

Help save the Brattle

It's time to start thinking, like George Bailey did about himself in "It's a Wonderful Life," what it would be like if the Brattle Theatre never existed.

It's probable that most of us never would have had the opportunity to see films starring Humphrey Bogart or directed by Alfred Hitchcock on a big screen. Cocteau's "La Belle et la bete?" Doubtful. Truffaut's "Jules et Jim?" Unlikely. On a more contemporary note, no one else would have presented Peter Jackson's odd documentary "Forgotten Silver" or Don Coscarelli's offbeat "Bubba Ho-tep," in which Bruce Campbell plays Elvis Presley, and Ossie Davis plays JFK.

Thankfully, it has existed for five decades, and still does ... for now.

The Brattle is in financial trouble. A major debt for renovations remains unpaid, fewer people are coming to see old movies now that they're on DVD and television screens are getting cheaper and bigger. The theater still hasn't rebounded from the day, six months after it was taken over by Ned Hinkle and Ivy Moylan, that terrorists flew airplanes into American buildings and attendance for all things cultural declined.

Business is better now, but the theater is still deep in the hole. A couple of months ago, word was released that if the Brattle didn't raise \$400,000 by year's end, there was a good chance they would be the next local nonprofit to go under.

Film aficionados sent checks, benefits were conducted, and more are still in the planning. But as of earlier this week, only \$100,000 had been raised. On Wednesday, Hinkle said it's probable that, through the help of a group of nonprofessional fund-raisers that continues to amaze them, "We'll get to \$200,000 by the end of the year."

This is an essential Cambridge institution which needs and deserves your support to keep it operating. Whether you would like to thank the Brattle for being turned on to Akira Kurosawa or the Marx Brothers, or for just being an vital part of our city's cultural life, we urge you to contribute.

Send your donation to Brattle Film Foundation, 40 Brattle St., Cambridge, MA 02138. Attn. Ivy Moylan. Credit cards can be used by calling the Brattle office: 617-876-8021.