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May, 1982

**The Gala Premiere of
FIREFOX to benefit the
Film Preservation Fund
of
The Museum of Modern Art**

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART FILM ARCHIVE:
PRESERVATION A VITAL CONCERN

Anyone who has seen the luminous magic of a silver nitrate film flickering in a darkened theater knows where the term "silver screen" comes from. The quality and purity of light and shadow captured on silver nitrate celluloid was one of cinema's most captivating features from the birth of the art to the early fifties.

The combination of chemicals which gave the silver screen its shimmer have also caused it one of its biggest problems. Silver nitrate is unstable; it can flake to useless powder, or decompose to a sticky mess. To keep nitrate prints from deterioration requires storage with meticulous temperature and humidity controls. To bring them out of the vault and onto the screen often requires transferral of the image onto acetate safety stock, in use since the early fifties.

Transferral is expensive and time-consuming; deterioration of the original print must be offset through laboratory restoration, and the elusive beauty of the nitrate black-and-white must be matched as closely as possible through painstaking efforts to achieve perfect contrast and tones. Every transferral is a custom job.

The Museum of Modern Art's Film Archive, containing over 8,000 films, has been active in film preservation since its inception in 1935. To complete the transferral of the Archive onto safety stock, and to proceed with efforts to combat other urgent problems, such as the rapid fading of color film, MoMA has launched a campaign to raise \$6,000,000 exclusively for the Preservation Program.

The campaign will be given a gala send-off on July 14, 1982, when Firefox, starring, produced and directed by Clint Eastwood, will have its New York premiere to benefit the Film Preservation Fund.

The Firefox benefit represents the first time that MoMA, a filmmaker,
more...

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FIREFOX

and a film company, Warner Bros., Firefox's distributor, have joined together to raise funds for film preservation.

It was at Mr. Eastwood's personal request that Firefox's New York premiere benefit the Museum's Film Archive. During a visit to MoMA for a special program of his films in 1980, Mr. Eastwood became interested in the Preservation Program, and later initiated the idea of the benefit.

"The Firefox Benefit is an important opportunity to publicize the urgent need to preserve our film heritage," said Mary Lea Bandy, Director of MoMA's Film Department. "Films are deteriorating quickly, and even color films made just five years ago have begun to fade at an alarming rate. Our investment, which may seem time-consuming and costly, is a small one in the long run, and must be made."

An example of the Film Archive's ongoing effort is the preservation of D.W. Griffith's Way Down East. In addition to transferring the print to safety stock, the original color tinting is being restored. Soon MoMA audiences will be able to see Griffith's drama with much the same quality as the spectacle enjoyed by the moviegoer of 1920, and without the danger of losing the drama forever to deterioration.

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