Written by Mike Schulz
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Everyone has movies they love, but you don't often have loving feelings toward movie *houses.*

Modern cineplexes are continually giving us more – more comfort, more food and beverage options, more stereo-surround sound. But cineplexes aren't very huggable; you can admire them as venues, yet, in the end, not really have any particular feeling toward them one way or another. They exist to provide a good time, of course, but they're primarily there to deliver a product, which has the effect of making them feel a bit soulless. A cineplex is generally A Place to See Movies, and that's about it.

The Brew & View, which just closed its doors in the District of Rock Island, was special, though. I *loved* the Brew & View, and I know a lot of others who felt the same way. Even if I didn't end up liking the movie it presented, I always liked being *there*.

Devin Hansen's venue was dedicated to independent releases, which was manna from heaven for area cinephiles; even the building itself had an indie *spirit*, flaky and rumpled and intimate and just … cool. (You were also allowed to *drink* there, which made it *very* indie-cool … nothing like watching *Sideways* and matching Giamatti gulp for gulp.) The Brew & View had both the hipness of an urban, art-film theatre and the small-town warmth of what used to be called "picture shows"; being there felt like being privy to a wonderful, secret society. (*Too* secret, as it turns out.)

But what made the Brew & View, for three years, such a wonderful alternative to the cineplex experience wasn't the building or even the movies that were shown in it – it was the camaraderie you felt by being a part of its audience, even if that audience consisted merely of yourself and two or three others. (You knew that, if nothing else, your independent tastes were at least shared by the proprietor.)

For many dyed-in-the-wool movie lovers, Hansen's establishment was a safe haven, a place to escape from the cookie-cutter norm of Hollywood fare. Unlike a cineplex, where you can decide what movie you want to watch while standing in line for tickets (or sneak into another auditorium if the movie you *are* watching is boring the crap out of you), Brew & View guests were there because they wanted to catch a *particular* movie, and for someone whose tastes have always been slightly to the left of mainstream, being among others who went to the trouble of seeking out the area release that *wasn't*

being advertised 24/7 and whose stars *weren't* making the rounds on Leno and Letterman was inspiring. The Brew & View made an independent-film lover feel less alone in an ever-less-independent marketplace. It felt like it was created just for *us*.

The Brew & View was not, however, a venue for movie *purists*. Widescreen presentations, for instance, never fit properly on the B&V's screen, and it took a while for some technical problems to get ironed out; in the early months, the muddled sound made much of the dialogue in movies like *Full Frontal* and *Igby Goes Down* nearly unintelligible, and watching them took a lot of concentration.

I, for one, was willing to concentrate, because it seemed then – and still does now – a small price to pay for the opportunity to *see Full Frontal* or *Igby Goes Down* in the area. (We cinephiles are a tenacious lot; if there's a buzzed-out independent release playing in the area, we'll find a way to view it, even if, as often happens, the movie is only showing at one venue at one inconvenient time in the middle of the day.) Before the Brew & View opened, your chances of catching a foreign film or documentary or critically acclaimed indie in the area were slim, at best; Hansen not only booked the movies film fans were searching for, but booked titles you didn't even *know* you were searching for.

Here's a sampling of what the Brew & View, and *only* the Brew & View, gave area movie lovers from 2002 through 2005.

A few Oscar winners: *Bowling for Columbine, Frida, The Fog of War, The Barbarian Invasions*, and *Born Into Brothels*.

A lot more Oscar *nominees*: *Far from Heaven, The Quiet American, City of God, Winged Migration, Capturing the Friedmans, Spellbound, American Splendor, Dirty Pretty Things, Thirteen, Pieces of April, The Cooler, The Triplets of Belleville, Girl with a Pearl Earring, In America, 21 Grams, Super Size Me, Before Sunset, Being Julia*, and *A Very Long Engagement*.

In addition to *Columbine, Fog of War*, and *Born Into Brothels*, a *bunch* of documentaries: *Comedian, Lost in La Mancha, Touching the Void, This Old Cub, Metallica: Some Kind of Monster, Control Room, The Corporation, Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room, Mad Hot Ballroom, The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill*, and

A League of Ordinary Gentlemen
.

And so many more independent works, many of which have subsequently become recognizable, even beloved, titles: *Shaun of the Dead, The Station Agent, Bend It Like Beckham, Bubba ho-Tep, Real Women Have Curves, Secretary, Millions, 25th Hour, Rabbit-Proof Fence, Howl's Moving Castle, The Magdalene Sisters, Goodbye Lenin!, Owning Mahowny, Melinda & Melinda, Layer Cake, Coffee & Cigarettes*
, and
Buffalo Soldiers.

Saw them all there. Didn't *enjoy* them all, but saw them, and was glad to have done so. (And I can remember the only two movies the Brew & View debuted that I accidentally
missed – Mostly Martha
and
Ned Kelly
.)

The Brew & View isn't completely gone, of course. Much of its spirit will linger in the Rocket, where Hansen, bless his heart, will continue to book alternative cinematic fare, if less frequently than before. And we film fans will be grateful for whatever indie releases we get. (Cinephiles are adaptable; we're *used* to it being difficult to see the movies we really want to see.)

But check out that list of titles again. If you're a movie lover, I'm betting you saw a bunch of them on DVD or pay-per-view or cable. And I'm betting you would have loved sharing a few of them with an audience, on the big screen, yet somehow missed them when they were at the Brew & View. (Watching *Winged Migration* together on DVD one night, a friend asked me, "Why didn't we get this *here*?" Uh … we *did*.)

There's certainly great fun to be had in sharing a huge, thrilling Hollywood blockbuster with others, but what's underrated is the joy of *finding* a movie with others, and with the demise of the Brew & View, the chances of landing upon a buried gem have grown ever more slim.

The Quad Cities is now without a movie house devoted to independent cinema, and that's a shame.

In the meantime, though, we have great Brew & View memories.

And we have the Rocket.

I'll see you there.

I hope.