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Miles Brings Back the Classics

By [Jamie Steel](#)

Posters are everywhere: hung on the wall, in a mountain on the table, in cardboard tubes everywhere. Round the corner, and there's even more.

The basement of Dan Miles, a communications strategist at UOIT, is a movie lover's dream, with posters from movies of all genres at every turn.

A movie-lover himself, Miles has been collecting posters for years, and for the past 11, he's also been a part-time poster restorer.

After restoring five posters for display at this year's Toronto International Film Festival (*Rashomon*; *The Sorrow and the Pity*; *Written on the Wind*; *The Leopard* and *Playtime*) the Port Perry man is increasing his client base. From Port Perry retirees, to a man in Illinois, Miles' clientele is spread across the continent, and has even included a customer in the United Kingdom. His most recent client is a CTV cameraman in Toronto. The cameraman's posters were for *Creature from the Haunted Sea* (1961) and *Alien* (1979). Miles said they were in good condition considering their age. They were creased from being folded in storage, and slightly yellow from age, but had relatively minimal water damage. Miles used the latter of the two posters to demonstrate the initial process of restoration, called linen backing.

The process begins by covering the mounting board with a heavy canvas and then applying a wheat starch adhesive to it. The adhesive starts as a white powder but after mixing it with water and letting it sit over night, it turns to a creamy, white substance. The same adhesive is then applied to Japanese Masa paper, an acid-free paper that helps preserve the poster after it has been restored, which is then placed on the canvas. Next Miles places the poster in a water bath to help relax the paper. This reduces the appearance of creases and water damage.

Finally, he gently places the poster on the canvas, on top of the Masa paper, leaving a half-inch border, and uses a roller to carefully flatten it and eliminate any bubbles.

The linen backing demonstration takes less than an hour, and that includes Miles taking the time to explain the steps. After this process however, Miles allows time for the poster to sit for days and then does a few final touchups before returning it to his client.

In a lot of cases, people have these posters folded and in piles and wonder how to display them, Miles explained. People are putting their trust in me to restore a piece of paper worth hundreds of dollars I take my time, as I should I think.

Most of the posters that Miles sees have creases in them, due to being folded and stacked in boxes. Some posters also have minor tears and water damage. Miles says he's even had posters fall to pieces during the water bath, but when he was done with them they looked whole again.

I'm probably averaging at least one email a day, says Miles, who completes restoration on four posters in the average month. I've got enough work to get me through till the middle of next year. And it keeps coming, it keeps coming.

Miles has no intention of expanding his restoration business in the near future and simply enjoys doing it as a hobby.

It can't get any bigger for me, at this point, says Miles. I just do it because I like to do it. It's a labour of love, I guess, to use that old cliché.

Miles currently has hundreds of restored posters in his studio, along with more than 400 original posters he recently purchased from a Port Elgin man.

As a kid my mom would drag me to the movies, says Miles who has always had a love of movies and movie poster art. The strength of film is so amazing.

Miles is disappointed that current movies seem to be all about the action and special effects, and appreciates movies with well-developed characters.

He doesn't hesitate when asked to name his favourite flick. It's the 1969 film Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, the poster for which is mounted at the entrance to his home for all of his visitors to admire.

The 1971 Dirty Harry poster is the most valuable that Miles has restored, worth about \$2,000 US.

More of Miles posters can be seen at the Super Video store on Highway 7A, and on his website, www.backingtothefuture.com.