

POINTS OF VIEW

Marketing plays different scenes at area theaters

As summer becomes fall, a new screen play is being written at some of our local movie houses. But sure you've noticed, for example, that the Maple Theatre is showing art films again.

Not one, not two, not three, but four art films were emblazoned on its marquee last week. I wondered, was this a fluke designed for the last week or two before summer unofficially ends?

"It definitely is going to continue," responded Matt Koricki, acting general manager. "It was a business decision."

Well, Koricki didn't spell it out, but it's pretty obvious that the combination of the near-by Birmingham Theatre's eight screens and the new Southfield Star with its 20 screens, showing mainly first-run films, has prompted the Maple's return to its roots.

"I thought 'what a line-up,'" said Nadine Maynard, of the Maple's latest offerings. "That's a wonderful little theater," said Maynard, who taught film for 15 years before her current position as head of Bloomfield Community Television. "More than any other theater, people are talking about the movie when they come out."

That's part of what first prompted former Maple manager, Ruth Daniels, to begin two film discussion groups a couple of years back, one that she continued at another location and one that she intends to revive shortly.

Daniels, a Farmington Hills resident, had a short stint at the Birmingham Theatre and is now public relations manager for the Southfield Star. For the past couple of years, she's continued to lead "Reel Talk" — devoted to a particular current film — 7 p.m. on the second Monday of each month at Border's Books and Music in Farmington Hills. "Kiss Me Guido" is the film set for the Sept. 8 discussion.

She has plans to resume the popular "Film Lover's Club," where guests knowledgeable about film give their views. One August Sunday morning, I was among 160 people who heard Elliot Wilhelm, founder of the Detroit Film Theatre and curator of film at the Detroit Institute of Arts. Watch for it to resume on a Sunday to be announced at her new home base.

We haven't seen much in the way of art films at the Southfield Star, but Daniels says that co-owner Barrie Locks promises two theaters devoted to art and foreign films will be fulfilled.

Meantime, Daniels says, the new theater is,



JUDITH DONER BERNE

also adding other attractions. It recently began free tours of its art deco-style premises to the public, running every half hour from 3-5 p.m. Monday-Thursday, and led by Fred Sweet, a theater manager for more than 60 years. "Tours can be pre-booked by a scout troop, birthday party or senior citizen group or be built around people just waiting for a movie," Daniels says.

Signing up for the new Kids' Club will alert your child to special events, and he or she will get a birthday letter with "a free something."

I wonder if Kids' Club material will include the Michigan Civil Rights Commission's recent ruling affecting children. The commission decided that two Detroit-area theaters can't ban children under age 6 during evening hours — a policy in effect at many metro-Detroit theaters.

Bloomfield Hills attorney Robert Finkel says the Northwest Theater Co., owned by Bob Sloan, will appeal the ruling to Wayne County Circuit Court.

Unless the decision is reversed, barring kids to assure a quiet theater violates the age discrimination portion of Michigan's Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act, says assistant attorney general Rob Willis. "Teenagers make noise, adults talk, some talk on the telephones. All is inappropriate behavior that should be controlled by the theater manager," according to Willis.

The ruling already has made a difference. Both the Birmingham and Star Theaters say they no longer automatically bar small children from PG-13 and R-rated films after 6 p.m. And the newspaper advertisement for AMC Theatres has this modified statement: "No one under 6 for R-rated films is strongly recommended."

All of us have run into a situation where our movie going was disturbed, as often by adults as children. But what about the propriety of parents exposing very young children to films designed for grown-ups?

Let's hear what you think as we wait to see how this movie-based drama plays out in real life.

Judith Doner Berne of West Bloomfield is former managing editor of the *Eccentric Newspapers*. You can comment by letter, by calling (313) 953-2047 Ext. 1997, or by faxing (248) 851-1209.

LETTERS

A salute to a fine fellow

Farwell to a friend, neighbor, father figure and general overall wonderful human being. Clarence Stoll passed away on July 31, 1997 after 91 years of life. Clarence was born in 1906 and grew up in Detroit. He graduated from the University of Michigan School of Architecture. After World War II he spent 30 years in the Detroit Schools as a teacher. He moved to the suburbs before it was fashionable. Farmington was to be his home. He bought a lot, and designed his own home with his dear wife Mary. They had a wonderful life which included travel, entertaining and giving back to the community. Mary and Clarence were very active in establishing the Farmington Library, the Mary Stoll Sewing Guild, and supported various community organizations such as the Longacre House restoration and the Farmington Players.

After Mary's death, Clarence was diagnosed with a rare eye condition which eventually would render him legally blind. Instead of his world closing in, his world continued to grow and friendships blossomed from his need for younger eyes to help him with his daily living. He hired many students to help do chores around the house, actually "to be his eyes." By accident, he became a second parent or grandparent to many kids. He was genuinely interested in each and every one of his young friends. He handed out free advice, enjoyed their music, even kept up with their pace of technology when he bought his first CD at age 89. His house sounded like a music hall on summer days.

Many neighbors on the street stopped by to observe his garden or discuss the goings on in the world or on our street. Drop in for a chat and you always felt welcome. Clarence kept up with the world news through the library's records of magazines for the blind and talking books. He was tough competition in Trivial Pursuit and his recall of history, geography and the arts put us all to shame.

At his 90th birthday party there were more generations represented than at most family reunions. He didn't feel he was anything special, but the people's lives he touched, surely believe he was very special. The happy and positive man reminded all of us how important a positive outlook on life can affect every small part of life. I know I speak for many people when I say he is loved and will be truly missed.

Salute Clarence, we miss you.
Jan Patterson and
friends and neighbors of Clarence Stoll
Farmington Hills

Owing a debt of gratitude

In the history of every community, of every organization, there are a few "influentials" who give of themselves for a greater good. Farmington and its library are grateful to have had Mary and Clarence Stoll commit their time and efforts to assure that our community had a public library.

In the early 1950's, Mary Stoll served on the Library Board, which was then a group of six conscientious women. In 1956, she, along with representatives of the Township Board, the Farmington City Council, and the Friends of the Library, served on a Special Investigating Committee to review two bequests that could be used to fund purchase of land and renovation for our first library to be housed in its own building. Clarence, as treasurer of the Friends of the Library, became involved in the "Voluntary Citizens Committee" which worked for passage of the first voter-approved operating millage to support the library. In letters to the voters, this committee believed that "a library reasonably adequate for the needs of the citizens of a community is essential to civilized living."

When the Friends realized that a new law would be required by the State Legislature to allow one library to serve two communities, the Friends worked tirelessly to lobby for the first District Library Law. After the bill was signed by the Governor, the Farmington District Library was established to legally serve the City of Farmington and Farmington Township.

Clarence Stoll's love of libraries and reading continued all of his life. For many years, he visited the Farmington Branch Library almost daily. When his eyesight failed, I remember assisting him with Talking Books. And, as Library Director, I can remember explaining to him the need for an expanded library operation and what technology was bringing to the world of information.

Our library and its current users owe a debt to people like Clarence and Mary Stoll, who gave of themselves to make their community a little more civilized.

Bev Papal
Library Director
Farmington Community Library

Opinions are to be shared: We welcome your ideas, as do your neighbors. To assure authenticity, we ask that you sign your letter and provide a contact telephone number.

Letters should be mailed to: Editor, The Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington Michigan 48335. Or they can be faxed to 248-477-9722.

'98 gubernatorial candidates are signaling intentions early

Even though the 1998 election is more than a year off, the usual stages of political evolution are already evident to the interested observer.

Digging In: Breaking his pledge to serve for just two terms, Gov. John Engler signified his intention of running again via the unusual device of an interview between his wife, Michelle, and the (nominally Democratic) Detroit Free Press.

By digging in so early in the campaign, Engler eliminated any doubt about his intentions and thereby solidified his control over the Republican Party, still torn by factional fighting between (dominant) conservatives and (nearly invisible in the hierarchy) moderates.

Sorting Out: Although organized labor's decision (by the UAW, Teamsters and Buildings Trades, so far) to endorse Democratic aspirant, lawyer and former East Lansing Mayor Larry Owen was unprecedentedly early, it produced an early sorting out of what had been a crowded field of challengers.

Gone are (energetic) state Sen. Jim Berryman, (bright and imaginative) state Rep. Jim Agee and (unknown) businessman Ed Hamilton. Improbable and not taken seriously is the (well known but very odd) Geoffrey Fieger, Jack Koverkian's lawyer. Probably out is former U.S. Sen. Don Riegle.

Still in and the other man in the two-man race is Doug Ross, former Commerce Department director for Gov. James Blanchard.

Piling On: With Owen now established as the early favorite, the usual process of piling on has started.

"The issue (for the primary) is who will decide for the party — a few political bosses in the back room or thousands of the rank and file?" asked Ross over the weekend at a meeting of the Democratic State Central Committee.

Others asking asking whether the method Owen used to become the favorite in the primary (with Big Labor's blessing) could also become the device of his certain defeat against Engler.

Examples abound, most recently including former U.S. Rep. Howard Wolpe, who benefited from labor endorsements to win a tight gubernatorial primary in 1994, only to be labeled as a tool of labor on the way to his crushing defeat by Engler in November.

Setting Out: I asked Owen to set out his



PHILIP POWER

answer to the charge that he could be pigeonholed as a single-constituency candidate. "Hogwash," he snorted.

"The people who make that argument are busy fighting the last war. There is a new generation of labor leaders who understand full well that unions don't run the entire state and that the interests of most folks — safe streets, good jobs, education for their kids — are the same as the interests of thousands of union members."

"An endorsement is not the end; it's just the beginning," continued Owen, who argues that he has plenty of credentials as a businessman and educator that will allow him to broaden the base of his campaign. He points to his announcement speech back in February which spoke of his commitment to the "sensible center," embraced by "middle class, poor and wealthy, Republicans, independents and Democrats alike."

Adding Up: Various pundits and political insiders are now going to spend months trying to add up what all of this means before ordinary people will take an interest in the August 1998 primary, a process that usually begins sometime in mid-July.

Ross argues that organized labor endorsed Owen early in order to head off some real momentum he was building among the grass roots. He may be right. But now that Owen has the labor endorsement, Ross will have to demonstrate he can excite enough passion to overcome his organizational setback.

Owen, for his part, will have to demonstrate by deeds to a skeptical media and disinterested public that he is the centrist he claims to be.

Phil Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper. His Touch-Tone voice mail number is (313) 953-2047 ext. 1880.

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