

Midwest Melodrama



Scott Eastman/DN

Nebraska filmmakers debut movies at Ross theater

By Shelley Mika

Staff writer

Someone asks, "Who do you know who's famous from Nebraska?" The answer: usually Johnny Carson or Willa Cather (athletes excluded, of course.)

Then Los Angeles opened a little spot in its corporate heart for musicians such as 311 and Matthew Sweet.

What's the next step? Corn farmers on Oprah? Lil' Red scoring a TV sitcom?

Not quite. But some Lincolnites are trying their hands at making movies.

To support the efforts of these Nebraska filmmakers, The Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater will present four films by local artists in two free showings. The following is a summary of what can be expected.

"The Passing" by Robbie Wilkins

A truly short film (less than 4 minutes), "The Passing" is a funny little movie about two people passing each other on the street. The film is as brief as the glance between the characters, but Wilkins manages to put together a work with good time-delay footage and an eerie, comical setting.

"The Walk" by Scott Pittock

A man smokes a million cigarettes while walking on a dreary night and finds himself in a bar

with an attractive stranger.

From there, the viewer may think the film noir style will lead to a racy romance, but Pittock twists the ending like metal in a car accident. If you can figure out the end, fill me in.

"Carpula" by Ross Brockley

It's not about a killer fish. Instead, "Carpula" follows a man and his dream of stocking a fish farm by breeding carp with tolapia. Brockley's film is loosely based on the 19th century book "Good Husbandry of Pondes" by British author Janus DuBravius, who first introduced carp to America.

Earlier this year, Brockley ran a trial screening of "Carpula" to test the waters. The film succeeded in being original and very funny, but Brockley and co-director John Andrews were still in the editing process.

Final cuts should make the film popular with Ross patrons. Among all of the films, this is the one to catch.

"The Dean's Boys" by Daniel B. Iske

I think there's a difference between watching a movie about young people and actually being in the presence of immaturity. "The Dean's Boys," which was shot in Omaha, fits the latter.

Although there are some quasi-intellectual conversations (which are delivered like speeches rather than dialogue), for the most part, all we see

are four guys screwing around.

To oversimplify, the basic plot is this: Four friends find themselves getting into and out of trouble beginning with getting caught altering a friend's grades.

Three of the four friends need to get laid. (This point is made very clear in the film.) The fourth friend's name is fitting: Party is getting all the "action" and tries to help out his buddies.

Of course, none of this is really essential to the plot, aside from what it weakly adds to character development.

Much of the dialogue is at least one of four things: Poorly written, poorly delivered, unoriginal or out of place.

For instance, one character is talking (actually, more like delivering a speech) to his prospective girlfriend. As they discuss—get this—movies, of all things (a central metaphor in the film), he explains how characters don't seem fake but come alive on the screen. At the same time, he is sounding really fake himself.

Oh yeah, and he needs to get laid.

Other things that would help out are hiring some decent actors, keeping the subtle jokes, losing the physical humor and using the camera as an art tool, not simply a recording device.

"The Dean's Boys" is billed as a comedy. Some goofy physical humor appears, and, once in a while, a truly funny piece of dialogue appears among the rest of the stale loaf.

PREVIEW Nebraska Features

TYPE: Films

DIRECTORS:

Ross Brockley, Daniel Iske, Robbie Wilkins and Scott Pittock.

COST: FREE

GRADE:

"Carpula" A;
"The Passing" B;
"The Walk" C-;
"The Dean's Boys" D

THE SKINNY: Local Directors offer both good and bad movies.

It's easy to compare "The Dean's Boys" to a Hollywood movie. And I have no doubt that Iske, not to mention any average Joe, could make a good movie if given enough money and a good cast.

But that's not what Iske is working with. Instead, inexperience is his material, and the learning tool here is his film, which makes me think that if the young Daniel Iske were more mature, he could use his talent to make a decent movie.