

BIJOU
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Our Song ★★★★★ (4 stars!)
A special engagement due to the overwhelming success at The Eugene Weekly Film Fest. If you missed this naturalistic film about three inner city high school girls now is your chance.
"Has the courage to work without a net, aware that when you're a teenager, your life is not a story so much as a million possible stories."
— Roger Ebert, CHICAGO SUN-TIMES
5:15 & 7:15pm Nightly - Sun Mat 3:15pm
Soon: Mulholland Drive & Ghost World

The Vertical Ray Of The Sun
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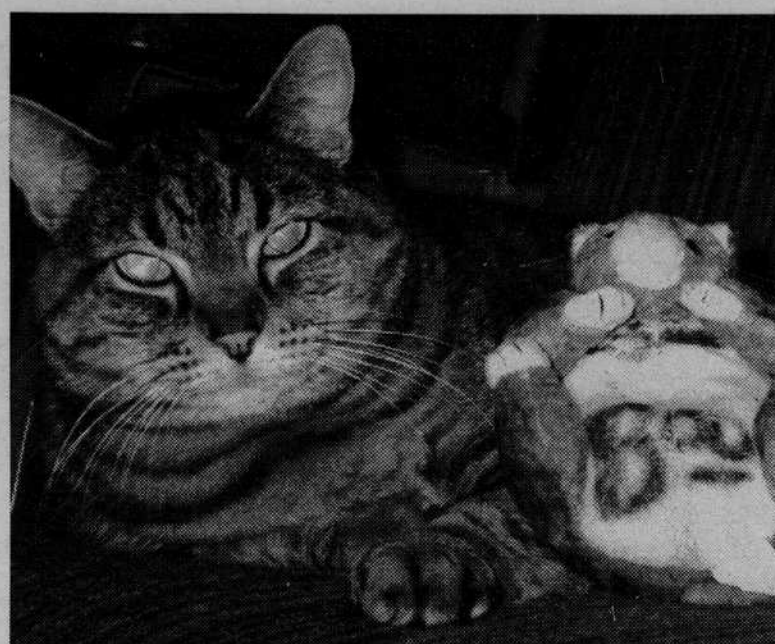
A ROOM WITH A BOO

■ The Bijou offers customers more than just a place to see a movie and have popcorn

By Mason West
Oregon Daily Emerald

The Bijou Art Cinemas plays temporary home to many films and people passing through Eugene, but it is always Boo's home.

Boo is the cat that roams freely around the Bijou, expecting love from everyone as they pass through her lobby to see movies. The Bijou has been her home for almost two years since general



Mason West Emerald

Boo, the furry film fanatic, relaxes in a movie seat at Bijou Art Cinemas on 13th Avenue.

manager Dana Krizan and a former employee adopted her from the Lane County Animal Regulation Authority.

"We didn't even see her at first," Krizan said. "She was back in the back of the cage spooked. We looked at her, and she was all dingy and fat. She had bald spots and matted fur. She was ugly. But those eyes — she had really bright eyes."

Boo is not the first Bijou cat. Krizan said before Boo, there was a cat that lived across the street that would come visit. The staff also adopted a cat that was abandoned, Krizan said, when the residents of a "crack house" behind the theater were kicked out. Krizan said that cat was "a pain," and one of the employees took him away from the Bijou. But there was something missing.

"We were looking for her because there was a void that we discovered that wasn't here — which (Boo) fills up amply," Krizan said.

But it took Boo some time to warm up to her new home. Krizan said she would hide behind the counter and in the lost and found box for the first three months.

"We didn't even know we had a cat, basically," he said.

Now she perches on the lobby seats like a queen looking down on the meager peasants waiting to pay her homage.

"When customers come, she'll sit in her chair and pretend she's asleep and let people come pet her," Krizan said. "Sometimes she gets to the point where she's yelling at people, saying, 'I want pettings now!'"

He said Boo is a "public access cat." Bijou volunteer Cheryl Capek said the first thing customers do when they come in is pet Boo. Patron Dave Emrich and his brother Matt both lavished attention on Boo after seeing "Made" Tuesday night. Dave has been coming to the Bijou since 1987, and even though Boo has not been there long he said "she seems like a fixture."

"She lends an aura of being comfortable," Matt added.

That statement stems from the fact that the public rarely sees Boo move. Krizan said this is just part of her public demeanor. On Tuesday, when the crowds were busy watching movies, Boo roamed around the nearly vacant lobby like she owned the place — which she almost does.

"The hierarchy goes, Michael (the owner), Boo, me and then everyone else," Krizan said.

Though he said Boo is in charge, Krizan has developed a warm relationship with the cat. With great pride, Krizan said he is her favorite.

"I have a natural ability with cats," Krizan said. "If I understood people half as well as I understood cats, I would be Don Juan."

He explained what is going

through Boo's head when they are alone: "You're in the room. I'm in the room. You must be paying attention to me now."

Boo is a "high-maintenance cat" and requires at least two good "skritchings" a day from Krizan. He demonstrated how her eyes are constantly focused on his hand as he moved it in a circle and Boo's head followed suit.

This playful side of Boo is what Krizan and the other Bijou employees see and love. Employee Brain Mumford said she is more comfortable with the staff than with customers. The employees said they feel close to Boo and do not like it when customers treat her badly.

"The number one reaction from people is, 'Oh my gosh, look at that fat cat,'" Krizan said.

Boo is rather large and takes up the better part of a theater seat. Employee Josh Hendrickson said Boo gets her feelings hurt everyday by inconsiderate customers. On Tuesday night, one person turned around and said, "That's Jabba the Cat!"

The truth is that Boo was bigger when Krizan got her. He said she was probably bloated from malnutrition. Since she has come to the Bijou, Boo eats a strict diet of one cup of dry diet cat food a day. Hendrickson especially wished to dispel the rumor that Boo eats popcorn.

Another myth is that Boo watches movies. Krizan said Boo doesn't really care for the cinema and the few times when customers have actually taken her in the theaters with them, she cries until someone lets her out.

Krizan said most people know where to draw the line with Boo because she puts out an aura that restrains them. The aura also keeps people coming back: Krizan said there are about a dozen people who stop by the theater just to check up on Boo.

On the opposite end, Krizan said there are some people who don't like the presence of a cat at a movie theater, but the positive responses well outweigh the negative ones.

If it weren't for customer support, Boo wouldn't be around. All of Boo's expenses are paid for out of the tips customers give to the employees. Krizan said there are three employees a night who split the tips four ways — Boo takes the lion's share.

Because Boo was abandoned, her age remains a mystery. Krizan guessed her age to be seven or eight years old because she "still has a spark in her eye."

"She's got the best life," he said. "We're just trying to make the last few years, or whatever she's got, as lazy as possible."

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