

Toronto Through the Eyes of Matt Austin Sadowski



You may not recognize Matt Austin Sadowski's name, but give it time. Known for his film and television roles, the actor has been busy making a name for himself as a writer and director. His most recent film, the John Hughes documentary [Don't You Forget About Me](#), has already received a ton of buzz.

So what makes a director in this town tick? Is this even a great city to be in if you're a budding filmmaker? I sat down with Sadowski to chat about his love for the city and why he went chasing after the late Hughes.

You grew up just outside Toronto, in Richmond Hill. What was it like?

Other than a fantastic burger place called CHAR-BROILED, there wasn't much to do when I was a prepubescent teenager. A friend of mine had grown up in the city and knew how to ride the rocket. He taught me. And most of my time was spent getting dropped off at the Finch station kiss n' ride so I could come downtown. I hit Rock Variety for posters

and concert tees, saw shows at Gasworks and The Concert Hall, checked out some [L.I.F.T.](#) screenings, one-act plays at the [Poor Alex Theatre](#), hung out in tattoo shops (just for fun) and strolled around [Kensington Market](#). I really enjoyed walking from one end of the city to the next.

What do you love about the city?

I love there's not a day that goes by that I don't run into somebody I know.

What do you loathe?

I loathe that there's not a day that goes by that I don't run into somebody I know. Kidding. I think winter and construction are the only things I'm not fond of.

You're a filmmaker. Would you say Toronto is a good place for budding film talent to live and learn about the industry?

I think Toronto has a lot of passionate and talented artists. I think if you're one of them, and you're lucky enough to meet other passionate and talented artists, that they'll be the kind of people to support you and become incredibly important resources and sources of inspiration in your career. I feel I owe the success I've had thus far to the people I've known for the last few years. In some way they've added to everything I've done.

But you can't rely solely on your own network and peers. The industry and regular audiences have to be behind you if you're going to grow. I think this is where we fail. It's an old conversation. Too much attention and money is given to people that are already established. We have to believe in our

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own and have a thirst for discovering and following new talent: Those who have done it on their own and need help to get to the next rung on the ladder. It's changing, but slowly. In an effort to break the stereotype of polite Canadians, I've found the media's been harsh in their criticisms of artists. Especially in film and fashion. We have to celebrate and invest in our own. We have to.

How does a man born and raised in the G.T.A. end up searching for [John Hughes](#)? What inspired the documentary?

I was inspired because Hughes' movies were so important to me and so many other people. Good teen films seem to have vanished from Hollywood. We wanted to remind people of that and celebrate a guy who had really become a recluse. Films are good for more than a laugh. They can mold you. In a way, his characters were my friends. They made me feel more 'normal' at an age when I didn't feel comfortable in my skin. His movies are a 'high-school reunion' for me when I watch them now.

There's a city election next year. What could the next mayor do to improve the state of the arts in the city?

More tax breaks for getting involved in the arts as a theatre patron, a film investor, a painting buyer and more. It will never happen, but it would be a great start for change.

Where do you go to absorb culture in this city?

The subway. I really enjoy taking it. There are minute stories and amazing characters between stops.

How would you spend a lazy day wandering Toronto?

My perfect lazy day would happen in the fall. It's my favourite time of year. I have an 11-month-old daughter, so I don't know how «lazy» my day would be because there's no way I'd want to leave her and my wife at home.

We'd wake up with the babe at 7 a.m. We'd go to the Farmer's Market at the [Wychwood Barns](#). I'd have a fish sandwich from Ali while my wife would split an egg sandwich from [Chezvous](#) with my daughter. We'd grab some amazing smoked fish and then come back for a little nap.

Then we'd wake up and hopefully hop on a ferry and head to [Toronto Island](#) and catch a concert (I know there isn't one in the fall, but hey, this is my day; the roster over at [Arts&Crafts](#) taking the stage would be beautiful). My daughter loves music so she'd be very clap happy. We'd grab a smoothie or something and enjoy a nice autumn day looking at the leaves change colour. We'd come back to mainland and ride the subway to head back home. I'd cook some dinner for my daughter with some organic veggies we'd have grabbed at the Market and would put our babe down.

In perfect timing, sushi from [EDO-ko](#) would arrive (specifically their avocado salad and butterfish). Then, a babysitter would arrive and my wife and I would head back downtown to listen to some boogie woogie at [The Reservoir Lounge](#). Um. Not such a lazy day after all, but a great one.

Do you have any favourite haunts (shopping, restaurants, etc.)?

The El Palenque Casa Del Mariachi Mexican restaurant on St. Clair. [House of Lords](#) (Robert) for a hair cut. [The Drake Hotel](#) for a bite and brew. [Caplansky's](#) for smoked meat. [Babur](#) for Butter Chicken. I love

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shopping for jewellery for my wife at [Made You Look](#) and shopping for choice thrift clothing at the [Black Market](#) on Queen.

If you were describing Toronto to someone what would you say? How would you sell them on the city?

Toronto is the city that you'll wish you could say «I knew it when». I mean that both in terms of things that Toronto has lost (no more [Carlton Cinema](#)?), but also in terms of where I think the city is going. It may not have everything you want, but it definitely has everything that you need. I wouldn't want to be anywhere else. I made a pact a long time ago with my group of friends to stick it out here to try and be one of the many faces for new ideas. And see those ideas through, completely.