

A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE OPERATION OF  
FILM CLASSICS BY ALPHA CHAPTER, DKA

Background:

During the past year, a marked change in the attitude of the Film Classics audience and the members of Alpha Chapter towards Film Classics has been observed by those closely connected with the most recent series. In terms of the audience, there has been a steady decline in the numbers purchasing season tickets- with a resulting decline in gross receipts. In terms of Alpha Chapter, there has been an equally steady decline in the number of members willing to devote their time and energy towards getting each series publicized, sold, and run. If nothing is done to rectify both of these problems, there is little reason for continuing Film Classics in the future. Indeed, in a motion passed during a recent meeting, Alpha Chapter has already expressed its unwillingness to continue operating Film Classics under the present arrangement.

However, it would be unfortunate and possibly embarrassing if a department of Cinema that is ranked among the finest in the world found that it could not muster sufficient enthusiasm to run at least some kind of a public film series. Film Classics should be saved, but it cannot be saved in its present form. Significant changes must be made in the area of Programming and in the relationship between Alpha Chapter and Film Classics. In presenting the following plan for the future operation of Film Classics by Alpha Chapter, the Chapter is expressing its faith that a new agreement can be reached- one that will rest on a more solid foundation of mutual understanding and mutual trust than has existed in the past.

Programming:

In the past, it has been the policy that the Film Classics program is selected in conjunction with the film needs of the 200 and 500 classes so that the resulting overlap will help defray certain of the operating costs of these classes. Such a policy may have been reasonably workable in the past before the large scale release of American and British feature films to Television. Now, though a certain series of such films might prove ideal for academic purposes, it cannot be expected that filmgoers will pay to see them when they can see them for nothing on Television. This, and other factors, have created a considerable divergence between academic needs and commercial realities. The majority of films booked for the 200 and 500 classes simply cannot be sold to the more discriminating filmgoers in Los Angeles, even under University sponsorship.

During the two most recent series, it has become apparent from the weekly side of single admissions that the people who might properly constitute the Film Classics audience are very interested in seeing certain foreign language, British, and American films that are well-known but have had little or no

local release: films that, for one reason or another, will never be shown on Television. Specifically, there were an astonishing number of single admissions sold for Alexander Nevsky and The Young and the Damned during the last series, and for Miracle in Milan and The Red Badge of Courage during the present series. It is also expected that Boris Godunov (to be shown May 14) will be similarly popular. A series of such films, properly presented and publicised, might be an immensely successful one from the financial standpoint.

Therefore, it is our recommendation that the programing for Film Classics be divorced from the academic needs of the 200 and 500 classes and concentrate upon foreign language, British, and American films that are well-known but have received little or no local release in recent years.

Admittedly, this will mean that the Department may have to bear the entire cost of the 200 and 500 classes film requirements. However, if Film Classics does not continue, such will be the case anyway. Furthermore, the films booked for Film Classics under the above proposal will be available for use in the 200 and 500 classes, should they meet existing academic needs.

#### The Relationship Between Alpha Chapter and Film Classics:

In one sense, this ~~xx~~ is a problem of much greater and more serious dimensions than the problem of programing, for it is useless to offer even an outstanding series of films unless the entire chapter is willing to share in the work that, in recent series, has been borne by a slender few.

The present relationship between Alpha Chapter and Film Classics may best be described as inarticulate, of vague definition, and totally unsatisfactory. In a May Day memorandum from Dr. Hall to the Alpha Chapter president, it was stated that the Chapter has no fixed costs (beyond film rentals) in the operation of Film Classics on which it can count; that it can only 'recommend' the expenditure of whatever profit is made; and that it is traditionally expected to relieve part of the strain on the teaching budget by bringing in some of the films needed for the 200 and 500 classes and running them in a public subscription series that will cover the cost of the films' rentals. This memorandum, coupled with an earlier financial statement for the Fall 1956 series (a statement which some considered outrageous and others thought highly significant), confirmed the impression within the Chapter that the relationship in question is a sadly one-sided one, with the Chapter providing most of the labor and receiving virtually nothing in return. It is on the basis of these impressions, now several series old, that most of the members of Alpha Chapter have declined to take part in the operation of Film Classics. A new degree of incentive must be created before the full support of the Chapter on anything relating to the Department can be assured.

The creation of incentive is something that requires considerable thought and understanding. Throughout the rest of the University,

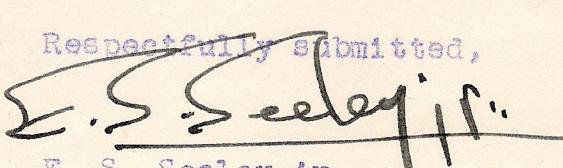
it is possible to gain a fair amount of free labor from groups of students by persuading them that it is an honor to be asked to perform such labor. The Knights, Squires, Amazons, and other service groups are typical examples. Cinema majors, however, tend to be somewhat older, more worldly, and perhaps less 'other-directed' than students in the rest of the University, and it is therefore to be expected that other means of creating the incentive to perform services must be found. The Chapter offers lunch to those who attend the Friday Noon meetings because the small profit from food ~~xxxx~~ sales goes into the Chapter's treasury. And the Chapter undertakes the job of organizing and printing the programs for the May showing of films because it gets some publicity for itself among the people it would like to impress. In each case, an equitable relationship between the Chapter and the service it performs has been achieved.

This semester, Delta Chapter at UCLA has begun something similar to Film Classics, though considerably less extensive. Conversations with Mr. Richard Duffield, Delta Chapter president, have revealed that the series has been a tremendous financial success with a large part of the Chapter's membership participating. The incentive here is of a simple and effective type: all the money collected goes into the Chapter's treasury (which is carrying the expenses of the series) and is helping to assure that the Chapter will be active in the future. This type of financial arrangement is not possible for us, as we realize, but there is another arrangement that might be and that might produce a similar degree of incentive for running Film Classics in the future.

Therefore, we recommend that, in return for running Film Classics, Alpha Chapter receive a percentage (to be agreed upon before each series is undertaken) of the gross receipts at the conclusion of each series. We feel that a percentage of the gross, rather than a percentage of the net, will eliminate needless and impossible hagling over equipment rentals, printing and mailing costs, etc. and assure that both the Department and the Chapter will be conscientious in keeping costs down and gross receipts up.

We hope that the Department and the Chapter will be able to get together on the two proposals offered in this report, for its implementation can do much to usher in a new era of cooperation and good feeling between us.

Respectfully submitted,



E. S. Seeley Jr.  
Film Classics Chairman, Spring 1957