

Gaiety fades with films

By PETER F. KUITENBROUWER
Brunswickan Staff

While 35 people scattered through the cavernous 600-seat wooden theatre Tuesday night watched the last first-run movie, *The Competition*, The Gaiety's manager talked about the closing. "I've done everything but stand on my head and spit nickels," to draw people into the theatre, Derrick Smith said. But for many reasons he listed, such as less movie-goers, the deterioration of the product, and competition from other theatres, the Gaiety can not compete any more.

While Smith was initially upset when he heard the cinema would be closing its doors, he now seems quite resigned to its fate.

he said, the present owner's of the place are not all good.

"Sure, Fredericton thinks this is a great place," he said. "But the owner worked here for 35 years. He worked for his old man, a staunch, shrewd conservative guy. His memories of this place are not all good, and he's just decided to shut the doors."

"The man's gonna do what the man's gonna do. What can I say?" asked Smith.

Smith says he's known something like this would happen eventually. "I've known about the deterioration of the industry and the deterioration of the product," he said.

"There are more movies being made now, and a lot of them are no good."

He also said that if there's a good woman's movie they'll



The Gaiety theatre will close March 31

"I've done everything but stand on my head and spit nickels," said Derrick Smith

The Gaiety, which replaced the Unique theatre in 1910 as Fredericton's only cinema is the property of William Fennety. His grandfather built the Unique, and late the downtown landmark that is now disappearing.

Financial problems are one reason the theatre must close, asserted Smith. On top of this,

drag the men in, but the reverse is not true. The average age of movie-goer

But The Gaiety, specifically, is hit hardest by this because it needs big crowd-draws in order to make money. It has trouble renting good movies because many movie companies give 'first-refusal' rights to theatre chains.

Smith pointed out the Famous Players cinemas now has four screens and will soon have six. They have almost 250 theatres in the Maritimes, he pointed out.

"They have a lot of pull," Smith said. "They can say 'Give me that picture or I won't play any of your movies.'"

Another big hassle, Smith said, is repairs needed at the theatre. "We got hit by the fire

marshall last year," he said. "The sprinkler system and other changes cost us \$15,000."

"The theatre also needs new wiring, which would cost about \$30,000," he said. "Then, new mortar between the bricks would cost another \$10,000 and you might well add another \$40,000 for a new heating system."

If the theatre remained open, all these changes would have to be made within the next year, Smith said.

Fennety hasn't made any suggestions about what could be done with the building, Smith said. "The lobby will stay, for sure, but I don't know about

the auditorium. It's pretty run-down."

Smith had lots of ideas for changing the cinema's format, such as changing it into a repertoire theatre. "It should have worked," he said. "We would have had to change the films, to show all the best movies of all time."

But, sighed Smith, "this building won't be maintained as a motion picture theatre."

What will Smith be doing with his livelihood now that his job is gone? "I bought a seven-foot fly pole, and I'm going to do some fishing," he said.

"Then I'll see what's happening in the industry. I want to stay in films."



Andre Michel, an artist living in Sept-Iles Quebec will open his second exhibition in Fredericton on March 15th. Until April 13th, the UNB Art Centre will show 35 of his paintings of Montagnais Indians entitled "Paysages, Visages Montagnais" (Landscapes and portraits of the Montagnais.)

Andre Michel has chosen to paint these people and their land quite directly using strong line and rich colour in a spontaneity for an immediate effect.

The Art Centre is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday and from 2 to 4 p.m. on Sundays.

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