movie and the book it was adapted from.

The book and film are of especial interest locally. Train Dreams is set around the turn of the 20th century in the Inland Northwest, in the era when the railroads and logging were the major industries. Much of the story takes place along the Moyie River – in the book spelled as a historical variant, the Moyea – where railroad and timber laborer Robert Grainier builds a remote cabin and attempts to retreat to a life with his wife and young daughter. The events in the story form a meditation on tragedy, fate and grief during a time of monumental change in the region.

Published in 2011, the short novel was written by the late Denis Johnson, an author of national stature who did himself have a home on the Moyie River with his wife Cindy. The novel was short-listed for the Pulitzer Prize; another novel by Johnson, Tree of Smoke, was also a Pulitzer finalist and won the 2007 National Book Award for fiction.

The movie was filmed at locations around eastern Washington and has won high praise for its beautiful cinematography and powerful performances by actors Joel Edgerton, Felicity Jones and William H. Macy. Directed by Clint Bentley, it is nominated for four Oscars, including best picture.

The movie is distributed by Netflix but did not receive wide theatrical release, so the showing here is a rare opportunity to see it on the big screen – and it will come just two days before the Academy Awards take place on March 15.

Following the movie showing, there will be a discussion of the book and film. Jack Nisbet, author of multiple books on the human and natural history of the region, scouted North Idaho locations with Bentley and co-producer Greg Kwedar in 2021, discussing both local context and the transition from book to film. Nisbet later watched a Train Dreams scene filmed at a sawmill north of Colville. He'll be joined on stage by Barb Rawlings, a longtime family friend of Denis and Cindy Johnson, who can tell more about the author and some of their discussions of the book and its story. Chris Bessler, Sandpoint Magazine publisher and an acquaintance as well of Johnson, will moderate.

Audience participation is invited for the post-show discussion, and Bessler encourages everyone who might attend to give the book a read first. "It's a beautifully written book," he said. "That it's set right here in a fascinating time historically makes it even more compelling. I think the movie captures the feel and mood of the book, but there are differences that will make for interesting talk."

Copies of Train Dreams are available at Sandpoint Books and Bonners Books.

Movie showtime will be 7 p.m. on Friday, March 13, at the historic Panida Theater. Admission is \$15, and proceeds will benefit the Panida. Underwriters for the evening are Sandpoint Books and Sandpoint Magazine.

For more information, contact: Heather White, Panida Theater, at <director@panida.org>