

# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

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Page 9

State  
of the  
ARTS

Jeff Randall

## Censorship can dilute aim of film

It seems as though a lot of critics of the American film industry have mixed up the whole idea of free speech.

When they ask the industry why it feels the need to produce films that contain such plentiful amounts of sex, violence, and other such shocking elements, they are attempting to reverse the basic arguments of those in favor of the First Amendment.

Filmmakers shouldn't have to say why they put breasts, obscenities or exploding heads in their films. They can, that's it.

But just to appease the inquiring minds of the right-wing censorship advocates, I will now take a few minutes to put forth an explanation based on my experiences as a moviegoer.

It just so happens that I saw the unrated, controversial, and extremely explicit film, "Kids," last Saturday evening. It also just so happens that this film affected me like no other film I had ever seen.

The film, directed by Larry Clark, features a group of teenagers engaging in unsafe sex, drug use, senseless violence, and a variety of other activities that are dangerous, illegal, or a combination of the two.

In the course of the film, the audience is subjected to scenes depicting these activities with graphic detail, and a collection of conversations which could be considered obscene, at the very least.

The lessons that are to be learned from this film are important to everyone; and they are taught by Clark with such power that they are not likely to be forgotten by anyone who sees this film.

Now, before I spiral off into a film review, let me add that the lasting effects of this film would most likely be nonexistent if the film had been cut so it would receive an R rating. Scenes in which drug use, brutality and sex are depicted without censure serve to emphasize their senselessness.

When films are cut with the intention of making them more socially acceptable, the result is a dumbing down of filmmakers' intentions and, in some cases, elimination of their true aims.

When "Schindler's List" was released, a number of anti-Semites pointed to its lack of visual scenes depicting concentration camp violence.

If "Kids" was released without footage of minors engaged in a plethora of illegal activities, then people who saw the film would tend to think that very little was wrong with those youths. And I really doubt that was Larry Clark's intent.

True, some filmmakers do have the ability to get their messages across with subtlety; some audiences, though, don't have the ability to recognize subtlety when they see it.

If all filmmakers are forced to adhere to established guidelines and sanitized, absolutely safe subject matters, then American films will become little more than propaganda for the way things ought to be.

I'd rather deal with the occasional swear word, imaginary severed ear, or bare breast than live in that kind of state. I hope somebody up there agrees.

Randall is a sophomore news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan senior arts & entertainment reporter.

## NC-17: A berated rating? Releases rekindle ratings dispute

Replacement  
for "X" earns  
mixed reviews

By Gerry Beltz  
and Jeff Randall  
Senior Reporters

With the weekend release of "Showgirls," and the earlier release of "Kids," NC-17 and unrated films have been getting more attention than usual from the general public and the media.

In Lincoln, however, the buzz surrounding these films' releases has been considerably less audible. Neither "Kids" nor "Showgirls" will likely show in Lincoln's film theaters.

These films' absences are the result of a long-time policy of Douglas Theater Co. not to show NC-17 or unrated films. It's a policy that the national theater chain has no plans to change, Vice President Debby Brehm said.

"We would like to show films that a family can go to and feel comfortable about seeing," Brehm said. "We don't think NC-17 films allow that."

The current film-rating system is administered by the Motion Picture Association of America Inc. The NC-17 rating was introduced in 1990 as a substitute for the X rating, a label that had become closely associated with pornographic films.

The X rating was abolished, and films then rated NC-17 were released — supposedly without the assumption that they were pornographic in nature — to result in wider acceptance of the films by theater chains.

The MPAA's suggestion is that anyone under the age of 17 not be allowed to view films given the NC-17 rating.

For the Douglas Theater Co., Brehm said, the policy remained the same, regardless of an X or NC-17 rating.



Courtesy of United Artists

Elizabeth Berkley stars as Nomi Malone, a young dancer looking for a break on the Las Vegas Strip in "Showgirls." The film has drawn controversy with its NC-17 rating.

"In our minds, an NC-17 film is the same thing as an X-rated film," Brehm said.

The policy also extended to cover unrated films, she said.

"If a film is unrated, that usually indicates to us that it wasn't able to get an R rating, and the film company decided to release it without an X rating," Brehm said.

"An X-rated film is not something that we consider to be family-friendly," she said. "And we try to run family-friendly theaters."

Amy Vrana, a moviegoer Saturday night, supports the policy. "I think it's a great idea," said Vrana, 18. "Restrictions need to be made on certain materials, and I don't think it's a violation of any freedoms or anything."

But for some in the Lincoln community, the lack of NC-17 and unrated films is disturbing.

One of those people is Danny Lee Ladely, director of the Mary

Riepma Ross Film Theater.

Ladely said his theater had no policy regarding films of any rating.

"We try to show films that we think are good, and we try not to base our opinion on how explicit those films are," he said.

The current rating system for films is one that the general public often misunderstands, Ladely said.

He said films that wished to receive a rating from the MPAA had to pay the organization several hundreds of thousands of dollars in order to pay for the rating process.

Lower budget films, therefore, often don't have the money to pay for the ratings and are released without them.

Ladely said he planned to show "Kids" at the Ross Theater sometime in January. But don't expect to see "Showgirls" in Lincoln anytime soon.

"I think the film is perfectly awful," Ladely said. "I wouldn't show

it, no matter what the rating is, because it's just not a very good film."

The current climate in America and in Hollywood may be against NC-17 films, Ladely said, but things could change rapidly if films such as "Kids" and "Showgirls" attract enough attention and money.

"Hollywood always goes for the bucks," Ladely said. "If people demand NC-17 films and start going to see them, film companies will be happy to oblige by making more of them."

The same effects would likely be seen at theater chains, he said.

Outside of Lincoln, NC-17 and unrated films are more easily found at a number of theaters that have broader policies regarding such films.

One of those theaters is the Dundee Theater, 4952 Dodge St., Omaha, which is currently running

See NC-17 on 10

## 'Showgirls' underclad, overrated and plotless

By Gerry Beltz  
Film Critic

Yep, it's definitely an NC-17 movie.

Why? Boatloads of breasts, buckets of buttocks, over-the-top sex scenes, drug scenes, along with viciously realistic language and one brutal rape sequence all add up to make the controversial "Showgirls."

Please notice that the words "plot" and "storyline" weren't a part of that last paragraph.

The reason for this omission is there isn't any real plot, aside from the standard "gosh-will-she-ever-make-it" storyline that is snipped



### The Facts

Movie: "Showgirls"

Stars: Elizabeth Berkley, Kyle MacLachlan, Gina Gershon

Director: Paul Verhoeven

Rating: NC-17

Grade: C

Five Words: All style with little substance

straight from "Stayin' Alive," the not-so-successful sequel to "Saturday Night Fever."

Elizabeth Berkley — of TV's "Saved By The Bell" fame — stars as Nomi, a dancer who makes her way to Las Vegas in the hopes of

See SHOWGIRLS on 10

## 'Kids' sends message with forceful perfection

By Jeff Randall  
Film Critic

One of the biggest challenges that many filmmakers face is telling a message-based story without hammering that

message into audiences so many times that it becomes overwrought and incredibly dull.

And while this problem has been virtually ignored by directors such as Oliver Stone, who prefer to bludgeon their audiences with moral message after moral message, some directors have taken the other way out.

Larry Clark does so with near perfection in "Kids."



### The Facts

Film: "Kids"

Director: Larry Clark

Stars: Leo Fitzpatrick, Justin Pierce, Chloe Sevigny

Rating: NR (NC-17)

Grade: A-

Five Words: It's not "The Breakfast Club."

In telling the fictional tale of a group of seemingly doomed teenage friends, Clark manages to slip in social commentary in the simplest and least obvious of places. With the exception of a few blunt shots, he beats his points into the

See KIDS on 10