

base and a soft, rolling terrain. But Hollywood's pastoral treatment of Iowa hardly does justice to the rich complexities of Iowa and its people, yesterday or today.

Films about contemporary Iowa and historical Iowa could dramatize far more diverse experiences, but the nation does not seem to want to hear those stories. Iowa's public image seems trapped in a cinematic time capsule. Perhaps there is a danger that even we Iowans will cling to the popular pastoral myth, romanticizing our past, denying our problems, and disregarding our options. Perhaps we Iowans should use these Hollywood films as a spark for our own thoughtful discussions about Iowa's identity on the silver screen. ❖

Marty Knepper is professor of English and John Lawrence is emeritus professor of philosophy at Morningside College in Sioux City, where they have taught courses in American popular culture together. Both have written about popular culture and film and have participated in Humanities Iowa programs around the state.

NOTE ON SOURCES

The following books on Iowa and midwestern cultural history proved essential: Clarence Andrews, *A Literary History of Iowa* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1972); Emanuel Levy, *Small Town America in Film: The Decline and Fall of a Community* (New York: Continuum, 1991); Thomas Morain, ed., *Family Reunion: Essays on Iowa* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1995); Dorothy Schwieder, *Iowa: The Middle Land* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1996); and James R. Shortridge, *The Middle West: Its Meaning in American Culture* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989). Shortridge is also essential reading on midwestern pastoralism. For a broader discussion of pastoralism, see Renato Poggioli, *The Oaten Flute: Essays on Pastoral Poetry and the Pastoral Ideal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975). Marty Knepper interviewed Stefanie Fuller, formerly of the Winterset Chamber of Commerce, on June 2, 1998.

MAKING FILMS IN IOWA

- Iowa Film Office, Iowa Department of Economic Development, Box 4784, Des Moines, Iowa 50309 OR www.state.ia.us/film (serves filmmakers' needs on projects ranging from local commercials to feature films).
- Iowa Motion Picture Association (IMPA), Box 4784, Des Moines, IA 50306 OR www.netins.net/showcase/impa (nonprofit group involved in financing, distributing, and promoting films and video productions).
- Iowa Scriptwriters Alliance (ISA), 3812 Ingersoll Avenue, #201, Des Moines, IA 50312 (develops regional talent for screenplay ideas, treatments, and scripts).
- Donna Reed Foundation for the Performing Arts, PO Box 122, Denison, IA 51442 OR www.frii.com/donna_reed/ (summer workshops on acting, screenwriting, scriptwriting, film critique, and more).

PRESERVING FILMS IN IOWA

The American Archives of the Factual Film (Special Collections, Iowa State University) is a research center for the preservation and study of 16mm non-theatrical film (business, educational, and documentary). Write: Special Collections Dept., 403 Parks Library, ISU, Ames, Iowa 50011-2140 or call 515-294-6672.

Special Collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa, in its Iowa City center, has a small collection of historical film and video related to Iowa, and serves as a clearinghouse for researchers who are trying to locate films. SHSI, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, IA 52240 or call 319-335-3916.

If Iowans made movies about Iowa...

Ever wish that you could be a film critic, a director, or a voting member of the Motion Picture Academy? Here's your chance to participate in a state-wide conversation about films and Iowa. Please enter our "If Iowans made movies about Iowa" survey.

—Marty S. Knepper and John S. Lawrence

1. In your opinion, what images are the most common and the least common in movies with an Iowa setting? To get you started, here are a few examples. What would you add to these lists?

Frequently seen images:

Hogs and cattle
John Deere tractors
Carnivals, parades, or fairs
Small-town or working-class bars
Men in seed corn hats
Women in aprons
Covered dishes and pies
Flowered wallpaper, wooden floors, and white lace curtains
Water towers

Seldom seen images:

Skyscrapers and traffic
Malls
National franchises
Computers
Casinos
Research universities
Art centers and artists
Shelves lined with books
Cutting-edge fashion
Suburbs

2. Of these films (*State Fair*, *The Music Man*, *Country*, *Field of Dreams*, *The Bridges of Madison County*, *A Thousand Acres*, or name your own), which gives the best portrayal of Iowa or Iowans, and why? Which do you like least?

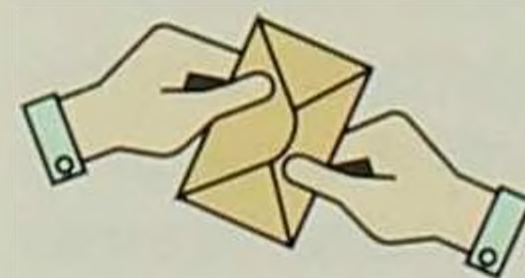


3. Now you're in the director's chair! Suppose you're a filmmaker with a huge budget and top-name stars. What would

your film portray about Iowa or Iowans? What actors would you choose? Or, if you had a chance to make a documentary, what would the topic be?

4. How does your experience with films about Iowa or Iowans affect your assessment of Hollywood's treatment of other regions of America (for example, New York, California, or Texas) or of historical events in America's past?

5. Do film images of Iowa really make a difference? Or, as they would say in Hollywood, is it just entertainment?



May I have the envelope, please?

For your convenience, these survey questions also appear on the ivory-colored mailing cover that accompanied this issue. Send your responses to any or all of the questions (along with your name, address, and daytime phone) to:

"If Iowans made movies about Iowa" survey
Attn: Editor, *Iowa Heritage Illustrated*
State Historical Society of Iowa
402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240-1806

or by email to: gswaim@blue.weeg.uiowa.edu

Watch for survey responses in an upcoming issue. —The Editor