DFT founder meets with film lovers

By Judith Doner Beine Brecial Whiten

It's a sunny, summer, Sunday morning in Bloomfield Township. And 160 people are sitting in a dimly lit movie theater although no film is scheduled until after-

dimiy lit movie theater aithough no film is scheduled until afternoon.

They have come to the third session of the Film Lovern Club.

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Attendance has grown so that the monthly Sunday morning meeting has to be moved from the bookstore coffee shop to the theater on Maple just west of Telegraph.

day Harvey and Nadline Miller, Diane Ponish, Inens Antonical Company of the Company o

Detroit Film Theatre at the De-ricol Institute of Arts.

"It's a real privilers to have the job that I have," Wilhelm tells them in bis engaging, conversa-tional manner. "For me to stand at the back of a theater and see an audience responding to a film on the screen is truly exciting."

Wilhelm, Detroit-born and bred, told of nurturing his love for ilm at the art film theaters of his boyhood — The Studio, Studio North, Studio 8 and Studio 4.

"But from 1970 until Wilhelm formed the DFT in 1973, "there was no real theater that showed alternative kinds of film.
"The NEA got me the job I have," Wilhelm tells this audi-

ence, seated in heavily Republican Oakland County.
With a backdrop of a Republican-controlled Congress seeking
to eradicate the National Endowment for the Arts, Wilhelm recites
this experience:
In the early 70s, the NEA recognized the void in alternative film
theaters that had developed in
Detroit and other major cites.
Through a Regional Film Thearter Project, they gave money to
museums, cultural centers and libraries to revive the showing of
alternative films. And one of
these was a \$10,000 grant to the
DIA.
Wilhelm recalls the sacial ten-

DIA.
Wilhelm recalls the racial tensions that ruled Detroit in the early '70's and the question of whether the DIA was the right

whether the DIA was the Figure venue.

"In a major city, that's where culture happens." At the same time, "We recognized that it was distinct possibility that it would fail. Would the suburbs come?"

The theater seats 1,200. And 857 came that first night. The theater has averaged between 850 and 1,000 each evening since.

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And once theaters like the
Maple opened, in 1976, the NEA
withdrew the grant. The alternative film market was once more in
place.

"The DFT's health is important to the Maple's health," Wilhelm says. "Together these theaters (together with the Main Art,
the Abbey, etc.) are offering the
public a much wider selection of
films than they would otherwise

ENTERTAINENT!"

ENGAGING AND UPBEATL

"YOU GET YOUR MONEY'S WORTH WITH THIS BABYSITTER!" "REAL FRIENDS, REAL FUN, REAL LIFE SITUATIONS!"

© 'In a major city, that's where culture hap-pens. We recognized that it was a distinct pos-sibility that it would fall. Would the suburbs come?' Elliot Wilhelm Elliot Wilhelm

be seeing.

"Wo wish them all great health.

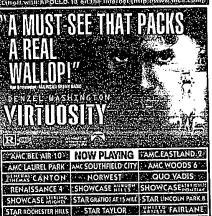
When audiences' tastes are reised, they'll support them in the marketplace. It's a great cycle, the more and more you go to good films, the more will be made."

The next meeting of the Film Lovers Club is 10 a.m. Sunday,

Scpt. 17 at the Maple 3. And the first meeting of the Reel Talh film discussion group takes places at the Barnes & Noble Cafe at 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 6 after the 7:16 p.m. showing of the "Brothers McMullen" at the Maple 3. Call Ruth Dankels at (810) 855-9091 for more information.



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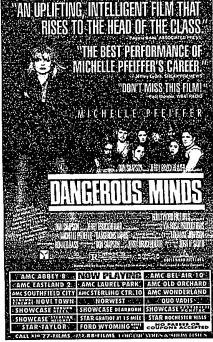


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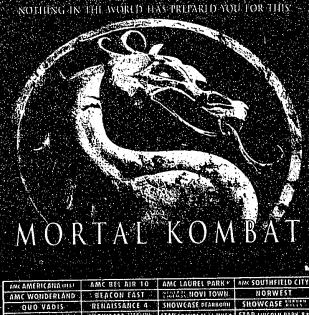
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