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They peddle, promote and plan: the best Friends a film could have

By Chris Burbach
Daily Nebraskan Senior Editor

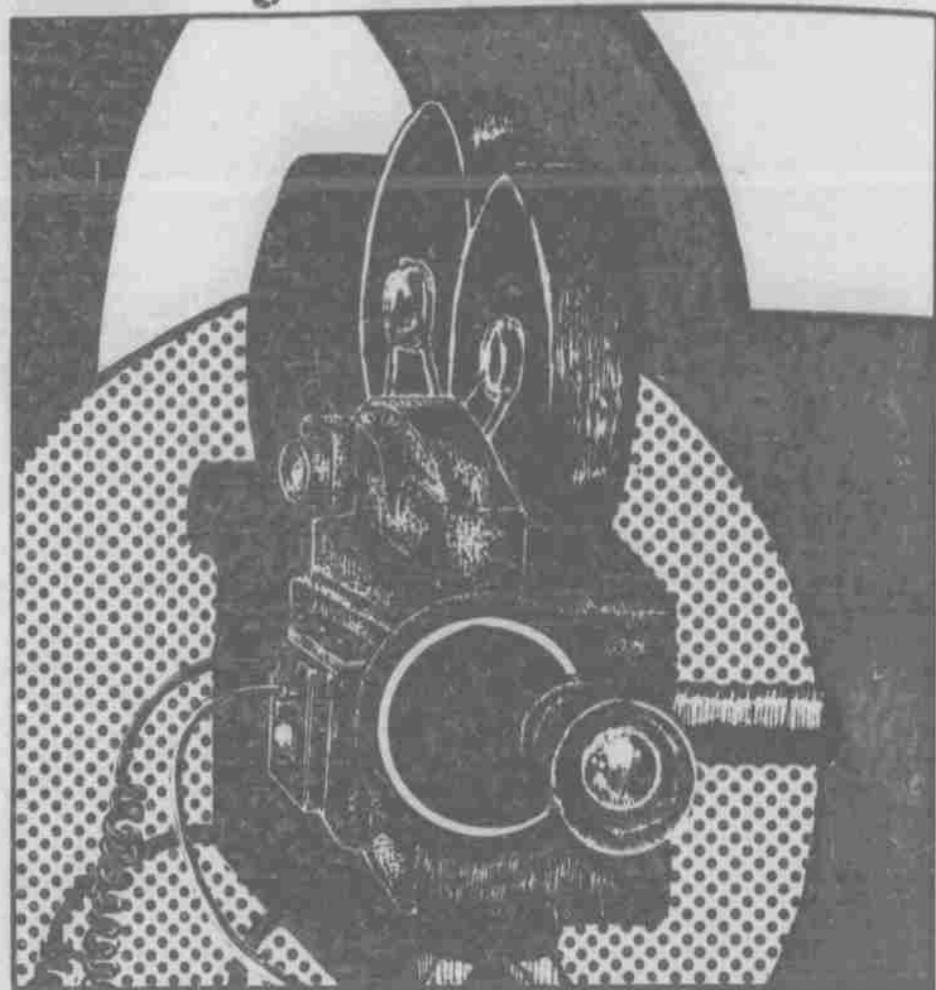
Save an aisle seat for these folks: Gene, Roger and the Friends of the Sheldon Film Theatre. As Bob Marley would say, "Gene and Roger criticize it, the Friends realize it."

Founded four years ago, the Friends membership has grown to 330 and is rising, according to the group's secretary, Peter Reinkordt.

Reinkordt attributes much of that growth to the attention the group attracted during a film and lecture marathon last March featuring Rainer Werner Fassbinder's 15½-hour "Berlin Alexanderplatz." They showed the film in two hour blocks with a couple of lectures and German dinners in between.

"It (the film) called attention to the fact that there was a group interested in film and wanting to do something about it," Reinkordt said.

The Friends also have gotten a boost from the film talk series introduced this semester. That series offered lectures and discussion with four films: "Carmen," "El Norte," "And The Ship Sails On" and "The White Rose."



Lou Anne Zacek/Daily Nebraskan

The "Berlin Alexanderplatz" extravaganza and the film talks fulfill directly one of the Friends' primary goals — getting people to participate in cinema as more than just viewers — getting their minds out of their seats, so to speak.

The goal of increased audience participation fits into the Friends' stated purpose of supporting the program of the Sheldon Film Theatre and its director, Dan Ladely. That means raising money. This year, the Friends donated \$8,800 toward the Film Theatre's operating expenses, including special events and upgrading equipment.

Some of the special events have been a pig roast for "Barbarossa" last year, dinner at the Underground with some visiting Chinese film folk and the Film Video Showcase, which features talks with visiting filmmakers accompanying screenings of their work.

Ladely said the big equipment project for the coming year includes installing a Dolby sound system, some much-needed machine parts and a new screen.

The Film Theatre screen is 20 years old and has a couple of stains, Ladely said; screens usually are replaced every couple of years because they lose their reflective quality. The whole project carries a \$20,000 price tag, \$7,000 of which the Film Theatre already has in hand. And the Friends work on.

"Memberships are still trickling in at this late date," Reinkordt said. Usually, the membership harvest is limited to two months of the year.

"There's a definite interest among a fairly large group interested in film as an art form and film as something more than just entertainment," Reinkordt said.

"We're getting more and more movie bugs," Ladely said. "And that's really our goal — to get people to see movies."

"It's (the Friends) been quite a lot of benefit to the program, because of the donations and getting information out to people," Ladely said. "I think in the future they'll be even more important."

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