

Wormwood's to move

by Pam Sullivan

If you're a patron of Wormwood's Dog and Monkey Cinema, you can expect to see a move take place next month.

Currently located on the top floor of Barrington Street's historic Wormwood building, the Dog and Monkey is one of the last businesses to vacate the near-empty building. The small theatre will be packing up and moving operations to the Carpenter Building, located next to the Irving station on Gottingen St.

Wormwood's Dog and Monkey Cinema, though relatively obscure, is growing in popularity more and more every year. It is consistent in offering alternative cinema to those who crave something out of the mainstream. For instance, if you're

interested in seeing a new Canadian or European release, the Dog and Monkey is the most likely place to find it.

The theatre first opened in 1978 as an adjunct of the Atlantic Filmmakers' Co-op and moved to the Wormwood Building five years later. Owner Gordon Parsons has been with the operation from the beginning and has great hopes for its future success. He is optimistic about the Feb. 21 move and subsequent Feb. 26 reopening, yet still admits initially to having a "mixed reaction" to the proposal. He says, however, that the new location is an expanding one in which he expects to see more and more growth.

The theatre itself will be changing and growing somewhat. A shortage of seats will no longer be a problem, as the new

theatre will have a greater seating capacity. The current theatre is the smallest of its kind in Canada — not a great thing for business. Even with a very large box office draw, the theatre's size acts as a barrier of sorts.

Parsons hopes, with a boost in ticket sales, to acquire access to an even larger selection of critically acclaimed videos which in the past have simply not been available in the city. With this larger capacity, he sees a future of programming in a more interesting way because the cinema will be more attractive to distributors. As well as a larger seating capacity, we can expect to see a concession area, the profit of which will greatly benefit the theatre. And last but not least, indeed maybe most, there will be a much greater access to parking, something sorrowfully missed in Halifax.

Parsons, though hopeful about the move, does voice some regret about leaving the Wormwood building. Over the years, he says, he's built up a "real affection" for the old building. The current owners — the Pangiotakas brothers of Marathon Grill — have left him no choice but to vacate, as they have provided no guarantee that the theatre's tenure in the building will not

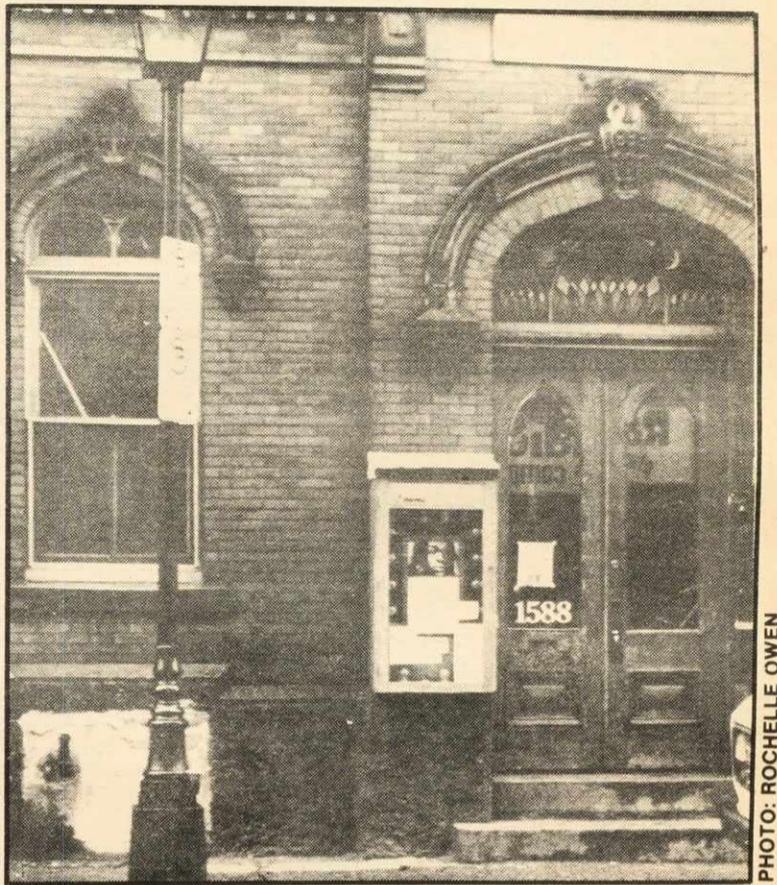


PHOTO: ROCHELLE OWEN

The Wormwood Building on Barrington St.

end next month. Parsons has tried repeatedly to negotiate an extended lease, but has been unable to succeed in this.

The future of the Wormwood building at this time is still up in the air. As it now stands, there appear to be no fixed plans for

the building, though several development schemes are currently being discussed. The Pangiotakas brothers have demolition rights to the property in June, and until then we'll just have to hold tight and wait for the decision.

The Last Emperor

by Meredith Usher

The Last Emperor is the dazzling new film epic by Italian director Bernardo Bertolucci. Bertolucci, who is best known for *Last Tango in Paris*, has taken the story of the last Chinese emperor and used it



Peter O'Toole and friends in *The Last Emperor* to create a visual masterpiece.

The film tell the story of the

emperor Pu Yi's life, mostly in flashback, during his imprisonment by the Chinese communists after WWII. The story consists of his ascension to the Dragon Throne at age three, his expulsion from the Forbidden City at age eighteen, his eventual rule over Manchuria as a puppet leader for the Japanese, and finally his re-education by the Chinese.

Bertolucci and his cinematographer, Vittorio Storaro, use this story as a canvas on which they paint a visually stunning screen epic. The colours, costumes, and beautiful Chinese architecture all contribute to the eye-filling impact.

All the principals give riveting performances, especially John Lone as the adult Pu Yi. He gives the emperor a subtle pathos through his portrayal, which

allows one to see the tragedy in his fall from grace. It takes a very gifted actor to convincingly play a character who begins as an emperor and ends as a gardener. Peter O'Toole also gives a great performance as the emperor's Scottish tutor, and Joan Chen as Pu Yi's empress deserves to be mentioned for her outstanding job in a difficult role.

However, the greatest performance belongs to The Forbidden City, which plays the part of the emperor's home for the first eighteen years of his life.

Although during this time it is a virtual prison for the ruler, Bertolucci imbues it with almost magical properties. Along with all the age and history of ancient China, it also manages to convey all of China's mystique and graceful beauty.

To create such a sumptuous masterpiece one must have great vision, and as Bertolucci has proven with *The Last Emperor*, he has that vision. Although the days of the Hollywood epic seem to be long since past, they have been reborn in the film-making

of Bernardo Bertolucci with colour and imagination.

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Emitai, made in 1970, is set in rural Southern Senegal during WWII. The film guide described it as a "curiously muted evocation" of anti-imperialism, but I found nothing muted about it at all. The film exposed African involvement in WWII for what it was: a terribly brutal undertaking by the colonial powers, something that amounted to nothing less than forced free labour, allowing for the confiscation of vital food supplies for the benefit of the colonial power. After the men in the area have been forced to "volunteer" for the army, the women are told to hand over most of their grain supplies. Based on an actual event, the women's actions to hide the grain were certainly acts of rebellion.

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