

Griffith classic coming to Sheldon

By Meg Greene

This weekend's offering from Sheldon Film Theater's Feature Classics Series is a film that has made cinema history: *Intolerance*, written, directed and produced by D. W. Griffith.

A major figure in the rise of American cinema, Griffith never wanted to make movies. It is ironic, because it is thought that in the history of the American screen, no other director so advanced the art of American film. Griffith wanted to write plays and he counted the moments until he'd have enough money to quit movies and begin to write.

Griffith changed his name when he entered the movie industry, because of the low status attached to the screen. Later he retrieved it and his name became as popular as the word movie itself.

Intolerance was made in 1916 and is called Griffith's greatest work by many critics. Griffith explained the film as "a protest against despotism and injustice in every form."

The film contains four stories: an original story, "The Mother and the Law," written by Griffith, "The

fall of Babylon," "The Christ legend of Judea" and "The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of the French Huguenots." To link the stories Griffith used a symbol of a mother (actress Lillian Gish) rocking a cradle. It recurs throughout the film and is a continual statement of the theme.

The film opens with a statement of the theme, then the presentation of the mother rocking the cradle.

"Today as yesterday, endlessly rocking, ever bringing the same human passions, the same joys and sorrows." A book appears on the screen and introduces the first story, "out of the cradle of the present." For two hours the audience is transported through time, picking up the threads of each story as it occurs.

The four stories finally come together in a plea for tolerance with Griffith using symbolic double exposures of angels, children playing, prison walls dissolving into open fields and a final close shot of the symbolic image, the mother rocking the cradle of Humanity.



Again this week there are good films at Sheldon and on television, as well as at downtown theaters.

Monday

The Queen of Spades, ETV, 7 p.m. This really doesn't classify as a film, but it should be mentioned. *The Queen of Spades* is the highly acclaimed version of Tchaikovsky's opera based on the original tale by Alexander Pushkin. Gherman, a poor soldier, is obsessed with learning the secret of the winning 3-card combination to capture the heart of Lisa, daughter of nobility.

Tuesday through Thursday

La Salamandre, Sheldon Gallery auditorium, around 7 and 9 p.m., admission by season foreign film ticket. Swiss filmmaker Alain Tanner directed this offbeat film. It's the story of a rebellious young working girl who rebels against her proletarian lifestyle.

Thursday

Heat, Hollywood & Vine Theaters. Andy Warhol again, through Feb. 13. This truly outrageous film features Joe Dallesandro and Sylvia Miles.

The Cranes are Flying, ETV, 8 p.m. This Russian-made war movie focuses on the home front rather than the battlefield. It shows the sordid as well as the glorious side of the Russian ordeal in World War II. The story centers on the emotional development of a young woman who is unfaithful to the soldier she loves.

diane wanek half frames

Friday

Serpico and *Fantastic Planet*, Plaza IV Theaters. I don't know anything about these films, except that they are both supposed to be dynamite, and anytime an allegedly dynamite film opens in Lincoln, I think it should be mentioned.

Friday and Saturday

The Getaway, Henzik Hall auditorium, 7 and 9 p.m. This is the film that began the Steve McQueen-Ali McGraw romance. It's an updated *Bonnie and Clyde*.

Intolerance and *Way Down East*, Sheldon Gallery auditorium, 3, 7 and 9 p.m., admission \$1.25. Two classics by one of the great directors of all time, D. W. Griffith.

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Silent Film Society's success fills void

The Lincoln Silent Film Society had its first showings last week and its success filled a void in the Lincoln film scene.

Silent films in their golden age were more than primitive fast-moving flickers. They were a legitimate art form, and working within their soundless limitations, many have not been equaled. They are rarely shown consistently outside larger cities and the Lincoln Film society is a welcome addition.

This week's presentation is Buster Keaton's *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* One of his greatest films, it is hilariously climaxed by Keaton's now famous hurricane sequence.

In future weeks the society's schedule calls for other comedy classics like Harry Langdon's *Tramp, Tramp, Tramp*, and Harold Lloyd's *Safety Last*, in which Lloyd hangs on for dear life as he dangles from a skyscraper high above the city streets.

Several foreign classics will be shown, including Carl Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, a stunning film shot almost entirely with close-ups; Fritz Lang's futuristic look at a gigantic, mechanized world in *Metropolis*; and *The Lodger*, one of Alfred Hitchcock's best early mystery-thrillers.

Also to be shown are such timeless American classics as *The Iron Horse*, a western epic directed by John Ford.

Erich von Stroheim's *Footloose Wives* feature him as the evil, lusty Prussian, one of the roles that made him so famous in the Silent Age as "the man you love to hate."

The society is a nonprofit organization designed to let people see films that would otherwise be impossible to view. Films are shown twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Lincoln YWCA.

greg lukow
key grip

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