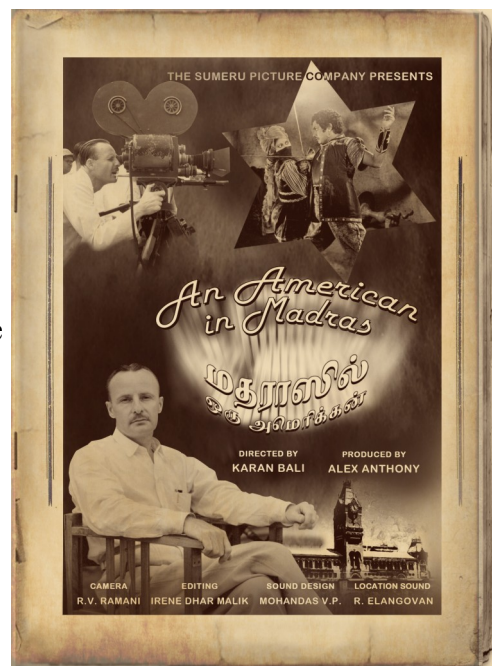


See Documentary About Wheeling Filmmaker Ellis Dungan at Library

On Tuesday evening, May 13, beginning at 6:00 pm, the Ohio County Public Library in Wheeling will host a screening of a new documentary, "An American in Madras," by Indian filmmaker Karan Bali about the early work of Wheeling filmmaker Ellis Dungan and Dungan's surprising contributions to Indian cinema.

Ellis R. Dungan was born May 11, 1909 in the small town of Barton, Ohio. After studying at USC's cinema department, he went to India in 1935. Intending to stay there for six months, he ended up staying for 15 years, making quite a name for himself in the Tamil Film Industry in South India and helping it in its developing years. Even after he left India he continued to return, working on jungle adventure films. He moved to Wheeling in 1958 and, through his own Ellis Dungan Productions, produced and directed industrial, business, and public relations films for entities like West Virginia University, Wheeling Steel Corporation, Consolidation Coal Company, and The Wheeling Ironmen. He resided in Wheeling until his death in 2001. Mr. Dungan is best remembered in his home state and hometown as a talented producer of regional documentary films such as "Wild Wonderful West Virginia," "Time's Runnin' Out," and "High Speed Steel," to name just a few. He was also instrumental in producing "For Liberty and Union," a film about West Virginia Statehood, which is shown daily at West Virginia Independence Hall and "Wheels to Progress," a film about Wheeling in its 1959 heyday.



Karan Bali is an Indian Filmmaker who became interested in the early history of Cinema produced in the Tamil region of India and realized the contribution Ellis Dungan had made to changing the nature of Tamil Films. Through reading Ellis Dungan's Autobiography "A Guide to Adventure" which he co-authored with Wheeling author Barbara Smik [one of the daughters of country music singing legend Doc Williams and Aunt to Wheeling Mayor Andy McKenzie], Mr. Bali realized that Ellis Dungan had given his collection of films, photographs and papers to the West Virginia State Archives. Working with the staff of the State Archives, Mr. Bali found many of the materials he needed to make his documentary. He also searched archives in India and Malaysia to find other archival materials.

Recently, Mr. Bali has been showing his film at many film festivals in India and elsewhere. He is currently scheduled to appear at the prestigious New York Indian Film Festival in early May and wished, after that, to visit Wheeling where Mr. Dungan had lived and worked to show his documentary, talk about its making and possibly meet people who knew Mr. Dungan. "Ellis Dungan's fascinating story was one just waiting to be told," said Bali. "I'm surprised no one else did it earlier but I'm glad I could make this film and bring to light, however belated, the efforts and achievements of a true pioneer of the Tamil (and Indian) film industry. I especially wanted the people of Wheeling, many of whom would have known Mr. Dungan personally and who might have only heard about his adventures in India to actually see the huge contribution he made while in India - not just to the Indian film industry but also to the War Effort from 1941-45 in addition to photographing historic events around Indian Independence from the British."



Ellis Dungan directing the Tamil film *Ponmudi* (1949); courtesy the West Virginia State Archives.

A reception featuring light refreshments will begin at 6 pm in the library's auditorium. The screening of "An American in Madras" will begin at 6:30 pm, and a discussion with the filmmaker, Karan Bali, will take place after the screening. The program is free and open to the public. Please visit ohiocountylibrary.org, call 304-232-0244, or visit [facebook.com/lunchwithbooks](https://www.facebook.com/lunchwithbooks) for more information.

Reception-6 PM: Screening-6:30 PM; Discussion after film.