

# 50 years at the movies

by LYLE STERN

This fall, Canada's first film society - the Ottawa Film Society (OFS)/Cine-club d'Ottawa - began celebrating its 50th season of showing movies. The OFS is a non-profit, community-based organization, administered by a volunteer board of directors, whose aim is to promote the study and appreciation of film as an art form, through the non-theatrical exhibition of films.

Over the years, there have been seasons of foreign masterpieces, film genres, screen personalities, directors, children's films, silent classics and screenings of Flaherty's and other great documentaries. Some memorable series titles have been: Bubbling Blondes and Bursting Brunettes, K-K-Kinky at Midnite, Truthmovies, and Tuesday Nite Fever.

Back in the 30s, there were many problems to cope with - where to screen, how to screen and, above all, what to screen. Distributors then were few and largely indifferent to film societies; but audiences were enthusiastic enough that, on one occasion, a band of enthusiasts met early on a Sunday morning in a Hull movie house to see Theda Bara in "A Fool There Was" plus some documentaries of John Grierson.

The financial position of the Ottawa group was often precarious but, with the end of World War II, membership expanded, more films became available and they were able to look forward with more certainty to the future.

Today, the OFS continues to be appreciated by film aficionados and the Society is flourishing. This year, all three subscription series - the International (English),

Serie Francaise and 50 Years of Comedy - sold out in advance through the mail. The formula for success is program packaging, pricing and promotion.

In celebration of their Golden Anniversary, the OFS has a variety of special activities planned. For example, in conjunction with the National Museum of Natural Sciences (Metcalf at McLeod) a free once-a-month weekend family series 'Life on Earth - Fact/Fiction' is being presented. "Quest for Fire" will be shown on Sunday Nov. 18 at 1:30 p.m. with Dr. Richard Harrington of Paleobiology, NMNS, bringing mammoth bones and answering questions after the film (call 995-6119 for more details).

With the Towne Cinema, they are saluting Canadian horror director David Cronenberg in the series, 'Terror in the Great White North' for 6 consecutive Fridays, starting Nov. 16.

Next May, during the Victoria Day long weekend, the OFS will be host to the Canadian Federation of Film Societies' annual film preview weekend and annual gen-



eral meeting where over 100 representatives of Canadian film societies will be screening over 100 feature films for consideration in their future programming (a mini Canadian Cannes).

To get on the Ottawa Film Society's mailing list or to get involved with their activities, please write: Ottawa Film Society, P.O. Box 914, Station B, Ottawa K1P 5P9.

---

*Lyle Stern is a member of the OFS's Board of Directors and a resident of Ottawa South.*



Ottawa Film Society - Cine-club d'Ottawa  
PO/CP Box 914, Station/Succ. B  
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5P9