

WHAT IS NIGHT LIFE? Movie Going...

Although they're altogether different from what they used to be way back in the innocent '30's and '40's, the movies will always serve a very real purpose in entertaining the public.

That's the opinion of Margaret Wilson, who started as a cashier at Plymouth's Penn Theatre in 1945 and now functions as its owner and manager.

Movie going, according to Miss Wilson, is still probably the biggest form of night life entertainment in the local area.

"Movies are still affordable," explains Miss Wilson, who tries hard to keep her prices down with a \$2 admission for adults and 75 cents for children. Other diversions, such as night clubbing, for example, are many times more costly and beyond the budgets of large numbers of people.

GOING TO THE MOVIES serves as a social function, unlike staying at home in front of the TV. "At a good comedy a robust laughter will encourage others around him to laugh," comments Miss Wilson. "During a mystery there's a common feeling of suspense in the audience. If you're watching TV with maybe one or two other people, there isn't the same sharing of enjoyment."

Often combined with eating out, going to the movies continues to be a good way to get together with friends.

Although movies are thought of as appealing to younger and younger audiences, Miss Wilson's customers, people from the Plymouth and Livonia areas, are people of all ages. She has seen no big shift in the age of the moviegoing public.

There is more of a pattern of parents dropping their children off at the show, rather than accompanying them as they used to 15 or 20

years ago. This may reflect statistically in a younger audience, but Miss Wilson feels it also points to an increased sophistication among adult movie goers.

Most kiddie films, at least those made today, may satisfy the juvenile members of an audience, but they prove tedious and uninteresting to the parents.

During the World War II era, when there were several theatres in the Plymouth community, audiences had a choice of four different movies a week. According to Miss Wilson, some people never missed a single one.

Today, even if there were more movies available, they wouldn't attract such a dutiful following. "The public is more discriminating," she points out and, although movie going remains a popular diversion, the number of admissions is much less than it used to be during the heyday of the '30's and '40's.

Of course, the contents of the movies themselves have changed radically. In the early 1950's a movie entitled "The Moon Is Blue," upset and outraged many church groups and communities by its blunt use of the word "pregnant."

TODAY'S MOVIE GOERS would never raise even an eyebrow to that; the days when married couples in movies slept demurely in separate beds and when romantic scenes ended in tepid kisses seem to have disappeared forever.

Because of these changes, many parents show concern for what their children will see. A "PG" rating (parental guidance) elicits telephone calls to the movie theatre in an effort to find out just what the film contains. "Most parents are concerned about sex rather than with violence or language," Miss Wilson observes.

Different movies attract different crowds.

"Paper Moon" which has had large audiences, has attracted the older theatre goers in the Plymouth area. Action films, like "Westworld" attracts men who come by themselves to see it, while women, in twos and threes, are more apt to attend romances.

Because the whole pattern of dress has changed, Miss Wilson's customers come in much more casual attire than they used to. Barefoot moviegoers are not unknown at the Penn these days, although Saturday nights still see many people dressed up.

PLYMOUTH WAS ONCE a farmer's town, and the Penn was frequented by farming families who spent a Saturday in town trading and shopping on Main Street, then rounded off their visit with an evening at the show. Admission prices back in 1945 were 40 cents for adults and 20 cents for children.

Eating patterns represent another big change. "People eat more than they used to," Miss Wilson states emphatically. The Penn used to sell only candy, but the public began requesting popcorn and beverages which are now sold.

Different types of solid foods are currently being requested by some customers, although Miss Wilson states with a smile that she has no plans to go into the restaurant business.

The increase in eating habits creates a small problem in maintaining quiet in the theatre, especially among children. Frequent trips for popcorn, followed by treks up the aisle for soft drinks and then candy can cause noise and disturbance.

Real misconduct, however, is minimal as are vandalism and theft. Moviegoers in suburban Plymouth can and do enjoy a pleasant atmosphere in which to find escape, entertainment and romance on their nights out on the town.



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