

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons

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'Book of Love' brings him home

By Dan Greenberg
special writer

NEW LINE CINEMA'S CEO, Robert Shaye, a Detroit native, Mumford High School and University of Michigan graduate, came home last week for a benefit premiere of his directorial debut, "Book of Love."

The premiere at the Star John R Theatre in Madison Heights raised money toward programs of the Variety Club for Children in Detroit. "Book of Love" opened Friday at Detroit-area theaters.

Shaye was in town with two of the film's stars, Keith Coogan, grandson of Jackie Coogan, and Tricia Leigh Fisher, daughter of Frankie-Foster and Eddie-Fisher. Despite their youth, both Coogan and Fisher are accomplished, experienced performers, who represent the acting profession's best facet, the ability to appear on screen as someone else. Neither looks nor acts in person as they do on screen in "Book of Love."

"I was happy my role came across as such a change from what I really look like," Fisher said during an interview with her, Coogan and Shaye at the Townsend Hotel in Birmingham.

"Acting is not about looking the best you can," Coogan added. "It's your character. It's fun to be someone else."

IN "BOOK OF LOVE," Fisher plays Gina Gaboche, who is pretty tough-looking, a chopper-check trying to emulate her brother, Angelo, football star and local bully. Coogan is a nerdy type with glasses, a limp and terrifically unfulfilled yearnings for the opposite sex. He befriends the new fellow in the neighborhood, Jack Twitler (Chris Young), and together they wind their way from lonely high school sophomores to reasonable success at their senior prom.

"I felt very passionate about this material," director Shaye said. "You have to have emotional enthusiasm



SHERRIE BUZY/staff photographer

Filmmaker Robert Shaye of New Line Cinema discusses "Book of Love."

to carry you through the difficult times in directing." Shaye believes this story of adolescence in the '60s is an important story for today's youth.

Although "Book of Love" is not set in Detroit per se, Shaye continued, "a lot of Detroit is in this movie. Kids today find the film, lots of fun and very illuminating because, despite what they're going through in contemporary anxieties and pressures, adolescence is still very much the same as it was then. A lot of kids are enlightened by that because they can't really believe their parents went through the same stuff that they're going through."

Inspiring others' creativity has been part and parcel of Shaye's style since founding New Line Cinema in 1967 as a small, private distributor

of art films. Now listed on the American Stock Exchange, New Line Cinema is unique as a prominent, successful, independent motion picture production and distribution company. Maintaining independence in a world of international entertainment conglomerates and corporate giants is no easy task, and Shaye's successful track record reflects his unique personal style of stimulating and encouraging individual creativity.

New Line has just completed a production arrangement with Harry Belafonte's company. In the past, New Line has given a boost to such noted filmmakers as Susan Seidelman and George Romero. Among more successful box office ventures,



Shaye and "Book of Love" stars Keith Coogan and Tricia Leigh Fisher joke around during an interview at the Townsend Hotel in Birmingham.

Shaye and New Line have distributed "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" and "House Party," while producing the first five parts of "Nightmare on Elm Street," two "Critters" and the cult favorite "Polyester."

SHAYE SAID, "It's really important for people in the entertainment business to know as much about their business as they can so shunting to directing from producing and distributing was a natural segue and also something I always felt I had an instinct for."

That instinct was evident early on as the 35-year-old Shaye was co-owner with Martin Scorsese of the prestigious Society of Cinematographers Rosenthal Competition for Best Motion Picture by an American Director Under the Age of 25. That national competition was won the previous year by Brian DePalma.

Shaye's father, uncle and grandfather were wholesale grocers, as Grosse Pointe Quality Foods. Later

young Robert learned to polish apples and carry out groceries for his father and uncle at the Big Bear Supermarket on Eight Mile and Laverne roads in Detroit.

After Mumford High, Shaye attended the U-M, took a brief stint at acting in California, traveled in Europe and attended Columbia Law School. He is still a member of the New York Bar.

After law school, Shaye studied in Sweden on a Fulbright Scholarship.

That's when he met a Swedish girl whom he married. The couple has two daughters, 18 and 16. He has a sibling, a sister, Lina, an actress, who appears in "Book of Love" as Mrs. Fisher, mother of the two Twitler friends.

Robert Shaye's father is a grocer, and living in Phoenix, he has a family of five. Shaye has a brother, a sister, and a nephew. He is a member of the National Association of Broadcasters and the National Association of Broadcasters.

"I felt very passionate about this material. You have to have emotional enthusiasm to carry you through the difficult times in directing."

— Robert Shaye

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