

beyond the blockbusters

Ladely has high hopes for his festival's future

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won't be doing that."

He says this in half jest but has serious confidence and faith in his festival. To Ladely, these are more than just movies, they're opportunities, dreams, people and most of all they are the great plains.

"Really, the two ideas of the festival are, one, the region itself and two, to focus on the diversity of the region, and we've really had that focus since the beginning," he says. "The film industry is really ran by white males and though focusing on the great plains limits us somewhat (as far as entries), I really don't care to have a festival of national scope. I think it's more important to do a regional one."

To stay true to his commitment to promote the great plains region, Ladely enlists the help of a number of local citizens to do the initial judging of the films before a celebrity panel of judges, all of whom have done extensive work directing, writing or producing independent films, makes the final cut.

This year there were 99 entries in five categories. Sheila Reiter watched 47.

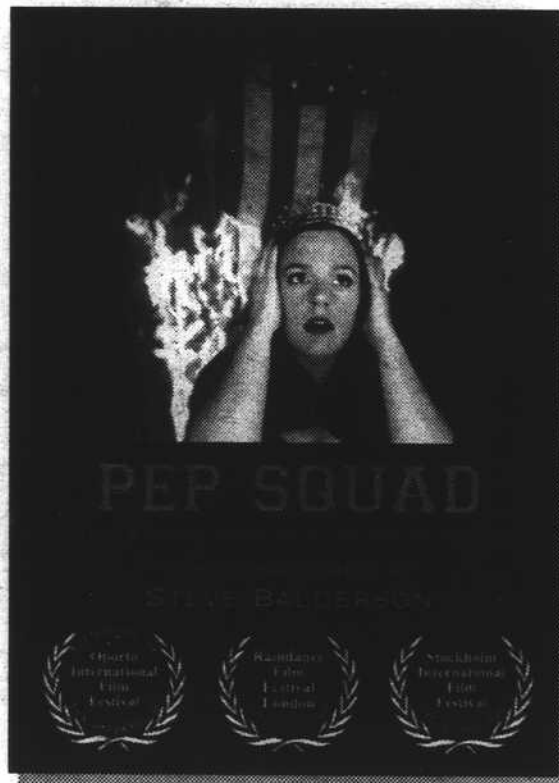
"I am the queen of judging," says Reiter, a Lincoln resident and writing professor at Doane College. "I try to see as many entries as possible."

Each of the 47 films Reiter judged were then judged by four other local judges before the finalists were decided upon.

While Reiter herself is a huge film buff, she usually sees between 3 and 5 films a week, she hopes that her participation in the Great Plains Film Festival will offer filmmakers feedback important, not only for the individuals, but for the development of independent films in the great plains as a whole. It is an honor and she takes it pretty seriously.

"I don't know how many times I've written the words 'this is a hard call,'" she says. "Sure it's fun to have a voice, but as a writing teacher I know how important communication is, so I'm really writing to those people when I write the critique."

She says often times a film can have a very slick production quality, but fail in terms of actual storytelling, so she considers the director's options



and budget and decides if the film is as good as it could be within those restrictions. Sometimes it's a hard call, sometimes it's not.

"You watch a stinker and you have to stop and say 'Jesus Christ, somebody made this movie.' But to just say 'throw your camera away' isn't the right way to do it. What I say is 'how come you did this, why did you do this, what is this about?'"

"I think someone entering who got zilch could still walk away and realize that what they're doing is important and they need to keep doing it. It's an opportunity to get real critique instead of just 'you win, you lose.' It's very academic in that sense."

Herb Thomas, a manager at the Grotto restaurant, 11th and O streets, and one of the festival's preliminary judges, says he too considers more than just what's good and what's bad when reviewing films.

"It's really interesting seeing different people's points of views and how they manifest themselves," Thomas says. "When you start out on any particular film you start by trying to figure out what they point of the film is and then by the time you finish you have hopefully decided if the filmmaker was successful in getting that point across to you."

Bob Byington, a former Lincoln resident and director of "Olympia," a film entered in the festival as a dramatic feature, said he appreciates any feedback, regardless of the critic's background in film or social standing.

"If anyone is critical about the movie, it's me because I wrote it, directed it and lived with it for a long time. I'm very aware of what I don't like and it's very interesting if people pick up on that," Byington says.

"With the Los Angeles Times and New York Times, the lead reviewers are pretty sketchy. It depends on what they

had for breakfast when they review it, so someone who can articulate why they didn't like that is really helpful."

For Thomas, the interaction between someone sitting in the seats and the person behind the camera is worth the time he spent voluntarily watching 22 films and filing out 22 sheets of critiques.

"The audience for independent film is, in general, better educated and more sophisticated and I would say I'm a pretty average viewer in that sense, and therefore I think my views a lot of the time would be shared by people who are also interested in this kind of film," he says. "It makes me feel good to be a part of that."

Back in Ladely's office people are busy organizing the films to be shown, looking at the new posters and finalizing all the upcoming events. From the festival's committee meetings to the living rooms of the local judges the festival has been a team project. Just how Ladely wants it.

"This appeals to me because it does give people here some ownership and participation in the festival and that's what's important to me."

"I want as many people who live here to get involved in it so it's really a community festival."

| Day Date | Tues. July 20 | Wed. July 21 | Thurs. July 22 | Fri. July 23 | Sat. July 24 | Sun. July 25 |
|---------------|--|---|---|---|---|--|
| Time & Titles | | | | | 1 pm Panel Discussion in American Independent Cinema | |
| Time & Titles | | | 3 pm Free A Man To Fight! (55 min); Not A Nickel's Worth of Doubt (57 min) | 3 pm Three Seasons (113 min) by Tony Bui | 3 pm Naked Acts (87 min) with filmmaker Bridgett Davis in person | 2:30 pm Olympia (80 min); The Materialists (36 min) |
| Time & Titles | 4:45 pm Canary Of The Ocean (56 min); Hill Stomp Holler (60 min) | 5 pm Wild Horses (56 min); Road To Return (57 min) | 5 pm A Cow At My Table (90 min); Passenger (8 min); Passing Berthoud (13 min) | 5 pm Fool's Gold (96 min); Bubblepac (12 min) | 5:30 pm Modulations (75 min) by Iara Lee | 4:45 pm Naked Acts (87 min) by Bridgett Davis |
| Time & Titles | 7 pm Opening Night: Omaha North High student films | 7 pm The Brandon Teena Story (90 min); Everyday (29 min) | 7 pm Modulations (75 min) with filmmaker Iara Lee in person | 7 pm Three Seasons (113 min) with filmmaker Tony Bui in person | 7:30 pm Smoke Signals (89 min) with filmmaker Chris Eyre in person | 7 pm Pop Squad (94 min); In The Hole (30 min) |
| Time & Titles | 9:30 pm Super Chief (75 min); Silent Tears (28 min) | 9:15 pm American Chaingang (56 min); Gifts From My Father (18 min); Happy Are The Happy (18 min); Man and Dog (16 min) | 9:15 pm Dog Gone! (23 min); Fancy Dance (30 min); Blue Train (29 min); Endangered America (32 min) | 9:30 pm Literature & Life (57 min); American Cowboys (27 min); Spirit of Reconcilia- tion (13 min) | 9:30 pm Nowheres ville (96 min); P.L. (9 min); Razor's Edge (14 min) | 9:15 pm Canary Of The Ocean (56 min); Hill Stomp Holler (60 min) |

MATT HANEY/DN