

Why we get the movies we do — it's a combination of common sense, appeal

The motion picture world is frequently littered with the glitter of stardom — as witnessed at the most recent display of *Oscardom*. Today more and more directors, technical crews and the like are gaining their own fame and popularity.

Though the likes of John Huston and Francois Truffaut have been around and drawing their own crowds for some time now, it is only recently that a majority of the film-viewing public is cuing into the director or producer, for example, of a film.

This is the age of the package film. Just like toothpaste, nylons and Big Mac's, the marketers dress up the film real nicely: just the right actor(s), and director and cinematographer and producer. VOILA! You have a winner.

Today actors and others are crossing over the traditional lines and roles involved with making a film come to life on the screen. Consider Lee Grant's *Tell Me a Riddle* and Robert Redford's *Ordinary People* — or even Sylvester Stallone's *Rocky*.

The old walls that kept actors acting and directors directing and cinematographers photographing appear to be giving way.

There is glory in the cinema world — and then, there is devastation. Picking the movies that are shown in the Eugene/Springfield theaters is just an extension of the overall movie industry: you either make it or you don't.

Tom Lunt is the Eugene/Springfield booker for the Luxury Theatre chain

based in Portland. Theaters under the domain of Luxury include: Cinema World, National, McDonald, Mayflower, North End Drive In, Springfield Quad and Motor Vu Drive In. Covering Idaho, Washington, Oregon and California with 160 theaters, the chain is in the commercial market for movies.

With the demise of blind bidding (frequently, bids were made before the film was even completed — when it was literally just a germ of an idea), and the growth of trade screenings, the theater owner can feel sure that s/he won't lose his or her skin on the deal.

"It's a competitive market," Lunt says. To feel out a film and to place it in the appropriate theater, says Lunt, he basically goes back and looks at the past records and tries to draw parallels — whether or not a film was a "stiff" or a "hit."

Comedies and escapist movies will dominate this coming summer, say all the bookers questioned. "Everybody's depressed," says Lunt, adding: "the economy's in terrible shape and people want to be distracted."

9 to 5 is the current big hit all over the country. Since times are so bad, 20th Century Fox is reissuing *Star Wars*. This summer you can look forward to a new Cheech and Chong movie: *Nice Dreams*, a new Mel Brooks film: *History of the World Part I*; Bill Murray in *Stripes*, Blake Edwards and Julie Andrews in *S.O.B.* and Dudley Moore in *Arthur*.

George Hamilton rides into summer with *Zoro the Gay Blade*, and Roger

Moore's *007* hits the screen with *For Your Eyes Only*.

There are lots more.

All the movies have one thing in common: whether comedy, horror or science-fiction/fantasy, they are a great form of escapism. A splendid way of avoiding the foul winds of the political and economic worlds (if you can afford the ticket price).

The big escapist film to finally reach us this summer is *Superman II*.

Chris Moyer, Eugene/Springfield

booker for Portland-based Moyer Theatres (Valley River Twin, West 11th and the Eugene Drive In — with other theaters located throughout Oregon and California), says that when choosing a film, she also looks at past records and works with movie popularity charts.

In Eugene/Springfield, Moyer says that the West 11th theater is more slapstick, whereas, the Valley River Twin is more sophomoric. That's why, she says, she can book a foreign film (with great commercial possibilities) like *La Cage*

Aux Folles II at the Valley River Twin. The West 11th, on the other hand, sports *Going Ape* and Jerry Lewis' new comedy *Hardly Working*.

Both Lunt and Moyer are wary of taking too many chances when booking.

Claiming that "this isn't New York or L.A." and that there just isn't as great a cultural appetite (in foreign films, for example), Lunt says he booked the Japanese film *Kagemusha* at the Mayflower — close to campus. But, that just wasn't enough to ignite interest in

the film. POOF! It's gone.

"This is not the art film business," Lunt says, "it's more meat and potatoes."

Theaters more willing to take chances with the films shown include the Oakway, Cinema 7 and the Bijou.

Lee Roy Hallsey at the Oakway says people like a bargain. Showing good pictures at a low price, the Oakway usually has classic films or recent popular movies. For example, Hallsey says the theater had the exclusive run of Woody Allen's *Stardust Memories*.

Tomorrow *Fame* and *Hair* take the screen; *Private Benjamin* and *Tell Me What You Want* follow in the coming weeks.

Hallsey has a rather unique position. As District Manager for Western Amusement Company (based in Los Angeles), Hallsey is able to suggest to the booker which films he'd like to show: "Good pictures at a low price."

Independent theater owner Steve Bove at Cinema 7 listens to his viewers and combines their suggestions with his co-workers', and his film programming instincts and his connections with film distributors, when choosing a film to show.

"I want Eugene to get them (good international cinema) as soon as possible," Bove says.

Underlying this decision-making, Bove says there's always the desire to pay homage to American and Foreign film classics.

Aside from movies, Cinema 7 also houses the wild-and-not-so-normal (but then, what is normal?) Live Matinee.

Michael Lamont at the Bijou Theatre is also an independent movie house owner (there are only two altogether). The Bijou, the most recent theater arrival on the local film scene, offers people a chance to see a "hopefully worthwhile film in a pleasant place," says Lamont.

"I'm showing films I hope people want to see" — such films include *Richard III*, *Pygmalion*, *Being There*, *Rocky Horror Picture Show* and *Eraserhead*.

On campus, Nina Rumely is the film programmer for the EMU Cultural Forum.

On Friday and Saturday nights, she says, films are generally popular movies that "people have waited to see cheaper." On Sundays, Rumely tries to slip in something different and to "encourage the idea that for \$1.25, you can afford to take a chance."

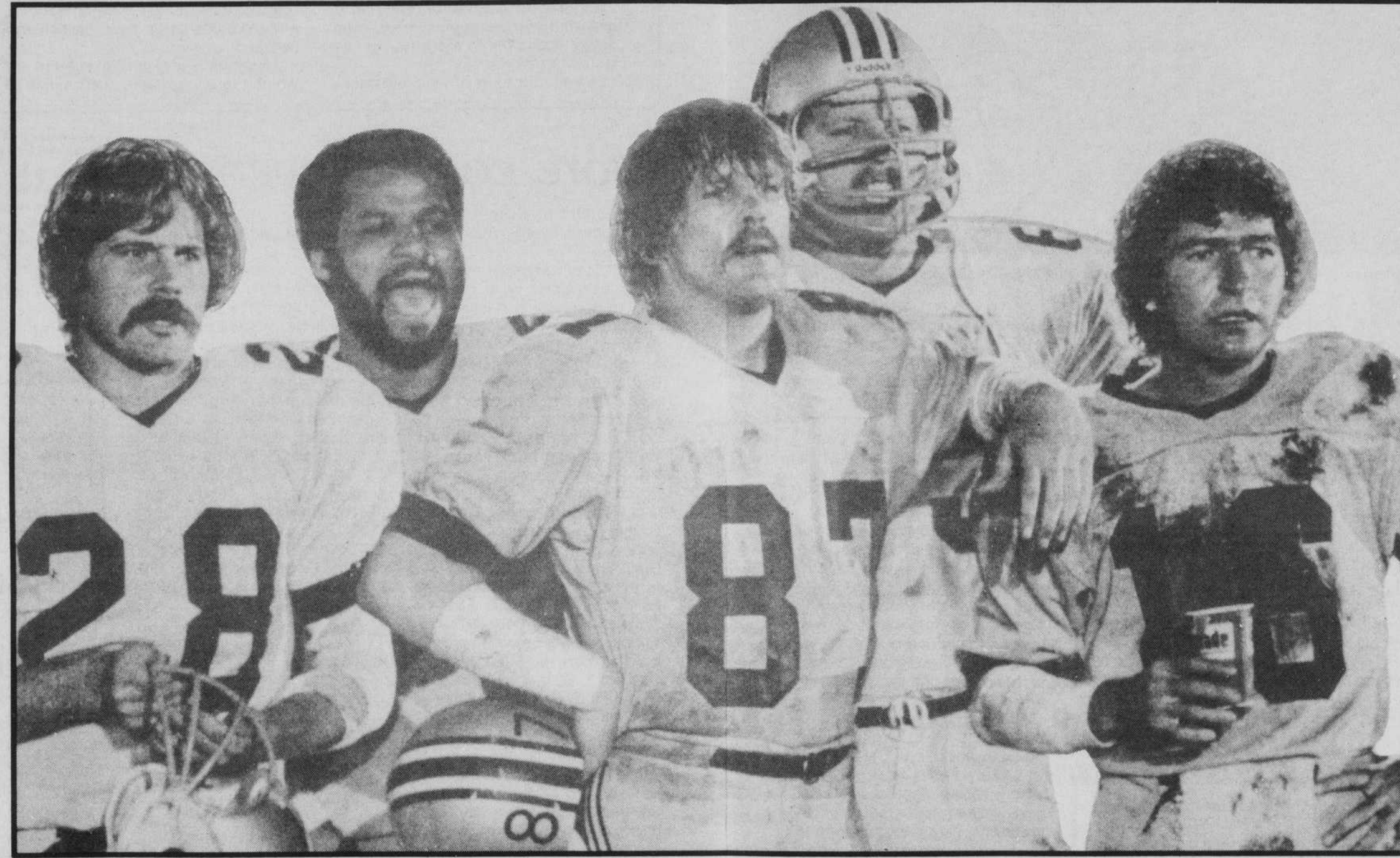
On a larger scale, Ruth Hayler of Seven Gales, based in Seattle, with theaters in Portland, hopes that people will like the movies she likes and chooses. But, she says, the Portland theater market is "extremely" difficult.

Hayler's complaint echoes throughout the Eugene/Springfield and Portland theater business. The Moyer brothers — Tom owns the Luxury chain and Larry owns the Moyer chain — with so many theaters under their controls, combined with a bit of in-fighting, make it difficult for the "little guy" in the theater business.

Complaints aside, film booking/programming requires basic business sense combined with sensitivity to general appeal.

Eugene/Springfield is a smaller market though, and even with the campus and its supposedly intellectual level, we generally are fed movies like *Hooper* or *Any Which Way You Can*; only at smaller theater or independent showings are you likely to find those special or cult films.

Story By Erzsébet De'ak
Photos provided by the motion picture companies



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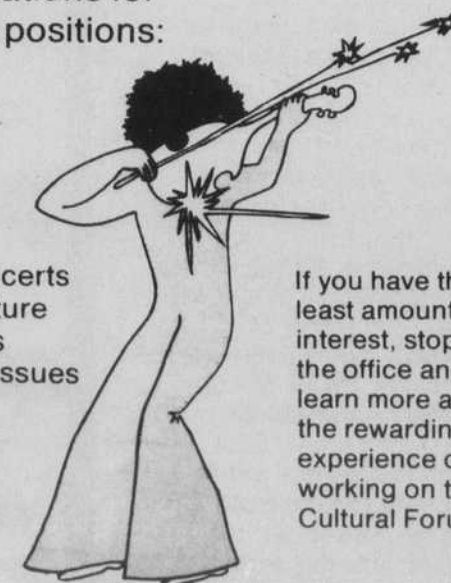


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