

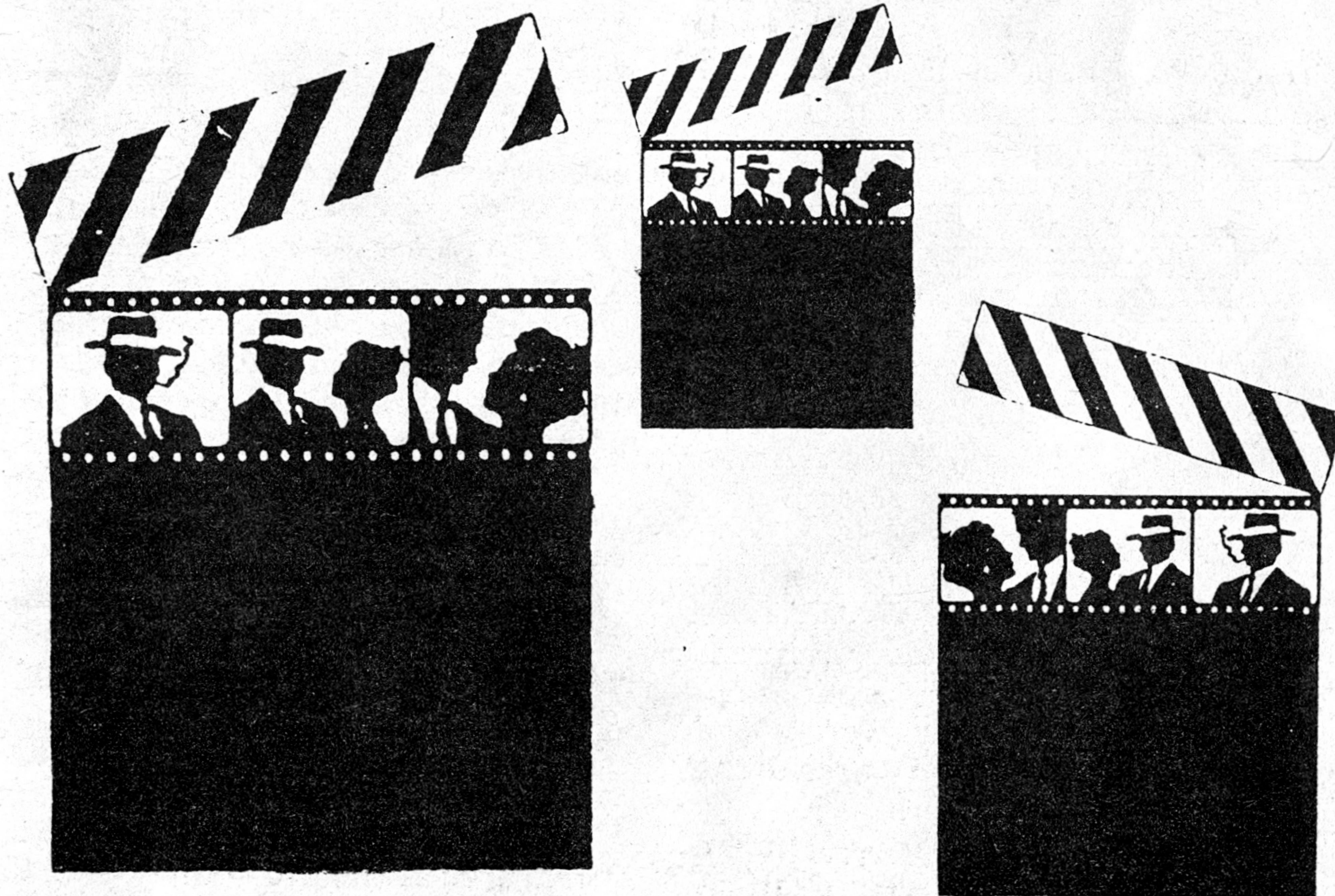
January Film Festival could lead to bigger, better things, planners say

by John Pantalone

It won't remind anyone of Cannes. It won't even make anyone forget Boston. But next month the city of Newport will plant the seed for what could become a full-fledged film festival before the end of this decade.

What started out as a small, off-season marketing idea at the Newport County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) has been picked up by two members of the Newport Cultural Commission as a short-term project with a long-term future. The first annual Newport Film Festival will make a modest offering in the coldest month of the year, but George Marshall and Philip Baskin hope this will be the first small step in a larger plan to bring a genuine film festival to Newport.

"This just happened to be something we have been thinking about for quite awhile, and when we heard that the CVB was planning a January film festival, we offered to help organize it," Marshall explained.



begin to build a foundation for a

done by Providence's Trinity Reper-

event could be used as a prototype for a larger endeavor. "A first rate film festival would appeal to locals and to people who would travel in to Newport to participate," he said. "It would be good for local commerce and for the city's image."

"It's the kind of event that would require major sponsorship, however. A big film festival could cost up to \$2.5 million to run, but the economic benefits of it in terms of visitors, spending and prestige would go way beyond that cost factor."

Anyone who has questions about the January festival should call Kathryn Godek at the CVB, 849-8048. Film and video artists who are interested in screening their work should write to the Newport Cultural Commission, c/o Mayor's Office, Newport City Hall, Broadway, Newport, 02840.

In later issues of *Newport This Week*, more details about the Film Festival schedule will be provided.

Small works by local artists at Spring Bull

Newport's Spring Bull Studio opens the holiday season's "Small Works" show with a reception on Saturday, December 12, from 5 to 7 p.m. This open gallery exhibition of

He and Baskin are looking at this first effort in a similar vein to the CVB's original plan, which was to encourage local residents to go out to the movies in January and to patronize local shops and restaurants in the bargain. The CVB had been thinking about getting restaurants and other locations to screen films, but with a short planning window available not much has happened on that front.

Instead, Marshall and Baskin have been coordinating a film festival with a local flavor. They'll schedule a series of Sunday screenings for children through the month at the Newport Harbor Center, and they also are planning a local filmmakers night at the Harbor Center toward the end of the month. They're inviting local film and video artists to submit work, and if there's an abundance of material they'll make selections "with fairness to everyone in mind," said Marshall.

He and Baskin have their eyes on a larger prize down the line. This summer they're planning a Japanese Film Festival to coincide with the Black Ships Festival, and they'll screen the films at the Newport Casino Theatre. They have the support and cooperation of the Japan-America Society for that, and they are working under the auspices of the Newport Cultural Commission, which is the city's officially appointed arts and cultural advisory body.

"Our aim with these activities is to

major international film festival on the order of Seattle, San Francisco, Montreal or Chicago," Marshall said. "We think it can be done here in the late spring or early summer, and we think it will enhance the city's image greatly as a cultural and entertainment center."

As for the January Film Festival, Marshall and Baskin intend to include video screenings at the Newport Public Library and perhaps the Seamen's Church Institute's new Green Galley Coffeehouse. They said the schedule of video screenings would be completed this month and they've already made contact with local filmmakers.

"We've got area children going through film catalogues to make selections for the children's screenings," Marshall said. "Our whole plan for this year is to make modest inroads to set the standard for bigger and better things. We're keeping it family oriented, and we want to emphasize that there is a lot of local talent here that is more recognized outside of the area than it is recognized locally."

For the video screenings Marshall will make a series of his own cable access program, "Between Takes," available at the library, featuring interviews with film and television personalities. (He'll also show the programs on Cable Channel 57 on Friday nights at 8:30.) They're also planning to show stage productions

tory Co. for the National Public Television's "Theatre in America" series, including work that won an Emmy Award.

Meanwhile, if local restaurants, hotels and other locations want to get in on the act, they can arrange to screen films themselves, said Evan Smith, director of tourism at the CVB. "We're going to assist with promotion and advertising as we do for all such projects," Smith said. "We conceived of this from the outset as a way of getting people out of their homes in the winter and out enjoying themselves.

"We'll be working with the local movie theatres on special programs and promotions. It's all designed to keep commercial activity going in the city during the slow month of January. We're trying to accomplish with this the same thing we did with the February Winter Festival, which started out very small and has grown to over 100 events."

As for the larger picture of an international film festival being developed in Newport, Marshall and Baskin are not naive about the required resources. "It's the kind of thing that would need full time staff," Baskin said. "It will take time to develop, but we think it can be done."

Marshall, who founded Flickers—the Newport Film Society in the early 80s and screened over 450 films in various sites around town until the late 80s, said the January

prints, paintings, photographs, collage, sculpture, original greeting cards, and mixed media pieces is a chance for the viewing public to see a broad range of work priced under \$100 by a variety of local artists.

Aside from the show's opening on Saturday night, Spring Bull Studio will also participate in the "Spring Street Stroll" scheduled for Friday evening from 6 to 9 as well as the "Christmas in Newport" Gallery Walk on Sunday afternoon from 12 to 5. Refreshments will be served during all three of this weekend's events.

The final deadline for contributing artists to bring work to the gallery is 7 p.m., December 10.

Ted Tihansky's portrait studio work will also be on display and appointments for portrait sittings at holiday prices are available through the end of next week. For further information, call 849-9166.

