

Hastings' IMAX offers five stories of visual nirvana

By Gerry Beltz
Movie Critic

It's about 90 miles to Hastings. I've got a full tank of gas, no cigarettes, it's kinda dark but I'm not wearing sunglasses.

Hit it.
My Friday afternoon journey to visit Nebraska's only IMAX Theater, located in the Hastings Museum, was uneventful (except for almost falling asleep at the wheel, but we won't go into that).

However, the end result was definitely worth the two-hour trip.

I arrived with only minutes to spare, not even enough time to stop at the Pump N' Pantry for a candy bar to

smuggle in.

I bought my ticket, and although I had left my AAA card in my dad's car, they gave me the discount.

Walking into this theater, one cannot be kept from expressing some amount of awe.

This screen is incredibly huge — five stories high and 70 feet wide, according to the pre-movie slide show — and makes any other movie screen look like a portable TV by comparison.

The auditorium itself was on a steep incline, about 45 degrees (or pi over four radians, I can never get those straight), thus insuring a clear, unobstructed view of the screen.

I chose the fourth row — the middle — for my first IMAX experience. Too close and my neck would be very upset, and too far wouldn't fully immerse me in this cinematic pool of technical wonder.

As I sat there, letting the final minutes tick by, I tried to decide on the one mainstream movie that I would like to see on a screen five stories high.

"Die Hard?" "The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai?" "Pink Floyd, The Wall?"

Then, the obvious hit me like a bolt of lightning.

"Star Wars." (Imagine that final battle, with YOU zipping through the Death Star trench to save the rebellion!)

That was one other good point about the theater; comfy seats. They didn't recline, but they were well-padded and had high backs to relax on.

The first film was "Sharks," and it was about (you guessed it) sharks. The moviegoer is taken underwater with a guy in a transparent pop can to observe the feeding habits of sharks, and you're even treated to watching a shark grabbing a munchie!

The six-channel stereo system made everything crisp and clear, and the envelopment on the screen really puts the moviegoer into the action.

The film was only about 40 minutes long, so I had an hour of free time before the next flick.

An hour to kill in Hastings, Nebraska. Yee-haw.

(Seriously, if you do head out to see the IMAX, try the hot beef sandwich at the O.K. Cafe about two blocks north of the Hastings Museum. Delicious!)

I came back and bought my ticket for "Fires of Kuwait," but this time they wouldn't give me the AAA discount (miserable, flesh-eating bastards), so I had to shell out an extra buck.

This film was a bit more compelling, showing what the oil firefighters had to deal with when the oil wells of Saddam Hussein during Operation

Desert Storm.

This was just damn incredible. The sweeping panoramic shots of a land set afire mixed with some very in-your-face shots of the fires themselves made for a very potent and compelling documentary.

The drive home seemed to go faster than the drive to Hastings did, but this was possibly because my mind was filled with the imagery of sharks coming to eat my face, or an oil well fire shooting flame hundreds of feet into the sky.

Or maybe it was because I was going 80 mph to get back in time to see "Assassins."

Ticket prices are \$5.50, \$4.50 with AAA or Hastings Museum membership. For more information call 1-800-508-IMAX.

Beltz is a senior secondary education major and a Daily Nebraskan Senior Arts and Entertainment Reporter.

Leisurely dining, drama lure crowds

By Paula Lavigne
Senior Reporter

A one stop shot.

Only two months into its operation, sold-out crowds have taken advantage of the Downtown Dinner Theatre's unique offering.

Owner Bob Rook said it was the only place in Lincoln where theater patrons didn't have to "worry about having their meal rushed down their throat."

Rook said his dinner theater at 13th and Q streets filled a void in Lincoln and satisfied the "laziness of Lincoln audiences."

"They can park their car someplace once, and they're there for the whole evening."

BOB ROOK

Owner of the Downtown Dinner Theatre

and enjoy the buffet — cooked by the dinner theater chef, not catered — or forsake the buffet for an \$8 cocktail seat.

"They can park their car someplace once, and they're there for the whole evening," Rook said.

The theater kicked off its first season with "Clueless," which coincidentally opened at the same time as the movie starring Alicia Silverstone.

Lincoln's "Clueless" was loosely based on the board game "Clue," Rook said, and enjoyed sold-out success.

Their second production met with similar coincidence.

"They either want to go to a show or dinner in one stop," he said.

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