

Fine film



Elliot Lefko

Bob Huber, manager of the Fine Arts Cinema, sat back in his chair with a look of deep melancholy. Only twelve people had paid admission for a Sunday afternoon showing of the Hungarian film, *Angi Vera*. Huber looked off as he spoke: "I'm not enthusiastic about the future. The costs of bringing in first run foreign films are getting higher and the market is decreasing. A film that gets bad reviews is immediately killed and even one that is received favourably, like *Angi Vera*, isn't assured of success."

Huber has been in the Toronto cinema game since 1966 when he exhibited films at the Electra. He ran Cinema Lumiere for two-and-one-half years at the beginning of the seventies and six years ago he and a partner took over the Revue Cinema. The Revue, the Fine Arts, and the Festival Cinema are all partially supplied with films by New Cinema distributors.

New Cinema owner Linda Beath is among a group which operates the Fine Arts and the Festival (both first-run, foreign film theatres).

New Cinema is an independent distributing company with over 200 titles in its possession. In addition to supplying Toronto, it deals with Vancouver and other smaller Canadian film markets such as Edmonton, Winnipeg and Ottawa. It also supplies many Canadian universities.

In the past New Cinema, and the Festival and the Fine Arts, have presented films from Hungary, Spain, France, Italy,

Germany and Cuba. Last year Beath was in Germany making connections to acquire films such as Fellini's *Orchestra Rehearsal*, and a German film about police brutality entitled *Knife in The Head*. It's difficult choosing films, though. You have pick from what is available. Only 3 or 4 out of dozens will make back money. The recently-featured *Bronte Sisters*, for example, cost \$4,000 and there is no way they are going to recoup their losses.

The increasing difficulty in showing quality first-run foreign films is compounded by the ignorance of the public and critics, conditioned by American narrative forms.

Huber notices the attitudes of people watching foreign films. "Most people get angry when they don't immediately understand. They either say it's boring or it's bad."

The independent New Cinema doesn't get any government grants. Huber pointed out that the Canadian government isn't interested in film, the way they subsidize ballet and theatre. This is the opposite to France, where film has always been considered an art.

The future for both cinemas looks pessimistic at best. On the horizon possibly is a Polish festival, but that is two long years away. *Knife in The Head* should open around spring, hopefully.

The only question left is why do people like Linda Beath and Bob Huber bother? Huber laughs: "I wonder myself. I suppose it is interesting. There are rewards, now and then."

Roll the next reel.

Cine mess

James P. Boyle

What happened to Cineplex? In their publicity propaganda Cineplex located in the Eaton's Centre, promised much. Cineplex president N.A. Taylor, a long-time senior member of the Canadian film industry, says, "We coined the word 'Cineplex' as a contraction of the words 'Cinema complex.'" Utilizing a custom 16mm rear screen projection system, similar to that used in the Curtis Lecture Halls, Cineplex offers a variety of art, foreign language and re-release films.

The 18 color-coded auditoria, with seating capacities ranging from 57 to 137, were designed by Toronto theatre architect Mandel Sprachman. A computerized ticket vending machine allows tickets to be purchased for any performance in advance.

So much for the publicity release and the Horatio Alger success story. What is the real story concerning "the Cineplex experience?" Designed to respond to the needs of special interest groups by providing motion pictures in original languages; retrospective film presentations; short subjects and French and English films produced in Canada, the Complex has become a massive re-release palace.

A small percentage of films

showing at one time are, true to their word, foreign or special interest films. And Cineplex breaks a recent European film at least once a month. It is especially in the Canadian area that Cineplex is deficient. *Rubber Gun*, Drubinsky's *Silent Partner*, and *A Scream from Silence* being the only Canadian product to receive extensive exposure at the Cineplex.

And what of the much touted computerized rear screen system? The compromises of the theatre's location forced the adoption of the rear screen process: utilizing three mirrors between projector and screen. The quality of the 16mm reduction prints is questionable, even with modern optical printing techniques. The fixed aspect ratio screens are incredibly annoying, cutting off the tops and bottoms of films in any of the widescreen formats.

The technical wizardry and modern conveniences do not compensate for Cineplex's drawbacks. Philosophically dedicated to alternative cinema presentation Cineplex has become a shopper's diversion, a great 18 channel T.V. set. The theatre's limitations are barely compensated for by the meagre special interest offerings. It will have to be an especially unique film to get me into Cineplex again.

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G.A.A. Strike Headquarters
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Local 3

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