



March 30, 2007

It's best to pay cash for your ticket

In Debt We Trust, a documentary that features Rochester Institute of Technology professor Robert D. Manning, debuts locally tonight at The Little Theatre.

Much of the film was shot at Rochester Institute of Technology, and Manning's book, *Credit Card Nation*, was a primary source.

So what's the crux of the film? If you're paying interest because you're behind each month on your credit card payments, you're not alone — by a long shot.

As directed by Danny Schecter, the unsettling *In Debt We Trust* examines how America has become increasingly a consumer society whose consumption depends on the running up of credit card bills. As the film states, consumers who pay off credit cards in full each month are considered "dead beats" by the banks because there's no opportunity for them to make interest. Instead, they encourage and are structured for consumers to pay off bills only partially, thereby sliding into exorbitant interest rates.

Indeed, the film — which debuted last June at the Nantucket Film Festival — is a sometimes-fascinating and frightening look at what it calls "America before the bubble bursts." (But be warned: If financial discussions make your eyes glaze over, you may believe, as I do, that the film's points could have been made in a tighter, hourlong production for PBS.)

Manning, whose book established him as one of the most outspoken critics of the country's consumer spending and lending practices, will appear after the 7 p.m. screening at the Little Theatre tonight for a question-and-answer session.
