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Curating Moving Image Material

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Series Prospectus

The following proposal is addressed to Horace Bullard, owner of numerous properties in Coney Island, Brooklyn. Among these properties is the Shore Theater, a 1925 movie palace that has been closed since the 1970's. Last summer, scaffolding appeared on the building, prompting many Internet rumors about a possible revival/restoration of the space. Unfortunately, at this time no work has been done on the building, and the current Internet rumors now suggest that last summer's activity was a false alarm. This prospectus, however, assumes an imaginative scenario in which Mr. Bullard is indeed returning the building to its original condition. This restored Shore Theater would be a stage and screen venue in the heart of Coney Island's commercial district. The program I am presenting to Mr. Bullard would constitute the venue's grand re-opening weekend. As this scenario takes place at an imagined future time, the opening letter to Mr. Bullard is undated.

Dear Mr. Bullard,

Congratulations on your impressive restoration of the Shore Theater. By the end of the year, Coney Island's most magnificent venue will once again open its doors to the public. As you know, this historic 1925 space is located in the heart of the area's commercial district, and therefore has the potential to greatly effect future redevelopment Coney Island. As a center for fine film and performing arts in the city's oldest preserved movie palace, the Shore Theater can become a destination for all of New York City. Like the successful additional of KeySpan Park in 2000, the venue will be one more step towards a new, revitalized Coney Island.

Obviously, the success of the venue will no doubt relate to its historic past. In fact, the redevelopment of Coney Island depends on ventures like the Shore Theater – ventures that integrate the area's history into a progressive vision of the future. In the spirit of this integration, I offer you my proposed series for the first weekend of the re-opening of the Shore Theater – a series of films that integrate the history of the area into their presentation. Entitled “Movies at the Shore,” the series offers viewers a look at the best films shot on location in Coney Island. From the famed amusement parks to the legendary basketball courts, from 1917 to 2000, these films all live and breathe Coney Island. What better way to reopen the historic venue than with a celebration of the area's past?

Not just a collection of films, “Movies at the Shore” also puts these films in context through guest speakers and historian introductions. The goal is to make the weekend a real event, something that attracts audience members from across the city and lets them experience the atmosphere of the Shore Theater for themselves. The quicker the building's reputation grows, the better, and this program is designed to get the word out as fast as possible. Any seeming extravagance on the schedule is for that purpose only. And besides, a little extravagance is only fitting for a majestic venue like the Shore.

I hope you enjoy examining my proposal, and if you have any comments or suggestions please let me know. I look forward to hearing from you.

And, again, congratulations on a fabulous restoration.

Sincerely,

Jeff Richardson

Movies at the Shore:

The Grand Re-Opening of Coney Island's Shore Theater



Schedule:

Friday: 7:00pm

- Opening Remarks by Brooklyn Borough president Marty Markowitz
- Film Introduction by Coney Island USA director Dick D. Zigun
- The Little Fugitive (1953)

Friday: 10:00pm

- Film introduction by director Darren Aronofsky
- Requiem for a Dream (2000)

Saturday: 7:00pm

- Film introduction by director Spike Lee
- He Got Game (1998)

Saturday: 10:00pm

- Film introduction by director Walter Hill
- The Warriors (1979)

Sunday: 3:00pm

- Film introduction by historian James L. Neibaur
- Coney Island (1917) and Speedy (1928) w/ Alloy Orchestra

Session One – Friday 7:00pm

Little Fugitive (1953)

Little Fugitive tells the story of a young boy who runs away to Coney Island for a day and a night. Filmed entirely on location, this largely unknown classic is the perfect way to kick off the rebirth of the Shore Theater. A fantastic visual record of the area, Little Fugitive effortlessly captures the wonderment of Coney Island like no film before or since. The delightful story of the film appeals to all audiences – critics and public, children and adults – making it the perfect opportunity to reacquaint all the peoples of New York with this long lost movie palace.

The first showing at the Shore Theater in three decades is an important occasion that deserves significant introduction. Opening the evening's events will be Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz. Never one to turn down a photo opportunity, Mr. Markowitz's presence should be easily obtained. His enthusiasm for the project – and the revitalization of Coney Island itself – should make for a warm, passionate introduction.

Following Mr. Markowitz, the community itself will take the stage in the form of Dick D. Zigun, director of Coney Island USA. A nonprofit group dedicated to preserving popular art forms and presentations, Coney Island USA also operates the Coney Island Museum. Mr. Zigun will be an excellent source for relating the Shore Theater's history and importance to the area, as well as contextualizing the 1953 Coney Island presented in Little Fugitive.

Notes on the Print: Preliminary research suggests that Little Fugitive is rarely screened publicly on 35mm. The film's distributor, Kino International, reports that no 35mm screening prints are available. The rarity of the screening will certainly be a boon for our attendance, but this fact nevertheless adds considerable cost to our budget, as a new print will have to be paid for. The film's negative is in the possession of the filmmaker's daughter, Mary Engel, and the Museum of Modern Art has already done preservation work.



Session Two – Friday 10:00pm

Requiem for a Dream (2000)

A very different version of Coney Island is on display in this modern classic. Set and filmed entirely in Coney Island, Requiem for a Dream tells the story of four connected characters all viciously battling drug addiction. Perfect for the late night crowd, this dark, stylish film has been enjoying popular midnight screenings across the country since it was released in 2000. The film's drug-fueled visions of Coney Island aren't likely to be forgotten by anyone who has experienced this significant piece of cinema.

Introducing the film with be director and Coney Island native Darren Aronofsky. The presence of this hometown talent will certainly be a major draw for many in the community, as well as for numerous film buffs throughout the city. Mr. Aronofsky can not only relate his experience creating the film, but also his memories of the area and the changes it has gone through.

Notes on the Print: Requiem for a Dream was produced by Artisan Entertainment and is currently being distributed by Lion's Gate Films. Prints of the film are available to rent and screenings across the country are still commonplace.



Session Three – Saturday 7:00pm

He Got Game (1998)

Home to Lincoln High School and numerous playground courts, Coney Island has long had a tradition of producing stellar basketball talents. The identification of the area with basketball is so strong that, when Brooklyn-raised filmmaker and resident Knicks fan Spike Lee decided to make a film about the game, he set it in Coney Island. Starring Denzel Washington and real life NBA-star Ray Allen, He Got Game is a tribute to the sport of basketball, as well as a critique of the system its players find themselves in. Washington plays Allen's father, a convict promised a reduced sentence if he can convince his estranged son to enroll at the governor's alma mater.

Preceding the screening will be an introduction by Spike Lee. Mr. Lee is a well-known figure, not just in the film world but also throughout the whole city of New York. His appearance is sure to generate a great deal of publicity for the entire program and the Shore Theater in general, though his price tag will obviously be steeper than others. The experience is sure to be worth it, however, as Mr. Lee can personally share his basketball drama with the neighborhood that inspired it.

Notes on the Print: He Got Game was distributed by Buena Vista Entertainment and 35mm prints are currently available to rent.



Session Four: Saturday 10:00pm

The Warriors (1979)

No retrospective of Coney Island films would be complete without The Warriors, a cult classic whose popularity is increasing exponentially with the recent release of a video game based on the film. There is even industry buzz about a possible remake in the works. The Warriors tells the comic book story of a leather vest-clad gang from Coney Island who must battle their way home from the Bronx after they are framed for the murder of a New York City gang lord. While the majority of the film doesn't take place in Coney Island, the characters carry their Coney Island pride with them throughout the city. And the memorable finale of the film takes us through Coney Island's deserted amusement parks and out onto the shore. Perfect for a late night crowd, The Warriors deserves to finally be shown at a Coney Island movie palace.

Preceding the film will be an introduction by director Walter Hill. Hill is respected veteran of the film industry who is still working today, well into his 60's. Always proud of his work on The Warriors, Hill will provide an excellent lead-in to the film. And his presence is sure to attract the film's cult followers, who by now are used to the film's frequent screenings and may need extra incentive to make the trip to south Brooklyn.

Notes on the Print: The Warriors was distributed by Paramount. Its recent surge in popularity has made 35mm prints readily available for rental from Paramount Repertory.



Session Five: Sunday 3:00pm

Coney Island (1917) and Speedy (1928)

The Shore Theater was built in 1925, four years before movies learned to talk, and so it's only appropriate that the building's grand re-opening feature some silent classics. Coney Island is a Fatty Arbuckle short that predates the theater itself. Costarring a then up-and-coming Buster Keaton, the film covers a madcap day at the amusement park as Arbuckle chases woman and dresses in drag. Speedy is a Harold Lloyd vehicle that, while not confined to Coney Island, has a memorable, extended sequence in which Lloyd takes a date to the shore. Perfectly paired, both films feature famous masters of silent comedy and are a perfect afternoon treat for the whole family. But the real draw of these pictures is their historical record of Coney Island in its heyday. The sights of old amusements and pristine beaches are eye candy for anyone interested in the area. Parents, film geeks, and history buffs take notice: Harold and Fatty and coming back to the Shore.

Preceding the afternoon screening will be a short introduction by historian James L. Neibaur, author of a recent book on the films of Fatty Arbuckle and Buster Keaton. Without going on so long as to bore the children, Neibaur will setup the background of the silent stars, as well as the viewing of silent films in general for those unfamiliar with the experience.

Both silents will be accompanied by live music from the Alloy Orchestra, a Massachusetts-based trio who tour the country playing original scores to silent films. Luckily, the Alloy Orchestra has already written scores for both films, having even played them in New York City's Lincoln Center as recently as 2001. This screening, however, will finally bring the performance to the shores of Coney Island itself, where the movies were filmed so many years ago.

Notes on the Prints: Speedy has been completely restored by the UCLA Film and Television Archive, and its nitrate archival copy is in their vaults. UCLA also has a conservation copy of Coney Island. Both films are available through Kino International.



Prospective Budget:

Films:

- <u>The Little Fugitive</u>	
New 35mm Print	5,000
- <u>Requiem for a Dream</u>	
35mm Print Rental	300
- <u>He Got Game</u>	
35mm Print Rental	300
- <u>The Warriors</u>	
35mm Print Rental	250
- <u>Coney Island</u>	
35mm Print Rental	500
- <u>Speedy</u>	
35mm Print Rental	500

Speakers:

- <u>Marty Markowitz (no fee)</u>	0
- <u>Dick D. Zigun</u>	
Honoraria	300
- <u>Darren Aronofsky</u>	
Honoraria	1,000
Travel	1,000
- <u>Spike Lee</u>	
Honoraria	8,000
- <u>Walter Hill</u>	
Honoraria	4,000
Travel	1,000
- <u>James L. Neibaur</u>	
Honoraria	500
Travel	800

Musicians:

Alloy Orchestra	8,000
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Total Estimated Budget: 31,450

Filmography

Coney Island (1917, silent, 24 mins., b&w, 35mm)

Production Company: Comicque Film Corp.

Distributor: Paramount

Director/Writer: Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle

Camera: George Peters

Editing: Herbert Warren

Cast: Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle, Buster Keaton, Agnes Neilson

Conservation copy held by UCLA Film and Television Archive

He Got Game (1998, sound, 136 mins., color, 35mm)

Production Company: 40 Acres and a Mule

Distributor: Buena Vista

Director/Writer: Spike Lee

Cinematography: Ellen Kuras and Malik Sayeed

Editing: Barry Alexander Brown

Cast: Denzel Washington, Ray Allen, John Turturro

Little Fugitive (1953, sound, 80 mins., b&w, 35mm)

Production Company: Little Fugitive Production Company

Distributor: Joseph Burstyn, Inc.

Director/Writer: Ray Ashley, Morris Engel, and Ruth Orkin

Cinematography: Morris Engel

Editing: Ruth Orkin, Lester Troob

Cast: Richie Andrusco, Richard Brewster, Winifred Cushing

Negatives held by Mary Engel

Restoration work by the Museum of Modern Art

Speedy (1928, silent, 86 mins., b&w, 35mm)

Production Company: The Harold Lloyd Corporation

Distributor: Paramount

Director: Ted Wilde

Writer: John Grey, J.A. Howe, Lex Neal, and Howard Emmett Rogers

Cinematography: Walter Lundin

Editing: Carl Himm

Cast: Harold Lloyd, Ann Christy, Bert Woodruff

Nitrate archival copy held by UCLA Film and Television Archive

Requiem for a Dream (2000, sound, 102 mins., color, 35mm)

Production Company: Artisan

Distributor: Lion's Gate Films

Director: Darren Aronofsky

Writer: Darren Aronofsky and Hubert Selby Jr.

Cinematography: Matthew Libatique

Editing: Jay Rabinowitz

Cast: Ellen Burstyn, Jared Leto, Jennifer Connelly

The Warriors (1979, sound, 93 mins., color, 35mm)

Production Company: Paramount

Distributor: Paramount

Director: Walter Hill

Writer: David Shaber and Walter Hill

Cinematography: Andrew Laszlo

Editing: David Holden

Cast: Michael Beck, James Remay, Dorsey Wright