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Local News

## Silver screen of Shreveport

The past year marked a record for Louisiana's film and television business when more than 80 major film and TV projects were filmed here, surpassing 2007's record of 56.

Film lovers can also rejoice. Last year marked the opening of the state-of-the-art Robinson Film Center of Louisiana, an exciting new venue for independent, foreign and classic film screenings in Shreveport. The Center offers two theaters as well as media education, film and media production classes and a resource facility for the burgeoning film community. On the third floor is the hip Abby Singer's Bistro with its outside balcony tables and scattered throughout are movie memorabilia from films such as Harry Potter and James Bond.

"We don't just show movies," explained Chris Jay, director of marketing and programming.

The \$4.2 million film center is located inside a renovated building on Texas Street in downtown Shreveport, across from Artspace, a multi-purpose arts center. The film center's goal was to further develop the downtown arts scene and to promote film throughout the community.

"We understood that this was a hard thing for a small city," Jay explained, adding that the money came in and the doors opened to a steady stream of customers. "When you walk out here on a Friday night and you can't find a parking spot, it's a wonderful thing."

In addition to the daily film screenings, the center offers special events, such as the Italian Film Fest, which showcased a week's worth of Italian films, panel discussions and question and answer sessions. The festival was a success, Jay said, and they sold out two screenings of *The Bicycle Thief*. Even a 91-year-old woman attended and offered her experiences on immigrating to Louisiana from Italy after watching a film on the subject.



File photo  
**The Robinson Film Center**

"This place was packed with Italians," Jay said. "That kind of magic is really happening here."

Other programming includes "Lights, Camera, Learning," a K-12 digital filmmaking and media literacy curriculum designed and taught by the Center's educational staff. "We teach kids to actively dissect media," Jay said.

Film stars show up on occasion because they are in town filming and either want to see independent, classic or foreign films or wish to speak at screenings in which they had a part, Jay explained. Oliver Stone and Val Kilmer, in town filming *W*, attended the Center's screening of *The Doors*, for instance.

"The movie stars in town love this place," Jay said.

Even small films or documentaries Jay thinks will not attract a crowd sell out. In November, he screened *Plagues & Pleasures on the Salton Sea* with director Chris Metzler and there were only three seats left.

This week the Center is showing *The Reader* starring Ralph Fiennes and Kate Winslet, *JCVD* starring Jean-Claude Van Damme and *Let the Right One In*, awarded Best Narrative Feature at the 2008 Tribeca Film Festival. Ongoing is the 2008 Salzburg Festival opera series with January featuring *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Classic films shown recently included *Rear Window*, *White Christmas*, *Gone With the Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz*.

"It does look better on film," Jay said in defense of watching these DVD classics on the Silver Screen.

Every Friday the Center offers the popular Friday Night Freak-out! with horror and suspense classics. On Jan. 16 and 17 the Center will present a special weekend Freak-Out with two showings of *My Name is Bruce*, directed by and starring Bruce Campbell.

Occasionally, the Center screens films in outside parks for the community to enjoy. With its special events, bistro, memorabilia and educational programming, the Robinson Center offers much more than a Saturday afternoon matinee.

"The media isolates us," he said. "We wanted to create a place where media unites us as a community."

## Want to Go?

The Robinson Film Center of Louisiana  
617 Texas St.  
Shreveport, LA 71101  
(318) 424-9090  
[www.robinsonfilmcenter.org](http://www.robinsonfilmcenter.org)

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