

Reviewing the seats, sounds and screens of local cinemas



Okay all you hot-shot editors out there: How come no one gives readers a practical, useful and sensible guide to the movie theaters in town?

Oh sure, several publications fall all over themselves to keep us up-to-date with "thoughtful, insightful and intelligent" movie reviews, but no one actually critiques the houses themselves, the places where the action is.

The Luxury Theater chain runs the majority of film houses in Eugene, 11 in all. Regular admission to Luxury theaters is \$4, but they also offer reduced admissions (\$2) on the first showings everyday and on all showings Monday nights. The Mayflower, just off campus, has a further discount, a student night Tuesday, with \$2 admission for University students on all showings that night.

The Luxury Theater's two quads — Cinema World at Valley River Center and Springfield Cinemas in the Springfield Mall — are virtually identical. Cinema World is located in a prime area and is often given the better, bigger-budget films before the Springfield theater, which is often relegated to featuring the same films on a second run.

Springfield does, however, get a few curious films from time to time, and often plays double features, which Cinema World rarely does. Both are composed of two large theaters and two smaller theaters. Both have good sound systems, and, unfortunately, undersized screens.

The McDonald and The National theaters are within easy walking-distance of campus, and usually feature the box office giants.

The McDonald, a small scale version of the 1940s film palaces, is one of the older and classier theaters in Eugene. The National looks like a cut-rate version of the McDonald but, like the McDonald, has a balcony which is opened for sellout shows. The screens are sizeable but by no means huge.

Unfortunately, both theaters suffer from echoing sound systems when they aren't filled to capacity.

The Mayflower is the most interesting and most unkempt of the Luxury chain. Although usually used as a dumping



Illustration by Shawn Bird

ground for homeless films, Luxury makes periodic attempts to attract the nearby college audience with showings of "The Rocky Horror Picture Show," and an annual six week program of Hollywood "Golden Oldies," and with its Tuesday students nights.

The major drawback to the theater is the poor condition of the auditorium. The walls are ugly, the seats need repair, and the floor cries out for a major scrubbing.

The Moyer chain is Luxury's only real competitor in Oregon. In Eugene the chain owns five theaters and a tri-screen drive-in. Regular prices are \$4.50, with a \$3 bargain price on for Saturday and Sunday matinees before 5 p.m. and all showings Tuesday nights. Wednesday showings are \$2 with a Fred Meyer receipt.

The West 11th Tri-Cinema is bigger than either of Luxury's quads. The smallest of the West 11th theaters is twice the size of Cinema World's smallest, while the largest seats more than almost any other theater in Eugene, barring the Oakway Cinema.

The major problem here is screen size. The two smaller theaters have good-sized screens, but the larger theater has a screen smaller than its Cinema World counterparts. Sound, however, is tops and the seats are wonderful. The biggest problem for the average University student is, again, transportation.

The Valley River Twin is practically next door to Cinema World, which can only bode ill for Moyer. Price-wise and selection-wise Luxury has it beat. The twin has smaller screens and poorer seating than Cinema World and sound that is no different. With the higher prices and all, it takes a film I'm really dying to see to drag me over.

The Oakway Cinema and Fine Arts Theater show second-run films in cooperation with each other. The Oakway, I'm convinced, is the finest film facility in Eugene. It usually books a double feature for a couple of weeks and then sends it to Springfield's Fine Arts — a theater that is similar to the Mayflower in decor but much cheaper — \$1.49. The Oakway's regular price is

\$2.50, with \$1 matinees on Saturday and Sunday.

Their selections are conventional for the most part, but the prices can't be beat, especially for double features. On top of that, the Oakway has the single largest screen in Eugene, coupled with a superior sound system and great seating. For a feature missed the first time around, the Oakway is the ideal place to catch it.

Cinema 7 is one of Eugene's two art houses. Located in the Atrium Building on the downtown mall, Cinema 7 is a small theater that features both older classics and out-of-the-ordinary foreign films, often on eclectic double bills.

The bills change weekly and are listed ahead of time on nine-week calendars available at the theater. The selections are usually very good and often excellent, providing a true alternative for Eugene filmgoers who have had enough of the box-office biggies.

Cinema 7's major drawbacks are the tiny auditorium and the too-cozy seating. Because of the auditorium size, a small screen is a necessity, and seating is close. Prices are regularly \$3.50; \$2.50 on Sunday, with further discounts to film society members.

The Bijou is closer to campus on 13th Avenue and is, in many ways, a safer art house. Playing already-proven foreign and small-distribution films almost exclusively, the Bijou rarely takes chances on eclectic works as Cinema 7 does.

However, runs are almost always two weeks or more and the selections are a cut above the usual Hollywood fare. The seating is good and the screen is fairly large. As an added bonus the Bijou runs late-night features every Thursday through Saturday nights, bringing in cult classics, science fiction favorites and sometimes a surprise or two.

Seats are \$4 with reduced admissions for Saturday and Sunday matinees. Beginning this fall, the Bijou will sell books of tickets at discount prices: 5 tickets for \$15 and 10 for \$25, thus enabling regular filmgoers to receive discounts for all showings. Late-night features are \$2-\$3, depending on which night you attend.

Sean Axmaker

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