

Big O screens 'Sometimes a Great Notion'

Watch the ultimate logging movie in a logger bar

What better place to watch the greatest movie ever made about logging than in a real logger bar decorated with chainsaws and saw blades? Well, "Sometimes a Great Notion" is that movie, and the Big O Saloon in Olney is about the best logger bar I've ever patronized. It certainly has the biggest chainsaw I've ever seen. Rumor is: It still works.

On Thursday, Feb. 26, the Big O Saloon will reprise its public screening of "Sometimes a Great Notion." The movie, adapted from Ken Kesey's epic novel about a defiant family of loggers, starred Paul Newman and was filmed on the Central Oregon Coast during the summer of 1970. The film was released in 1971 to an indifferent nationwide audience but remains a cult classic in the Pacific Northwest, particularly in logging/timber communities.

Last year, I approached Dale and Shawron Searls, owners of the Big O, about screening the film in the bar to promote my book about its production, "Sometimes a Great Movie: Paul Newman, Ken Kesey and the Filming of the Great Oregon Novel." They enthusiastically agreed, and we staged the event on a Thursday night in late January.

I thought a dozen people would show

up and I might sell one book. I was wrong. The place was jammed; there was standing-room only. People came from as far as Manzanita, Portland and Long Beach. One man even bicycled from Astoria. In the dead of winter!

After I introduced the film, we all settled in with food and drink and watched a movie containing incredible scenes of logging and log drives of the type that will never happen again because environmental regulations and industry



Submitted photo courtesy Nestucca Spit Press

The 1971 film "Sometimes a Great Notion" remains a cult classic in the Pacific Northwest.



Photo by Matt Love

The Big O Saloon boasts a full bar and is a great setting to watch "Sometimes a Great Notion," a film about logging, Thursday, Feb. 26.

changes disallowed or precluded them in the subsequent decades. Forty-five years ago, that wasn't part of the film's inherent appeal, but it is today.

At last year's screening, there were members in the audience who logged the old-school way and cut down the monster trees. There were members in the audience who politicked to end that type of logging. There were current loggers, log truck drivers, state forestry officials, tree planters, and members of conservation groups in attendance, too.

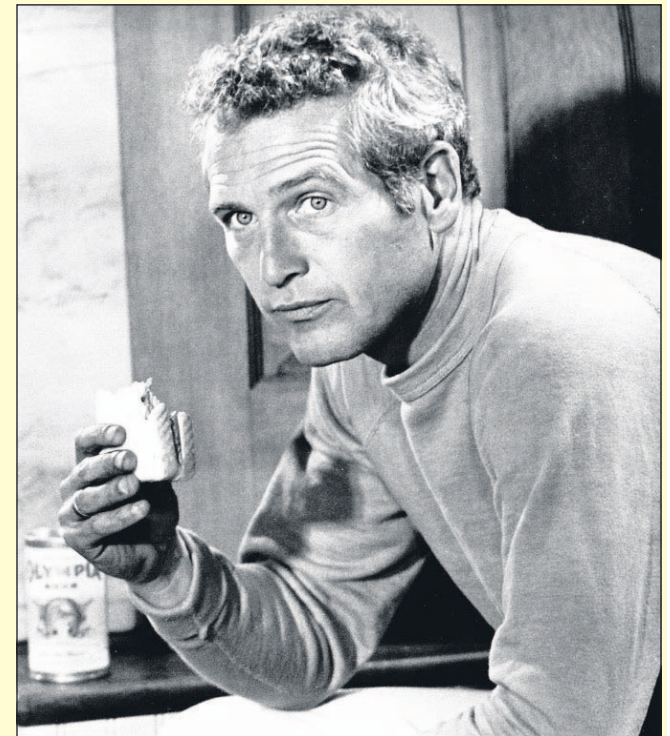
Quite honestly, it was the most interesting politically diverse audience for any presentation I have ever given. The question-and-answer session afterward was respectful and fascinating to moderate. I learned a few things myself. That's often what happens when you bring people of different perspectives together for a conversation about something both sides care passionately about.

The Big O will offer a Hank Stamper

Olympia and meatloaf sandwich special, free popcorn, the warmth of crackling woodstove fire to enjoy the film, and a special musical guest. I will introduce the movie and moderate a discussion after the screening if there's interest. (There will be.) I'll also discuss new revelations about the legend of whether Newman cut the legs off a tavern pool table with a chainsaw during the production. It's the story that never seems to die.

The event is free and begins at 6:30 p.m. The Big O is located 9.5 miles down Oregon Highway 202. Get there early to snag a good seat.

Matt Love is the publisher of Nestucca Spit Press and the author/editor of 12 books about Oregon, including "Of Walking In Rain," his account of one of the rainiest winters in Oregon history. They are available at coastal bookstores and through www.nestuccaspitpress.com



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Paul Newman and his wife, Joanne Woodward, enjoy themselves at the wrap party for the filming of "Sometimes a Great Notion."

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Coastal Life

Story by MATT LOVE