



Attractions

SPRING 2009

IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

- **Manager/ Exhibitor Relations Seminar— April 29, 2009**
- **Taxicab Confessions: Film Theft hits Home**
- **Legislation Activity**
- **The Byrd Turns 80**
- **Jerome Gordon Memorial Scholarship “Thank you”**



Maryland - Virginia District of Columbia

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Manager's Eye on Legislation

As information hit the airwaves about the nations economy, our government leaders were after new ways to raise revenue and potentially tax or fine our theatres. Earlier this year, Mid-Atlantic NATO faced bills to add admission taxes for two counties in Virginia and later battled off Menu Labeling legislature that carried stiff penalties for non-compliance in Maryland.

The good news is these bills did not pass, but it highlights the importance of our continued partnership to monitor legislation and defend our businesses.

Yes! The admission tax bills were introduced in Virginia counties that may not have caught our immediate attention were it not for a manager watch-

ing the local news. And the testimony of a local theatre manager in Maryland helped us get an amendment to exclude movie theatres from the now defunct state menu labeling bill. (Thank you Dan Herrle of Bowtie Cinemas in Annapolis, MD.)



As the legislative year comes to a close, our lawmakers will start preparing new bills for the coming year and we need your watchful eye on those local news articles to warn us of any potential legislation.

Just recently there was a “truth in advertising” bill introduced in Utah that had the potential of collapsing our entire ratings system. While it may not have been the intention of the law, there were interpretations to conclude that if we advertised a rating as excluding a certain age, and an underage person was able to purchase a ticket, than we could be considered as untruthful in advertising. Imagine facing fines and jail time if someone under 17 could prove we sold them a ticket! Albeit this is an abridged version of the issue, but once again underscores the vital role theatre managers play in reporting any legislative activity that could cripple our operation. If you hear or see anything, please contact us immediately.

Big Time Film Theft Strikes Virginia

Last year it was D.C.; the year before that it was Maryland. Now it appears the criminal film pirates have moved to Virginia. Specifically, the MPAA sourced pirated DVD's and film downloads to several movies shown during the past six months in the Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Hampton Roads areas of Virginia. For those that were unaware, films

are now watermarked so they can be tracked to the theatre where they played.

In an effort to help theatre managers identify the issues, we conducted a film theft seminar during February at The Cinema Café in Hampton Roads. (Thank you to John Walker for hosting the event and the great lunch too!)

MPAA Investigator John Coghlan

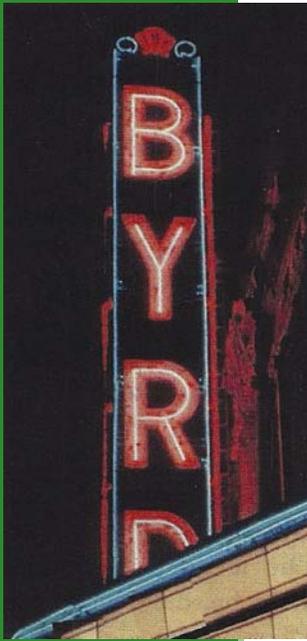
lead about 30 local managers thru the various steps of film theft and helped us identify clues on the criminal behavior patterns.

Please contact Doug Murdoch if you would like a copy of this presentation to use in your own theatre employee training.

Also, check out “Taxi Cab Confessions” later in this publication.

Richmond's Picture Palace

by Rosemary Dietrick



ABOVE: Restoration plans include reinstating the “Byrd” name on the theatre’s marquee.

The Byrd Theatre looks forward to 80 more years.

RIGHT: In 1935 patrons lined up to see *Roberta*, a musical featuring Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire

Movie mogul Marcus Loew once said, “We sell tickets to theatres, not movies.” Although the silver screen provided the entertainment, Loew and fellow Hollywood impresarios of the 1920s knew the big draw for moviegoers was the fanciful ambience of the ornate movie palaces.

In 1928, Richmonders found much to “ooh!” and “aah!” about in the Byrd Theatre. Fortunately, years later, movie fans can still experience the star power of a building that steals the show.

The theatre’s splendor includes murals in niches, ceilings adorned with gold leaf, and walls with an abundance of Turkish marble. Necks crane to view the dazzling two-and-a-half-ton Czechoslovakian crystal chandelier suspended over rows of red plush seats. Two gilded opera-style boxes flank the stage; the one on the left displays a grand piano, on the right is a harp, each illuminated by a twinkling chandelier. An Austrian-style shirred curtain of gold silk hides the movie screen. General Manager Todd Schall-Vess says, “It was a rule in those days that the audience should never have

to look at a blank screen while waiting for the show to start.”

Schall-Vess thinks it was serendipity that the theatre was built in 1928. It was a crucial time: Talking pictures were on the horizon. Walter Coulter and Charles Somma, builders of the Byrd (named for Richmond’s founder, William Byrd), outfitted the theatre with Vitaphone, a new sound-synchronization system. However, silent movies were still the norm so they cautiously installed both options for sound. “They were on the cutting edge of this developing industry,” says Schall-Vess, “because they could see the potential of a talking film like *The Jazz Singer*.”

In the silent era, movies were indebted to the “Mighty Wurlitzer.” The pipe organ provided special effects like galloping horses, train whistles, thunder claps, and the all-important mood music, synchronized to the action on screen.

The legendary Eddie Weaver held forth at the keyboard for 20 years, in effect, the conductor of a one-man orchestra because the organ was capable of producing the sounds of all

sorts of musical instruments. Byrd audiences delighted in singing old favorites, all the while following the ball bouncing over the words on the screen.

Now patrons line up on Saturday nights to hear Bob Gulledge’s concert before the two evening shows. In the Web site’s video, Gulledge, a student of Weaver’s, speaks to the power of the organ: “The music falls from the ceiling, surrounding you; the audience feels the vibration in the floor.”

The year 1928 also played a role in the design of the Byrd’s opulent French Empire-period style. Such a lavish project — its cost \$900,000 — would never have been attempted during the following Depression years.

The 1,300-seat Byrd has been compared to European opera houses, largely due to the work of two Richmonders: architect Fred Bishop and sculptor Ferruccio Legnaioli. Unique is the cantilevered balcony, giving every seat good sound and an unobstructed view. Legnaioli was admired for his flamboyant rococo style of plasterwork that added to the decor’s “wow” factor.



Article and photos reprinted with permission from *Cooperative Living Magazine*/February 2009 issue.

Picture Palace—continued

The sumptuous surroundings inspired patrons to dress up for the show. Faded photos show moviegoers waiting outside wearing coats, ties, and hats. The Byrd's majestic spell affected the deportment of the members of the Saturday morning Mickey Mouse Club, even when they vociferously cheered or booed their favorite heroes and villains.

Robert Coulter, manager of the Byrd for 43 years, was known to run a tight ship regarding rowdiness. Stories about Coulter's ghost abound. Vigilant as always, some say he's been spotted sitting in the balcony or at the back doors, checking on the locks.

Evening fare included a newsreel, a cartoon, a comedy or drama, and perhaps a travelogue. Ushers wore natty uniforms with gold braid.

To preserve the glamour for future generations, the Byrd Theatre Foundation, a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation, plans to refurbish the state and national historic landmark. Board member Bertie Selvey, who had previously been involved with TheatreVirginia before its dissolution, instantly recognized the elegant, old movie house's need of restoration. She and other dedicated fans, whom she dubbed "Byrd Watchers," have spearheaded efforts to benefit the theatre.

In recognition of her work on behalf of the theatre, James Madison University honored her with the 2008 "Be for Change" award. (Selvey is an alumna of the school.) "I had a cause," she says. "The Byrd is an endangered species."

The foundation has already achieved two major goals: It has been able to install a new roof and enter into a purchase agreement regarding the building. Future enhancements include the replacement of the auditorium's seating, a boon to the larger-framed 21st-century customer. As funds become available, the group will address a long list of needs. Among them are: electrical, plumbing and heating repairs, the updating of handicapped accessibility, modernization of bathrooms, and new carpeting. The "Mighty Wurlitzer" will have a top spot on the list. "To raise funds, we host a "Tour and Toast" party, with champagne and hors d'oeuvres, several times throughout the year," says Bertie. "It's an opportunity for people to explore the theatre, learn the history, and see a movie."

The Byrd offers second-run movies 365 evenings a year except for scheduled events, such as this year's VCU French Film Festival to be held March 27-29. Unlike the '20s when the price was 50 cents, it's still a bargain at \$1.99 a ticket. An integral part of Carytown, an eclectic shop-



ABOVE: Eddie Weaver was, at one time, the only theatre organist in the nation.

ping area, the Byrd participates in seasonal happenings like the New Year's Eve festivities that attract crowds to watch the ball "rise" on the top of the theatre's roof.

The Byrd was the venue for HBO's premiere of its television series, "John Adams." Attendees included actor and producer Tom Hanks, Paul Giamatti, who played Adams, author David McCullough, and director Tom Hooper. Hanks was so impressed by the theatre, he made a generous contribution to the foundation. To a packed house, Hanks proclaimed, "This is a great hall!"

Lawmakers Recognize The Byrd

Following the story on The Byrd, we are proud to announce the following legislation that passed in mid-February 2009:

State of VIRGINIA House Joint Resolution 862 Regular Session

Title: Resolution; Commending the Byrd Theatre.

Session Years 2008-2009

Sponsors Jennifer L. McClellan

Summary

Resolution; Commending the Byrd Theatre. Commends the Byrd Theatre on 80 years of cultural and educational services to the City of Richmond and the people of the Commonwealth.

Note, The Byrd has been a member of NATO of Virginia and Mid-Atlantic NATO as far back as our history goes. Bravo!





Taxicab Confessions:

Film Piracy Hits Home

by Steve Bochan

The worldwide motion picture industry, including foreign and domestic producers, distributors, theaters, video stores and pay-per-view operators lost \$18.2 billion in 2005 as a result of piracy.

Excerpt from
MPAA.org/
piracy_economies



Returning from Los Angeles recently after the Academy Awards, I hailed a cab at Dulles for the short ride home and had what can only be described as one of the most bizarre but timely conversations with the cab driver.

After exchanging some pleasantries, the cabbie wanted to know how I liked the movies this year so far. I told him that it was nice to see that there was something for everyone, and he smiled. "That's what I like – something for everyone."

He then opened up his glove compartment and showed me an assortment of DVDs he had of movies that were currently playing in movie theatres. "I like to offer something for everyone, too, and cheap!"

"But aren't you worried about breaking the law?" I asked, dumbfounded.

"What law? The studios make enough money. Why shouldn't the little guy make some too?"

"There's nothing wrong with making money," I told him, "but, what you're doing is actually stealing. It's film piracy, and it's illegal."

"Yeah," the cabbie shrugged, "but who am I really hurting?"

Hmmm, I thought: ever hear of *Tower Records*? but didn't bother with the root cause of the death of the record and CD business analogy thinking it might go over the driver's head. So I tried something else. "Didn't you tell me your teenaged son worked at a movie theatre, saving money for college?"

"Yeah, so?"

"Well, what you're actually doing is stealing from him – not just the movie studios."

The cabbie slowed down and turned around to look at me.

"What are you talking about? I'm not stealing from my own son. He's a good boy and works hard for the theatre. How am I stealing from him?"

I smiled. "Well, you don't think you're the only person copying and selling illegal DVDs, do you?"

"No, that's right. I'm not the only one."

"Don't you think if enough people saw a movie first on an illegal DVD they might

not bother going to the movie theatre to see it?" "Yeah, so?"

"So, if enough people stopped going to the movie theatres to see movies, don't you think one of the first things that would happen – especially in this economy – is that the movie theatres would have to start cutting back on their help by cutting hours, maybe even laying off some of the help? Maybe even laying off your son?"

"OK, I can see how that might happen – but I am only one person. What I do can't have that big an effect on what a movie theatre does."

"But what if what you do is imitated and emulated by others who see how easy it is for you to make extra money, even illegally? What if the people you sell your illegal DVDs to make more copies of the same DVD, and then sell those? Don't you see how your actions can actually cause a ripple effect on others who also might want to get in on the action?"

The cabbie rubbed his face and was obviously becoming uncomfortable with the conversation.

Taxicab Confessions....

I continued, "If your actions cause others to do the same, of course your son's hours and that of so many other hourly employees who work in movie theatres will be cut. They would have to be cut to adjust to the downturn in attendance. It would be a business decision any business owner would make if their attendance dropped. And you do see why attendance would drop if people could watch current movies on a black market DVD, right?"

The cabbie didn't answer. He just nodded.

"That's how what you're doing is stealing from your own son; the one trying to save money

for college."

He pulled over to the curb and let me out of the cab. I paid the fare and asked the driver if anything I said made any sense to him. I think it did.

He told me, "Listen, the first thing I am going to do today after work is destroy these copies of DVDs. Then the next thing I am going to do is to sit down with my son and have a good talk with him about how alert he and his friends who work at the theatre should be for anyone who comes in and looks like they might have a camcorder or small recording device. They need their jobs. They're good kids. They don't deserve to be stolen from."

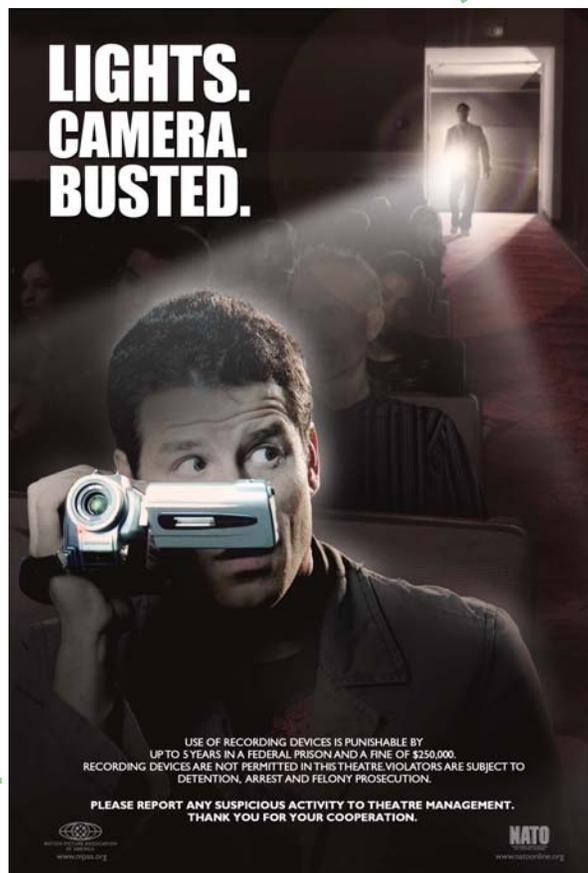
Anti-Camcording \$500.00 REWARD

The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) and the National Association of Theatre Owners (NATO) have instituted a program to reward theatre employees who identify patrons illegally camcording a movie. Employees may be eligible for a reward of up to \$500.00 for identifying a person operating a video camera or other recording device to copy a movie in a theatre, for immediately notifying the police, for stopping the camcording, and for filing a police report of the incident.

Whenever a theatre employee witnesses a person operating a video camera or other recording device to copy a movie, the employee should immediately follow the procedures called for in the company's written anticamcording policy. If your company does not have a written policy, here is a list of steps that theatre employees should take:

1. **Advise your theatre manager immediately.**
2. **Your theatre manager should call the local police immediately and provide as much information and assistance as possible.**
3. **If a police officer has not arrived within 20 minutes of the end of the movie, theatre management and/or theatre security should STOP or INTERFERE with the camcording, but NEVER touch the suspect or grab the camcorder.**
4. **Theatre management or security should politely but firmly ask the suspect to accompany them to wait in the lobby. Get the person's name and ask to see ID (copy it or write down the key information).**
5. **Get a good physical description.**
6. **Ask the suspect to hand over the device and the recording.**
7. **NEVER PUT YOURSELF OR YOUR PATRONS AT RISK. NEVER USE PHYSICAL FORCE TO STOP THE ACTIVITY OR TO DETAIN THE SUSPECT.**

If you have any questions or need assistance during the incident, call the Motion Picture Association of America's 24/7 Anti-camcording Hotline (1-800-371-9884). The MPAA has investigators on staff who can come to your location and assist you. Regardless of whether you utilize the hotline during the incident, however, you should contact the MPAA within 24 hours after a police report is filed so that they can take appropriate steps to assist local law enforcement and pursue the suspect. For further information about the reward program, contact NATO at (202) 962-0054.



Jerome Gordon Memorial Scholarship Fund

Continues to grow...



ABOVE:

February 14, 2004,
Jerry Gordon
strikes a pose



Please send future
contributions to the
**Jerome Gordon
Memorial
Scholarship Fund**
c/o Mid-Atlantic NATO
P. O. Box 1150
Brooklandville, MD
21022-1150

Shortly after our beloved Jerry died during the summer of 2007, we established the "Jerome Gordon Memorial Scholarship Fund" to honor his legacy. In 2008, we awarded \$5,000 from this fund, and are happy to announce that we have collected enough to again award 2009 scholarships for High School Seniors in the following levels:

- \$3,000 Jerome "Jerry" Gordon Memorial Scholarship
- \$2,000 Mable G. Gordon Memorial Scholarship

The winners will be announced at our annual seminar on April 29, 2009.

Please join us in thanking the following that have given generously since the inception of this program:

Alan D. Altschuler, CPA	Carlyn Wasserman Katz
J. Wayne & Mary Ann Anderson	Vicki & Robert Lanier
Barbara & Willis Barnes	George & Nancy Lecuyer
Grace Benjamin, Jayne Luttrell	Scott Levin (Indigo Red)
Lucinda & Albert Biagioni (Indigo Red)	Harvey Lindsay Commercial Real Estate
Richard & Patricia Brzeski	Stephen H. Marcus/Marcus Corporation
H. Donald & Sondra S. Busch	Emily Mooza
CATO-Connecticut Assoc. of Theatre Owners	Toby Morewitz
Betty W. Cohen	Doug Murdoch
Bruce Corwin & Family/Metropolitan Theatres	National Amusements
Ken Courter/Washington Suburban Press	NATO of Pennsylvania
Ann & Roy Craft	NATO of New Jersey
Sarah & Sam W. Craver, Jr.	Elizabeth & James O'Donnell
Cathy & Tim Dalke/Dalke's Theaters	Ted & Jim Pedas
Gerald T. Deforge	Pat & Ken Pleasant
Ellis Gibson Development Group	Selma & Marvin Posner
Grandin Theatre Foundation	Regal Entertainment Group
Andrew & Jean Greenwell	Joanne & Wm. Roos
Curry Hall & Family	Joan Roth & Mike Rowan
Hampton Marina Hotel	Dr. S. L. & Nancy Seaton
Richard & Jan Herring/Davidson Theatres	Keith Spitzer
Robert & Rebecca Holberg, Jr.	Herman Stone
Shelly Bendheim Janus	Morton G. Thalhimer, Jr.
Domenica & Howard Jernigan	Vanessa Trent
Willis G. Johnson	Peter A. Walch
Robert L. Jones	John Walker/Cinema Cafes
William F. Kartoizian	Phil Zacheretti/Phoenix Theaters



Manager/Exhibitor Relations Seminar 2009

Wednesday, April 29, 2009



Cinema Arts Theatre



9650-14 Main Street Fairfax, Virginia Phone 703-978-6853

Schedule of Events



9:30- 10:00 AM
Check-In – Welcome Gifts – Continental Breakfast

10:00 AM – 12:30 PM

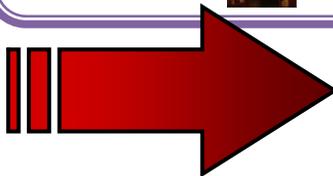
Management Seminar – Scholarship Awards

12:30 – 2:00 PM

Exhibitor Relations Show-A-Rama – Meet with Film Company Reps at your leisure – Lunch Buffet

2:00 – 4:00 PM

Trailers & Info on Summer Product – Door Prizes



PRE-REGISTER by Friday, April 24, 2009

FREE for Mid-Atlantic NATO Members

All others: \$30 Fee Paid in Advance/\$40 at Door



- Register by e-mail with your Name(s) and Mid-Atlantic Member Location to Doug@MidAtlanticNATO.com. Include a phone number.

- For those without e-mail, complete the information below and send to Mid-Atlantic NATO: by mail to P. O. Box 1150 - Brooklandville, MD 21022 or by fax to 410-252-4592

Name for Name Tag: _____ Company/Theatre: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-Mail Address (optional) for confirmation: _____

- Non-members make checks payable to Mid-Atlantic NATO and mail to address above

Need more info? Call Doug Murdoch at 410-252-5010 or 443-895-1446



Mid-Atlantic NATO
P. O. Box 1150
Brooklandville, MD 21022-1150



Check out our new look!



As spring approaches we thought the timing was perfect to introduce a fresh look to the newsletter and give it a name. Introducing: **"Attractions"**.

Yes, it has been quite some time since our last issue, and alas we are moving toward the direction of "going green" with plans to publish our newsletters quarterly instead of monthly. As always, we will continue to reach members thru phone calls and timely e-mails on important matters that may come up from time to time. Send us an e-mail if you would like to be included on our e-mail alerts.

Inside is information for our upcoming Manager/Exhibitor Relations Seminar, as well an update on Legislative Matters and Film Theft in our area. Long time member Steve Bochan tells us of his adventures in a Taxicab, and we share an article on The Byrd theatre. Also look for the special note of thanks to all those who have given generously to the Jerome Gordon Memorial Scholarship Fund.

Check it out and give us your feedback...

If you would like to contribute towards a future issue, please send us your ideas and articles.

Thank you all for your support!

Doug Murdoch
Executive Director
Mid-Atlantic NATO

