

Rubinstein in Life and on the Screen

By JOHN ROCKWELL

"I love to be at a performance where I don't have to play the piano," said Arthur Rubinstein to an admiring crowd.

The occasion was the 8 P.M. showing yesterday at the Festival Theater of "Love of Life," a documentary movie about the 89-year-old pianist at its premiere.

"We just found out two days ago that he was coming tonight explained Daniel Talbot, president of New Yorker Films, which is distributing the docu-

mentary. "It was his idea to come. It's been a big fantasy of his to get this film up on a screen before he dies."

The 550-seat theater wasn't full, but to judge from the fervor of the fans who were there, it would have been had more people known that Mr. Rubinstein was coming.

Mr. Rubinstein who said afterwards that he had seen the film three times already, already, arrived by limousine at 7:40, and was immediately caught up in a press of ad-

mirers. Somebody worried that he looked frail, but to this observer he seemed lively and alert indeed.

He was handed a bouquet by a representative of New Yorker Films, chatted amicably in French with François Reichenbach, the film's director, and dealt graciously with even the most pushy fans. "Yes I can do it," he said politely but firmly to a particularly insistent autograph-hunter. "But I won't."

During the film, the audience applauded performances and on-screen remarks continuously, in deference to Mr. Rubinstein's presence. Afterwards, he spent a good 15 minutes chatting with admirers as he moved slowly out of the theater.

Carol Lubetkin, a pianist who lives in Oberlin, Ohio, and teaches in Cleveland, booked space on a 5 P.M. flight to La Guardia Airport. "I heard Horowitz in Cleveland and in New York last year," she said, "but I missed Rubinstein. My plane was held up in a holding pattern over New Jersey, but I made it."

If most of those at the theater had come to see Mr. Rubinstein as well as the film, there were some who had no idea the pianist was to be there.

"We just saw the movie twice and we're staying to see it a third time," said John Hendrickson, who was with Judy Stillman. Both study piano at the Juilliard School of Music. "I just now heard this rumor that he was coming tonight, but we would have seen the movie this many times anyway. We just worship him."