

the glassy eye



Cliff A. Hicks

TV needs a return to cyclic plots

There are no cycling narratives on television right now, and it's frustrating the hell out of me.

I suppose I should explain what I mean by "cycling narratives." I'm talking about shows that present a self-contained short story each week. These shows have no recurring characters (with the possible exception of the narrator), and they never require you to have seen previous episodes to understand the show's story.

You can watch the episodes in any order you please. There's no continuity to worry about, no long-running plots to confuse you.

This approach is nonexistent in soap operas, where the characters have long and complex (and quite often torrid) histories. That's great and all, but I want a show I can watch on an irregular basis without having to worry about missing something important. I have enough trouble keeping track of everything in my own life; why add a whole series of fictional characters to it?

In the past, the majority of cycling narrative shows were science-fiction series ("Outer Limits," "The Twilight Zone," "Amazing Stories"). It seems ironic that more recent sci-fi shows seem to be veering away from that sort of thing.

You know, the "Star Trek" shows, "Space: Above and Beyond," "The X-Files" — all of these shows have recurring characters. Not that they're bad; I watch Mulder and Scully with everyone else.

But it's time for a change of pace. Or maybe a change back.

Besides the science-fiction series, we used to have "Alfred Hitchcock Presents." Who could forget the master of suspense? I'll always remember the way Hitchcock would step out weekly, look directly into the camera and say "Good evening" with the chilling tone only he possessed.

Every episode was as chilling as the master, but Hitchcock was the only element that remained the same on a weekly basis.

"The Twilight Zone" was the same way. The only recurring character was Rod Serling, who was the narrator. The episode with the woman whose face is covered in bandages still haunts me to this day. Serling's genius may never be replaced.

The cycling narrative made a comeback when producers created a new "Twilight Zone" series a while ago. It crashed and burned.

Still, I'm ready for something new. And I think the cycling narrative may be just about right.

Hicks is a freshman English and news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan staff reporter.

David and Goliath

Local stores stand firm against Blockbuster



Tanna Kinnaman/DN

This former Video Station, 70th and Van Dorn streets, is one of five locations that was replaced by Blockbuster Video in December 1995.

By Gerry Beltz
Senior Reporter

In early December, the video rental business in Lincoln faced a dramatic change when it was announced that Blockbuster Video bought out the locally-owned Video Station chain.

But local video store managers have shown very little concern since then. Randy Abel, manager of Audio-Visual South, 3219 S. 13th St., even expressed appreciation.

"It's helped for the better," Abel said. "Several people already have been coming here who used to go Video Station."

"Once they found out Video Station had been bought out, they said they no longer wanted to do business there."

One of the more frequently-men-

tioned reasons given by customers for not joining Blockbuster has been the commitment to customer service available in smaller stores, Abel said.

"They've been saying they prefer our looser atmosphere and policies to those of a corporate giant," Abel said. "They're not as personable."

Mike Stretz, manager of Film Strip Video, 897 N. 27th St., agreed.

"They don't come here just for the movies," Stretz said. "It's kind of like 'Cheers,' where everybody knows your name. You don't get that at Blockbuster."

"To us, the customer isn't just a face and a number."

Both managers said the differences in the stores' rental policies also had been a factor.

"I talked to one customer who

won't rent at Blockbuster because she had to give out her credit card number to rent there," Abel said.

"A customer can call us and ask us to reserve a tape for them," Stretz said. "A lot of people appreciate that."

Blockbuster's policy of not carrying unrated or adult films is also an advantage for the independent dealer, both managers said.

"We can offer everything, including adult and NC-17 films," Abel said. "We give choice to our customers."

"We carry a wide variety of both kinds of films," Stretz said, "and they are a big part of the business too."

Abel and Stretz agreed on some disadvantages of not being part of a huge corporation such as Blockbuster.

"We can't carry 100 copies of a new release like Blockbuster," Abel said. "Not without cutting out of another area in the store."

Stretz said local video businesses had been disappearing, partly because of the rise of larger businesses like Blockbuster.

"Lincoln has lost five to six independent video places in the last year," Stretz said, "and a large part of that was due to the fact Blockbuster was taking that share of the available market."

But for Stretz and Abel, competition isn't a concern at this point.

"I think our business — with what we offer — competes with them really well," Abel said. "They carry more copies per title, but we have a broader selection."

See VIDEO on 10

A lighthearted look at AIDS

"Jeffrey" opens Thursday at Futz Theatre

By Brian Priesman
Staff Reporter

The Futz Theatre, 124 S. 9th St., will open the new year Thursday night with one of its most ambitious projects to date.

"Jeffrey," the latest Futz production, tells the story of a young, gay male attempting to live his life in the face of AIDS.

But do not be deceived. "Jeffrey" is not a darkly serious play about AIDS and gay issues, said Paul Pearson, the play's director.

Pearson, who is also the Futz's artistic director, said "Jeffrey" was more of a comic romance about falling in love than a social drama.

"We can still pursue love in the face of death," he said.

But, Pearson said, approaching the topic of

AIDS in a lighthearted manner is a difficult task, particularly because of the disease's widespread effects.

"That was the trick of it," he said.

"Jeffrey" provides "an insider view of the whole subculture" and does not try to "educate about certain aspects of the AIDS epidemic," Pearson said.

The eight-person cast includes a UNL alumnus and a current UNL student.

The 2-year-old Futz Theatre is hoping to add to its ever-increasing audience with "Jeffrey." It will be their first production to play for three weekends, and already several shows are sold out.

According to Pearson, the Futz Theatre tries to "find a script that is of some interest."

The Futz offers a new play production every month, which gives this small theater one of the

largest, most diverse theatrical schedules in Lincoln.

"A lot of the plays we do no one has ever heard of," he said.

"Jeffrey," however, may be a bit more recognizable to observant theatergoers and moviegoers.

In 1995, a movie of the play was released with Tim Daly and Patrick Stewart. The film did not run in Lincoln, but enjoyed a brief stint in Omaha's Indian Hills 4 theater.

"Jeffrey" opens Thursday and will run through Saturday. It will continue its run Jan. 18-20 and 25-27. All tickets are \$10. Because of limited seating and a large amount of advance interest, the Futz advises theater patrons to purchase their tickets early. Because of the play's subject matter, "Jeffrey" is not open to children under 17 unless accompanied by an adult.