

Pickford's films to receive screen time at Ross

BY TIM KARSTENS
Staff reporter

At her peak, she made as much per film as Charlie Chaplin, directed some of her own films and was voted the top actress by Photoplay magazine 15 times.

Her acting career spanned a stunning 200 silent and "talkie" films from the 1910s to the 1930s. She started United Artists with fellow stars D.W. Griffiths, Charlie Chaplin and Douglas Fairbanks, who was also her second husband. Among her friends and admirers were F. Scott Fitzgerald, Albert Einstein, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Lord and Lady Mountbatten.

Yet Mary Pickford's legacy extends much further. She was a pace-setting female superstar of her time who demanded and received equal billing with her male contemporaries. Wielding her

immense star power and a sharp business sense, Pickford was able to select her directors, co-stars and production teams. Because of all this, she is regarded as not only a legendary Hollywood figure, but a pioneer for women in film.

"She is one of the seminal people in the development of cinema," said Danny Ladely, director of the Mary Riepma Ross Theater. "She is one of the people who have made Hollywood what it is today."

And now the first lady of silent film is coming to Lincoln. "Sweetheart: The Films of Mary Pickford," a series of six silent and one "talkie" film will be showing at The Mary Riepma Ross Theater June 18-21 and June 25-28. In addition to the films, Hugh Munro Neely, a director and producer, who has completed a feature-length Pickford biography, will lecture on Pickford's life and career.

According to Ladely, those who attend the

screenings will be surprised at the improvements modern film-altering techniques have had on the films that are up to 80 years old.

"People will be astounded by the quality and focus of these films," Ladely said.

Thanks to the Mary Pickford Foundation, which preserved Pickford's films, and film-revival company Milestone Pictures, Pickford's original films have been improved by "print stretching" or adding frames to eliminate the jerky quality of older films, Ladely said.

Despite adding new frames and greatly improving on the original copies, the character of the films will not be lost, Ladely said. It will give audiences the chance to experience the forgotten genius of Pickford while incorporating modern production values, like clarity and focus, that cinema fans have taken for granted.



COURTESY PHOTO
MARY PICKFORD, one of Hollywood's first major stars, appeared in more than 200 films.

Please see PICKFORD on 9

Black returns to alien territory

BY JIM ZAVODNY
Staff Reporter

While visiting some relatives in western Nebraska with his family, a boy who would one day be known as Frank Black was exposed to his first UFO.

Ever since then, Black has felt a special connection to the area, and even returned to the site in Alliance a couple of years ago to research exactly what happened that day. Black said his investigation into the incident turned up inconclusive results, but his efforts would surely make both Agents Mulder and Scully proud.



Black

"I just kind of hung out there for a little while, but anyway, I didn't come up with anything," Black said. "But I had my own little version of the most boring episode of 'The X-Files' ever." Since becoming a musician, first as the front man for the indie rock band the Pixies, and now as a solo artist, Black has written his share of songs about paranormal phenomena, and one can only wonder how his exposure as a child effected him.

Black isn't quite sure if he believes in the paranormal, and like a lot of modern people, he doesn't look into the sky probably as much as he should.

Black said he would probably go and see "The X-Files" movie when it came out, even though he didn't watch the show regularly.

"I can't say that I'm totally into the show. I like the idea of the show

more than the show," he said. "The two leading characters drive me nuts." So much for making them proud.

Now, Black plans his return to Nebraska, only this time armed with his guitar and his band of the last four years, the Catholics. The band's stop in Omaha next Thursday at the Ranch Bowl comes in the wake of a split with their former label, American Recordings, which left their new album, called "Frank Black & the Catholics," without a home. The new record came out in most territories around the world on May 4, 1998, but has yet to be released in North America.

Fans hoping to buy a copy of "Frank Black & the Catholics" at the show will be disappointed to hear that Black doesn't plan on selling it there, but he did say it would be coming out in the United States in September, probably on a label called Spin Art.

"It's the only record that I've ever recorded live, for a live two-track. It probably has more songs of a universal and/or personal nature than usual, maybe," he said. "Other than that, I mean, it's another collection of rock songs by Frank Black."

Black said he opts not to use his real name — Charles Thompson — while performing because it's part of the show biz. While with the Pixies, Black was known as Black Francis, but he then changed his name again to Frank Black when he went solo. So is Charles Thompson really his name, or is that just an alias, too? He'll probably never tell.

Something Black will reveal, though, is his desire for playing music and traveling. He and the Catholics start their tour across the United States this week, and will be opening a few times for Pearl Jam, which is why they'll be in the Midwest, Black

"Playing is playing
... So I don't know
that I miss any
particular
configuration or
whatever."

FRANK BLACK
musician

said.


"We just want to play some shows. Pearl Jam doesn't play every night, so we had a couple of other nights to fill in, and so Omaha was one of them. So we're going back to the Ranch Bowl, which is fine with us," he said. "We like the Ranch Bowl. And I like being in Nebraska in general, I like Omaha."

And even though he would rather be playing his own shows, Black doesn't mind taking the chance of expanding his audience by playing with the ultra-popular group, he said.

"It's always my preference to be the headliner of my own show, but you know, I don't mind playing a half a dozen shows opening up for someone big. It's different, you know," he said.

It's Pearl Jam who really should be opening for Black, since his band, the Pixies, were one of the groups that helped influence the "alternative" music scene that Pearl Jam cashed in on during the early '90s. But Black isn't bitter. He's happy being one of

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