

OAK BAY NEWS

A NEWS GROUP PUBLICATION



CAN YOU DO THE CAN CAN?

The Oak Bay High Community Theatre dancers can.

ARTS, 10

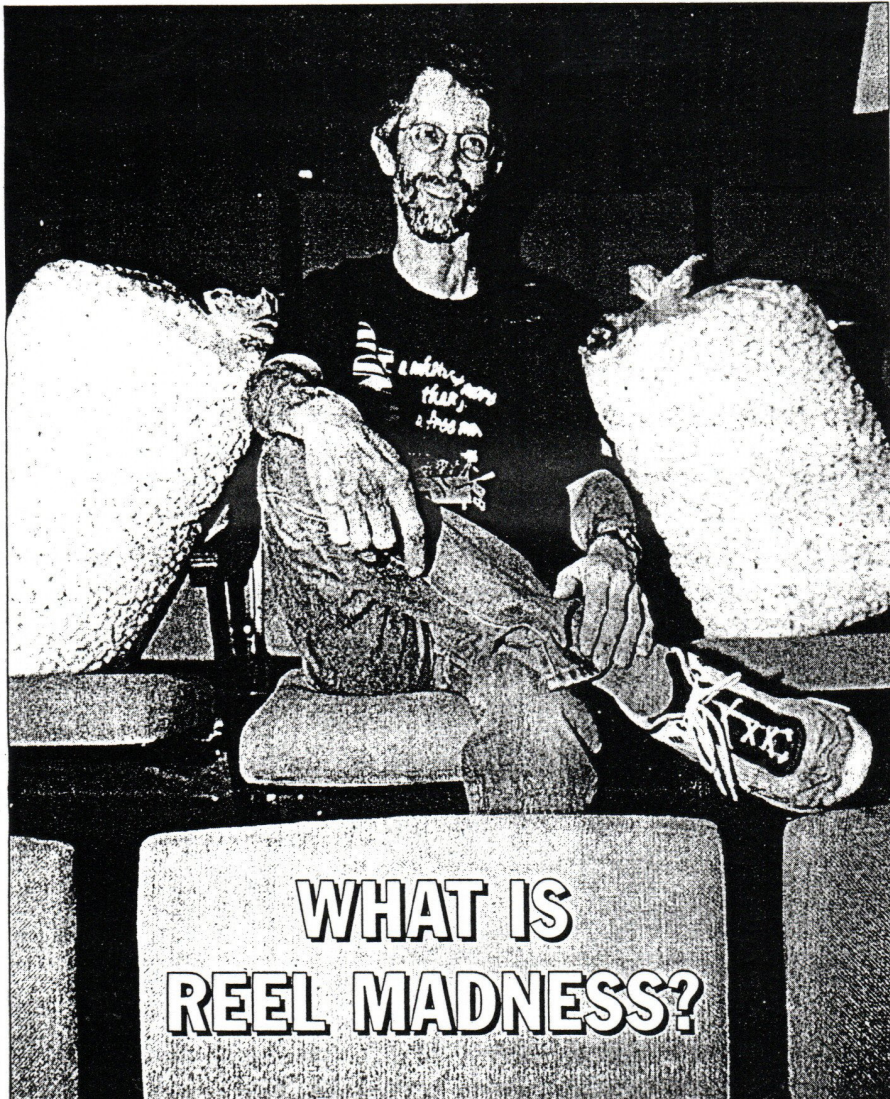
CASTAWAY-WANDERERS STUMBLE AGAIN

Saturday's loss to UVic was their fourth in a row.

SPORTS, 11



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SHARON TIFFIN/OAK BAY NEWS

Flanked by two enormous bags of popcorn, Reel Madness Film Festival guru Bruce Saunders gets ready for some serious movie watching at the Eric Martin Pavilion Theatre. His festival runs through March 10.

Films that speak to the mind

■ Fifth Reel Madness Film Festival focuses the lens on the problem of addiction

By Elianna Lev
News staff reporter

For Bruce Saunders, the most frustrating aspect of organizing a two-week film festival is putting together the posters. "Getting the damn poster done drives me crazy," he laughs. However, as the director of the fifth annual Reel Madness Film Festival, Saunders' job involves a lot more than just making sure the graphics are the right size on his promotional material. His biggest challenge is to prove that entertainment is an effective way to deal with and learn about mental illness. "The big point I'm trying to make to the medical health community is that this is a way of educating people, rather than holding focus groups and workshops that are only for the people who attend," the Oak Bay resident explains. He also wants to make the Eric Martin Pavilion more accessible to the community. It contains the little theatre where most of the festival's movies will be screened and it's the same building in which Saunders was once a patient. A gardener by profession, the 52-year-old Saunders has been battling manic depression for more than a decade and has been hospitalized twice for treatment. "People are realizing it's not as scary or uncomfortable as they think it is," he says quite candidly of the facility. The Eric Martin Pavilion has helped Saunders in another way as well. He's been showing free movies there for 10 years as part of the popular Movie Monday series. Second-run films are

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Reel Madness film festival looks at addictions

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screened for free every Monday night at 6:30 p.m. Each year, the Reel Madness festival tries to focus on a particular theme related to mental health. This year the issue is addiction, says Saunders, which seems to relate to a lot of problems that society faces, particularly in Victoria. "There's such a strong need for discussion on addictions in Victoria," Saunders explains. "We need to understand the addiction issues in the downtown area." The festival features a mix of short films, feature

films and documentaries. From *Grief To Action* tells the story of families living in Vancouver's upscale Kerrisdale neighbourhood who have children addicted to heroin. The film documents the struggles and the progress of the families and their children over a 17-month period. Filmmaker Nijole Kuzmickas made the film as a reaction to the overdose death of a 20-year-old she mentored through the Big Sisters program. Back for the second time is *rollercoaster*, a film about suicide and youth at risk. Filmmaker Scott Smith will be on hand for a question and answer pe-

rience. Themes from past years' festivals have included creativity, art and family issues. Saunders believes that the films will open a dialogue and influence positive change. Hopefully, those who have the power to promote the most change — the people within the medical community — will watch them. "These films are a strong teaching tool and learning tool," he says. "However, they aren't being seen by the people who should be seeing them — yet." Reel Madness is on now through March 10. For more information, log onto the Internet at www.is