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Bijou Art Cinemas delivers independent films, cult flicks

The art house's owners are toying with the idea of special, rotating offerings, like 3-D and classic films

By Ryan Nyburg
Senior Pulse Reporter

On the corner of East 13th Avenue and Ferry Street sits a Spanish mission-style building that once housed a First Congregational Church and later a mortuary. Since 1980 it has been the home to Eugene's sole art film house, the Bijou Art Cinemas. Now, the larger of the Bijou's two theaters betrays its religious past, with its high roof and boarded-up, stained-glass windows.

Where there was once an altar now sits a large white movie screen.

The Bijou specializes in the sort of films that multiplexes usually don't touch, including smaller, independent productions, foreign films, cult favorites and film festival selections. Recently it revived its late-night film selection; late-night attendance dwindled after Cinemark Movies 12 at Gateway Mall began showing second-run films. Before, the Bijou had been the sole proprietor of second-run films in Eugene.

After a successful summer — "The busiest I've witnessed," as projectionist Scott McGahan put it — the Bijou is preparing for fall, along with the influx of business from returning students, with some new ideas.

"We're trying to figure out what will draw the most people," Bijou day manager Louise Thomas said.

One idea is to have something new during the late nights of every week of the month.

"I'd like to have one 3-D film a month, another weekend for classic films and one for concert films," own-



Jessica Waters Photo Editor

Lloyd Newton purchases movie snacks from Matt Ralston before the afternoon showing of *Whale Rider*, one of many popular independent films featured at the Bijou.

er Michael Lamont said. "Also maybe one for a laser light show, but we need to work that one out."

One of the first late-night films is already playing, a 3-D showing of the 1954 Universal monster classic "Creature from the Black Lagoon," which began on Sept. 19 and will continue for the next two weeks. Last year the Bijou held a series of late night cult choices, featuring such films as "Taxi Driver," "Evil Dead 2" and "Fast Times at Ridgemont High." What might be shown on future late nights is still open to suggestion.

As for the Bijou's primary business of new art films, the schedule is only certain up to a few months away, and is dictated by the popularity of whatever is currently playing. A few planned showings include "Masked and Anonymous," "Thirteen" and

"The Magdelene Sisters," which will appear over the next few months.

A few changes are also planned for the theater itself.

"We're going to be making a few minor repairs to make things run smoother," McGahan said. "We're also planning to get a new Dolby sound system in theater one."

And beyond changes for the existing Bijou, the theater is also open to expansion.

"We're always looking for an expanded location, but such locations are hard to find," Lamont said.

It's a safe bet that even if the Bijou remains structurally the same, it will also continue as a popular and unique business in Eugene.

Contact the senior pulse reporter at ryannyburg@dailyemerald.com.

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