

FEATURES

Chelsea Theater owner as offbeat as the movies he shows

By Yi-Hsin Chang
Staff Writer

Some say it's the best popcorn in town.

The movies aren't bad either.

Before each show, faithful movie buffs are overwhelmed with the aroma of fresh popcorn at the Chelsea Theater in Timberlyne Shopping Center on Weaver Dairy Road.

Cloud Nine espresso bean crunch, Toblerone chocolate bars and homemade poppyseed cake also make moviegoers' mouths water as they stand indecisively in front of the concession stand with the red-and-white neon Coca-Cola sign.

To further complicate the decision, mainstream movie favorites such as Milk Duds, Raisinets and Junior Mints also sit temptingly in the glass case.

The abundant food selection mirrors the diversity of films shown at the Chelsea Theater. Owner Bruce Stone opened the theater in November 1990 to provide Chapel Hill with an alternative venue of entertainment.

"It was a personal dream," Stone said in his soft, somewhat shy voice, his blue eyes staring into the distance. "You can't sit around waiting for things to happen. You just have to do them."

Stone, who attended Bucknell University, the University of Florida and the University of Wisconsin, said he first became interested in movies in college. "There were theaters in various college towns I was in that showed

offbeat films. I became fascinated by non-commercialized films."

The idea of opening his own theater had been in the back of his mind for the last 10 years, he said. He had read about interesting films and was frustrated that he couldn't see them in the Chapel Hill area. Stone wanted to show films that normally only run in big, urban cities such as New York and Los Angeles.

Wedge between a realtor and dry cleaner, the Chelsea seats 120 and 85 people in its two theaters and has on occasion had to turn away customers.

The only theater in town with cup holders on its arm rests, the Chelsea opened in 1990 with "Too Beautiful For You" and "Berkeley in the '60s," and has shown a diverse array of foreign and American films, such as the Canadian film "Strangers in Good Company," the French film "Madame Bovary" and American film "Cape Fear."

The Chelsea has also shown revivals of old films, such as "Gone With the Wind," "Citizen Kane" and "Spartacus." Stone chooses films by reading reviews, attending screenings and following the careers of various directors and actors. "You have to assume your interests are the same as those of other people," he said.

The Black Ink, the newspaper of the



Profile



Chelsea Theater owner Bruce Stone

DTH/Grant Halverson

Black Student Movement, recently ran a cover story about the lack of black films in Chapel Hill theaters. The story said the Chelsea was an exception with its showings of films such as Spike Lee's "Jungle Fever" and Matty Rich's "Straight Out of Brooklyn."

Stone said he did not choose these films because of the race of the directors and actors. "My choices have more to do with the quality of the films than anything else," he said. "We try to show a diversity of films."

The diversity of films in turn creates a diversity in audience, Stone said. "It depends on the film. When we had 'Cape Fear,' we had largely college students. Each film has its own audience."

Dave Steffens of Durham heard about the Chelsea through friends. "It shows movies you can't always see in the Triangle," Steffens said. "It's the only game in town."

Michelle DeGraff of Chapel Hill, a frequent customer of the theater, re-

cently saw "Madame Bovary" with a friend from Raleigh. "I always know it will be good if it's here," DeGraff said.

Rob McHone, 21, assistant manager of the theater, decided to work at the Chelsea instead of the Varsity because he thought he would have more creative influence at the Chelsea.

McHone said the staff at the Chelsea was like a family. "You don't dread coming to work, because you know you're with people you like."

Many of Stone's employees are former English students at Chapel Hill High School, where, until last year, he had taught for more than 10 years.

Jessica Ruegg, a senior at CHHS, sells tickets and concessions at the theater. Stone taught her 10th-grade English class. "Mr. Stone was the first teacher to teach me how to write. He had pretty discriminating taste with literature, so it makes sense that he would be discriminating in selecting movies."

Braden Stone, a sophomore at CHHS who also works at the theater, not only talks like his father, but is also very interested in films. "I like most of the movies that run here," he said.

Bruce Stone's wife of 21 years, Mary Jo Stone, who does most of the book-keeping for the theater and bakes the poppyseed cake, said the Chelsea was a family business. "My daughter (age 7) enjoys coming out and likes to pitch in and help out. I give her little jobs — let her help restock the concession area — so that she feels like she's a part of it, too." Dorothy, the youngest member of

the Stone family, had her last birthday party at the theater with a showing of "The Red Balloon."

Bruce Stone, 45, sometimes seems like a kid trapped in an adult's body. He reluctantly retired from teaching, not only to devote more time to the theater, but also so he could have writing time.

He has published two novels, "Half Nelson, Full Nelson" and "Been Clever Forever," and has just sent his third book to his publisher.

His novels, narrated by 16- or 17-year-olds, are about adulthood through the eyes of adolescents. "I'm still amazed by what it means to be an adult."

"I simply like the young adult voice. It's more liberating."

Bruce Stone said although he usually did not get ideas for his books from movies, writing and showing movies were just different ways of storytelling. The theater owner's favorite part of running a movie theater is seeing the people and having the chance to bring different films to the area, he said.

Mary Jo Stone said she also liked interacting with customers. "I like to be here when people are coming in, because we have an awful lot of really nice people who come in here on a regular basis. It's kind of our social life, because we really don't have much outside of this other than our children."

As with all movie theaters, business at the Chelsea varies from week to week, Bruce Stone said. "You have to take your hills with your valleys."

"It's still a labor of love."

Campus Calendar

THURSDAY

10 a.m. Rape Action Project will have office hours until 3 p.m. in 215D Union.

5:30 p.m. Amnesty International Student Action Group will have an Urgent Action letter-writing meeting in Lenoir's north dining room.

7 p.m. Provident Life & Accident will give a presentation in 209 Hanes. Sponsored by UCPPS.

Student Peace Initiative will meet in 101 Bingham to view video footage of the Persian Gulf War.

7:30 p.m. UNC Pre-Vet Club will meet in 102 Murphy.

8 p.m. Chimera will meet in 208 Union.

La Casa Espanola os invita a venir a "Charlemos" en el segundo piso. Esta semana vamos a "Jugar — Family Feud en español."

ITEMS OF INTEREST

UNC Math Contest is available for everyone in 365 Phillips.

Nominations requested for the Chancellor's Awards for Excellence in Student Activities and Leadership. Forms available at: Union Desk, Campus Y, Office of Leadership Development (01 Steele), Office of the vice chancellor for student affairs (104 Steele). Nominations are due by Friday.

Yackety Yack will be taking yearbook portraits March 16 through April 16. Call 1-800-873-7591 or come to 106 Union to schedule an appointment.

Class of '38 Summer Study Abroad Fellowship Applications now available at the International Center. Application deadline is March 9. For more information stop by the center or call 962-5661.

On the road again: UNC students use rideboard to get out of town

By Sonja Post
Staff Writer

No thank you, I don't want a "When Harry Met Sally..." experience, even if it does lead to true love.

Flashbacks from the movie may race through students' heads as they look at the AT&T long distance rideboard in the Student Union, considering their options for making the trek home over Spring Break. But finding a ride, not your true love, is the service's goal.

Out-of-state and in-state students use the board with about the same rate of success. In other words, it doesn't always work out, particularly if you're a rider.

"I drove twice, and people called me all the time," said Beth Ross, a junior from Charlotte. Now, as a rider, Ross said she had not received a single call.

While there are about 100 rider cards

for every 10 driver cards, coordinating schedules isn't always easy. You might expect a careful of noisy students, clashing over music and the optimum driving speed, but it's more likely to be just you and the driver.

However many end up in the car, it's important to talk about splitting gas costs before the trip begins, said Karen Conrad, a junior from Charlotte. Most drivers expect \$5 to \$10.

Another expectation is that the rider and driver are UNC students. The instructions on the rider/driver cards suggest that both students check a valid UNC ID before getting in the car. Most students said they didn't check IDs but assumed the other person was a student.

For years, students have sought companions for long car trips home. Originally, the rideboard was a large, laminated map of the United States, maintained by Alpha Phi Omega fraternity.



Drivers and riders put their names and phone numbers on slips of paper and pinned them to their state destination.

Although today's board is in the same location, Chris Kennedy, a graduate student from Goldsboro and former APO member, said: "Now you have to look twice to see what it is. You have to look down each row to find the state."

AT&T was in tune to the visibility the board received. In 1989, a marketing firm representing AT&T approached the Union and offered a larger board at no cost. They promised to keep it stocked with rider/driver cards and new AT&T posters every four months.

APO gave up control of the board. "We felt that having something larger

than what we offered would be more beneficial," Kennedy said.

Jon Curtis, assistant director of the Union, said: "The rideboard is a service that many universities and unions have. The AT&T name is there. It's marketing."

It may be marketing, but some have wonderful experiences.

"We talked for 1 1/2 hours before we even left Chapel Hill," Conrad said of her ride-sharing experience. "We found out we had all these things in common. He lived five minutes from my house and had gone to high school with my sister."

After the first ride, they always rode together. "We became really good friends," Conrad continued. "I see him on campus, and we keep in touch."

So don't let thoughts of meeting Harry or Sally on your next road trip keep you from using the rideboard. You may find your driver or rider is another person in your 8 a.m. recitation. And chances are, they won't be armed with Aqua Net hair spray or a bag of seeded grapes.

Ronkin's New LSAT Premium Program: The Best Way To Prepare For The LSAT

If you're one of the nation's 95,000 applicants determined to get into an accredited law school, you know the competition is tough. Since there are only 44,000 openings, a high score on the LSAT is crucial.

That's why Ronkin created the LSAT Premium Program which offers a choice of three varied levels of assistance.

• LSAT Preparation Course

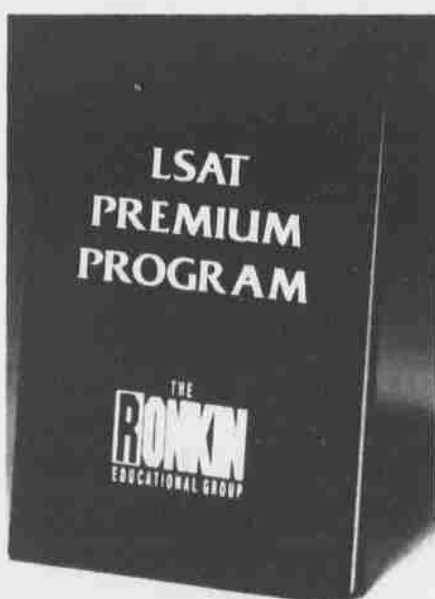
Using the most recently updated curriculum, our 40-hour course stresses critical thinking, argument analysis and logical reasoning. Besides classroom time, our comprehensive LSAT course provides live tutorials, three diagnostic exams, three practice exams, a computer-based tutorial program, homework materials that include released LSATs, and a toll-free Dial-A-Teacher line. Two-day clinics, which are included in Ronkin's LSAT Gold and Platinum Packages, are also available for an additional fee.

• LSAT Gold Package

In addition to the 40-hour LSAT course, Ronkin's LSAT Gold Package includes our two-day LSAT Intensive-Study Clinics offered immediately prior to LSAT examination dates. These clinics concentrate on Logical Reasoning and Logic Games. The Gold Package also includes our Law School Success Program which covers law school exam preparation, legal writing, legal research, and career planning.

• LSAT Platinum Package
This plan provides everything you'll need to get into law school and to be a success. Enroll and you'll receive our LSAT Preparation Course, LSAT Intensive-Study Clinics, Law School Success Program, plus our Law School Selection and Application Assistance Programs.

So if you're looking for the best in LSAT and law school preparation programs, call The Ronkin Educational Group.



Chapel Hill
932-9400

Raleigh
832-9400

THE
RONKIN
EDUCATIONAL GROUP

We'll Make Sure You Make It!
LSAT • GMAT • GRE • MCAT



We're here (as if you hadn't noticed). Spend Spring Break in a hot place. The Nike Factory Store. Carolina Pottery Outlet Center, Industrial Park Dr., Smithfield. (919) 989-6100. Discontinued/irregular sports and fitness stuff. Leave now, we'll wait.