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beyond the blockbusters

Tabloid TV shows and entertainment stations alike love to do segments on film festivals from around the world.

They shoot close-ups of big stars at Sundance and shots of sunbathing women in Cannes. They seem to gloss over any of the cornfields in Nebraska.

It's understandable, but unfortunate because over the past seven years the Great Plains Film Festival has been gaining in stature and prominence among the film festivals of the world. A bi-annual event, the Great Plains Film Festival is not only a competition, but a celebration of films connected in some way to the great plains region of the United States.

On Tuesday, July 20, the festival will kick off at 4:45 p.m. in the Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater with a documentary feature called "Canary of the Ocean" and will show numerous films every day for the fol-

lowing two weeks. The festival will end on Aug. 1 with a showing of all the winning films from each of the festival's five categories: dramatic shorts, documentary shorts, dramatic features, documentary features and made for public television.

Far from the sunny beaches of the French Riviera, Dan Ladely, director of the Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater and coordinator of the Great Plains Film Festival, sits at a messy desk in his corner office and thinks of who he should have called hours ago. He's a busy man but understandably so. As creator of the festival he has a lot of responsibilities and with less than a week to go he is frantically taking care of last minute details.

The initial process of putting together this year's festival were put into motion

*Great Plains Festival
overcomes obstacles
to bring eclectic films
to Nebraska viewers*

Story by Jason Hardy

***part one in a three-part series**

months and months ago and Ladely says everything is coming together nicely. Of course, there have been some set backs. James Coburn, who was invited to attend the festival and win the Mary Riepma Ross award for acting in the film "Affliction," which he picked up an Academy Award for also, is unable to make it. Two of the festival's strongest films have been pulled by their directors to be shown in other festivals. Still, Ladely keeps a positive attitude.

"Someday this festival will be famous and people

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