

Free flicks not completely gratis—downtown theatres have to pay

by Chip Ensslin
Staff Writer

Taxi Driver and *Seven Beauties*, two of the most publicized films of 1976, were shown to near-capacity audiences in Carroll Hall this past weekend as part of the Carolina Union's Spring Free Flick program. These films represent a trend toward scheduling popular contemporary films, which began last semester after the success of the student government film series, which included *The Sting* and *The Godfather*.

Seven Beauties was free, as are most of the films on the Spring Schedule. *Taxi Driver*, part of the Super Friday Series, cost a dollar.

"We've gotten a lot of compliments on the list," said Hank Baker, chairperson of the Union's twelve-person Free Flick selection committee. "One guy said it was the best schedule he ever saw. We've gotten a lot of positive feedback from the students."

Reaction from downtown theater owners has not been as positive. Since the free flicks utilize University resources and do not pay taxes, rent, or business license costs, downtown theater owners feel that the competition free flicks cause them is unfair.

"The reason we're showing films like this is because the attendance was very poor last year," Baker said. "It was very obvious that we were not fulfilling the

students' needs. Since we are the Student Union and we use the students' money, we ought to show what the students want."

But according to E. Carrington Smith, former manager of the Carolina Theater, now retired, the original concept of Free Flicks has been "perverted" in recent years. Smith first

comptroller W.D. Carmichael to show movies to students on Fridays and Saturdays without charging admission.

"In the old days," Smith said, "when we made the agreement, they were to submit lists to us for our approval. They were to show old movies, which wouldn't compete with us." Smith said that after Carmichael died, the lists were

University of North Carolina is prohibited from selling articles of merchandise exceeding 25¢, except those produced "incident to educational research, incident to the operation of instructional departments, and articles of merchandise incident to classroom work, meals, or books."

"In my opinion, free flicks violate the

worked with the free flicks as a Union employee from 1967-69. He said that he believes free flicks infringe more and more upon the downtown theater business every year.

"It didn't used to be like this," said Scott Reid, manager of the twin Carolina theaters. "Free flicks used to show movies you couldn't get downtown. Showing movies like this is really unfair."

"He's not spending the students' money wisely," Reid continued. "They're probably paying for *Taxi Driver* what six old Bogart movies would cost."

Baker said he could not name any specific prices, but said that six Bogart films would cost a lot more than *Taxi Driver*.

Reid made it clear that he thinks the idea of free movies is good for the University. He objects only when they become competitive.

"I'd just as soon they show movies every day," he said. "All we've asked them to do is to talk to us about what they're planning to run."

Reid said that he and other theater owners have met with Dean of Student Affairs Donald A. Boulton and other members of the University administration.

"They've (the theater owners) never said anything to me," Baker said. "If

they wanted to ask me for a list, I'd give it to them, but it wouldn't make any difference," he said, indicating that he would still run what his committee had decided to program.

Baker says that he sympathizes with downtown theater owners, but feels that students want contemporary programming.

"I see their point," he said. "I know they don't have a lot to work with or to book."

Reid said that if he owned the theater, he would probably sue. The American Broadcasting Company (ABC) is the parent corporation, however, and since Chapel Hill is the smallest town that an ABC theater plays, Reid said he did not think that ABC would consider it worth the hassles involved.

Robinson said that he would not sue, but that his parent corporation, the Eastern Federal Corporation, might take legal action.

When asked if he thought that this year's free flick program violated the Umstead Act, Baker said, "As far as I'm concerned, if the Student Stores can do what they're doing (i.e. sell retail merchandise) we can do what we're doing. I don't think we're violating the Umstead Act at all," Baker said. "We're here for the students, not the downtown theaters."

"I just think that nothing the University sponsors should be in direct competition with us."—Jerry Robinson, manager of the Varsity Theatre.

came to Chapel Hill as an undergraduate in 1927, and gave the University permission to show free flicks during the war years. His permission was required because free movies were forbidden along with other university retail operations by the 1939 Umstead Act, which prohibited direct retail competition between town merchants and the University.

Smith gave permission to University

no longer submitted for approval. He said that in his opinion free flicks have "turned into a monster."

Smith said that the Umstead Act was still in effect, but because of the ambiguity of its phrasing, it was subject to differing interpretations. In his opinion, the University violates the Act with regard to Student Stores merchandising as well as the free flicks.

The law states that the Greater

state laws," said Jerry Robinson, manager of the Varsity Theatre. "That's my opinion, but it's debatable. I just think that nothing the University sponsors should be in direct competition with us (downtown merchants)." Robinson noted that within the last two weeks, he has shown *The Passenger* and *Love and Death*, two movies on the free flick schedule.

As an undergraduate, Robinson

Experience the presence of creative genius

by Melissa Swicegood
Kaleidoscope Editor

When anything from a bottle rack to a white canvas with a single black line can be placed in a museum as a masterpiece, people begin to wonder why. Hundreds of critics of modern art long for the days when there were more clear-cut standards of judging works.

when the final product looked like something more than last night's leftovers.

The Challenge, a film that explores modern art and its creators, will be shown at 8 tonight and Thursday and at 2 p.m. on Saturday in Carroll Hall. Admission is \$2 at the door.

An Academy Award nominee. *The*

Challenge illustrates the growth and dynamism of nearly 100 years of modern art. Relationships between styles are explained, such as how Cubism completed the revolution begun by Cezanne and how diversified styles emerged.

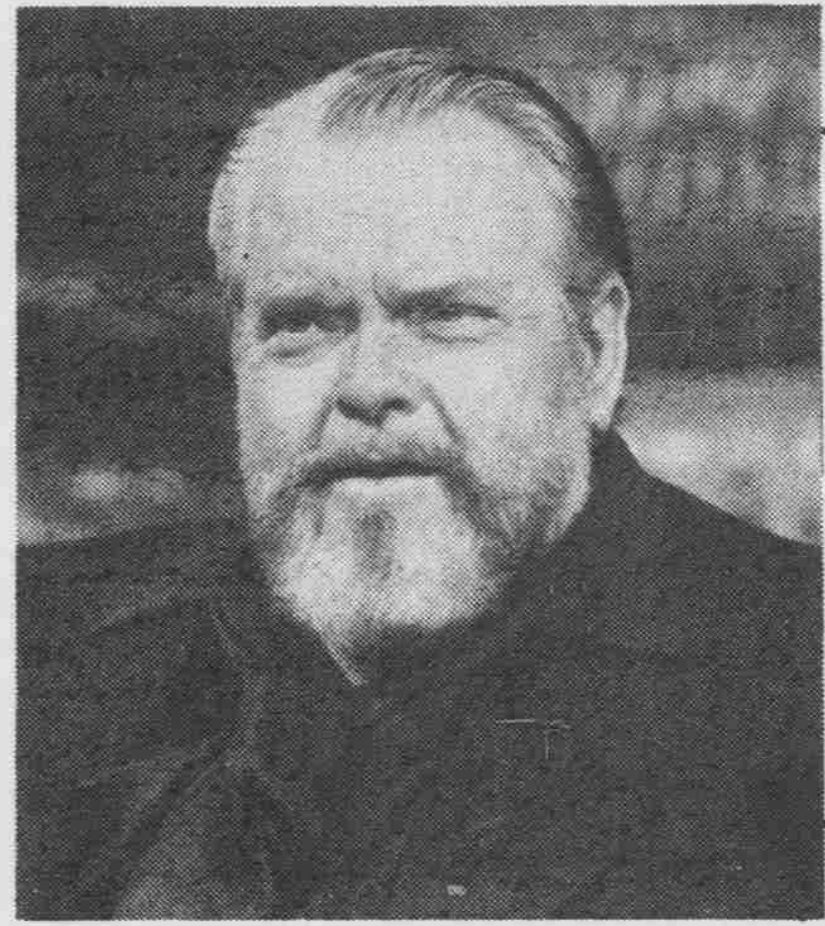
Director-producer Herbert Kline Academy Award-winning director of *Walls of Fire*, persuaded Orson Welles to appear in and narrate the film. Commentary was written by Pierre Schneider, art critic of *The New York Times* and *L'Express*.

Kline filmed many of the world's great artists at work in their studios. The film allows us unique visits with such artists as

Chagall, Lipchitz, Oldenburg, Di Chirico and many more. These are newly filmed sequences and in many cases are the only existing film on the artist.

Many important artists, however, were unavailable for filming so Kline proceeded to comb the world for rare existing footage. Consequently, *The Challenge* shows us Matisse, Picasso, Braque, Duchamp, Pollack and other artists creating and explaining the works that have made them famous.

The film also visits great collection in the Louvre, The Guggenheim and The Museum of Modern Art.



Orson Welles narrates and appears in *The Challenge*, a film tribute to modern art. It will be shown at 8 tonight and Thursday and at 2 p.m. on Saturday in Carroll Hall.

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