

Cinema 2000

Times Square theatre a new experience

By DAVID McCaughna

With the large chains engulfing most of our film theatres, pumping out their endless stream of drivel, it is the lucky man who can have a theatre to show his own favorite films. Max Allen, owner and operator of the recently opened Cinema 2000, is one such fortunate.

The theatre, on the flashy Midnight Cowboy land of the Yonge Street strip district has been much publicised for the fact that

by using videotape instead of the conventional film it has bypassed the hand of the Ontario Film Censor Board. "It wasn't my original purpose, to get around the censor," explains Allen. "It wasn't the first thing on my mind, by any measure. But I have."

Allen was confronted with the problem of creating a film theatre out of the small space available in the building that also houses the Times Square Book Shop. The

sheer physical limitations of the building made it impossible to have an ordinary theatre so Allen came up with the concept of videotapes.

The videotapes are processed in New York and played to audiences on television-size screens in each of the three thin, long theatres in Cinema 2000. Seating is three and four chairs deep and the screens are at angular positions above the seats. The tapes are run by a girl operating in a glass-sided booth visible from the street.

Although the censorship board has no jurisdiction over what is

shown on the tapes in Cinema 2000, the Metropolitan Police do, they can take action if they wish. While the scene has become increasingly permissive in Toronto in the last six months (within the last year Chelsea was confiscated and Futz prosecuted as obscene, now the girls at the Victory have dispensed with the pasties, nude actors roll around in Dionysus '69 and there is a veritable public feast in I am Curious (Yellow) there remains the constant threat that action could be taken against Allen.

The police have already visited the theatre twice and seen both of the films that have been shown so far. They have discussed with Allen segments of the film they thought to be obscene but so far no action has been taken.

Allen plans to show many of his favorite films in Cinema 2000 — films that have never played in Toronto, or have come here and gone away unnoticed. "This place isn't here to show dirty movies as I know many people think," Allen said. "Toronto has been cut off from a lot of stuff and I want to bring it here now."

One film he mentioned he plans on showing is *The Incident*, a tense drama that takes place on a subway car under New York City.

Max Allen opened Cinema 2000 with a shoddy, semi-psychedelic mess called *The Age of Aquarius*. Advertised as "the Woodstock Generation film" it was obviously intended to cash in on the very lucrative aura surrounding the Woodstock festival.

Allen claims the film was an embarrassment to him and he pulled it off in less than a week. The only reason he showed it was because of a contract he had with

its makers. He then put on the currently running Andy Warhol extravaganza *Lonesome Cowboys*, the first Warhol film to ever have a regular run in Toronto. Warhol happens to be one of Allen's favorites and he wants to show a number of Warhol flicks at Cinema 2000.

"I like Warhol a lot," he said in an interview "and I'm showing about three more. I'm running this one first because its pretty mild compared to some of the others." Having seen a couple of Warhol films in New York recently I understand what Allen means. *Lonesome Cowboys* is especially well-clothed for Warhol.

Bone-thin Warhol superstar Viva is the star of *Lonesome Cowboys*. She parades around an Arizona ghost town with her "nurse" Taylor ead, another leading light of the New York underground circuit. There are five or six young cowboys around and when not taunting or raping the not overly alarmed Viva they indulge in various amusements with each other. *Lonesome Cowboys* is a quite funny take-off on the John Wayne syndrome of westerns, if one dismisses the Warhol mannerisms which tend to become somewhat tiresome as time passes.

Incidentally, for those who think of Warhol along with those eight-hour long films of the Empire State Building, or of a man consuming a mushroom, *Lonesome Cowboys* is a brisk 110 minutes long.

Other Warhol films that may be coming to Cinema 2000 are *Flesh, I a Man*, and perhaps the ultimate, *Blue Movie*. If *Blue Movie* can play in this city then Max Allen needn't have another worry about police harassment.

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