

# Flickers now on 'movie row'

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NEWPORT — With its fifth move in two years, the people behind Flickers — The Newport Film Society hope that the group has finally found a permanent home on Newport's "movie row," just across Washington Square from the Opera House and Jane Pickens moviehouses.

Flickers' new home, on the second floor of the old Odd Fellows Hall with an entrance at 3 Charles St., opens at 7:30 p.m. Thursday with David Lean's production of *Doctor Zhivago*. For the past couple of weeks, volunteers have been working to turn what is a ballet studio by day into a movie theater by night.

George Marshall, one of the prime movers behind the group, says that Flickers has been bouncing around Newport since it was founded in November, 1982.

Its first home at the Casino theater was ideal in summer (except for a couple of resident bats that swooped down on patrons during one memorable showing of *Meet Me in St. Louis*), but had no heat during cold island winters. The troupe next set up its projectors at the Blue Pelican nightspot, but the club couldn't accommodate movie shows during busy Friday and Saturday nights in the summer season. After another summer back at the Casino, they moved into Swanhurst Theater, home of Bob Colonna's Rhode Island Shakespeare Theater, until Colonna had to build sets for his production of *Dracula*.

Their new home is one half of an airy ballet studio, where a 20-foot-wide drop-down screen ("the second largest on the island," says Marshall) will hide enormous practice mirrors. Curtains will block out the light and street sounds from the over-sized windows of the former ballroom. Some 120 portable padded arm-chair seats will allow the place to show movies Thursday through Sunday nights, while affording a quick-change into a dance space by day for Miki Ohlsen's Newport Ballet School.

With a \$2,000 sound system and Marshall's insistence on screening the 16 mm prints ahead of time to ensure the best available picture, Marshall says that "this is no Mickey Mouse stuff."

Indeed, Marshall and his board work to bring films that are rarely seen in Rhode Island, even if they are starting off with the often-seen *Doctor Zhivago* Thursday and Friday. Their second film, running at 7:30 p.m. Saturday and next Sunday, is a Rhode Island premiere, French director Maurice Pialat's *A Nos Amours*, which is about a teenage nymphomaniac.



—Journal-Bulletin Photo by JAMES J. MOLLOY

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Marshall doesn't expect problems with that film, although he does remember that shortly after Flickers began showing films, a stir was created locally when *Last Tango in Paris* was booked. Some citizens fretted publicly that Flickers was only a step away from showing *Deep Throat* and other X-rated fare. "That got us more publicity than anything else," recalls Marshall.

But the Flickers staff persevered and even managed to show the ribald German homosexual film *Taxi Zum Klo*... which played to a grand total of four patrons.

Films coming up on this spring's schedule include *Soldier of Orange*, *Pygmalion*, *Bizet's Carmen*, *Mr. Hulot's Holiday*, *La Balance*, *Another Country* and a double feature April 18 to 21 of *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* with *American Graffiti*. "We do have some safe things," Marshall admits, "but we could have just shown *Indiana Jones* itself twice a night."

Besides the usual popcorn, volunteers sell beer, wine and fancy pastries during intermissions. At last year's popular Japanese film festival, which will be repeated this summer during Newport's U.S.-Japanese Black Ships Festival at

the request of the Japanese consulate, a sushi bar was set up.

Flickers has 200 members who pay \$15 a year, but that small number belies the group's drawing power. Last year, Flickers booked more than 100 films, which played to more than 10,000 people who came from as far as Providence, Westerly and Cape Cod, not to mention a flock of summer tourists.

Members get discounts on Flickers' films, which are \$4 for a single film and \$5 for a double feature; discounts at the Jane Pickens Theater, which Flickers occasionally rents to show its 35 mm prints; and discounts at stores and restaurants. They also get a quarterly newsletter, reserved seating and the chance to go on group-sponsored theater trips to New York City or Tanglewood.

Chris Foster, one of the Flickers volunteers who is helping to put the new theater into shape, has been a member for a year because, "I've always loved foreign films and there were none around Newport. Culturally, Newport is very sterile. The other theaters are out to make a buck. But here there's something more, something to stimulate those brain cells."