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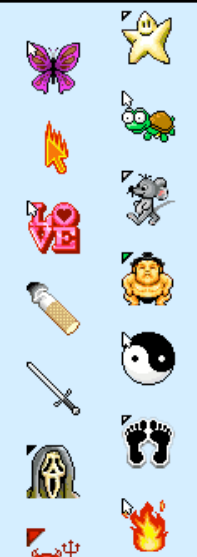
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## Life

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### MOVIES ON THE RUN

SCOTT STEEPLTON, NEWS-PRESS SENIOR WRITER

March 26, 2006 12:00 AM

Sid Ganis took the stage during the Oscars telecast and did what any self-respecting president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences would do: He led a cheer for going out to the movies.

Considering theaters are 13 percent emptier than they were three years ago, it seems only natural for the AMPAS head to do everything he can to fill those seats.

But Mr. Ganis' March 5 plea that consumers essentially give up their DVDs, video iPods and other small-screen devices and enjoy movies the old-fashioned way -- in a theater -- was a slap in the face to the growing number of people who prefer their films digital and on the run.

"That was so silly," said Constance Penley, professor of film studies at UCSB and director of the university's Center for Film, Television and New Media.

"I and everyone I know, we just thought this was retro nostalgia mongering."

Mr. Ganis, she said, rightly noted that watching a film with a bunch of other people can be a wonderful experience.

But, at a time when going to a theater means dealing with screaming kids, irritating cell phone ring tones and people who can't leave the dialogue to the actors, it's no wonder people are turning away from theaters and turning to small screens.

Instead of looking back, she said, Hollywood needs to embrace the new world.

"It's mobile, interactive, on-demand," said Ms. Penley.

Doug Bresler, a 2003 UCSB Film Studies graduate whose short-form "experiments in cartoon documentary" he calls Dooftoons are available as video podcasts at the iTunes Web site, agrees that Hollywood needs a new mind-set.

"I think that (Mr. Ganis) is concerned," Mr. Bresler said. "I think that everybody there is concerned that the future's not going to bode well for the movies."

Indeed, with Apple CEO Steve Jobs now a Walt Disney Co. board member -- thanks to the buyout by Disney of his other successful company, computer animator Pixar -- conventional wisdom says that Mr. Jobs will lead the charge for even more Disney/Pixar content being made available for mobile devices like Apple's video iPod.

"What Sid Ganis said is, 'I'm no longer in touch enough with what's going on to be president of AMPAS,' " said Shelly Palmer, chairwoman of the advanced media committee of the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences New York chapter.

No longer can the business side of Hollywood be content with seeing a movie as something that opens in theaters on a Friday, and ends up in a video store a few months later.

"If I'm a filmmaker, I'm an artist and film is my religion," Mr. Palmer said.

"But if I'm a distributor, a film ceases to be a film. It becomes content to be widely distributed and monetized in every fashion: box office, DVD, some version of Pay Per View, you may have some downloaded files.



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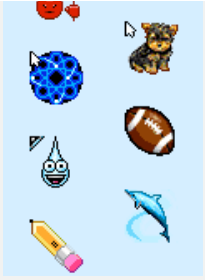
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"There's a whole list of the ways you can distribute and monetize that content," said Mr. Palmer.

Some films go straight to video or DVD, but for those that do well at the box office, all that ancillary monetizing typically takes a while.

Steven Soderbergh ("sex, lies & videotape") is compressing that time exponentially for six films he's directing for HDNet, shooting in high-definition digital and releasing them simultaneously in theaters, on DVD and on cable TV.

The first, "Bubble," opened in theaters and was shown on HDNet Movies on Jan. 27. The following Tuesday, Magnolia Home Entertainment released the DVD.

Mr. Soderbergh's Web site touts the experiment as the first time "consumers will truly have their choice of how they want to watch a new film."

"Steven Soderbergh has challenged Hollywood with multiplatform distribution of 'Bubble,' " said Ms. Penley, the UCSB professor. "The time between theatrical release and DVD release is getting shorter and shorter."

At the same time, people are trading moviegoing for other kicks.

"I think that there are many types of entertainment experiences and movies are just one of them," said Dooftoons' Mr. Bresler. "My girlfriend is very young, 18, and she's my greatest resource into the new generation of kids.

"She tells me, along with all of her friends, that movies are boring. They would never go to a movie by themselves. The way that they entertain themselves is by surfing the Internet, finding this short, wacky content, choosing when they see it and where they see it, and they don't have to wait two hours to see the whole thing.

"They all have video iPods, and they all figure out ways to get video off the Net and onto their iPods," he added. "You can find a lot of content for \$1.99. For 40 minutes of content that's a pretty good deal."

While multiplatform distribution might foreshadow a lot of gloom for going to the movies, Constance Penley says it doesn't necessarily spell doom.

"They said the same thing about going to sound," she said.

"They said the same thing about going to CinemaScope," a process developed in the 1920s that allowed for widescreen projection.

"Even with all this multiplatform distribution, there's still going to be event movies, date movies," said Ms. Penley.

"And there will still be movies that just have to be seen on the big screen."

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