

NFT looking to change its image

by Suzanne Lundrigan

Jim Sinclair's voice echoes in the wilderness, "But we are not boorriiiiiinnngggggg"

As program director of the N.F.T., Sinclair is struggling to hew out a place for the his theatre in the Edmonton market. It's an uphill battle.

"The N.F.T. has an image problem. We take our film seriously; as a result, people perceive us as stuffy. I want to alter that perception. Our mandate is highlight film with artistic, critical, and historical significance. We showcase directors, genres and regional films. Granted, its heady stuff. . . but it is not boring. I have to get that across to the public so that I can get more people to come through the theatre doors."

These are not merely the musings of a man hoping to expand business, but the measures a man takes in order to remain in business. This past August, the N.F.T. weathered a crucial financial storm. Its board of directors voted to suspend operations. Some fancy financial footwork kept the theatre doors open.

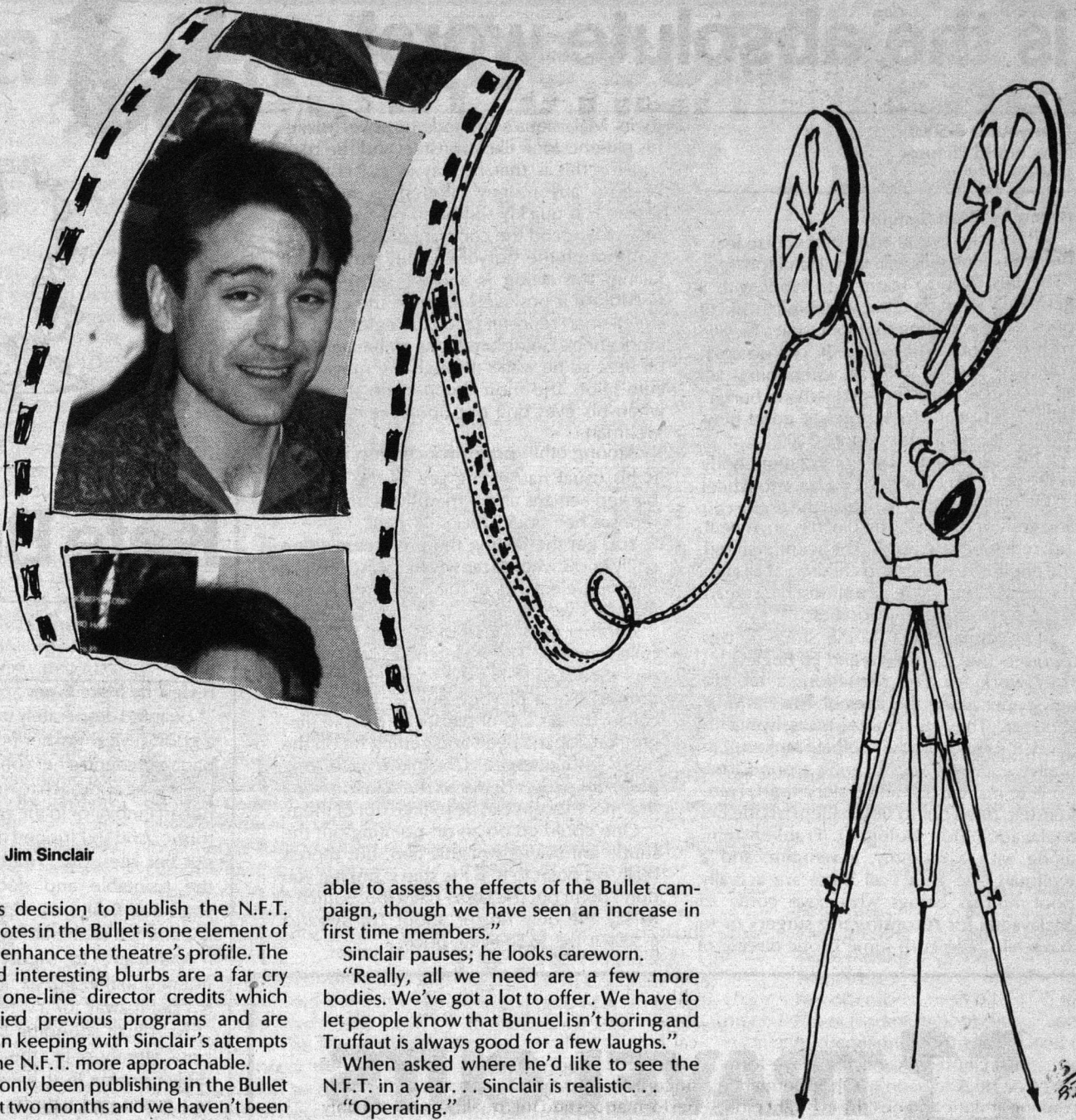
"We renegotiated our contract with the Citadel. Instead of paying \$500.00 rent per month we now pay \$100.00. Under the new contract we also provide our own ushers.

Though we are still operating at a deficit we are paying the bills."

Sinclair literally bubbles over with plans for a modified N.F.T.

"We have a terrific venue. . . probably the classiest in town. The seats are comfortable and there is plenty of leg room. The theatre is carpeted so you don't stick to the floor. Ironically, the 'classiness' of the theatre seems to work against us. People are a tad intimidated by it. Further, the no food and drink rule does little to promote a fun atmosphere."

However, we are anticipating a name change. . . the N.F.T. label is part of our image problem. We are looking for something a little more inviting. After we implement the name change we will be putting a marquee in the foyer, installing more vending machines and building our own box office. Hopefully we will be able to draw more people into the



Pictured: Jim Sinclair

theatre."

Sinclair's decision to publish the N.F.T. program notes in the *Bullet* is one element of his plan to enhance the theatre's profile. The catchy and interesting blurbs are a far cry from the one-line director credits which accompanied previous programs and are definitely in keeping with Sinclair's attempts to make the N.F.T. more approachable.

"We've only been publishing in the *Bullet* for the past two months and we haven't been

able to assess the effects of the *Bullet* campaign, though we have seen an increase in first time members."

Sinclair pauses; he looks careworn.

"Really, all we need are a few more bodies. We've got a lot to offer. We have to let people know that Bunuel isn't boring and Truffaut is always good for a few laughs."

When asked where he'd like to see the N.F.T. in a year. . . Sinclair is realistic. . . "Operating."

Photo: Bill St. John

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