



Clem McIntosh

The Repat Actor and Filmmaker on Realizing Promise in His Home Province

by Jennifer Wood | Photographs by Denis Duquette

New Brunswick-born Clem McIntosh has built a substantial portfolio in the film industry both in front of and behind the camera. Throughout 15 years of living in New York City, McIntosh was a regular figure in theatre productions and acted in television series including Netflix's *Master of None* and Hulu's *The Path*, and he had a recurring role as Wellman in HBO's *Boardwalk Empire*. His work behind the camera began as a production assistant working on feature films including the *Bourne Ultimatum*, *Rachel Getting Married*, *Doubt* and *Revolutionary Road*. Ten years later he produced the comedy feature *Ghost Team* starring Jon Heder, Justin Long and Amy Sedaris. McIntosh grew up on his parents' potato farm in Glassville, where he appreciated the tactile nature of working with his hands. He knew that he wanted to return to New Brunswick and his family's beloved farm someday, and when the pandemic hit in 2020, the opportunity presented itself decades before he had anticipated. When he returned home, he felt he would be bidding adieu to his film career. But in a short time, he was surprised to learn about the burgeoning prospects that New Brunswick had to offer. He has since co-created a production company, Cultivation Pictures, joined forces with Saint John's Hemmings Films, and continues to act in series. Two years after leaving the grind of NYC, he is busier than ever.



Premiere screening of *Wabonaki Modern* at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton, NB

[EDIT] Senior Editor, Jennifer Wood, met with McIntosh at Saint John's East Coast Bistro, an understated eatery widely considered the best restaurant in the city and located in its epicentre. Over a piping hot, seasonally plump tomato risotto, delightful fresh-caught fish (tacos) and a shared, generous serving of French fries, the two charted about Clem's formative years in Glassville, his personal and professional experience in the film industry, his return to Atlantic Canada, and why he feels that New Brunswick presents a largely untapped market.

[EDIT] Your professional credits behind and in front of the camera are both numerous and admirable. Earlier in your career, what was it like working both sides of the lens?

CLEM MCINTOSH: I have always enjoyed tactile work, so earning a living working in film production was a natural fit. Once I found my footing in the industry, I quickly moved away from the production-assistant work and began working as a freelance gaffer (lighting technician) in documentary,

commercials and narrative and finally as a director of photography. My main client was *Time* magazine and their many brands including *Entertainment Weekly*, *People* magazine and *This Old House*. I grew up around cameras so I knew it was something that I could do. Simultaneously, I was constantly writing, directing and producing my own short films, and on the acting side, I was getting roles in commercials, voice over, video games, and film and television.

I always tried to keep the two facets of my career separate. I didn't want my agents knowing that I was working crew because they might regard it as lacking focus on my acting career. And while I was working crew, I didn't want the people around me to think I was just doing it for the paycheck. It was a delicate dance for years, but I knew the production experience was an opportunity for me to learn new skills and to build contacts in the industry. I finally became comfortable embracing both facets of my career.



Clockwise from top: Clem McIntosh as Cory in *Severance* with Elizabeth Ashby (Producer, Actor), as Beeson in *Nakui: The Path* (Actor) as Willman in HBO's *Boardwalk Empire* (Actor), and as McIntosh in *In Privato* (Director, Producer, Actor)

[EDIT]: Did growing up on a farm instill the necessary grit for the oftentimes ruthless film industry?

CLEM: To be honest, no! Farm life didn't provide me with the grit I needed to make it in New York. I remember smiling at everyone during my first few weeks there and getting a lot of strange looks. Moving from Atlantic Canada to New York was a huge learning curve in terms of trusting people. People are very trustworthy here; there is an inherent kindness. For sure, there are a lot of kind people in New York as well, but people are there to pursue their passion, and many will do whatever it takes to get there. In many ways, moving home gave me the chance to begin again with fresh eyes and a blank slate. I am now working with people I love, people that I can trust — this wasn't always the case in New York.

[EDIT]: How did you embrace returning to New Brunswick earlier than expected?

CLEM: My family's farm is my favourite place on earth, and I always thought I would eventually retire there. When COVID locked the planet down, I was lucky enough to be able to come home. Life in New Brunswick's lockdown was so different than what I had been experiencing in NYC. I didn't feel the suffocating restraints that my fellow New

Yorkers were going through. I appreciated getting out of my head, playing hockey again, and working in the woods. At the time, I was comfortable with my new life and wasn't missing my former career.

[EDIT]: What was the process of your reintroduction to the film industry after returning home?

CLEM: I eventually connected with another New Brunswick creative, Sandy Hunter. When I met him, he was head of Apple TV Canada and eager to return home after twenty-five years in Toronto. Some months later, I booked a guest-star role on Global TV's *Nurses*, and when I went to Toronto to film, Sandy and I met up to talk about our prospects on the East Coast. We discussed the province's many untold stories and its potential as a great untapped location. Soon after Sandy's move back East in the summer of 2021, we launched our production company, Cultivation Pictures, and later joined forces with Greg Hemmings, Steve Foster and Haley Adams to grow Hemmings Films.

[EDIT]: What is your perception of the future of the industry in New Brunswick, and what are the challenges to realize its potential?



The premiere of *Wabanaki Modern* at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery, October 2022

CLEM: New Brunswick presents a fresh, mostly untouched canvas for filmmakers. Nova Scotia has established itself rather quickly in the industry and New Brunswick can do the same. It's no surprise that when a production company comes to a location to film, the direct and indirect revenue for the province can amount to millions of dollars. Its other obvious benefit, which is oftentimes incalculable, is the major impact it can have on tourism. The movie *Anne of Green Gables* and Netflix's *Anne with an E* are prime examples.

Unfortunately, the tax incentive in New Brunswick has always been quite low and, until recently, non-existent. When it comes to the viability of productions filming in your province, it entirely hinges on the level of provincial tax incentive. It is hard to compete with surrounding provinces that have higher caps. But the province is working on this, and they have made significant headway in raising our incentive. The other hurdle is capacity, and we need more skilled New Brunswick-based technicians trained in every area of production. We are negotiating with a lot of companies very eager to shoot here — big productions that could really put our province on the map — but the bottom line is that it just needs to make financial sense to them.

[EDIT]: What are you working on now?

CLEM: Sandy and I continue our efforts with Hemmings Films and Cultivation Pictures, working to get various fiction and non-fiction television and film productions off the ground in New Brunswick. We recently worked alongside the Beaverbrook Art Gallery on a short documentary called *Wabanaki Modern*, which celebrates the amazing artists of the "Micmac Indian Craftsman" studio in 1960s New Brunswick. *Wabanaki Modern* was recently licensed to CBC and will be airing nationally in 2023. We are also developing a couple of feature films, a Prohibition-era action film called *Bum Runner* set in 1930s Madawaska, and we are working with Nova Scotia filmmaker Taylor Olson on his new film *Unson*, which has been pre-sold to Crave. Sandy and I also conceived a rural crime comedy series called *Justus*, which we are working on with Mike Allison. Mike also grew up in our area and serves as a showrunner for *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*. The dark action-comedy series is a loose reflection of our hometown and highlights the rampant rise in crime rates in recent years due to the absence of police. It features a ragtag group of would-be vigilantes that decide to take the law into their own hands. Comedy ensues. I am also working on an ani-

“EVERYTHING COMES FROM THE TOP DOWN. SO IF I AM RUNNING A SET EITHER AS A DIRECTOR OR PRODUCER, I TREAT EVERYONE WITH COMPASSION AND TRY TO CREATE A COLLABORATIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT FOR EVERYONE.”



ated kids series called *Young Maestro* with Hemmings Films and celebrated Canadian hip-hop icon (and fellow Saint John resident) Maestro Fresh Wes, which is loosely based on Maestro's early years and rise to hip-hop stardom.

[EDIT]: What do you bring to a filming experience from what you learned working on sets, either in production or as an actor?

CLEM: I have zero interest in working with jerks anymore — life is much too short for that. Everything comes from the top down, so if I am running a set either as a director or producer, I treat everyone with compassion and try to create a collaborative work environment for everyone. When done right, film can be the most collaborative of art forms, and so it has always irked me when I am watching something and see "a film by" so and so. In my mind, films don't really belong to any one person. You are a team working together to hopefully make the best film you can make, and I always want to foster an environment where people are excited to do so. ■

ukrafilms.com
Instagram: @ClemMcIntosh