

# Bijou sees financial troubles

■ The theater's owner says if business doesn't pick up, the future looks grim

By Chris Noble  
for the Emerald

Those who wax nostalgic at the thought of watching a movie at an old-fashioned movie house may soon be able to only do just that.

Michael Lamont, the owner of the Bijou Art Cinemas, known to most simply as the Bijou, says the theater that is one of a kind in Eugene has been experiencing severe financial difficulties lately. If business doesn't increase soon, Lamont said he believes the Bijou's screens will darken for good.

"The Bijou lost an important revenue stream when Movies 12 switched from first-run movies to a dollar house," Lamont said. "Bijou LateNite used to specialize in showing movies fresh out of the theaters. However, when the dollar theater opened, people quickly realized that they could see the same movies at more convenient times."

The Bijou is located in the historic Wilcox Building at 13th Avenue and Ferry Street. In 1925, then-dean of the University's

school of architecture, W.R.B. Wilcox, designed the structure and oversaw its construction.

Whitewashed walls, arched ceilings and a large open courtyard betray the fact that the building was originally a First Congregational Church. Lamont said the church membership grew too large for the building, and the church moved to its current location on 23rd Street. For the next 20 years, the Wilcox Building served as a mortuary until Lamont leased the main section in 1980 and turned the large, empty structure into the Bijou Art Cinemas.

In an effort to stay competitive, Lamont decided to show cult and classic movies for the late-night showings. He said he hopes this will attract a more eclectic and loyal audience that will keep coming back.

Rose Johnson is one of the people that Lamont hopes to hold onto as a customer. She has been going to the Bijou since she moved to Eugene six years ago, and she said she is saddened by the thought of it closing.

"It is too bad," she said. "I like the Bijou and the movies they show. It's the place to see anything

that the mall theaters don't bring in. Besides, I usually enjoy the Bijou movies more than those I see somewhere else."

Other business owners nearby said they will be affected if the Bijou closes its doors for good.

"The Bijou brings people to our area," said Dale McDonald, a piercing apprentice at nearby Primal Body Tattoos. "People come to see a movie and then visit us before or after the show."

Not only is McDonald a fan of the business the theater draws to his shop, he is also a fan of the theater itself.

"I'd hate to see it go," he said. "It's my favorite place to go see movies that no one else shows."

Lamont said the Bijou fills a niche in the movie market by showing films that are not necessarily mainstream fare, but he added that the future looks bleak.

"If people want the theater to stay open, then they need to come see all our movies — twice," Lamont said jokingly.

But he added: "Seriously, people need to try and remember the Bijou. When looking at entertainment options, don't forget that the Bijou is here."

# Chelan wildfire destroys three homes

CHELAN, Wash. — A 2,500-acre wildfire that burned three homes near this central Washington resort town had forced the evacuation of 32 homes by late Sunday, while crews were able to contain a fire that grew to 5,000 acres east of Walla Walla.

Some 70 homes were not evacuated but remained threatened by the Union Fire a few miles north of Chelan. Nearly 500 firefighters and support staff were on scene, along with three helicopters, four air tankers, five bulldozers and 25 fire engines, the state Emergency Management Division said.

The fire, burning in brush, scrub grass and some timber, was only about 10 percent contained within fire lines as of Sunday afternoon, and there was no estimate on when it would be fully contained, interagency fire spokesman John Townsley said.

It was reported on Saturday afternoon, and by Saturday night it had destroyed one house and two trailers being used as summer homes.

No injuries were reported, and no other structures burned on Sunday.

Mike Brownfield said he spent Saturday night fighting to save his home in the Union Valley area.

"Within just a few minutes we were surrounded with flames," he told KOMO-TV. "It was glowing orange, and trees were candling and just exploding around us."

Meanwhile, more than 300 firefighters were able to fully contain the 5,000-acre Port Kelley fire burning in sagebrush near the Oregon border around Wallula, east of Walla Walla on the Columbia River, said Don Marlatt, the emergency management director for Walla Walla County.

The fire was contained within fire lines by 6 p.m. Sunday, and mop-up work on hot spots was underway, state Emergency Management Division spokesman Rob Harper said. Crews were aided by cool, damp weather.

No homes were burned and no injuries were reported in the Port

Kelley fire, which was believed to have been started by sparks from a train.

Many residents of homes around the Union Fire evacuated voluntarily, fire information officer Greg Thayer said.

The town of Chelan, full of summertime visitors to the lake's resorts and campgrounds, was not threatened and was not in the path of smoke from the fire, he said.

The cause of the fire was under investigation, but investigators believed it was started by area residents, Thayer said. It did not start at any of the burned structures as earlier had been reported, he said.

The fire was called in at about 2:30 p.m. Saturday, and it grew to 15 acres within 30 minutes, Chelan County Fire District No. 7 reported.

A Red Cross emergency center was established in Chelan's community gym, but most evacuees appeared to be staying elsewhere.

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## News briefs

### Oregonians create Bigfoot kit

FOSSIL, Ore. — An Eastern Oregon couple is having fun with the Bigfoot legend, and hoping to make a buck, by marketing a package of items aimed at helping customers lure, track — and hopefully repel — the mythical missing link.

The Official BigFoot Fur Co. includes "fur" from the animal, along with bait, a bottle of repellent and a tracking guide in a BigFoot Tracking Kit, available for \$14.95.

The company is owned by Fossil residents Jeffrey Pickering, his wife Karlena and her mother Edith Lowe. Through their Web site, [www.bigfootfur.com](http://www.bigfootfur.com), the company has taken orders from as far away as

Texas and Missouri since the site was launched July 4.

"This is Bigfoot central," Jeffrey Pickering said. "We've done a lot of research. It's meant for people to have fun."

Pickering said most of the 100 e-mail inquiries he gets every day are questions from those who noticed the first BigFoot Tracking Kit offered on the Internet auction site eBay. The kit was put together by the family and given as Christmas presents to other family members and friends a little more than six months ago.

"We watched the Discovery Channel and all these Bigfoot documentaries," Pickering said. "They're pretty serious, but we wanted it to be fun."

The Associated Press

## Tickets

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we did the best job we ever did this year telling people where to park. But the message only trickles down so far."

Last year, the society paid a handful of parking citations issued to participants, but there were no

plans for similar payment his year, he said.

The Relay for Life is an annual fundraiser for the American Cancer Society. Money goes to cancer treatment, research and prevention programs in Lane County. This year, about \$430,000 was raised, topping last year's \$313,000 mark, Oaker-son said.

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