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August 2022

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Boxoffice Pro has served as the official publication of the National Association of Theatre Owners (NATO) since 2007. As part of this partnership, Boxoffice Pro is proud to feature exclusive columns from NATO while retaining full editorial freedom throughout its pages. As such, the views expressed in Boxoffice Pro reflect neither a stance nor an endorsement from the National Association of Theatre Owners.

Due to Covid-19, Boxoffice Pro will be adjusting its publishing schedule. For any further questions or updates regarding your subscription, please do not hesitate to contact our customer service department at boxoffice@cambeywest.com.



Boxoffice Pro (ISSN 0006-8527), Volume 158, Number 5, August 2022. Boxoffice Pro is published by Box Office Media LLC, 63 Copps Hill Road, Ridgefield, CT USA 06877.

corporate@boxoffice.com. www.boxoffice.com. Basic annual subscription rate is \$75.00. Periodicals postage paid at Beverly Hills, CA, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send all UAA to CFS. NON-POSTAL AND MILITARY FACILITIES: send address corrections to Boxoffice Pro, P.O. Box 215, Congers, NY 10920. © Copyright 2022. Box Office Media LLC. All rights reserved. SUBSCRIPTIONS: Boxoffice Pro, P.O. Box 215, Congers, NY 10920 / boxoffice@cambeywest.com. 833-435-8093 (Toll-Free), 845-450-5212 (Local). Box Office Pro is a registered trademark of Box Office Media LLC. (Jan-Dec 2021) 2,566 / Print - 2,101 / Digital - 465

GETTING BACK IN THE GROOVE

→ We're now four months out from April 2022's CinemaCon—a whirlwind of meetings, parties, panels, and, of course, glimpses at a slate of movies that's already begun to draw moviegoers off their sofas, out of the summer heat, and into those sweet, air-conditioned theaters. (Looking at you, *Top Gun: Maverick*.) Though a scaled-down, in-person CinemaCon was held in 2021, this year's iteration felt like a return to form. We, as an industry, have proved that we still have the knack for running around Caesars Palace, reconnecting with colleagues, and trying to fit *just one more* meeting into our already overpacked schedules.

It was fun, and it was important, but oh God, was it exhausting! With CinemaCon behind us, we can now revisit some of the smaller, more focused trade shows that haven't been able to take place in person for a solid two years. Later in the year there's ShowSouth, CineShow, the Geneva Convention, ShowEast, and CineAsia. But—and forgive the editorializing—the one I am personally looking forward to attending most is the NAC Concession and Hospitality Expo, taking place July 26–29 in Orlando, Florida. No undue favoritism here. I just like snacks.

Malco Theatres' Larry Etter returns to the pages of BOXOFFICE PRO in this issue with a welcome to the NAC Expo; his in-depth knowledge of the concessions industry is also reflected in this issue's "The Seven Cues of Buyer Confidence," which draws from Etter's CinemaCon presentation. (It was at 7:30 in the morning on the show's final day—we understand if you were recovering.) Editorial Director Daniel Loria interviews Marcus Theatres' Rob Novak, winner of this year's Bert Nathan Memorial Award. Keeping with the concessions theme, Loria also has

an overview of some innovative cinema initiatives centered around the grand pooh-bah of movie theater concessions: popcorn. Elsewhere in this issue, you'll find the blend of industry coverage, film features, and in-depth interviews you've come to expect from BOXOFFICE PRO throughout our 102-year history. In this issue we even get a bit meta, interviewing the director of a film about—wait for it—drive-in theaters.

As an industry, we have not yet reached our "new normal." Ticket sales are up, and the release schedule is stable, but we *are* still in the midst of a global crisis, and we have the supply chain issues to prove it. But the NAC Expo represents a step forward—or, maybe, *back*—to a time with a robust trade show schedule, giving friends and colleagues across the industry ample time to relax, party, and connect.

Oh—and eat lots of popcorn. 🍿

Rebecca Pahle
Deputy Editor, BOXOFFICE PRO

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INDUSTRY



“We weren’t interested in becoming rich on any of our films. If we felt a film was worthwhile, we wanted it to be given a chance to find its audience.”

Industry Insiders, p. 12

WELCOME TO THE TEAM

Getting To Know Two New Members of the NATO and Cinema Foundation Teams

BY PHIL CONTRINO

Top: Bryan Braunlich
Bottom: Lou DiGioia



➔ On June 1, Bryan Braunlich and Lou DiGioia officially started their new jobs with the Cinema Foundation and NATO, respectively.

As executive director of the Cinema Foundation, Braunlich will be responsible for donor development and fundraising, as well as developing and overseeing programming and staff to support the foundation's key priorities, including cinema careers, education and diversity, moviegoing promotion and creative community involvement, the Center for Innovation and Technology, industry data and research, and industry charities.

Braunlich was most recently executive director of the Wheeling Symphony Orchestra in West Virginia, where he oversaw development and programming initiatives. Prior to that role, he was director of marketing and communications and then general manager of the orchestra. He is a graduate of California State University, Fullerton.

DiGioia will serve as NATO's chief financial officer, which means he will oversee and coordinate the financial operations of NATO, the Cinema Foundation, CinemaCon, and the NATOPAC. The increasing size, scope, and reach of NATO's activities led to the hiring of the organization's first CFO.

DiGioia is a graduate of Georgetown University, with an MBA from George Mason University and a certificate in effective management of nonprofit organizations from Harvard Business School. He was most recently chief operating officer of the Colorectal Cancer Alliance. Prior to that position he also served as executive director of Distributive Education Clubs of America and the MathCounts Foundation.

I caught up with Bryan and Lou for this issue to ask them a few questions so that the industry can get to know them a little better.

What is your favorite movie of all time? Why?

Bryan Braunlich: *Big Fish*. I am a huge fan of Tim Burton. I remember crying at the end of the movie when I saw it in the theater. It's a beautiful story that struck a chord in me, and whenever I see it I still cry. I love how movies can do that.

Lou DiGioia: *Avengers: Endgame*. The whole Marvel series has been something my son and I have bonded over. When

Endgame came out, it was the only time I took him out of school early so we could rewatch *Infinity War* and then make it to the theater on time for the premiere of *Endgame*. It was one of the best days of my life!

You both got your first taste of the exhibition world by attending CinemaCon this year. What did you take away from that experience?

Braunlich: I come from the nonprofit arts world, and I thought I knew people [who are] passionate about their work. This industry is filled with people who love what they do and how it connects each of us together. I met so many people who understand that it is a community that brings the theatrical experience to everyone's hometown, and that is an incredible thing. I am so excited to be a part of it.

DiGioia: The biggest takeaway for me was that the passion of the members and the sense of community was palpable during my time at CinemaCon. I don't think you get that with every association, but I felt it with NATO.

What excites you the most about your new role?

Braunlich: The Cinema Foundation at its heart will connect people. I cannot wait to start having conversations with as many people as possible to find out how we can help them further the theatrical cinematic experience. Through these discussions, we will be building a foundation for investing in the future of this industry. I think that is exciting and quite frankly pretty cool.

DiGioia: The fact that I get to help support an industry that has brought so much joy to my life in a role that I love doing. This is my dream job, and I am thrilled to have the opportunity! ■

"I cannot wait to start having conversations with as many people as possible to find out how we can help them further the theatrical cinematic experience."

TOP GUN: MAVERICK, 'OBI-WAN KENOBI,' AND 'STRANGER THINGS 4'

A Look at the Dynamic between Theatrical and Streaming

BY PHIL CONTRINO

→ This past Memorial Day weekend marked an important moment in the dynamic between theatrical and streaming.

For years now, there have been many broad statements about the way streaming steals audiences away from theatrical, without a whole lot of concrete evidence to back it up. Not enough attention has been paid to what happens when blockbuster theatrical releases open on the same weekend that major streaming releases debut. That's what happened over Memorial Day when *Top Gun: Maverick*, "Obi-Wan Kenobi," and "Stranger Things 4" all landed at the same time. Despite much target-audience overlap, they were all very successful. As I write this article, *Top Gun: Maverick* followed its massive \$160 million holiday weekend debut with a record-setting drop of only 29 percent in its second frame. Tom Cruise is almost 60, and he is now enjoying the biggest hit of his career. Disney and Netflix are touting that "Obi-Wan Kenobi" and "Stranger Things 4," respectively, delivered incredible viewership numbers, and fans are obsessively analyzing both.

What does this mean? That's easy: There is enough room for theatrical and streaming to prosper at the same time.

Thinking about streaming and theatrical as competitors causes people to miss the bigger picture. The challenge for both platforms in a splintered marketplace is figuring out how to make sure that every project—big or

small—finds its audience. By the way, this challenge is not unique to streaming and theatrical. Spend some time reading about the video game industry, live theater, or the literary world and you'll find they are in the same boat.

While launching established I.P. in the marketplace should never be called easy—it still requires a huge marketing push and a tightrope walk with passionate fans and their expectations—any marketer will tell you it is easier than launching original content. Yet make no mistake: Consumers do crave original content. The desire to be enthralled by a creative project that goes in a new, surprising direction is just as appealing as the comfort that comes from engaging with characters and story lines that you know and love.

Just look at what is happening with *Everything Everywhere All At Once*, which has surpassed *Uncut Gems* to become A24's biggest hit of all time, with \$60 million in domestic receipts and counting as I write this. It's a brilliant film that has surprised moviegoers with its inventiveness and an ending that packs a real emotional wallop. *Everything Everywhere's* success is a nice complement to *Top Gun: Maverick's* victory. Both accomplish the same thing: They are getting people back in the habit of going to the movies by giving them choices that they are interested in.

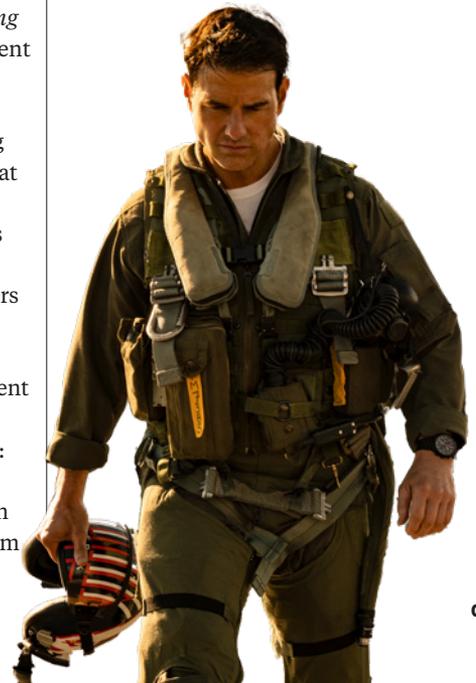
Even with some strong recent success stories, we still need more movies on the calendar. And movies need movie theaters to stand out. A little while back, NATO worked with NRG (National Research Group) to field two key audience-sentiment survey questions that we've asked in the past. We asked moviegoers the following: Do you know whether movies released on streaming were previously available in theaters, and are you more likely to stream

a movie if it was released in theaters? Nine in ten say they always, usually, or sometimes know whether movies released on streaming were previously available in theaters. Forty-four percent say they are more likely to stream a movie if it was available in theaters, vs. 13 percent who say they are less likely.

Consumers are more media savvy than ever. They are aware of the options that they have, and they are not passive when it comes to spending money on entertainment. Catering to a more educated base means that maximizing return on investment in a strategic way is more important than ever. When it comes to movies, theaters are still unquestionably the best at that. There is nothing healthier for a movie than a staggered release pattern that respects all lucrative windows.

Obsessing over a nonexistent "war" with streaming and forgetting that original films can deliver in a big way is a mindset we need to keep pushing against. If it is allowed to take hold, it harms the entire ecosystem. ♥

The challenge for both platforms in a splintered marketplace is figuring out how to make sure that every project—big or small—finds its audience.



CHARITY SPOTLIGHT

Past Events

Texas-based dine-in chain Studio Movie Grill continues its commitment to charitable activity on the local level, with two locations—the SMG North Point and SMG Duluth, both in Atlanta—partnering with Variety, the Children’s Charity of Georgia to host special adaptive bike presentations, providing two mobility challenged children with a way to get out, exercise, and explore with their families. Elsewhere in Atlanta, at the SMG Marietta, a special screening of *Top Gun: Maverick* was hosted on June 15 for the Dobbins Air Reserve Base. June 20 saw the SMG Sunset Walk (in Kissimmee, Florida) and SMG Lincoln Square (Arlington, Texas) host special screenings for local groups: a *Jurassic World: Dominion* screening for Special Olympics Team Florida in Sunset Walk, and a screening of *Lightyear* for the Orange Out Foundation—which helps families suffering through childhood cancer—at Lincoln Square.

On Thursday, June 9, the Motion Picture Club held its annual Max Fried Golf Tournament—the 27th in the history of the industry nonprofit, and the first since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. MPC members from around the country gathered at the Engineers Country Club in Roslyn, New York, to golf, participate in a “Paint n Sip” session, and catch up with their colleagues in the industry. Variety, the Children’s Charity of New York was on hand to present an adaptive bike to young Carter (pictured above right).

On Wednesday, May 25, the South Orange (N.J.) Performing Arts Center (SOPAC), Cinema Lab, the Village of South Orange, and South Orange Downtown celebrated the official reopening of SOPAC, which was left much in need of renovations following the destruction of 2021’s Hurricane Ida. In conjunction with the event, Cinema Lab CEO Luke Parker



Bowles organized a campaign to raise money and awareness for Red Nose Day through a marathon of films by director Richard Curtis (*Four Weddings and a Funeral*). Founded by Curtis in 1988, Red Nose Day has grown into an annual fundraising campaign to end the cycle of child poverty and ensure a healthy future for all children.

Cinemas Guzzo Founder Supports Health Care Initiatives

The Jewish General Hospital (JGH) Foundation is pleased to announce that the Guzzo family, represented by Maria and Vincenzo Guzzo, has made a donation of \$3 million to support its

health care workers. This is in addition to the combined \$1.1 million in gifts previously made by the Guzzo family to the JGH Foundation. This \$3 million commitment will support several JGH priorities, particularly the hospital’s digital health initiatives. “I know firsthand about the difficulties the movie and restaurant industries have experienced over the past two years,” says Vincenzo Guzzo, president and CEO of Cinemas Guzzo, the largest independent operator in Quebec and the third-largest movie exhibitor in Canada. “As much as my sector suffered during the pandemic, the health care sector had it much worse. This reality fuels my motivation for

making this additional commitment at this critical time of economic recovery. ... I call on all leaders in the private sector to acknowledge how fragile our health care system is and join me in supporting hospitals and health care workers in the leaders' areas."

Santikos Entertainment Announces Results of 2022 Food Drive

San Antonio-based Santikos Entertainment has announced the final result of its most recent food drive, launched to support the New Braunfels and San Antonio Food Bank near Santikos's Cibolo, Texas location.

On June 1, 2022, in the sweltering Texas heat, 358 families and 1,164 people were successfully provided with food assistance thanks to the support of Santikos, its patrons, and its team members. Among those helped were 53 veterans and seven active-duty military families. Families and individuals came from Guadalupe, Bexar, Atascosa, Caldwell, Comal, Goliad Hays, Wilson, and Cass counties. All told, a staggering 63,942 pounds of food was distributed.

Says Andrew Brooks, Santikos's executive director of sales and marketing: "You could stop there and call it a success, but those smiles received that day said a lot more than any total of numbers or pounds served. That's why Santikos does what we do: to make our communities a little more joyful."

An ethos of giving back to the community is baked into Santikos Entertainment, which dedicates 100 percent of profits to supporting area nonprofits benefiting locals in need, as well as in support of education, medical research, and arts and culture.

Will Rogers Foundation Promotes Christina Blumer to Executive Director

The Will Rogers Motion Picture Pioneers Foundation (WRMPPF) has promoted Christina Blumer, who has been with the organization for 13 years, to the position of executive director, making her the first woman appointed to the position since 1975, when Lois Lewis ran this historic cinema-industry charity. The foundation's previous executive director, Todd Vradenburg, exited the post in March 2022 to become the president and CEO of the California/Nevada chapter of the National Association of Theatre Owners.

Blumer joined Will Rogers in 2009, first as the foundation's director of development, overseeing fundraising and donor relations, and most recently as director of operations, in which role she expanded industry relations and supervised the ongoing programs and services of the charity. As executive director, Blumer will oversee day-to-day activities, provide leadership to staff, ensure tax compliance, advise the board of directors on organizational programming and services, and maintain relationships with the motion picture industry at large.

"Christina has demonstrated an exceptional work ethic, leadership, collaborative spirit, and commitment to the Will Rogers Motion Picture Pioneers Foundation during a time of increasing need from members of our motion picture community," said Heather Morgan, president, Will Rogers Motion Picture Pioneers Foundation. "We are excited to see her flourish in her new role."

"Having started my career at the Will Rogers Motion Picture Pioneers Foundation, I'm grateful for the opportunity to have done a bit of everything while learning about the rich history of our beloved organization and its enormous impact on the lives of so many people in the motion picture industry," said Blumer. "I look forward to adapting and growing our programs to ensure the success of our charity as the industry evolves."

The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the critical role that the Will Rogers Motion Picture Pioneers Foundation's Pioneers Assistance Fund serves within the industry. The only charity of its kind in the nation, the Pioneers Assistance Fund provides financial assistance to members of the distribution and exhibition community in times of need. The need had never been greater than throughout the pandemic, when film releases were halted, theaters were shuttered, and employees were furloughed. The charity administered more than \$3.5 million in aid and helped 10,000 people remain in their homes, buy basic necessities, and navigate hardship.

The Pioneer of the Year Dinner, benefiting the Will Rogers Pioneers Assistance Fund, returns September 21, 2022, honoring James Bond producers Michael G. Wilson and Barbara Broccoli. ■

"Christina has demonstrated an exceptional work ethic, leadership, collaborative spirit, and commitment to the Will Rogers Motion Picture Pioneers Foundation during a time of increasing need from members of our motion picture community."



ART HOUSE ON THE UPPER WEST SIDE

The Indelible Influence of Toby and Daniel Talbot on Specialty Exhibition and Distribution

BY DANIEL LORIA

➔ The New Yorker Theater opened to the public on March 9, 1960. The 900-seat cultural outpost, situated on the corner of Broadway and 89th Street on Manhattan's Upper West Side, opened at a time when the neighborhood was significantly less gentrified than it is today. "In the early 1960s, the Upper West was a dangerous place, heroin was the drug of choice," wrote Daniel Talbot in his memoirs, which have been edited and published posthumously by his wife and business partner, Toby Talbot. *In Love with Movies: From New Yorker Films to Lincoln Plaza Cinemas*, with a foreword by Werner Herzog, was released earlier this year by Columbia University Press. According to Daniel, the Talbots' first theater was named the New Yorker because it allowed them to save money by reusing the "York" part of the previous theater's marquee (the Yorktown), since neon was so expensive. The Upper West

Side was a Hispanic neighborhood back then, and the Talbots' accountant, Henry Rosenberg, had plans to convert the Yorktown to a Spanish-language movie house before Daniel, "flat broke at the time, needing work, with a wife and kids to support," convinced him to turn it into a repertory house instead. Daniel became the New Yorker's manager and programmer, earning \$125 a week while charging an admission price of \$1.25 per head. It was his first job in a career that would shape and influence the development of the American art house and repertory scene for decades to come.

Speaking from the Upper West Side apartment she shared with her husband for more than 50 years, Toby Talbot remembers those early days in exhibition as a natural evolution of their relationship. "In our courting period before we were married, our idea of a great date was to go to the Beverly Theater or the Paris Theater,

one of the old cinemas on the Upper East Side, with a hero sandwich and watch movies. That was a perfect day for us. We were very compatible in that sense. We were married almost 70 years, and I'm still getting to know him through his personal journals."

Daniel Talbot passed away in December 2017 at the age of 91, a week after the landlord of his last theater, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, declined to extend its lease. It took Toby years to muster the strength to look through Daniel's archives—booking ledgers, distribution catalogues, diary entries—the precious ephemera from a life devoted to the movies. The resulting book acts as both a compendium of his experiences in exhibition and a firsthand account of how repertory and art house distribution developed into fully-fledged businesses.

The Talbots had no prior experience in running a movie theater before the New Yorker. That didn't deter them from experimenting with programming and booking titles they believed in, even those that were hardly a guarantee at the box office. "The Upper West Side was a scrappy neighborhood back then," recalls Toby. "We started out as a repertory house, showing films of the '30s and the '40s, silent films, films that we ourselves adored, and films we wanted to see for the first time because we'd never had a chance to see them before. That was the same spirit that led us to become distributors."

The New Yorker's first screening was a double feature of Laurence Olivier's *Henry V* (1944) and the French short film *The Red Balloon* (1956). Daniel describes the experience as a huge success: "From that first day, the place had an electric atmosphere, virtually all the customers were young, with a genuine hunger for





"In the fifties and sixties, a cluster of distributors and exhibitors in New York City handled all foreign films in America. No Hollywood studio would touch them with a ten-foot pole."

film—and not satisfied with run-of-the-mill junk. All the shows ended with applause." Despite building his own audience base, it didn't take Daniel long to realize the necessity—and challenge—of off-peak programming to ensure patrons kept coming back throughout the week. That challenge is what led to the creation of the New Yorker Film Society. "Monday nights being traditionally slow, why not stage a special event and call it a society?" he writes. "It would be fun ferreting out interesting films, otherwise ignored."

The New Yorker Film Society's first meeting raised quite a few eyebrows. The Talbots decided to introduce its new series by offering the city's first full-length public screening of *The Triumph of the Will*, Leni Riefenstahl's documentary of the 1934 Nazi Party Congress. "We knew the ramifications of showing *Triumph of the Will*," says Toby Talbot. "We realized the grandeur of its filmmaking and we knew that as a

documentary, etymologically, the film is a document [of its time] while still being propaganda, meant to proselytize. She is very successful in doing that in that film. As a piece of powerful cinema, it's very important. As a piece of propaganda of the period, extremely important. We showed it at night, and we had to have another screening because young people were lining up to see it."

According to Daniel's memoirs, the film hadn't had a public screening outside of an edited version shown at the Museum of Modern Art in 1943 and 1946. "We had ticket-buyer lines three blocks long. Over three thousand people showed up. We turned away hundreds and eventually held shows until three in the morning. And who were they? Mostly Jewish kids in their twenties who'd heard about Hitler but had never seen any films about him. We thought there was going to be some rioting or people accusing us of being neo-Nazis, but there was none of that. People were plain curious, fascinated. No other show drew quite like this one, though attendance was generally substantial."

Those first years at the New Yorker reflect the intellectual curiosity and passion for cinema that defined the Talbots' approach to exhibition and distribution. Daniel acquired the lease to the New Yorker in 1962, and the cinema soon became a family operation, with Toby's parents—Bella and Joe Tolpen—working behind the concession stand and inside the auditorium respectively. The eclectic programming kept driving audiences, making the New Yorker a tastemaker for the budding art house cinema scene in the United States. "In the fifties and sixties, a cluster of distributors and exhibitors in New York City handled all foreign films in America," writes Daniel. "No Hollywood studio would touch them with a ten-foot pole."

In New York, cinemas like the Plaza Theatre, the Paris Theater, Fine Arts, and the Little Carnegie all played a role in giving city audiences an alternative to the steady stream of studio films hitting theaters elsewhere in the nation. Important art house exhibitors of the time would often open their own distribution offices to bring films stateside themselves. People like Cy Brattle, founder of Boston's Brattle Theatre, and impresarios like Don Rugoff, who owned several New York City art houses alongside his own specialty

distribution outfit, Cinema 5, exemplify the art house exhibitors of the era who used their expertise to build successful careers in independent distribution.

It wasn't long before the Talbots joined the distribution game themselves, acquiring films on the European festival circuit and introducing exciting new filmmakers to American audiences through New Yorker Films. "Distributing foreign and independent films makes little sense," writes Daniel Talbot. "The work is mainly tedious, if not downright boring, and at times nasty. It demands enormous patience, for it's a hit-driven business and not unusual to wait as long as five years before your ship comes in."

The Talbots steadily grew an impressive slate of films, many of them acquired through deals made directly with the filmmakers at major film festivals. As a result, New Yorker Films became a reference distributor for art house cinemas across the country. "We had a little office above the New Yorker theater that was devoted to our budding distribution company," remembers Toby Talbot. "Dan found himself so immersed in distribution and looking for films, that he felt that he was done with the New Yorker—now he had to focus on this new thing. I was very, very opposed to it. It may be that stereotypical female notion of not leaving the nest, but the New Yorker Theater was a very exciting place. We had midnight showings; we wrote notes for the films that were shown at night. I couldn't imagine having created such a place and—boom!—he was ready to move on. I scolded, I screamed, I shouted—

but eventually I was forced to sign the document selling the theater. Years later, Dan regretted having done that in retrospect, but, in fact, he may not have had enough energy to fully devote himself to distribution otherwise."

The Talbots sold the New Yorker Theater to the Walter Reade Organization in 1973, and Daniel fully refocused his efforts on distribution. Despite being opposed to the cinema's sale, Toby admits the demands of New Yorker Films required a different approach as the distribution business evolved in the 1970s. "I think he was more foresighted than I was at the time," says Toby. "He knew what his capacity was in order to give distribution the attention it required. There's always a conundrum when we arrive to this conversation: Does something like a successful distribution company emerge because of somebody like Dan, who had very good taste and conviction? Or is it an outcome of circumstance, that there was such great filmmaking talent around at that time?"

As New Yorker Films continued to grow, Daniel Talbot found himself unable to stay away from running his own movie theater. The Talbots' departure from exhibition only lasted three years, and the opening of Cinema Studio—on Broadway between 66th and 67th streets—marked their return to the Upper West Side's movie theater scene in 1976. "Dan had that exhibition bug and, lo and behold, he missed having a movie house," says Toby. "One day, walking from our apartment on 90th Street down to our office on 50th Street, he passed this empty movie house next door to a funeral parlor, a little coffee shop, and a fish restaurant."

Daniel Talbot bought the theater, installed new seats, and, years later, with the help of France's Gaumont, split the space into two auditoriums seating 300 and 185 patrons respectively. After a bumpy start, Cinema Studio booked its first hits with a pair of Werner Herzog titles—*Aguirre, the Wrath of God* (1972, acquired and released by New Yorker Films in 1977) and *Stroszek* (1977)—going on to become a vital platform for the launch of foreign films in the U.S. Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *The Marriage of Maria Braun* (1978) played at Cinema Studio for 53 consecutive weeks. In other instances, having Cinema Studio allowed the Talbots to keep a film in release until it could find

"We weren't interested in becoming rich on any of our films. If we felt a film was worthwhile, we wanted it to be given a chance to find its audience."



an audience. Louis Malle's *My Dinner with André* (1981) posted moderate grosses at Cinema Studio for 10 weeks before taking off on its own 53-week run, a streak that turned the title into the highest-grossing film in the history of New Yorker Films. "We weren't interested in becoming rich on any of our films," says Toby. "If we felt a film was worthwhile, we wanted it to be given a chance to find its audience."

Toby Talbot singles out Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985), a nine-hour documentary about the Holocaust, as the title that Daniel dedicated the most energy to as a distributor. A film with difficult subject matter and an unconventionally long running time, *Shoah* was never a commercial undertaking for New Yorker Films. "I devoted one full year to the distribution of *Shoah*," writes Daniel. "I did all the launching, selling, and publicity by myself ... the cost of distributing the film was staggering. Each print cost \$15,000. We had six prints. When embarking on this project, little did I think about its commercial possibilities. I was prepared to personally guarantee all losses—I did not want to mix money and Holocaust work. For me, it was a moral undertaking."

Shoah's U.S. release was met with a scathing review by the *New Yorker* magazine's influential film critic Pauline Kael. Daniel pushed back, sending her a response expressing his disagreement with her review. Few distributors ever dared to test Kael's mercurial temperament, but the Talbots had known the critic for decades by that point, having become acquainted with her in 1957 while she was programming and managing the Cinema Guild and Studio in Berkeley, California, the first twin cinema in the U.S. to program foreign films year-round. "Pauline's reaction came after the film was acquired and shown," says Toby. "We didn't care what Pauline said at that point; we were only upset when she gave it so little political and emotional attention. She was treating it like some frivolous musical. And you know we loved Pauline; she and her daughter spent many evenings with us at our apartment. But I think she was wrong about *Shoah*. She was not engaging with it in the proper context."

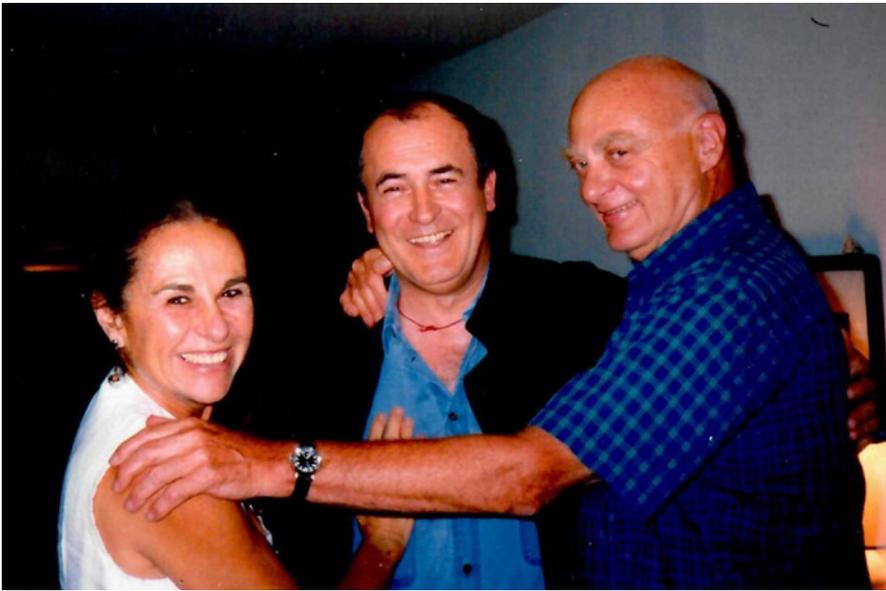
Despite the challenges of its release and reception, the film was ultimately able to connect deeply with audiences. Its theatrical run eventually led to a national television broadcast on PBS,

The Talbots steadily grew an impressive slate of films, many of them acquired through deals made directly with the filmmakers at major film festivals.

which Daniel Talbot claims was viewed by over 10 million people. "Presenting *Shoah*, as both exhibitor and distributor, was the most satisfying event of my work in film," he writes.

Success at the box office led the Talbots to open an additional multiscreen venue, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, also on Manhattan's Upper West Side, in April 1981. Toby Talbot was initially skeptical about the site's viability, an underground space on Broadway and 62nd Street. Originally a three-screen theater, Lincoln Plaza went on to become a six-screen venue in 1992 with the support of Gaumont. "People are going into a basement to go to the movies?" Toby remembers asking when they signed the





Generations of moviegoers and filmmakers have walked through its doors, a testament to the Talbots' contribution to the neighborhood and nation at large through their work as exhibitors and distributors.

lease. “Dan said, ‘Don’t worry, we’ll bring them in.’ We didn’t have the funds to build such an ambitious project. Everything we did was from our own pocket. Gaumont was already in the picture, through Cinema Studio, so we brought them in for Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.”

Toby was tasked with sourcing the concessions at the Lincoln Plaza, something she took on with good spirits. “I do not have a sweet tooth,” she says. “I would rather eat a clove of garlic or a sour pickle. But I can bake, and I know what good pastries are. I tasted every single pastry that vendors would send to me. I don’t know how many vendors we went through. The gingerbread was baked by a Jamaican woman. The ricotta cheesecake was baked by an Italian baker. The carrot cake was baked by Two Little Red Hens. Silver Moon Bakery would bake the muffins.”

The Talbots opened an additional Upper West Side location, the Metro, on the site of a former adult theater at Broadway and 99th Street, in August 1982. The Metro opened as a 525-seat revival house, eventually becoming a three-screen complex in 1985. The success of Lincoln Plaza Cinemas convinced Daniel to close the Metro in 1987 and focus all the Talbots’ exhibition efforts on its thriving film community 30 blocks down the road.

“At a certain point, we had to condense our efforts. It was physically impossible to do all that management,” says Toby. “What was exceptional at the Lincoln Plaza, which wasn’t quite the same at the Cinema Studio or the Metro or to some extent at the New Yorker, was the staff who worked

at the Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. Everyone came from somewhere else.” The Lincoln Plaza’s staff was representative of the city’s diversity, “an international staff,” according to Daniel, “from Europe, the United States, Turkey, Haiti, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Trinidad, and Ethiopia.”

Lincoln Plaza Cinemas thrived throughout its nearly 40 years in operation, establishing itself as a destination for art house films in the United States. Generations of moviegoers and filmmakers have walked through its doors, a testament to the Talbots’ contribution to the neighborhood and nation at large through their work as exhibitors and distributors.

The theater closed permanently on January 28, 2018, a month after Daniel Talbot’s passing. The site has remained vacant, its marquee still standing but barren since the theater shuttered. Toby continues to keep in touch with the Lincoln Plaza’s former staff over the phone. “There were many people whose lives intertwined with the theater, and it made them feel good about themselves,” she says.

The Talbots’ lives in the cinema business left an indelible mark on the American art house. Their work set the standard for the way the specialty market continues to operate today. Daniel’s recollections in *In Love with Movies: From New Yorker Films to Lincoln Plaza Cinemas* provide a touching first-person account of their love for one another—and how their shared passion for cinema made American audiences fall in love with foreign and independent films. ■

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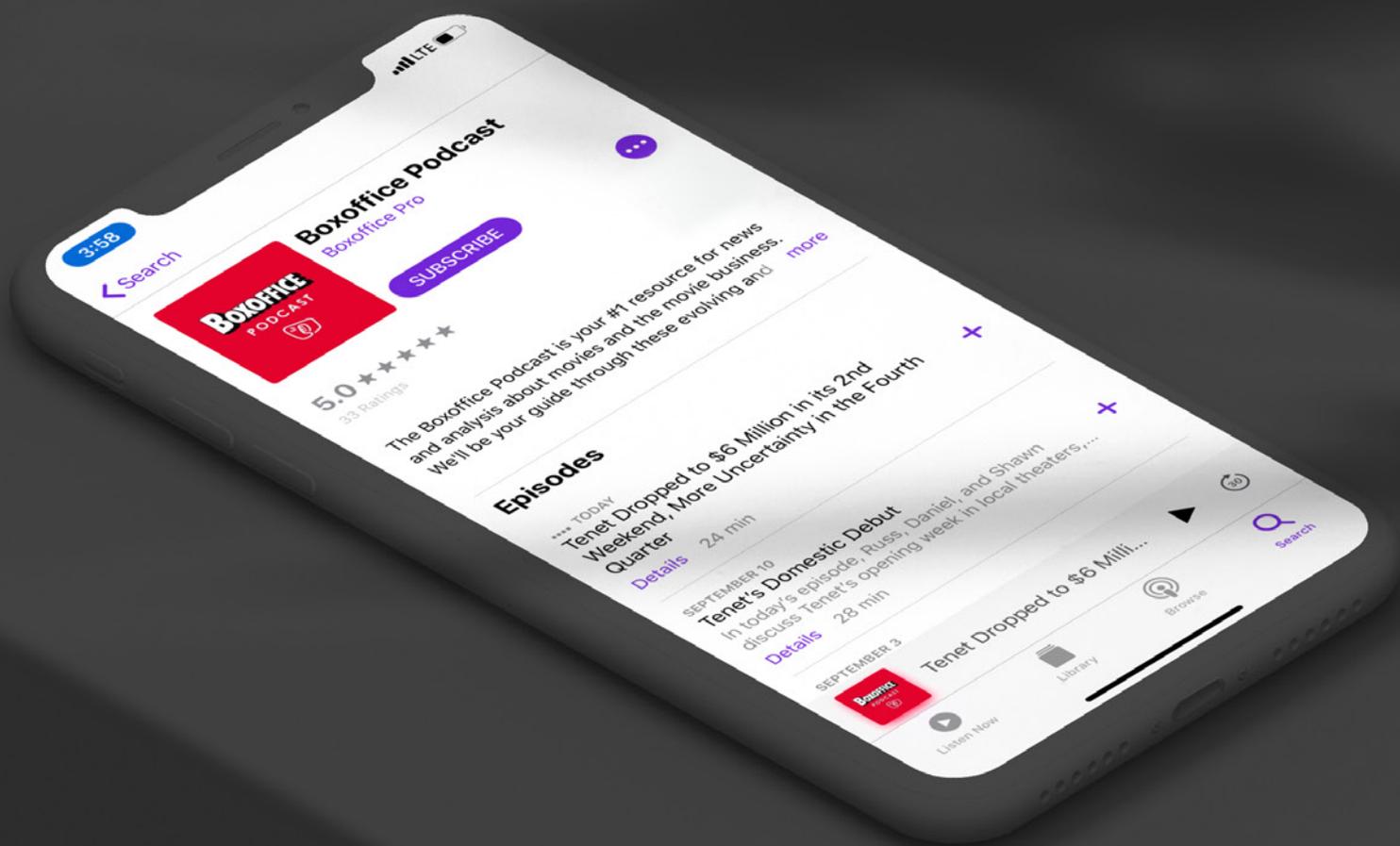
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BOXOFFICE PRO

THEATER



“Our approach is cutting edge and new. But the history, the relationship to the city—that’s not new. That’s embedded in our cultural fabric.”

Indie Focus, p. 20

INDIE FOCUS

SPOTLIGHT
CINEMA NETWORKS

As the cinema industry emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic, BOXOFFICE PRO and Spotlight Cinema Networks are partnering to profile movie theaters and influential industry figures from across the country and ask them to share their first-person accounts of bringing the movies back to the big screen.

VIDIOTS LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Interview with Maggie Mackay, Executive Director at Vidiots; and Barbara Twist, Director of Partnerships at Vidiots and Executive Director of the Film Festival Alliance

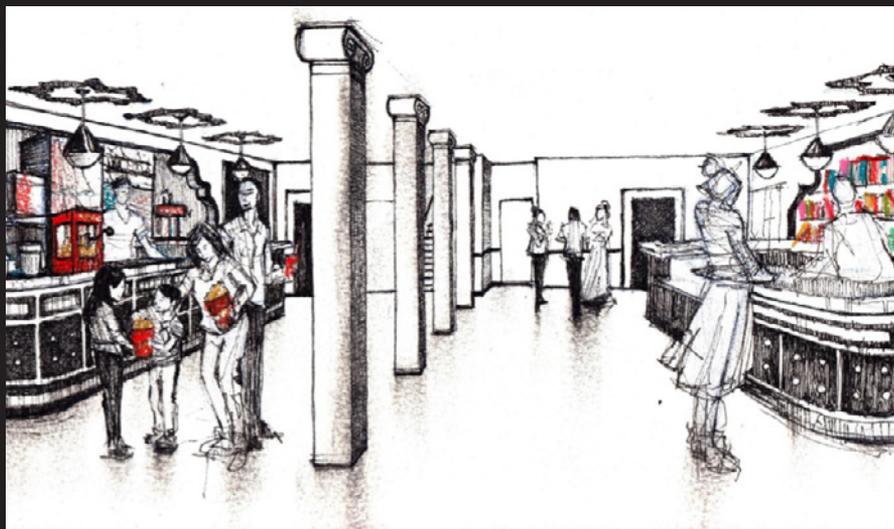
In 2017, video store-slash-Los Angeles cinema institution Vidiots closed its doors after more than 30 years in operation. But the story of Vidiots is getting a new chapter—and Los Angeles is getting a new cinema—with its reopening in a new location: specifically, East Los Angeles's old Eagle Theatre, originally opened in 1929. In addition to the video store, this new incarnation of Vidiots will boast a 250-seat cinema and a microcinema/community space. Funding and construction have been happening throughout the pandemic, with organizers aiming to open their doors by the end of 2022. Among those organizers are Executive Director Maggie Mackay and Director of Partnerships Barbara Twist, who was also appointed the executive director of the Film Festival Alliance—a not-for-profit organization representing film festivals and those who run them—earlier this year.

Maggie, we've heard a bit about Vidiots in a 2021 episode of the Boxoffice Podcast [available at bit.ly/3QqW7T1]. Can you catch us up on where you are in the process of reopening?

Maggie Mackay: We had not started construction in January 2021. We were very, very lucky to find the building in 2019. Covid hit four months after we signed the lease. And then we were trying our best to navigate a capital campaign for the renovation of an almost 100-year-old building. We were really lucky that a lot of people came out and supported the campaign. We grew our social numbers and had some really nice press. We started construction in July 2021, and we've been in construction since. We're making incredible progress. The building is almost 11,000 square feet, almost 100 years old, and was pretty seriously neglected. It's been an amazing labor of love for everybody involved, from our crew to our amazing staff, like Barbara Twist, to our board and advisers. Everybody just came together.

Barbara, can you talk a bit about your role at Vidiots?

Barbara Twist: My role at Vidiots is director of partnerships. Fundamentally, it's about building relationships. Much of my work is with companies, to bring them in to Vidiots, particularly while we're in the capital campaign; getting them in on the ground floor, giving them opportunities to really be engaged in our



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overall commitment to bolster moviegoing culture in Los Angeles. We look nationally [for partnerships] with film distributors, with studios, folks like that. But we also look hyper-locally, in our own neighborhood. We've been doing a lot of in-kind partnerships with local businesses. I never imagined that I would be involved in the opening of a cinema. It's been really fun, and it's stretched my brain in new ways. I've learned a lot; at the same time, I've been able to rely on the collective wisdom of the art house community that I've been part of for many years.

What will Vidiots look like once it opens?

Mackay: [There will be] a 250-seat movie theater. It's a massive building. In its heyday, the Eagle was an 800- to 900-seat movie theater. It operated from 1929 until 2000, without a break. The job that we had was to decrease the size of the theater, increase the size of what one technically would call a lobby but was really a hallway, and create a gathering space. That still leaves us with a really, really sizable house for 250 seats. And then this amazing storefront, which is of the same era as the building, will house the videos, which is 50,000 titles on DVD and Blu-ray. It's a very sizable collection, and it's very unique to Los Angeles. It's fundamentally important as far as physical media goes,

"We wanted to have a space that could be used for a multitude of [purposes] and events. It cost a lot more than we expected, but it was worth every penny to have a space that the community can really, sincerely use."

and in terms of affordability and access to film lovers.

The second part of this really big storefront will be used as a flexible microcinema and a community space. Everything from a screening of a new movie to a workshop for kids to a space that the community can activate. If there's some kind of community meeting that needs to take place—I have this vision in my head of using it as a polling place on Election Day. We put a lot of money and a lot of thought into this space, so that we could maintain an incredible amount of flexibility. It's not just a black box theater. We wanted to have a space that could be used for a multitude of [purposes] and events. It cost a lot more than we expected, but it was worth every penny to have a space that the community can really, sincerely use.

Barbara, we've written before in Indie Focus about the need for cinemas to be in touch with their community. In practical terms, as someone who's worked with the larger independent cinema space through the Film Festival Alliance and, before then, Art House Convergence, what does that community connection look like?

Twist: One of the most challenging things to do is to listen. And that is a big part of it. For me, that's something that really drew me to Vidiots, because [co-founders] Patty [Polinger] and Cathy [Tauber] built this incredible community of people over many, many years. With a video store, you get that daily, hourly interaction with customers. You stop at the counter and ask, "What should I get?" Maybe you talk about your day or the weather. The video store clerk gets all this information about your life, your tastes, your preferences, and that informs what goes into the video store. That's a really important thing.

To a certain degree, folks behind the concession stand—those in the movie theater setting—are your best advocates for knowing what's going on in the community. They're [the] boots on the ground. There's so much information that you can gather from employees who are customer facing, and I don't think organizations always value them in the way they should. Organizations might think, "Oh, we have a community outreach manager!" But that job may be focused



on going out externally, to schools and community organizations, which is also really important. It's twofold: The folks who are already coming to your space, your everyday customer; and then there is your larger community. [You have to] listen to what they want and balance it all.

If you are starting out, before you even open your cinema, assuming you live in the community (which I hope you do), ask yourself: What is the community missing? And what would I want? If you want a cinema, because there isn't one, the odds are there are going to be other people that feel the same way. I was just talking to someone this morning who lives in a midsize city that has a ton of film festivals. They're honestly questioning whether their film festival needs to exist, or if their time could be better used in supporting the existing festivals. If you listen to what the community needs and combine that with what your own passions are, you're going to be in a much better place.

Mackay: From the perspective of something like *Vidiots*, we're in a really unique position where we're taking two things that were deeply important to the cultural and community fabric of the city—the Eagle Theatre and *Vidiots*—and we're putting them together. And we're bringing them back. A lot of people think of us as something new. And our model is something new. Our approach is cutting edge and new. But the history, the relationship to the city—that's not new. That's embedded in our cultural fabric. We're surrounded by ... an entire area that really remembers [the Eagle Theatre], that misses it and wants it back. [And *Vidiots* is] one of the only brick-and-mortar, open-to-the-public, year-round film spaces run by women in L.A. It's very rare.

Barbara, what are the FFA's main priorities in this pandemic-recovery era?

Twist: It's really about three things for me: community, education, and advocacy.

The health of the film festival and exhibitor community is a priority. So is the health of the festival-going community: our audiences. Getting audiences back is a priority. This definitely overlaps with cinemas. Audience attendance is rising, which is great. But it is still low. I don't necessarily believe that it's a "new normal." ... I think anyone who suggests that we're



"There's so much information that you can gather from employees who are customer facing, and I don't think organizations always value them in the way they should."

in a new normal is not acknowledging that we're actually still in the pandemic. Children still don't have access to vaccines. There are so many people who are immunocompromised or otherwise unable to go out for fear of getting Covid. We're not back to what we were before. I think that there's real and valid concern about audience habits changing, but I don't think that those changes are dug-in yet. There's a lot of opportunity to course correct. [But these are] issues we were dealing with before the pandemic; we were already having to [explain to people why they should] come to the cinema.

I'm grateful to Spotlight for supporting this column and BOXOFFICE PRO [for] acknowledging the indie exhibitor space, both the cinemas and the festivals. We are incredibly connected to our audiences. The work that we're doing at the festival level, at the cinema level, is so critical to the larger exhibition ecosystem. Because many of us are nonprofits, we have a different kind of mission [or] bottom line than the chains, so [we're able to focus more] on building audiences. We're able to dig into education programs, for example, teaching kids about going to the movies

and getting them in to see films that they never would have seen otherwise. Festivals, in particular, are all about discovery. I like to think, in a perfect world, you go to at least one festival a year, plus you have your local art house. Your local art house is going to keep you up on all the great new stuff that's coming out. Maybe you bop between *Everything Everywhere All At Once* and *Doctor Strange*. You can love both. That's what your art house and your local chain theater are there for. Then the festival comes along, and that's the time where you go, "I don't know what I'm going to see, but I'm willing to put myself out there because I trust the people programming this."

In regard to education, my best tools are "support" and "teach." What can we learn from each other? What can we learn from external folks, people in other industries? There's so much shifting and moving. Maggie was firmly in the film festival world for many years and is now in the cinema world with *Vidiots*. There are plenty of cinemas that have started festivals, and there are plenty of festivals—look at SIFF [the Seattle International Film Festival] or Milwaukee [Film Festival] or Mill Valley [Film Festival]—that have year-round art houses and film festivals. There's so much connection there, and so much learning that we can do from each other.

The advocacy angle, for me, is really [about] emphasizing the value of festivals. Helping people understand the economic impact of festivals. So often we talk about the economic impact of an arts festival. A film festival is the exact same thing, if not more, because you're bringing in hotel business, you're bringing in restaurant business, you're bringing in tourists. There's a huge economic footprint for a film festival.

Similarly, *Vidiots* at the Eagle is going to have a massive economic impact on its neighborhood because we are a place maker. We are now a foundational space on Eagle Rock Boulevard that's going to attract people. The combination of the video store, which encourages foot traffic throughout the day, and the movie theater, which is more event-based ... encourages [people to enjoy the area].

Going back to the festival world, something that's really important to me is looking at the financial impact of the last few years, and planning for the next



"So often we talk about the economic impact of an arts festival. A film festival is the exact same thing, if not more, because you're bringing in hotel business, you're bringing in restaurant business, you're bringing in tourists. There's a huge economic footprint for a film festival."

few years. The last few years were really difficult. The next few years could be more difficult, because now we're back to the expectation that your event is going on, yet we don't have the same kind of government support. Folks are still not back to their pre-pandemic levels of attendance, while expenses are going up with inflation. There's definitely a lot of financial concern. I'm really focused on, what can we do to help festivals shore up their finances? What can we provide?

Another concern is not returning to how it was pre-pandemic. The system was not working for a lot of people. There's a lot of very real issues that have come up during the pandemic, and we hope to keep working towards addressing these issues for a better environment for all.

A huge issue across the industry right now is staffing. Could you speak to what sorts of conversations are happening in the film festival and art house communities on that issue?

BT: Staffing conversations are wide-ranging in our community right now, and as a result of the pandemic, many long-standing issues around pay equity and working hours have been brought to the surface in a very visible way. We are certainly not the only industry facing these issues, but at FFA we are focused on addressing them within our industry. I encourage everyone to discuss your working experience with your colleagues, your boards, and your donors. Transparency is critical to finding solutions for a sustainable future of exhibition.

[The FFA] has our Film Festival Staffing, Workforce & Compensation Survey, supported by Elevent, [which came out] on June 22. We had 105 organizations participate from across the country. We included key roles such as executive director and director of programming and are getting a sense of the average rates that people are paying across the country. Hopefully festivals can look at that and see where they compare. We also started conversations last year on issues like paying filmmakers, which was really interesting, because it gave way to the thornier question of, “Why would you pay your filmmakers if you can’t even pay your staff?”

Right now it feels like there’s a limited amount of money, and that limited amount of money has to be dispersed to everyone. I would like to move towards: There’s a ton of money in the world, and [film festivals] need more [of what’s out there]. We need more resources for festivals, instead of [needing] to parcel out tiny amounts of what we currently have. As it stands right now, it is not economically feasible to pay your staff what they deserve, pay filmmakers what they deserve, and run the kind of festival you want to run with the way that festivals are resourced. We are under-resourced. We do need more money. When you go to raise money as a nonprofit, people don’t really want to give to general operating funds. They want to give to a program, not acknowledging that people run programs.

[How can the FFA] advocate for festivals, or on behalf of festivals, to national funders and major foundations?

“Why did it take a global pandemic for movie theaters and some film festivals to be considered for funding by the Small Business Administration?”

A lot of us are nonprofits, so that opens some doors. Outside of the National Endowment for the Arts, federal funding has been limited or nonexistent. NATO’s lobbying arm has been incredibly helpful with advocating for federal funds. It was really wonderful that [Shuttered Operators Venue Grants] came through, but why did it take a global pandemic for movie theaters and some film festivals to be considered for funding by the Small Business Administration? And it really wasn’t until the American Rescue Plan that the majority of film festivals were able to access federal funding, beyond PPP.

I think that film is often siloed because we are arts organizations in a commercial world. To funders, it’s thought of as a business, so you should go raise your money from Wall Street. And then, to Wall Street, it’s like, “You’re a nonprofit. It’s a little art film. Why would we give you money for it?” We end up stuck in the middle. What no one is thinking about is our duality: the economic impact that we generate and the value that we bring from an arts and culture perspective. We are generating money for the economy: the local economy, the national economy, for Disney and other studio shareholders when we play their titles. Art houses and film festivals not only generate money for the shareholders, we also create a really valuable impact on arts and culture in our local areas. We are developing movie lovers, who become paying moviegoers.

How does the continuing support of Spotlight Cinema Networks help sustain the indie/art house scene?

Twist: What’s really wonderful about Spotlight is that they bring revenue to indie exhibitors. They understand our economic reality. Moviegoers are used to watching a marketing package with trailers and ads before a film goes on. What I find unique about Spotlight is the quality of the ads they bring to the screen. They’ve navigated a really specific niche to provide something that feels in line with the experience that you would expect at a movie theater.

Having a company come to you and say, “Yep, here’s revenue!” That is huge. It shows that they value what we do and are willing to support us with direct resources to achieve our mission of bringing a great theatrical experience to our audiences. ■





POPCORN TO GO

From the Big Screen to the Couch,
Movie Theater Popcorn Breaks Away
from the Concession Stand

BY DANIEL LORIA

➔ Covid-19 closures forced theaters around the world to improvise new revenue streams, driving some cinema operators to innovate their food and beverage (F&B) strategies by bringing the concession stand out of the lobby and into moviegoers' homes. Exhibitors of all sizes went from selling jumbo bags of popcorn out of their parking lots to partnering with delivery apps like Uber Eats and Grubhub to sell entire concessions combo packages direct to consumers.

These innovations were gradually phased out as restrictions lifted. The most prominent player to have stayed the course is AMC Theatres, the country's largest cinema circuit, which announced in November 2021 its intention to enter the retail popcorn space as part of its long-term strategy. The circuit plans to introduce 15 AMC Theatres Perfectly Popcorn retail locations in the United States by the end of the year. These locations will be stocked with freshly made popcorn—both traditional and flavored varieties—as well as candy, soda, and other movie theater snacks. AMC plans to expand this strategy into 2023 with the introduction of its own microwavable popcorn brand to be sold at supermarkets. In the company's announcement, AMC CEO Adam Aron called this expansion “so natural and logical, one wonders why the idea has not been tried before.” The executive believes its retail strategy will play an important part of the circuit's post-pandemic diversification, citing consumers' strong association of popcorn with the moviegoing experience.

It's not just AMC that's taking note of popcorn's potential outside the concession stand. A pair of independent theaters in the United States are implementing this pandemic-era innovation into their long-term F&B strategy, selling their own brand of gourmet popcorn outside their theaters through a direct-to-consumer (DTC) model. Ridgefield, Connecticut's Prospector Theater and California's Cinelounge Cinemas are taking a similar approach in optimizing their brand through their most beloved concessions item.

Cinelounge founder Christian Meoli cites the 2017 opening of his Hollywood location on Sunset Boulevard as a turning point in his F&B strategy. “That's where my relationship with popcorn went to the

Exhibitors of all sizes went from selling jumbo bags of popcorn out of their parking lots to partnering with delivery apps like Uber Eats and Grubhub to sell entire concessions combo packages direct to consumers.

next level,” he says. “I love offering guests what I call ‘the power of the option.’ That's how we began expanding with additional blends. My take on popcorn is that it's a highly undervalued aspect of what we do. Most theaters across the globe just serve popcorn and offer butter. I create blends with fun movie puns and great, well-sourced ingredient pairings.”

Cinelounge's popcorn line features film-themed flavor blends like Rosemary's Popcorn (rosemary salted caramel), Popzilla (sweet chile lime), Popcorn of the Living Dead (cinnamon churro with pretzels), Apopalypse Now (jalapeño), Truffaut Truffle (truffle), Bourbon Caramel Jones (bourbon caramel), Art House Gold (curry), Fiery Chocolate Ecstasy (Mexican hot chocolate), Once Upon a Time in



Popcorn (smoked cheddar), and Some Like It Popped (naked, with sea salt).

Cinelounge's line of prepackaged popcorn comes in movie poster-inspired packaging, and a percentage of its sales are placed in a fund designed to support new filmmakers. By the end of 2019, Cinelounge Popcorn could be found at 10 gourmet markets throughout Los Angeles.

Meoli sees Cinelounge's popcorn as a calling card for the expansion of the Cinelounge Cinemas brand. "Ever since I began Cinelounge, it's been my plan to expand and be a fluid, amenity-driven exhibition brand in the top 20 DMA's across the U.S.," says Meoli. Cinelounge opened its first Bay Area location in June 2022. Located 50 feet from the bay in Tiburon, California, the theater is serviced by a ferry that drops off guests steps away from the cinema.

"We envision it as a Soho House vibe for movie lovers," says Meoli about the new theater. Cinelounge Tiburon features additional amenities, including an expanded concessions menu they're calling "Spinal Tapas," and custom seating available for guests to purchase at three furniture store locations across the Bay Area. A complimentary Cinelounge Popcorn sampler box comes with every purchase.

The pandemic helped Cinelounge launch its independent popcorn business through a DTC model on cineloungepopcorn.com. "We sold our popcorn and shipped all over the country," says Meoli. Cinelounge established partnerships with other film organizations and events to offer their popcorn at numerous film festivals and at events organized by Amazon Studios and the Academy Foundation. In April, Cinelounge Popcorn welcomed CinemaCon delegates at every studio presentation held at Caesars Palace. Today, Cinelounge Popcorn is available in 23 cinema locations and 25 gourmet markets across the United States.

For Ridgefield, Connecticut's Prospector Theater, its approach to DTC popcorn sales is an extension of its mission as a nonprofit first-run cinema dedicated to providing employment opportunities to adults with disabilities; three-quarters of the Prospector's workforce self-identifies as having a disability. The Prospector serves the needs of its local community as the town's sole movie theater while simultaneously



"My take on popcorn is that it's a highly undervalued aspect of what we do. Most theaters across the globe just serve popcorn and offer butter. I create blends with fun movie puns and great, well-sourced ingredient pairings."

acting as a vocational training academy for adults with disabilities.

"We are showing the world what is possible when adults with disabilities are given the chance to work," says Mike Santini, executive director of the Prospector. "Unfortunately, 80 percent of Americans with a disability do not have a job. So here at the theater, we're watching movies, we're popping popcorn, and we're doing it all through a competitive and integrated workspace where we can show the world just how brightly we can shine when given a job. The Prospector is not just a movie theater. We are an innovative lab where we experiment with new strategies, techniques, tools, curriculum, products, and technologies that will allow more adults with

disabilities to enter and integrate within the workforce.”

The Prospector opened in 2014 in a new, state-of-the-art facility next to the town’s public library. “Our goal has never been to be the best movie theater run by people with disabilities; our goal is to be the best movie theater, period,” says Santini. “We’ve always wanted to be assessed and valued on the merits of our business rather than a sympathy factor.” According to Santini, everyone on staff at the Prospector earns above minimum wage and is involved in working across every facet of the operation: from the box office to the projection booth, and everything in between.

In 2019, the Prospector announced plans to open a second location in Connecticut, taking over a former Bow Tie site in Wilton. Those plans were derailed by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. “We were looking at growing and expanding our mission through opening a second theater. We viewed another brick-and-mortar facility as a way to create more jobs—but then the pandemic happened and all of a sudden, movies were diverted to streaming services, release dates were delayed, and an uncertainty loomed over our theater and the industry as a whole,” says Santini. “So we looked internally and we asked ourselves what else we could do to create more jobs while also helping to drive alternate revenue.”

The Prospector had built a local following around its flavored popcorn combinations since first opening. When movie theaters turned to takeout concessions at the start of the pandemic, the Prospector decided to offer its gourmet popcorn directly to consumers through their website, prospectorpopcorn.org. Their product line includes combinations like Classic Caramel, Belgian Chocolate Toffee, Chicago Style, Sweet and Spicy, Buffalo Cheddar, Buffalo Ranch, Maple Walnut Ice Cream, and Summertime S’mores.

“We were very fortunate that we had a great product that performed very well at our concession stand,” says Santini. “When the pandemic hit, we saw how this could expand and create more jobs, drive alternate revenue, and introduce the mission of the Prospector Theater beyond the moviegoing demographic within our area. Now, with our own e-commerce business, people across the country can



get our popcorn delivered to them. They can indulge in a tasty treat and know they’re helping create jobs for people with disabilities.”

Whether it’s the world’s largest cinema circuit, a growing independent chain, or a mission-driven nonprofit theater, movie theaters have taken popcorn from concession stand to couch. Popcorn’s journey may end up being one of the few pandemic-era innovations to outlast Covid-19. 🍿

“So we looked internally and we asked ourselves what else we could do to create more jobs while also helping to drive alternate revenue.”

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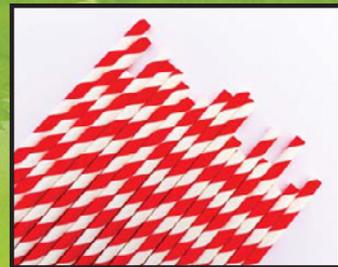
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NAC



“No movie theater is operational by showing movies alone. We all need to figure out ways to offer consumers something that gets them to spend beyond their ticket purchase.”

Bert Nathan Memorial Award, p. 36

HAIL, HAIL, THE GANG'S ALL HERE!

Welcome to the 2022 NAC Concession and Hospitality Expo

BY LARRY ETTER

The foundation of continued growth and knowledge is built upon the wisdom of the leading authorities from many outside industries, whom the NAC Expo presents.

➔ A question people tend to ask themselves in these times is, “Why am I doing this? What is the purpose of expending my energy and effort?” As the National Association of Concessionaires (NAC) kicks off its 2022 Concession and Hospitality Expo in Orlando, Florida (July 26–29), the same question could be asked. The frequent NAC attendee might be tempted to respond: “It’s the free booze.” The novice Expo attendee, however, should hear the real (and more professional) answer: There are at least five excellent reasons to attend the NAC Concession and Hospitality Expo.

1. Continuing education is at the core of the NAC’s mission. Specific certifications are offered during the conference—such as the Certified Concession Manager (CCM) class, the Executive Concession Manager (ECM) certification, and the Accredited Concession Supplier (ACS) certification—and the show invites many recognized personalities to educate NAC membership in the latest industry trends and developments. Now, more than ever, we should be engaged in learning. The foundation of continued growth and knowledge is built upon the wisdom of the leading authorities from many outside industries, whom the NAC Expo presents. I learned my most valued time-management techniques at an NAC Expo presentation thanks to a consultant from FranklinCovey; it had nothing to do with food and beverage, but it made me a more efficient agent of my company.

2. Collaboration is a means of working together to solve the mysteries of the world. *Our* world centers around food and beverage. Collaboration consists of more than just the much-overused term “networking”; instead, it’s the exchange of ideas and sharing of problems that need solutions. At the NAC conference, there is constant conversation, with attendees sharing their experiences, successes, and sometimes failures, resulting in opinions and suggestions offered, accepted, or rejected.

Over my years with the NAC, I have heard many fantastic concepts that I never would have appreciated had they not come from a trusted peer. Example: During the pandemic, I was struggling to come up with the best, most hygienic way to serve butter topping for popcorn

at Malco Theatres. My solution was to put the topping in 3-ounce lidded soufflé cups and let the guests apply it themselves. Ron Krueger, president of Southern Theatres, had a warning: “Oh no, don’t do that. They’ll spill the butter all over the seats!” Instead, he suggested we place squeeze bottles on the counter, allowing the patron to add what they needed and leave the bottle on the counter to be wiped down after every use. A simple, small solution—but it was prudent and saved me thousands of dollars in chair replacements. Collaboration doesn’t always have to be monumental—but it does lead to results.

3. The stimulation of creative juices leads to innovation and exploration. Choose to stay in your lane, and you’ll be safe and secure. But, as the saying goes: if you stand still, you are falling behind as the universe expands. At the NAC Expo, creative solutions to the concessions industry’s most pressing issues are pondered by professionals from multiple fields sharing diverse insights. At the Expo, you get to see the latest in products and designs. One that comes to mind was offered by Rob Lehman, president of Santikos Theatres: a food pick-up locker system that makes it safe, sanitary, and comfortable for guests to pick up their food. As the cinema and concessions industries recover from the pandemic, new packaging, innovative marketing techniques, supply chain issues, and rising costs are all topics that will be looked at from all angles to find creative solutions at this year’s show.

4. Communication is a valuable tool—one that’s as much about listening as it is about speaking. Some of the most invigorating elements of any NAC conference are the breakout sessions, where professionals from different channels of the concessions business— theater operators, stadium operators, etc.—meet for conversations moderated by a recognized authority. I cannot quantify the number of great ideas, solutions, and compromises shared in these sessions. No one stands at a podium and pontificates; everyone is on the same level, sharing their “what-ifs” and “how-tos.”

5. Congregation—who doesn’t like to congregate? Humans are a communal species, congregating at sporting events,

at movie theaters, church, school, work. We just like being around people—even if we don't like the people very much. Why is that? I think we like knowing that we're not the only ones on the planet with issues and that everyone else gets emotional about their work, too. We like sharing stories and rehashing fond memories. We like socialization! And there's no better place to socialize than at the NAC Expo.

Over the years, the show has been heralded for its social functions, whether on the field at the Caesars Superdome in New Orleans, the home court of the Utah Jazz in Salt Lake City, the Florida Panthers' FLA Live Arena, Fenway Park, or Wrigley Field. NAC and its supporters always put out the red carpet, with sponsors opening the purse strings and offering the highest grade of hospitality. This year is no different. The week's activities are held at the Hilton Hotel Lake Buena Vista, which offers a pedestrian bridge right into Disney World.

One of the most compelling reasons to attend the NAC Expo are the offsite tours, where attendees are invited to visit the most recognized venues in that

At the NAC Expo, creative solutions to the concessions industry's most pressing issues are pondered by professionals from multiple fields sharing diverse insights.

year's host city. There, they will get a behind-the-scenes look at how those companies operate, whether organizing and preparing for events, storing goods, completing transactions, or handling crowds. It's a chance to peek behind the curtain and see the essentials for success in a variety of different environments.

It's easy to see why the NAC Concession and Hospitality Expo is important. This year, after multiple years of separation due to the pandemic, it is not just important but necessary to remember the roots of the trade: people. It's people working together that make our industries and venues successful. While we can all find reasons not to attend, absence ignores our commitment to the industry and its growth. Adversity cannot lessen our desire for excellence. ■

Larry Etter is NAC's Director of Education and Senior Vice President at Malco Theatres Inc.

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BERT NATHAN MEMORIAL AWARD 2022

Rob Novak, Vice President of Concessions and Food & Beverage, Marcus Theatres and Movie Tavern by Marcus

BY DANIEL LORIA

➔ After managing movie theaters for 16 years, Rob Novak moved up to Marcus Theatres' home office in Wisconsin to become the growing circuit's new head of concessions and food and beverage (F&B) during a critical time. Marcus Theatres has significantly expanded its concessions strategy during Novak's nine-year tenure in that role, a time span that includes the circuit's nationwide expansion to more than 1,000 screens and 88 locations.

Presented annually by the National Association of Concessionaires, the Bert Nathan Memorial Award recognizes leadership and significant accomplishment in the movie theater concessions sector. Rob Novak brings a wealth of experience and accolades as this year's recipient: He is responsible for the direction, menu development, and oversight of concessions and food and beverage operations at the Marcus Theatres circuit. Included in his portfolio are three full-service Zaffiro's restaurants and nearly 30 Zaffiro's Express outlets, about a dozen Reel Sizzle outlets, nearly 50 lobby/bar restaurants branded as Take Five Lounge and The Tavern, and more than 30 locations that offer in-auditorium dining. Novak played an integral role in launching BistroPlex, a concept that features all in-theater dining and puts a much greater focus on the food. He was instrumental in integrating Movie Tavern into the Marcus Theatres portfolio in 2019, and he currently manages the F&B and leads operations for those 22 properties.

BOXOFFICE PRO spoke with Novak ahead of the award ceremony, scheduled for July 27 in Orlando during the NAC's annual convention, and asked him to look back on his career and the evolution he's witnessed at the concession stand.

How did you get your start in the movie theater business, and how did you come to work in the concessions side of the business?

I started working in movie theaters back in high school, in December of 1996, and continued working in theaters through college during summer breaks. I stayed in the industry after college and moved to the Marcus Theatres home office in the beginning of 2013 to work on the food and beverage side of the industry. The opportunity to move to the home office

came organically; it wasn't a position that I was seeking out. At that time, I was working in the field as a general manager. The opportunity was presented to me to move to the office and I jumped on it. I went from dealing with day-to-day customers to dealing with vendors and larger-scale issues that have a business impact across the entire circuit.

What have been some of the lessons you took from those first days in exhibition that still resonate with you in your current role?

The thing that's always been essential—something you learn early on in the field and carry with you up to the home office—is that while we need to sell tickets to bring people in, we need to sell them ancillary items to truly make money. That's where your concessions strategy comes in. No movie theater is operational by showing movies alone. We all need to figure out ways to offer consumers something that gets them to spend beyond their ticket purchase.

The one thing that continues to ring true is that consumers love popcorn. The movies have a unique association with popcorn. Every other thing we do is something consumers can obtain somewhere else. Candy and soda are items you can find at any grocery store. Even as we've expanded into culinary items that are unique and well-executed, those aren't exclusive to theaters. When it comes to popcorn, movie theater popcorn is the gold standard of that specific snack. Home popcorn tries to mimic movie theater popcorn; it's even branded that way on the packaging. That's the one lesson you learn from the moment you start working in exhibition: Popcorn is king. There's nothing else that gets consumers more excited about their trip to a movie theater. It's an essential part of the moviegoing experience and probably the most important thing we do.

There have been so many innovations to moviegoing over the past decade—and F&B is among the areas that have changed the most. What is the most influential innovation you've seen at the concession stand in the last 10 years?

Alcohol has been, first and foremost, the single largest and most important change to a movie theater's concessions business. Alcohol is now up there with popcorn,

"No movie theater is operational by showing movies alone. We all need to figure out ways to offer consumers something that gets them to spend beyond their ticket purchase."

soda, and candy as one of your main assets. It's a product that is sold at a premium that consumers consistently seek out. In 2013 we probably had four or six theaters selling alcohol. Today we have around 80 theaters offering it. Every theater we have has a liquor license and sells alcohol in some fashion, whether it's behind the concession stand or through a full-service bar with dedicated seating. That's been the biggest evolution we've seen.

I still think of that scene in *Pulp Fiction*, where John Travolta is telling an incredulous Samuel L. Jackson that you can order a beer—And I don't mean no paper cup, I'm talking about a glass of beer—at a movie theater in Amsterdam. It feels like it wasn't that long ago when alcohol seemed very out of place at a U.S. movie theater.

I'd go as far as saying that I wouldn't build a movie theater today without getting a liquor license first. It's very easy to maximize the profitability of alcohol. Consumers come in with a built-in awareness of the premium brands and their value. It doesn't spoil as food does, and it has a very long shelf life. Alcohol stands alongside popcorn and soda as an essential revenue driver.

Your role at Marcus has changed as the circuit has incorporated different F&B strategies and dine-in concepts, including its acquisition of dine-in circuit Movie Tavern in 2018, which pushed the chain to over 1,000 locations nationwide. Can you walk us through how that evolution took place at Marcus Theatres?

The average consumer has a lower expectation when it comes to movie theater food. Because of that perception, we knew we had to deliver better-than-average results. I'm defining that "average" to restaurant standards. Our food has to consistently exceed our guests' expectations. Otherwise, we struggle from a legitimacy standpoint.

Our strategy started with a full-service Zaffiro's restaurant. Zaffiro's is a local Milwaukee-based pizza company. We got the rights to open two Zaffiro's full-service restaurants in Wisconsin and one in Minnesota—testing the concept by taking a screen out from our venues and adding a full-service restaurant. We learned from that experience that we

"The one thing that continues to ring true is that consumers love popcorn. The movies have a unique association with popcorn. Every other thing we do is something consumers can obtain somewhere else."

didn't need to replicate that model in every single instance. We consolidated the concept by modifying the menu in a QSR (quick service restaurant) model, Zaffiro's Express, where consumers can order from an expanded menu at a concession stand, pick up their order, and take it back to their seats.

Zaffiro's is a pizza/Italian concept, and the evolution from there was our decision to explore other QSR concepts. We knew that the QSR market was oversaturated with burger places, but we thought we could offer a different spin on the concept in our buildings. That idea ultimately led to Reel Sizzle, a place where we could offer burgers, shakes, and chicken tenders with all sorts of toppings. We knew consumers in many of our local markets really responded to this type of restaurant, so it was a natural evolution for us to bring that to our theaters.



“The pandemic accelerated a lot of decisions that businesses were eventually going to take: We realized we didn’t need to have 27 product lines across 27 packaging sizes.”



Our next step was to create a BistroPlex, an entire venue dedicated to the dine-in experience. We melded all these menus together to create a unique dine-in concept with tremendous pizza and burger options. We looked at different finger food options that could work well in a movie theater setting. Prior to that, we had experimented with this concept by converting two or three auditoriums in a given venue to dine-in—and that experience helped us develop and launch our own BistroPlex concept. We had acquired Wehrenberg Theaters years prior, and part of my job was to look at the F&B Wehrenberg had rolled out and analyze what worked and what hadn’t. We learned from all these different experiences ahead of the Movie Tavern acquisition and informed our strategy in incorporating those sites into our circuit.

The pandemic put extraordinary stress on the exhibition industry. How did it impact your line of work at the concession stand?

Due to the supply chain issues throughout the country—and due to decisions made by manufacturers during the pandemic to cut down on their product offerings—we’ve had to adjust the products available to our customers at any given time. The pandemic accelerated a lot of decisions that businesses were eventually going to take: We realized we didn’t need to have 27 product lines across 27 packaging sizes. The pandemic pushed manufacturers to restock shelves at grocery stores across

the country; they put all their energy into supplying supermarkets because that’s where that demand was at the height of the crisis. It has been a slow shift to redirect that focus back to servicing venues like restaurants, movie theaters, stadiums, and the like. The supply chain had never encountered this push and pull. It wasn’t prepared for this scenario, and it made things very difficult for entertainment venues. We were very fortunate that despite these challenges we never went without a product we absolutely needed. Sure, we’ve gone through periods where certain types of candy or packaging were missing—but we also had a range of alternatives to offer our guests.

The pandemic also pushed Marcus Theatres to go all-in on its own mobile ordering system for concessions. How did that transition take place?

We were lucky in that we created our mobile ordering system back in 2019. We were building a brand new Movie Tavern location in Wisconsin and made the decision to open it without servers, instead having people order through their phones, kiosks, or through a walk-up window in the theater where they could make their selections and have the food delivered to their seats. That theater opened in October 2019.

And then the pandemic happens; the building shuts down on St. Patrick’s Day 2020. We have this app that’s been designed, tested, and used at that theater for a couple of months. As the pandemic

rages on, we decide to sell popcorn out of every location in the summer of 2020 but don’t have any labor to do so. That’s when we turned to our app, where we have all our guests who want to order curbside popcorn at any of our theaters throughout the country do so through one of our online platforms. We just built that out over the summer, training our guests, staff, and managers to order through our app. In late summer 2020, leading up to the release of *Tenet*, we pushed hard to get all our customers on mobile ordering—especially at our Movie Tavern locations—because we simply didn’t have the number of servers we needed.

It was a one-year journey to get to where we are today with it, but we were fortunate to have all that pre-pandemic work and planning already in place. Mobile ordering is everywhere today—whether it’s proprietary apps like McDonald’s, Starbucks, or Chipotle, or third-party apps like DoorDash or GrubHub. People have become acclimated to ordering from their phones. You combine that with the labor costs, hiring, and retention struggles that we’ve all experienced as an industry, and it just makes business sense to turn to mobile ordering to shorten those concession stand lines. Ultimately, I think that’s what’s best for the consumer. In many cases, our guests are deterred from buying anything because of long lines at the concession stand. Mobile ordering helps us make sure we can get the right order ready a lot faster for our customers. 🍿

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BUYER BEHAVIOR IN A NEW WORLD ORDER

The Seven Cues of Buyer Confidence

➔ Though the cinema industry, like many others, is well into its recovery era, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic are still very real. Perhaps more than ever before, audiences have an increased awareness of germs and viruses—an awareness that, though people may be more comfortable touching surfaces and going maskless than they were a year ago, is still very much heightened compared with pre-2020.

The landscape is different now. For those who work in concessions—whether at a cinema, sports arena, or restaurant—it’s essential to remember that in the minds of many patrons, the risk they are taking in coming to your facility is still greater than it used to be. Their confidence must be re-earned every time they order a popcorn, get a soda refill, or even check out food and beverage options online before a movie. That confidence is based on their perception of your cinema—which is often formed not through conscious thought, but through an instinctual impression of what you provide and how you provide it. As you think about the ways your cinema can earn your customers’ trust, here are seven key questions to keep in mind about the products, services, and experiences you offer.



1

IS IT CLEAN?

As soon as the pandemic shut down the global exhibition industry, cinemas went on the hunt for products and techniques to ensure safety and sanitation—and vendors, even ones whose typical work put them in a completely different part of the industry, rushed to help. Among the latter group is popcorn machine manufacturers C. Cretors & Company, which came out with a U.V. sanitizing chamber in early 2021.

2

IS IT SAFE?

In 2022, customers equate safety with the question “Do I have to touch it?” With cinemas and other industries upping their investment in mobile ordering technologies, the answer is increasingly “no.” Santikos Entertainment cut down on in-person contact in their concessions areas by being an early cinema adopter of Apex Order Pickup Solutions (below), which lets customers pick up their food from a smart locker opened by a code sent to their phone.





3

IS IT FRESH?

“Fresh” means fresh ingredients, of course—no one wants stale popcorn. But “fresh” can also mean a fresh approach, whether it’s introducing new menu items or integrating an innovative architectural concept into your concession stand. Freshness takes the commercial and makes it personal, communicating to customers that thought, caring, and preparation went into whatever product is being sold.

But “fresh” can also mean a fresh approach, whether it’s introducing new menu items or integrating an innovative architectural concept into your concession stand.

4

IS IT AFFORDABLE?

Affordability is a moving target that changes based on each person’s individual circumstances—it’s not just a matter of whacking a few dollars off the price and hoping enough people bite to offset the discount. Avoid the impulse to put things on sale just for the sake of it, says Kim Cook-Sorano, director of food and beverage at Galaxy Theatres: “We’ve been trained by businesses that if it’s not on sale, it’s not a good deal. ... For us, in our business, affordability means that we’re taking care of our guests.” Look beyond the price point to auxiliary benefits like free refills or the ability to earn loyalty card points as a way to meet and exceed your customers’ expectations.

5

DOES IT HAVE VALUE?

Assessing value is all about balancing an item’s cost with its quality. Various factors come into play here, from supply chain issues (no doubt familiar to our readers) to rising costs to changes in customer taste. Take this time to reassess the value that each product brings you. Do you need to sell three sizes of soda, or can you downsize to two? Are there automation solutions that will streamline your business and save money? What menu items can you potentially cut?



6

IS THERE VARIETY?

... But be wary of cutting *too* many items. What demographics do you serve, and what do you have on the menu to pique their interest? Know your audience. Popcorn and soda are a given—experiment with nontraditional food items to see if you hit upon something that attracts those guests who normally bypass the concession stand.



7

IS IT FUN?

Because, after all, fun is what going to the movies is all about! Give people the opportunity to treat themselves and make their moviegoing experience an even more special memory. Don’t ignore non-food items, like the movie-themed cup toppers, popcorn tubs, and collectible cups sold by Golden Link. ▀

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Bullet Train **44** | Beast **52** | Back to the Drive-In **58**

ON SCREEN



“Action for spectacle’s sake never really becomes iconic. If you can service the character and the tone of the movie, it makes it fresh, original, and provocative. That’s my approach to action.”

Bullet Train, p. 44



STRANGERS ON



A TRAIN

David Leitch's *Bullet Train* Is Heading Directly to a Theater Near You

BY DANIEL LORIA



A big-screen spectacle optimized for the theatrical experience, Sony's *Bullet Train* arrives in theaters this August with a point to prove at the box office. *Bullet Train* is the rare studio tentpole that bets on capturing a moviegoing audience without the pre-built awareness of an established franchise. The film stars Brad Pitt as Ladybug, an assassin who can't shake his bad luck, determined to take things easy after one too many jobs gone wrong. Ladybug's latest mission seems simple enough: board a bullet train in Tokyo, complete his task, and disembark at a designated station. Little does he know that the train is carrying a group of competing assassins, all with connected yet conflicting objectives, unknowingly pitted against each other aboard the world's fastest train.

Based on an international best seller by Japanese author Kōtarō Isaka, this global adaptation from director David Leitch (*Atomic Blonde*, *Deadpool 2*) features a diverse ensemble cast that also includes Joey King, Aaron Taylor-Johnson, Brian Tyree Henry, Andrew Koji, Hiroyuki Sanada, Michael Shannon, Benito A. Martínez Ocasio (better known under his recording name, Bad Bunny), and Sandra Bullock.

BOXOFFICE PRO spoke with Leitch about adapting the film's source material,

crafting its fight sequences, and tracing its action-comedy roots. These are edited excerpts from the conversation.

This is a type of film we don't see very often: a multicultural cast in a big-budget action spectacle designed for theaters. No superheroes, no dinosaurs, no monsters. And it's based on an international best seller, something that doesn't always translate to a film of this scope.

It doesn't always translate, no. I think Kōtarō Isaka's book was really fun, original, and compelling, and that's why we were drawn to it. Zak Olkewicz did an incredible adaptation for the screenplay. From there, we put our own spin on it. The dark sensibility of the material was hard for me to get on board with right away, but I loved the original conceit: seven assassins on a train, contained environment, incredible setting. I felt I needed to add my own flavor as a storyteller to that. Isaka has been super gracious and supportive of the film and was excited that we set out to make a global version of his book with the international cast.

In the story you have assassins, who just by their nature are nihilistic characters, and it's hard to make them relatable because they're not redeemable. It was really my goal to take Zak's draft and add the humanity inside of these characters, so you could root for them

"The dark sensibility of the material was hard for me to get on board with right away, but I loved the original conceit: seven assassins on a train, contained environment, incredible setting."

in the moments you needed to. That change allows the audience to go on this emotional roller coaster that I like to include in all my films. Ultimately, even if the characters are not redeemable, at least they're still relatable and fully dimensional. That's the sort of work I put in with Kelly McCormick, my producer, culminating on-screen with an incredible cast of actors that came on and contributed brilliant ideas.

I'm glad you bring up that this was a film that was always designed to be an international, multicultural adaptation, especially in the context of what I find to be unfair criticism leveled at the film over claims of whitewashing the original novel. There's a very big difference, in my view, between whitewashing a work and loosely adapting it into something new, taking it in a different direction. The film is, by design, inspired by the novel but offers a different interpretation of the story and its characters. I'd love to see a more loyal, Japanese adaptation of *Bullet Train* that adheres to the novel—but that's just not what you set out to make with this film adaptation.

"Our adaptation, since the very early discussions with the studio—Sony, a Japanese company—was always meant to be a film that could reach a wide, global audience."

Our adaptation, since the very early discussions with the studio—Sony, a Japanese company—was always meant to be a film that could reach a wide, global audience. It's something the book's author, Isaka, was also very excited about. We changed the backgrounds, nationalities, and genders of several characters in the film in a very diverse and inclusive way.

The novel is great, but this is a global-event film, with a cast and setting that reflects a lot of that multicultural fusion.

Making this type of film was our full intention from the beginning. We also wanted to keep a lot of the Japanese elements in the book, such as the characters played by Hiroyuki Sanada and Andrew Koji. That's where the real homage to the original work lies. We are servicing the elder's arc in his quest for revenge: Is fate going to lead him to his ultimate revenge? Very similar to the original novel, but we set out to tell that story while including other characters from across the globe, in a way that expanded our opportunities to build a fun and inclusive world.





Talking about world-building, I have to bring up your involvement in the first *John Wick* film, which you co-directed with Chad Stahelski. There have been very few influential action movies in the past 15 years that serve as a counterpoint to the superhero movies that dominate the box office. I don't want to knock superhero movies, they're their own thing, but the action genre has somewhat stalled during their prominence. *John Wick* is an exception to that trend and so is another film you made, *Atomic Blonde*. There aren't many others on that list—George Miller's *Mad Max: Fury Road* and Gareth Evans's *The Raid: Redemption* come to mind—action movies that bring a fresh take on the genres and are best experienced in a movie theater. How does *Bullet Train* fit into that conversation, in making a big-budget action spectacle optimized for the big screen?

My experience comes from choreographing so many fight scenes over my years as a fight choreographer, stunt coordinator, and unit director on big movies. You're constantly curating things for other directors in those roles, and that's fine, but you're not always servicing your own creative itch. To speak quickly about *John Wick*, and we've said it in the past, it was cathartic for Chad and me at that moment in time, because we were responding to having done multiple superhero movies. As action directors, we wanted to do something that felt grounded. We didn't move the camera in that movie because we were rebelling against the *Jason Bourne* shaky-cam style of that moment. We were reintroducing an aesthetic with our own brand of choreography, holding the camera still and watching the actors perform. That style served the characters in that movie. Action for spectacle's sake never really becomes iconic. If you can service the character and the tone of the movie, it

"For *Bullet Train*, there is this expectation out there that it's going to be *John Wick* on a train starring Brad Pitt, or that I'm going to be bringing in these long takes as I did in *Atomic Blonde*—but that isn't this movie."



DAVID LEITCH AT THE BOX OFFICE

A look at the director's box office history, based on domestic totals

1.
Deadpool 2 (2018)
\$324.5M

2.
**Fast & Furious
Presents: Hobbs
& Shaw** (2019)
\$173.9M

3.
Atomic Blonde (2017)
\$51.6M

4.
John Wick (2014)
\$43M

makes it fresh, original, and provocative. That's my approach to action.

For *Bullet Train*, there is this expectation out there that it's going to be *John Wick* on a train starring Brad Pitt, or that I'm going to be bringing in these long takes as I did in *Atomic Blonde*—but that isn't this movie. The choreography we did is designed for the characters and the incredibly fun and irreverent tone in this movie. We leaned into influences like Jackie Chan and Buster Keaton, who are masters of physical comedy, and were heavily inspired by them. We played with the contained space of our setting, challenging the art department to create environments for us that would help us make interesting fight scenes. That comes from the wealth of experience of having done action movies for so many years. I like to challenge myself and reinvent things every time I go out, making a bold swing for something different. That's what we're bringing to *Bullet Train*.

The right setting for an action sequence can make all the difference in a scene. I think of a fight scene set inside a train, and I immediately think of *From Russia with Love*.

Choreography is always better when you're working with constraints. For example, as a second-unit director, I worked on *The Wolverine*, directed by James Mangold. There is this fight scene set in the snow between Wolverine and ninjas. And I told James that we needed to give ourselves environmental constraints—how about putting it on ice? Once you've given yourself constraints, you throw that to the choreography team to create fresh ideas you haven't seen before.

We approached *Bullet Train* with the challenge of keeping things creative in a movie that is set on a train in a tube with hand-to-hand combat scenes that never get repetitive. The film delivers on that challenge because we focused on talent,



a fun tone, and defining character moments within those sequences—so you're learning something about a character as the fight resolves, or you're adding to the stakes of one of the characters as the fight develops. It keeps you falling forward in the story in a compelling way like an action movie should.

When you mention the film's fun, irreverent tone and that you took inspiration from someone like Jackie Chan, it brings to mind a lot of his iconic action sequences. Those environmental constraints are a big part of what makes Jackie Chan's movies so fun: Something always goes wrong for the protagonist that leads him to improvise his way out of a situation. Striking those comic beats in an action scene is very difficult to pull off. How did you approach that challenge?

As stunt choreographers, we have the best job in the business: You go to the workshop and you play-fight. My team will shoot what we call "Stunt This," where we choreograph, edit, and shoot a fight on video multiple times so we can look at different iterations of it and see what's working and what isn't. That's something we do before we bring a scene to the actors to train them for it. It's hard work but it's also really fun and rewarding.

Talking about Jackie Chan, the thing about him in his movies is that he is incredibly relatable. Things are always going wrong for him in his movies, and the fight scenes are a result of that. In *Bullet Train* there's a similarity in Ladybug's character [played by Brad Pitt], this guy who believes he's cursed with bad luck, and we leaned into that. There's a lot of bad luck and things going wrong in his fight scenes. As competent as he is as an assassin, he is having a bad day. Once you throw that into the engine of fight choreography, we need to make sure that those narrative points are coming through and we're actually building up the stakes for him in each scene.

It's the type of movie that benefits from being seen in a theater with an audience.

That is 100 percent right. You want to see *Bullet Train* with an audience. We've done a lot of test screenings, as you do with comedies, something I like to do as a director because there's an empirical nature to comedy. Just like a stand-up comedian, you know what it means when the audience laughs or doesn't laugh in particular scenes. It gives us the chance to substitute a joke or find a better payoff for a scene during the editing process. It allows you to make choices



"My team will shoot what we call 'Stunt This,' where we choreograph, edit, and shoot a fight on video multiple times so we can look at different iterations of it and see what's working and what isn't."



informed by an audience responding to the film in real time. There are so many fun moments in this movie that work best when they're shared in that communal experience.

You've been involved in a range of projects within the action genre: launching an original franchise with *John Wick*, a graphic-novel adaptation like *Atomic Blonde*, a superhero sequel in *Deadpool 2*, and even a spin-off of an established franchise with *Fast & Furious Presents: Hobbs & Shaw*. What sort of freedom did you have in developing *Bullet Train*?

I love the freedom that Sony allotted us with this film. I applauded them for the bold choice of spending the money they did on something that isn't really known in our market. It's based on a successful novel, but it's not a superhero franchise. I personally feel cinema needs some of these bigger, bolder swings beyond the

superhero universe to keep things fresh. Original voices that give other artists a chance to show their skills in different worlds with different characters. I love the challenge of opening a summer movie with a lesser-known I.P., a film we had so much freedom in making, and proving that it can be successful and that we need to continue making this kind of movie.

I had incredible experiences working with established franchises and doing sequels. It's a whole other challenge to step into something that has a massive fan base, where you need to deliver but still find the space to have your voice stand out. *Deadpool 2* was incredibly financially successful, as was *Hobbs & Shaw*. Those films had a built-in fan base, which acts as a security blanket. With *Bullet Train*, we have a chance to put it all on the line and take a big swing. It's the sort of movie where we make it worth the effort of going to the cinema. 🍷

DAVID LEITCH AT THE MOVIES

Moviegoing Moment

Because of my action roots, seeing *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* was a pinnacle for me. I love action-adventure movies and being in that theater, seeing it on the big screen with an audience, and hearing the gasps and the laughs, along with all the classic Indy moments through Spielberg's precise storytelling—it was one of those experiences that I'll never forget. I saw it at a Mann Theatres location in Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

At the Concession Stand

I am a popcorn aficionado. I like looking past the concessions line to make sure I get a fresh batch. I arrive at the theater early for it, just so I can get that first scoop of popcorn. I'm a purist: salt, maybe a little fountain butter if they have it, but I stay away from adding anything too sweet. No raisins in the popcorn, no chocolate!





MAN VS. BEAST

Baltasar Kormákur Pits Idris Elba Against
a Rogue Lion in Universal's Thriller *Beast*
BY REBECCA PAHLE





Icelandic director Baltasar Kormákur is no stranger to the dangers of the natural world. In 2012's *The Deep* and 2018's *Adrift*, characters fight for their lives against the open expanse of the sea; in 2015's *Everest*, it's the titular mountain taking people out. And in his latest, *Beast*, it's a rogue lion, angry and violent and angling to kill visitor Nate Samuels (Idris Elba) and his two daughters (Leah Jeffries, Iyana Halley). In theaters on August 19 from Universal Pictures, *Beast* looks to close out the summer season with a roar—providing the visceral excitement that Kormákur, speaking to BOXOFFICE PRO while in post-production for the film, says deserves to be seen on the big screen. Following are edited excerpts from the conversation.

How did you come to be involved with this film?

It was during Covid. I became a little bit of the Covid king—I don't know if you read about this. I started production

before everyone else did [on Netflix series *Katla*, filmed in Iceland]. I created this color-coded system and ended up doing interviews with *The New York Times* and everyone about it. [Filming in the first quarter of 2020, Kormákur came up with a color-coded armband system so they could shoot safely during the pandemic.]

I was talking to Universal, sending them the teaching videos we'd made. It's not what I planned for my life, to become a Covid instructor! They asked for information on how we were doing this. [Universal Pictures president] Peter Cramer called me, and he said: "What are you doing, by the way?" And I said, "Well, what do you have?" He sent me the script for *Beast* and a couple of others. I instantly responded [to *Beast*]. I loved the idea of doing this in Africa—and I made it very clear it would have to be [shot in] Africa.

Also, [there's] my fascination with lions, which actually goes pretty far back. I didn't realize. I was at dinner with my parents, and I told them about what

was coming. "Oh, that's interesting," my mother said, and she went down to the basement and brought up a clipping book from when I was a kid. It was way before the internet, by the way. Clippings of lions in Africa! Apparently when I was 6 years old [I was] planning on becoming a lion specialist in Africa.

So it was fated that you would direct this movie.

It sounds like it. I'd forgotten that, but my mother hadn't. These things live inside of you, and you can't really explain. Your instincts go, "Yeah, I would enjoy

"People are animals, and in certain circumstances the animalistic elements come into play. That's when you really find out what you're made of."



making that. That's interesting." I've been away a little bit dealing with some personal issues, and I kind of wanted to get back in the big game.

Was "big game" an intentional pun or an unintentional pun?

[Laughs.] Unintentional pun. I mean, back to making a big studio movie, because I've been at home for a while, sorting my stuff out and doing local productions.

There's this really good Tom Skerritt vs. lions movie from the '80s called *Savage Harvest*—have you seen it? If you're into killer lion movies ...

No, I have not. I haven't even seen the famous one, *The Ghost and the Darkness*. [Editor's note: That 1996 film is based on the true story of a pair of lions picking off railway workers in the late 18th century.] I saw a lot of comments regarding the trailer: "It reminds me, in a good way, of the vibe of *The Ghost and the Darkness*." There's no relation [between the films], except that there's a lion.

I really like the idea—which is probably better explained in the movie than in the trailer—that this is a lion that has gone rogue because of our behavior. Basically, we are poaching [the lions] and leaving them without prides. I think it's a metaphor for all environmental crises that we have. We might be drinking with paper straws, but not everyone is doing that. The tsunami that's going to hit us, it's not going to pick [those people] out and say, "Oh, you're the paper straw people, so you get a pass!" No. They just take it all out.

And that's what this lion does. It doesn't make a difference if you're a poacher or a safari tourist.

You've done man vs. nature movies several times before. What appeals to you about that theme?

I come from a country where you're reminded almost daily that man vs. nature is a real thing. I've lived in Iceland since I was a kid. We have volcanoes erupting every now and then. I might be exaggerating a little, but going to school as a child almost felt like a survival movie.

What I also love about [the concept of *Beast*] is, it becomes existential. People are animals, and in certain circumstances the animalistic elements come into play. That's when you really find out what you're made of. I breed horses in Iceland; I've been [doing that] since I was 12. I was a judge and a professional rider for a while. That's how I supported myself when I was in theater school and studying drama. I've kept doing that, and I travel the islands of Iceland almost every summer. I'm actually planning on doing that as soon as I'm done with *Beast*. We're by the volcanoes, and we are in this crazy landscape. You learn [that] it's not the macho guy who's always going to be strong. It might be a tiny woman, someone who's just mentally incredibly strong in these circumstances. That's what is fascinating to me: It's about your mental strength. Of course, physical strength is important in some circumstances, but mostly it's about endurance and how people deal with those kinds of circumstances.



IDRIS ELBA AT THE BOX OFFICE

The British actor's highest-grossing films, domestically

1. **Avengers: Infinity War** (2018)
\$678.8M
2. **Finding Dory** (2016)
\$486.2M
3. **Avengers: Age of Ultron** (2015)
\$459M
4. **The Jungle Book** (2016)
\$364M
5. **Thor: Ragnarok** (2020)
\$315M





When I was doing *Everest*, I learned about how a woman might be much stronger than a man [when it comes to making the ascent], because of the way our bodies are constructed. But we always have this idea [about some] incredible, athletic man. And of course, Idris looks like one. But in the end, in [*Beast*] it's more how the family becomes stronger, and that gets them through it.

I feel like I kind of know what to expect from Idris Elba in hero mode, but I'm excited to see how his character's daughters play into the whole situation.

It is [about] the daughters, and we've tried to make them as realistic [as possible]. We don't want them to be, like, [roundhouse] kicking a lion or something, like you'd see in some kind of fantasy world. Their courage, their wit, and their family strength come into play. What is more surprising, probably, is the element in the beginning [of] how wounded Idris is. [Eventually] he hits hero mode, which is a part of this genre. You have to face your fears in the end—if not, you just have a loser being eaten by a lion, which nobody would be interested in.

Where did you shoot? And how long did you get?

We shot for three months in Africa. Mostly in [the South African province of] Limpopo, which is by Mozambique. Kruger National Park is very close. Basically, we were waking up to lions roaring, and I got attacked by an elephant, and, you know ...

"I think cinema [is more about an] enjoyable visual ride, which is a very important part of the experience and why people should go to the cinema."

You got attacked by an elephant?

Yeah. First, with his trunk, he threw a rock at me. I was like, "What are you doing?!" And then he just came charging at me and I had to stand him down. I didn't get hurt, and he didn't connect with me. It's an interesting situation. You'd hear rhinos, or you'd hear elephants breaking trees behind your cottage the whole time. But then we also [shot in the] Northern Cape, which is by the Namibian border, a beautiful area, more desert-like. We had a couple of days in the studio and a few days in Cape Town [South Africa]. We did the whole circle.

Did you work with any actual lions? They looked so real in the trailer, which I guess is the point.

That's great, because, between you and me, there are no real lions in this movie. We are at that place in film [history] where you cannot use those [animals] for shooting. We did have a lion as a reference. I actually intended to have [real lions], but we've been working deeply with an incredible team of VFX [artists]. It's very limited, what you can do with a real lion in these circumstances, with insurance and stuff like that.

In the movie, there are moments where the lions seem incredibly real, because we'd been studying for months and months—actually, for over a year—every detail of their movement. We don't have the lion do anything a person hasn't seen it do in nature. That was my approach. You have *Jurassic Park* and more fantastic, scary stuff. Like *A Quiet Place*, which is a brilliant movie, but it has this imaginary monster. That's very interesting, but in this case, it's about a lion, so the scariest thing was to make the lion as realistic as possible. You actually feel that you're in the vicinity of a real rogue lion.

First we had to create a lion with a *character*. Not just any lion. This one is very specific. I found a lion called Scarface that we used as a model. It had the kind of face I was looking for. And then its [physicality]—it has to be like Brad Pitt in *Snatch*, ripped and out of control. It's one of the leading characters in the movie.

I had a very good call with [Alejandro G.] Iñárritu, who gave me a little bit of advice [Iñárritu's *The Revenant* pitted Leonardo DiCaprio against a bear]. I used [that scene] as a reference in some way: That was the level I wanted to be on.

There's one thing, also, that you won't [typically] see in these kinds of movies: there are a lot of [long] shots. There are shots over eight minutes long in the film. You're stuck in the shot. You feel the claustrophobia. The lion is coming at you, and as it comes, you experience it, and the impact of that is stronger.

Given that the lion is all VFX, how did you work with the actors to make sure their terror feels real?

You have an actor who is fully a stunt guy. You rehearse with a guy playing the lion in every scene. It becomes incredibly important. Because of the [long] shot approach, we had to lay it out very clearly. You can't just save yourself by cutting around it. You have to know everything is timed right. The pacing has to be right. Especially when there's contact. It all has to be synced up. That [requires a] huge amount of preparation, but it's really enjoyable. Instead of shooting it and doing whatever, you really have to prepare yourself. There are ways to save some things in the edit, but ...

If the eyelines are wrong, then the eyelines are wrong.

Yeah, and you have a problem. Especially when there is an interaction, you're trying to make everything work together. I enjoyed it immensely, because I hadn't done this kind of work at this [level of] detail. I've done *Everest*, creating those visual effects. My [approach to] visual effects is always about—and this isn't fair to the visual effects people—making them disappear. So [the VFX artists] don't get the credit they deserve.

Who was the man who stood in for the lion? That sounds like a once-in-a-lifetime job.

It was a local guy from South Africa. Very nice kid. It was very physical. His parents had a lion farm in Africa, so he was very good at playing them, [depicting] the way they behave. Their speed, the way they walk, and stuff like that. It was helpful to have someone who understands the lions. I've been around animals [a lot], so it's something I'm very particular about. The way they run—their feet have to [hit the ground] in the right order, and the distance it travels has to be realistic. For me, it's about gravity. If you lose the gravity—which is very common in VFX—the [sequence] loses its connection to

Earth. That's something that I couldn't say often enough. It's all about the gravity of the lion.

Growing up in Iceland, did you go to the movies a lot?

All the time, yeah. It's a big movie country. I think one of the reasons [is that Iceland was] part of the Marshall Plan, [and thus got] movies from America. America was exporting their culture and their ideology and everything, through cinema. I think it's immensely clever, whether you like it or not as a European. I think it's the reason I adapted pretty easily to American cinema: We had access to it all the time.

[As an adult], when I saw *Mad Max: Fury Road* or *Apocalypse*, I felt this instant joy of the cinema. I hope that [*Beast* gives] people that kind of—wow! People coming out of the cinema excited because they just had an experience. It's not always about story or plot. *Apocalypse* is a very simple movie: It's about people going in one direction, then turning around and going the other direction. Same with *Mad Max*. [The characters] just drive [to their destination], and they turn around and come back! But it's the ride. TV has taken up more elaborate plots and story lines. I think cinema [is more about an] enjoyable visual ride, which is a very important part of the experience and why people should go to the cinema. It was one of the reasons I used long shots: You feel like you're inside a tunnel, in the cinema. [The movie is] holding you by the shoulders throughout. It doesn't let you go.

It's collaborative, too—you get to feel the energy of other people reacting to the movie.

The scares and jumps! It's like going on a ride in some way. All the [intellectual elements of film] are very important, but at the same time the ride, the enjoyment, the fun of going to the cinema mustn't be forgotten. ■

"We don't have the lion do anything a person hasn't seen it do in nature. That was my approach. ... The scariest thing was to make the lion as realistic as possible. You actually feel that you're in the vicinity of a real rogue lion."

BALTASAR KORMÁKUR AT THE MOVIES

What are movie theater concessions like in Iceland?

It's all about popcorn. We have a lot of candy. We have this weird tradition of breaking movies in half, so there's a break in the middle to go buy more candy and more popcorn. A lot of cinephiles don't like that, but the crowd really wants it. I think the cinemas basically survive on candy sales, you know?

What do you get when you go to the movies?

Salty popcorn and a Coke, and sometimes M&Ms. And, in Iceland, licorice. There's really good licorice there.

Was there a particular hometown theater that you spent a lot of time in?

There was [Reykjavik's] Gamla Bíó, which was an old cinema. It was later turned into an opera house. That was my favorite place as a kid. And then mall culture came in, and all that. I have a strong tie with cinemas in Iceland. My Icelandic films have been box office hits. One of them is the biggest local release of all time. I have a direct connection with [theaters in Iceland], more than [a filmmaker] would in America, where the studios take care of that relationship. I like that.



BACK TO THE DRIVE-IN





April Wright Goes behind the Curtain in Her Newest Drive-In Documentary

BY REBECCA PAHLE

➔ April Wright has spent a good chunk of her career chronicling the history of the film industry, with feature documentaries on movie palaces and drive-ins covering the exhibition side. The writer/director/producer turns her lens (and her drones) on the 21st century with *Back to the Drive-In*, revisiting the industry covered previously in her 2013 film *Going Attractions*.

Planning the documentary pre-pandemic, Wright pictured her latest film as a story of today's drive-in owners during a time of decreasing numbers. Shortly thereafter, Covid-19 all but shut down the global exhibition industry, leaving drive-ins the only places in many areas to see films outside the home. With this unique set of circumstances came increased popularity and wider attention for drive-ins—though, as seen from the owners of the 11 drive-ins from eight states featured in the doc, the industry was and remains beset by serious challenges. Wright chronicles these challenges, as well as the resilience and creativity of drive-in owners, in *Back to the Drive-In*, in theaters (yes, indoor ones too) on August 12.

First of all, watching this movie really makes you want to go to the drive-in.

I'm so happy with the title, because during the pandemic, people went back to the drive-in. I went back to the drive-in to make a second documentary. And now that more movies are coming [out] from the studios, don't forget about the drive-

ins. Everybody needs to keep going back to the drive-in! The message is built into the title.

At the very beginning of the film, you establish that—despite what many outside the industry were saying—2020 wasn't some great boom period for drive-ins. They were still struggling.

It's a hustle. They're all family owned; even if they're companies, they're family-owned companies. They really care. They have a passion for what they provide to the community. That's what really shines through. Despite all the different types of troubles that the industry is facing right now, they seem very determined to make sure that their drive-ins stay alive and stay in their communities.

Your other films about the film industry, including your first film on drive-ins, have come from a historical perspective. What made you want to tell a more current story here?

I wanted to do a second drive-in documentary because I was still seeing a gradual decline in the numbers. In *Going Attractions: The Definitive Story of the American Drive-in Movie*—long title—I had shown the whole history, but I wanted to really profile the owners. I wanted to show this topic, that they have to keep these places going, keep them alive, and that it's important for people to make it a regular habit. If you want to keep them around, you have to go to them. This was all before the pandemic hit. I went to the drive-in [conference, UDITOA] down in Florida in February of 2020, and I said I wanted to make this documentary. Brad Pitt had just won the Oscar, and he was talking about how he grew up going to drive-ins. We were trying to think how we could leverage that and bring some attention to drive-ins.

Also, I wanted to make a second drive-in documentary because we have drones now, and when I made the first one, [we didn't]. I'm a drone pilot. I got a drone and learned how to fly it and how to do all that. The first one, I shot it so long ago that it was shot in standard def. By the time I was done, I had to [convert] it to high-def. This film I could shoot all in 4K, and I could get all that drone cinematography, which definitely gives [a different] perspective on the drive-in. A big part of this new film is being able to see them from a different

angle that you wouldn't normally see. Those were the things I really wanted to show: the people, how hard they work to keep their drive-ins going, and the beautiful imagery that I couldn't get when I made my last film.

It's so neat to see drive-ins from an aerial perspective, because you can see the design of them, that they're much more complicated than just big fields.

You saw, especially during the pandemic, a lot of these pop-up drive-ins. You can't blame people for putting one outside a restaurant or whatever, but it is a little different when you're just in a parking lot, because the angles aren't right, and the rows aren't right. It gives you a *taste* of the experience. But when you go to a real, authentic drive-in, there's a design, there's a layout. There's architecture involved. The flow of the snack bar is thought through. All of these pieces. It is a designed experience that has been working for years. Because you're in a *theater*. You're just outside. People have told me, "I'd only gone into a pop-up, and then I went to this real drive-in and was like, wow, I get it now!" [Editor's note: UDITOA maintains www.authenticdriveins.com, which helps moviegoers in the United States, Canada, and Australia find drive-in theaters near them.]

The drive-in owners you interview are so candid, especially talking about the challenges—like unruly

"Despite all the different types of troubles that the industry is facing right now, they seem very determined to make sure that their drive-ins stay alive and stay in their communities."





DRIVE-INS IN THE USA

Number of fully operational, permanent U.S. drive-ins*

318

Theater locations

571

Total screens

Top 5 U.S. states with the most drive-in theaters*

1.

New York
29

2.

Pennsylvania
28

3.

Ohio
23

4.

Indiana
20

5.

California
19

Source: UDITOA
uditoo.org/media.html

*Information correct as of September 2021

customers—they've been dealing with these past few years.

I didn't know all [that] when I got on the road. From L.A. [I went to] the Dallas area, then up to Nebraska, through Ohio, Illinois, upstate New York to Cape Cod, Baltimore, and then I drove back. I did the whole cross-country trip. I didn't know some of the issues. But if you think about it, you would. They were having supply chain problems, like everybody. They were having problems finding employees to hire, like all the restaurants, like everybody else. And like the airlines, they were having problems with customers who didn't want to comply with the rules and who were feeling very entitled. It's like people were locked up so long, they forgot that if you go somewhere in public, it's not just you!

For me, [in deciding who to include in the film], there is an element of casting, in a way. For all my films, I'm always thinking about who can provide different points of view and different perspectives. For this film in particular, I tried to choose all different types of drive-ins: in different states, in rural areas or city areas, some that had a single screen and some that had up to seven screens, some where the owner had just opened three weeks before I got there—the Quasar in Nebraska—and then some where they had owned it for 37 years. Like Jennifer [Miller] at [Granbury, Texas's] Brazos, who was ready to sell her drive-in. All these different types, all these

different points of view. And yet the story was the same at the end of the day. They're all dealing with the same things, even though they're completely different.

Despite those problems, they really display a sense of optimism about the future of drive-ins.

Especially now. The pandemic put the focus on staying home and streaming, and it gave the studios an opportunity to test out what happens if we do day-and-date, or if we don't put [a movie] in theaters at all. It seems like the lesson learned is that the theatrical piece is really the hub of the industry, and so critical. I think people are realizing how important the theatrical component is.

But there certainly was a time during the pandemic when people were questioning, is it going to die? And when you talk to people, despite the struggles, they are vested in their drive-ins and in this industry, and they're confident that they're going to have a good season and that they're going to stay alive. But people need to leave their houses! Hopefully we'll do our part: The public, the communities, the people and the families will get out to these places and support them and help bring the industry back to where it needs to be.

The thing about drive-ins, where they are somewhat unique [compared] to indoor theaters, is that when you go to a drive-in you can talk to the people

Above. Quasar Drive-in; Valley, Nebraska

Left. Ben and Nora Harroun of the Harvest Moon Twin Drive-in Theatre; Gibson City, Illinois

with you and have a little bit more of a communal experience. You create a memory. When you're streaming at home, it all blends together. When you go to any theater, but especially when you go to a venue like a drive-in, it creates a good memory about the people you were with. When I talk to people, they'll remember what they ate, what they saw, what it smelled like. It's a very vivid memory for people when they go to drive-ins.

[The other way that] drive-ins are great for the industry is that they also provide a different way to see a movie. So many people that I know are like, "I already saw *Top Gun* in a multiplex, or on an Imax screen. Now I want to go see it at a drive-in. I want to have *that* experience." Because they know the film will feel different if they see it at a drive-in, and that that's a different type of memory and experience. I think it helps with repeat views if you have drive-ins in your area.

What else are you working on now?

I'm working on a whole bunch of things. For documentaries, I'm going to do some follow-up *Going Attractions*, which I shot B-roll for last summer when I was on the road visiting drive-ins. Those are going to be about roller rinks, which was my family's business growing up, north of Chicago. My family had a rink. My first job was working the snack bar there when I was 13 years old, for one dollar an hour. I'm working on another one about bowling alleys and [another on] mom-and-pop amusement parks, because people don't realize there were little regional amusement parks everywhere before everything became Six Flags or Disney. Those are similar topics, where I'll look at the whole history [of an industry] and all the different stages. Roller skating is another one that's having a pretty big surge right now in popularity.

Top left. Rick Cohen of the Transit Drive-In Theatre; Lockport, New York

Bottom left. Brazos Drive-In; Granbury, Texas



"Those were the things I really wanted to show: the people, how hard they work to keep their drive-ins going, and the beautiful imagery that I couldn't get when I made my last film."

Another older industry surviving because people value communal experiences.

Unfortunately, a lot of places—movie palaces, drive-ins, roller rinks, bowling alleys—are getting torn down to become shopping centers and things like that. So there are some cultural messages [there] about valuing commerce and shopping more than family gathering places and community gathering places. I think in the long run, some of those choices are probably not the best choices. We used to have a lot more [communal spaces], and now we have a lot less of things like that. I think the pandemic made people want things that are comfortable and maybe a little wholesome, in a way.

And compared to indoor theaters, they can be much more experiential and, for lack of a better term, Instagrammable.

If you go to a drive-in, you're far enough

"I think the pandemic made people want things that are comfortable and maybe a little wholesome, in a way."

[away] from people that if you're [taking a picture] it's OK. The other cool thing about drive-ins is that sometimes it's more than 3D—it's almost like 4D sometimes. You have the sky above you. Sometimes you have woods around you. If you're seeing a scary film, if it's raining—you have all these environmental things that add this other dimension to the experience.

Back to the Drive-In screened at drive-ins on June 6, Drive-In Day. What are your release plans after that?

We're doing the bigger theatrical release, which will include indoor [theaters] and drive-ins, on August 12. This summer has so many great releases. I wanted to stay away and let the drive-ins [take full advantage]. August 12 is getting toward the end of the standard drive-in season, although a lot of them stay open later and sometimes year-round. ■

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EVENT CINEMA CALENDAR

Updated through June 22.
Contact distributors for latest listings.

BY EXPERIENCE

byexperience.net

GREAT ART ON SCREEN: TUTANKHAMUN: THE LAST EXHIBITION

Now through Sept. 12
Genre: Art

GREAT ART ON SCREEN: POMPEII: SIN CITY

Now through Oct. 7
Genre: Art

GREAT ART ON SCREEN: BOTTICELLI: FLORENCE AND THE MEDICI

Now through Nov. 12
Genre: Art

GREAT ART ON SCREEN: VENICE: INFINITELY AVANT-GARDE

Now through Dec. 2
Genre: Art

CINELIFE ENTERTAINMENT

cinelifentertainment.com

THE RETALIATORS

From Sept. 14
Genre: Horror

HALLOWEEN

From Sept. 1
Genre: Classics

FATHOM EVENTS

fathomevents.com
855-473-4612

STUDIO GHIBLI FEST 2022: KIKI'S DELIVERY SERVICE

July 31, Aug. 1, Aug. 3
Genre: Anime

MET SUMMER ENCORE: LA BOHÈME

Aug. 3
Genre: Opera

MET SUMMER ENCORE: LA FILLE DU RÉGIMENT

Aug. 10
Genre: Opera

DRUM CORPS INTERNATIONAL: BIG, LOUD & LIVE 17

Aug. 11
Genre: Music

SLAVES & KINGS

Aug. 22, Aug. 23
Genre: Inspiration

STUDIO GHIBLI FEST 2022: ONLY YESTERDAY

Aug. 28, Aug. 29
Genre: Anime

TCM BIG SCREEN CLASSICS: STAR TREK II: THE WRATH OF KHAN (40TH ANNIV.)

Sept. 4, Sept. 5, Sept. 8
Genre: Classics

LIFEMARK

Sept. 9-15
Genre: Inspiration

STUDIO GHIBLI FEST 2022: HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE

Sept. 25, Sept. 26, Sept. 28
Genre: Anime

TCM BIG SCREEN CLASSICS: POLTERGEIST (40TH ANNIV.)

Sept. 25, Sept. 26, Sept. 28
Genre: Classics

JOHNNY CASH: THE REDEMPTION OF AN AMERICAN ICON

Oct. 11-13
Genre: Music

TCM BIG SCREEN CLASSICS: IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT (55TH ANNIV.)

Oct. 16, Oct. 19
Genre: Classics

STUDIO GHIBLI FEST 2022: SPIRITED AWAY

Oct. 30, Nov. 1, Nov. 2
Genre: Anime

TCM BIG SCREEN CLASSICS: TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD (60TH ANNIV.)

Nov. 13, Nov. 16
Genre: Classics

TCM BIG SCREEN CLASSICS: IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE

Dec. 18, Dec. 21
Genre: Classics

ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

roh.org.uk/cinemas
cinema@roh.org.uk

RIGOLETTO

From Aug. 20
Genre: Opera

TOSCA

From Sept. 27
Genre: Opera



Drum Corps International: Big, Loud & Live 17

BOOKING GUIDE

Release calendar for theatrical distribution in North America

Release dates are updated through June 24, 2022. Please consult distributors to confirm latest listings.

20TH CENTURY STUDIOS

310-369-1000
212-556-2400

BARBARIAN

Fri, 8/20/22 WIDE
Stars: Bill Skarsgård, Justin Long
Director: Zach Cregger
Rating: R
Genre: Hor/Thr

BRAHMASTRA PART 1: SHIVA

Fri, 9/9/22 LTD
Stars: Alia Bhatt, Amitabh Bachchan
Director: Ayan Mukherjee
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Adv

AVATAR

Fri, 9/23/22 WIDE
Stars: Zoe Saldana, Sam Worthington
Director: James Cameron
Rating: PG-1
Genre: Act/Fan/SF

AMSTERDAM

Fri, 11/4/22 WIDE
Stars: Anya Taylor-Joy, Christian Bale
Director: David O. Russell
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra

AVATAR: THE WAY OF WATER

Fri, 12/16/22 WIDE
Stars: Zoe Saldana, Sam Worthington
Director: James Cameron
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Fan/SF
Specs: 3D, Imax, Dolby

UNTITLED 20TH CENTURY 2022

Fri, 12/23/22 WIDE
Rating: R

UNTITLED 20TH CENTURY 2023

Fri, 9/15/23 WIDE
Rating: NR



Barbarian
Fri, 8/20/22 WIDE

TRUE LOVE

Fri, 10/6/23 WIDE
Stars: Gemma Chan, Allison Janney
Director: Gareth Edwards
Rating: NR
Genre: Rom/SF/Dra

UNTITLED 20TH CENTURY 2024 1

Fri, 5/24/24 WIDE
Rating: NR

UNTITLED 20TH CENTURY 2024 2

Fri, 7/5/24 WIDE
Rating: NR

AVATAR 3

Fri, 12/20/24 WIDE
Director: James Cameron
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Fan/SF

A24

646-568-6015

BODIES BODIES BODIES

Fri, 8/5/22 WIDE
Stars: Amandla Stenberg, Maria Bakalova
Director: Halina Reijn
Rating: NR
Genre: Hor

AMAZON STUDIOS

CATHERINE CALLED BIRDY

Fri, 9/23/22 LTD
Stars: Bella Ramsey, Billie Piper
Director: Lena Dunham
Rating: PG-13
Genre: Act

MY POLICEMAN

Fri, 10/24/22 LTD
Stars: Harry Styles, Emma Corrin
Director: Michael Grandage
Rating: R
Genre: Rom/Dra

GOOD NIGHT OPPY

Fri, 11/4/22 LTD
Director: Ryan White
Rating: PG
Genre: Doc

BLEECKER STREET

A LOVE SONG

Fri, 7/29/22 LTD
Stars: Dale Dickey, Wes Studi
Director: Max Walker-Silverman
Rating: PG
Genre: Dra

SUMMERING

Fri, 8/12/22 LTD
Stars: Lake Bell, Megan Mullally
Director: James Ponsoldt
Rating: PG-13
Genre: Dra

BREAKING

Fri, 8/26/22 LTD
Stars: John Boyega, Michael Kenneth Williams
Director: Abi Damaris Corbin
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra/Thr

CRUNCHYROLL

DRAGON BALL SUPER: SUPER HERO

Fri, 8/19/22 WIDE
Stars: Kyle Hebert, Sean Schemmel
Director: Tetsuro Kodama
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani
Specs: IMAX

DISNEY

818-560-1000
Ask for Distribution

BLACK PANTHER: WAKANDA FOREVER

Fri, 11/11/22 WIDE
Director: Ryan Coogler
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/SF/Fan
Dolby Vis/Atmos

STRANGE WORLD

Wed, 11/23/22 WIDE
Director: Don Hall
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani
Dolby Vis/Atmos

ANT-MAN AND THE WASP: QUANTUMANIA

Fri, 2/17/23 WIDE
Stars: Paul Rudd, Evangeline Lilly
Director: Peyton Reed
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/SF

HAUNTED MANSION

Fri, 3/10/23 WIDE
Director: Justin Simien
Rating: NR
Genre: Hor

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY VOL. 3

Fri, 5/5/23 WIDE
Stars: Chris Pratt, Zoe Saldana
Director: James Gunn
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Adv/SF

THE LITTLE MERMAID

Fri, 5/26/23 WIDE
Rating: NR

ELEMENTAL

Fri, 6/16/23 WIDE
Director: Peter Sohn
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

UNTITLED INDIANA JONES

Fri, 6/30/23 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Adv

THE MARVELS

Fri, 7/28/23 WIDE
Stars: Brie Larson, Teyonah Parris
Director: Nia DaCosta
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/SF/Fan

UNTITLED DISNEY LIVE ACTION 2023

Fri, 8/11/23 WIDE
Rating: NR

UNTITLED MARVEL 2023

Fri, 11/3/23 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Adv/SF

UNTITLED DISNEY ANIMATION 2023

Wed, 11/22/23 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

ROGUE SQUADRON

Fri, 12/22/23 WIDE
Director: Patty Jenkins
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/SF/Fan

UNTITLED MARVEL 2024 1

Fri, 2/16/24 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Adv/SF

UNTITLED PIXAR ANIMATION 2024 1

Fri, 3/1/24 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

UNTITLED DISNEY LIVE ACTION 2024 1

Fri, 3/22/24 WIDE
Rating: NR

UNTITLED MARVEL 2024 2

Fri, 5/3/24 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Adv/SF

UNTITLED PIXAR ANIMATION 2024 2

Fri, 6/14/24 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

UNTITLED DISNEY LIVE ACTION 2024 2

Fri, 7/5/24 WIDE
Rating: NR

UNTITLED MARVEL 2024 3

Fri, 7/26/24 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Adv/SF

FOCUS FEATURES**VENGEANCE**

Fri, 7/29/22 WIDE
Stars: B.J. Novak, Issa Rae
Director: B.J. Novak
Rating: NR
Genre: Com/Thr

TÁR

Fri, 8/7/22 WIDE
Stars: Cate Blanchett, Nina Hoss
Director: Todd Field
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra/Bio

GKIDS**INU-OH**

Fri, 8/12/22 LTD
Stars: Mirai Moriyama, Avu-Chan
Director: Masaaki Yuasa
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

GRAVITAS PREMIERE**MACK & RITA**

Fri, 8/12/22 WIDE
Stars: Diane Keaton, Elizabeth Lail
Director: Katie Aselton
Rating: NR
Genre: Com/Dra

HIDDEN EMPIRE RELEASING**FEAR**

Fri, 8/26/22 WIDE
Stars: Joseph Sikora, King Bach
Director: Deon Taylor
Rating: NR
Genre: Hor

UNTITLED HIDDEN EMPIRE THRILLER

Fri, 10/21/22 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Thr

IFC FILMS

bookings@ifcfilms.com

RESURRECTION

Fri, 8/05/22 LTD
Stars: Rebecca Hall, Tim Roth
Director: Andrew Semans
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra/Hor

FREEGARD

Fri, 8/12/22 LTD
Stars: James Norton, Gemma Arterton
Directors: Adam Patterson, Declan Lawn
Rating: NR
Genre: Thr

SPIN ME ROUND

Fri, 8/19/22 LTD
Stars: Alison Brie, Aubrey Plaza
Director: Jeff Baena
Rating: NR
Genre: Com

PRETTY PROBLEMS

Fri, 8/26/22 LTD
Stars: Britt Rentschler, Michael Tennant
Director: Kestrin Pantera
Rating: NR
Genre: Com

BURIAL

Fri, 9/2/22 LTD
Stars: Charlotte Vega, Tom Felton
Director: Ben Parker
Rating: NR
Genre: Thr

LIONSGATE

310-309-8400

FALL

Fri, 8/12/22 LTD
Stars: Grace Caroline Currey, Virginia Gardner
Director: Scott Mann
Rating: NR
Genre: Thr



Strange World
Wed, 11/23/22 WIDE

WHITE BIRD: A WONDER STORY
 Fri, 10/14/22 WIDE
Stars: Bryce Gheisar, Ariella Glaser
Director: Marc Forster
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra/Fam

THE DEVIL'S LIGHT
 Fri, 10/28/22 WIDE
Stars: Virginia Madsen, Ben Cross
Director: Daniel Stamm
Rating: NR
Genre: Hor

JESUS REVOLUTION
 Fri, 2/24/23 WIDE
Stars: Joel Courtney
Director: Jon Erwin, Brent McCorkle
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra

JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 4
 Fri, 3/24/23 WIDE
Stars: Keanu Reeves
Director: Chad Stahelski
Rating: NR
Genre: Act

ARE YOU THERE GOD? IT'S ME, MARGARET
 Fri, 4/28/23 WIDE
Stars: Rachel McAdams, Abby Ryder Fortson
Director: Kelly Fremon Craig
Rating: NR
Genre: Fam

UNTITLED DIRTY DANCING SEQUEL
 Fri, 2/9/24 WIDE
Stars: Jennifer Grey
Director: Jonathan Levine
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra/Rom

MAGNOLIA PICTURES
 212-379-9704
 Neal Block: nblock@magpictures.com

I LOVE MY DAD
 Fri, 8/5/22 LTD
Stars: Patton Oswalt, James Morosini
Director: James Morosini
Rating: NR
Genre: Com/Rom

RIOTSVILLE, USA
 Fri, 9/16/22 LTD
Director: Sierra Pettengill
Rating: NR
Genre: Doc

PIGGY
 Fri, 10/14/22 LTD
Stars: Laura Galan, Richard Holmes
Director: Carlota Pereda
Rating: NR
Genre: Thr

NEON
 hal@neonrated.com

UNTITLED NEON FILM 1
 Fri, 10/7/22 LTD
Rating: NR

UNTITLED NEON FILM 2
 Fri, 11/23/22 LTD
Rating: NR

PARAMOUNT
 323-956-5000

SMILE
 Fri, 9/30/22 WIDE
Director: Parker Finn
Rating: NR
Genre: Hor

UNTITLED PARAMOUNT
 Fri, 10/21/22 WIDE
Rating: NR

BABYLON
 Fri, 12/23/22 WIDE
Director: Damien Chazelle
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS: HONOR AMONG THIEVES
 Fri, 3/3/23 WIDE
Stars: Chris Pine, Michelle Rodriguez
Directors: Jonathan Goldstein, John Francis Daley
Rating: NR
Genre: Fan

UNTITLED SCREAM SEQUEL
 Fri, 3/31/23 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Hor

TRANSFORMERS: RISE OF THE BEASTS
 Fri, 6/9/23 WIDE
Stars: Anthony Ramos, Dominique Fishback
Director: Steven Caple Jr.
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Adv/SF

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE - DEAD RECKONING PART ONE
 Fri, 7/14/23 WIDE
Stars: Tom Cruise, Ving Rhames
Director: Christopher McQuarrie
Rating: NR
Genre: Act
Specs: Dolby Vis/Atmos

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES: THE NEXT CHAPTER
 Fri, 8/4/23 WIDE
Director: Jeff Rowe
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

UNTITLED A QUIET PLACE
 Fri, 9/22/23 WIDE
Director: Jeff Nichols
Rating: NR
Genre: Hor

PAW PATROL: THE MIGHTY MOVIE
 Fri, 10/13/23 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

UNTITLED RYAN REYNOLDS/JOHN KRASINSKI FILM
 Fri, 11/17/23 WIDE
Stars: John Krasinski, Ryan Reynolds
Director: John Krasinski
Rating: NR
Genre: Com/Fan

TIGER'S APPRENTICE
 Wed, 12/20/23 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

UNTITLED STAR TREK
 Fri, 12/22/23 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: SF/Act

UNTITLED BOB MARLEY
 Fri, 1/12/24 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Bio

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE 8
 Fri, 6/28/24 WIDE
Stars: Tom Cruise
Director: Christopher McQuarrie
Rating: NR
Genre: Act

UNTITLED TRANSFORMERS ANIMATION
 Fri, 7/19/24 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

UNTITLED SMURFS ANIMATED MUSICAL
 Fri, 12/20/24 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani/Mus

ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS
 323-882-8490

EMILY THE CRIMINAL
 Fri, 8/12/22 WIDE
Stars: Aubrey Plaza, Theo Rossi
Director: John Patton Ford
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra/Thr

THE GOOD HOUSE
 Fri, 9/30/22 WIDE
Stars: Sigourney Weaver, Kevin Kline
Directors: Maya Forbes, Wally Wolodarsky
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra/Rom



Smile
 Fri, 9/30/22 WIDE



Devotion
Fri, 10/14/22 LTD

CALL JANE

Fri, 10/14/22 WIDE
Stars: Elizabeth Banks, Sigourney Weaver
Director: Phyllis Nagy
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra

SABAN FILMS

THE MODERATOR

Fri, 7/29/22 LTD
Stars: Irma Lake, Gary Dourdan
Director: Zhor Fassi-Fihri
Rating: NR
Genre: Act

SONY

212-833-8500

BULLET TRAIN

Fri, 8/5/22 WIDE
Stars: Brad Pitt, Joey King
Director: David Leitch
Rating: NR
Genre: Act
Specs: Imax, Dolby Vis/Atmos

THE INVITATION

Fri, 8/26/22 WIDE
Stars: Nathalie Emmanuel, Thomas Doherty
Director: Jessica M. Thompson
Rating: NR
Genre: Hor/Thr

THE WOMAN KING

Fri, 9/16/22 WIDE
Stars: Viola Davis, Thuso Mbedu
Director: Gina Prince-Bythewood
Rating: NR
Genre: His/Dra

LYLE, LYLE, CROCODILE

Fri, 10/7/22 WIDE
Stars: Javier Bardem, Winslow Fegley
Directors: Will Speck, Josh Gordon
Rating: NR
Genre: Fam

DEVOTION

Fri, 10/14/22 LTD
Stars: Jonathan Majors, Glen Powell
Director: J.D. Dillard
Rating: PG-13
Genre: Act/Dra

I WANNA DANCE WITH SOMEBODY

Wed, 12/21/22 WIDE
Stars: Naomi Ackie, Stanley Tucci
Director: Kasi Lemmons
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra/Bio/Mus

A MAN CALLED OTTO

Fri, 12/25/22 WIDE
Stars: Tom Hanks, Mariana Treviño
Director: Marc Foster
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra

KRAVEN THE HUNTER

Fri, 1/13/23 WIDE
Stars: Aaron Taylor-Johnson, Russell Crowe
Director: J.C. Chandor
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Adv/SF
Specs: Imax

HAROLD AND THE PURPLE CRAYON

Fri, 1/27/23 WIDE
Stars: Zachary Levi, Zoey Deschanel
Director: Carlos Saldanha
Rating: NR
Genre: Fam

IT'S ALL COMING BACK TO ME

Fri, 2/10/23 WIDE
Stars: Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Sam Heughan
Director: Jim Strouse
Rating: NR
Genre: Mus/Rom

UNTITLED GEORGE FOREMAN BIOPIIC

Fri, 4/7/23 WIDE
Stars: Khristian Davis, Sullivan Jones
Director: George Tillman Jr.
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra/Bio

65

Fri, 4/14/23 WIDE
Stars: Adam Driver, Ariana Greenblatt
Directors: Scott Beck, Bryan Woods
Rating: NR
Genre: SF/Thr

SPIDER-MAN: ACROSS THE SPIDER-VERSE

Fri, 6/2/23 WIDE
Stars: Oscar Isaac, Shameik Moore
Directors: Joaquim Dos Santos, Kemp Powers, Justin K. Thompson
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani
Specs: Imax

UNTITLED SONY/MARVEL UNIVERSE 1

Fri, 6/23/23 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Adv/Fan

MADAME WEB

Fri, 7/7/23 WIDE
Stars: Dakota Johnson
Director: S.J. Clarkson
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Adv/Fan

GRAN TURISMO

Fri, 8/11/23 WIDE
Director: Neill Blomkamp
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra

THE EQUALIZER 3

Fri, 9/1/23 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Thr
Specs: Imax

UNTITLED SONY/MARVEL UNIVERSE 2

Fri, 10/6/23 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Adv/Fan

EL MUERTO

Fri, 1/12/24 WIDE
Stars: Bad Bunny
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Adv/Fan

SPIDER-MAN: BEYOND THE SPIDER-VERSE

Fri, 3/29/24 WIDE
Stars: Oscar Isaac, Shameik Moore
Directors: Joaquim Dos Santos, Kemp Powers, Justin K. Thompson
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani
Specs: Imax

SUPER LTD

THREE MINUTES - A LENGTHENING

Fri, 8/19/22 LTD
Director: Bianca Stigter
Rating: PG
Genre: Doc

UNITED ARTISTS RELEASING

310-724-5678
Ask for Distribution

THIRTEEN LIVES

Fri, 7/29/22 WIDE
Stars: Viggo Mortensen, Colin Farrell
Director: Ron Howard
Rating: PG-13
Genre: Dra
Specs: Dolby Vis/Atmos

THREE THOUSAND YEARS OF LONGING

Fri, 8/31/22 WIDE
Stars: Idris Elba, Tilda Swinton
Director: George Miller
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra/Fan

TILL

Fri, 10/7/22 WIDE
Stars: Danielle Deadwyler, Whoopi Goldberg
Director: Chinonye Chukwu
Rating: NR
Genre: His/Dra

BONES AND ALL

Fri, 11/23/22 WIDE
Stars: Timothée Chalamet, Taylor Russell
Director: Luca Guadagnino
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra

WOMEN TALKING

Fri, 12/2/22 LTD
Stars: Rooney Mara, Claire Foy
Director: Sarah Polley
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra

UNTITLED RUSSO BROTHERS FAMILY FILM

Fri, 1/13/23 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Fam

CREED III

Fri, 3/3/23 WIDE
Stars: Michael B. Jordan, Tessa Thompson
Director: Michael B. Jordan
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra

A GOOD PERSON

Fri, 3/24/23 WIDE
Stars: Florence Pugh, Morgan Freeman
Director: Zach Braff
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra

ON A WING AND A PRAYER

Wed, 4/5/23 WIDE
Stars: Dennis Quaid, Heather Graham
Director: Sean McNamara
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra

CHALLENGERS

Fri, 8/11/23 WIDE
Stars: Zendaya, Josh O'Connor
Director: Luca Guadagnino
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra

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EASTER SUNDAY

Fri, 8/5/22 WIDE
Stars: Jo Koy, Jimmy O. Yang
Director: Jay Chandrasekhar
Rating: NR
Genre: Com

BEAST

Fri, 8/19/22 WIDE
Stars: Idris Elba
Director: Baltasar Kormákur
Rating: NR
Genre: Thr

BROS

Fri, 9/30/22 WIDE
Stars: Billy Eichner
Director: Nicholas Stoller
Rating: NR
Genre: Com/Rom

HALLOWEEN ENDS

Fri, 10/14/22 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Hor
Specs: Dolby Vis/Atmos

TICKET TO PARADISE

Fri, 10/21/22 WIDE
Stars: George Clooney, Julia Roberts
Director: Ol Parker
Rating: NR
Genre: Rom/Com

SHE SAID

Fri, 11/18/22 WIDE
Stars: Carey Mulligan, Zoe Kazan
Director: Maria Schrader
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra

THE FABELMANS

Wed, 11/23/22 WIDE
Stars: Michelle Williams, Seth Rogen
Director: Steven Spielberg
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra

VIOLENT NIGHT

Fri, 12/2/22 WIDE
Stars: David Harbour
Director: Tommy Wirkola
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Thr

PUSS AND BOOTS: THE LAST WISH

Fri, 12/21/22 WIDE
Stars: Antonio Banderas, Salma Hayek
Director: Joel Crawford
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

M3GAN

Fri, 1/13/23 WIDE
Stars: Allison Williams, Ronny Chieng
Director: Gerard Johnstone
Rating: NR
Genre: Hor/Thr

DISTANT

Fri, 1/27/23 WIDE
Stars: Anthony Ramos, Zachary Quinto
Directors: Josh Gordon, Will Speck
Rating: PG-13
Genre: Com/SF
Specs: Dolby Atmos

KNOCK AT THE CABIN

Fri, 2/3/23 WIDE
Director: M. Night Shyamalan
Rating: NR
Genre: Thr

COCAINE BEAR

Fri, 2/24/23 WIDE
Stars: Keri Russell, Margo Martindale
Director: Elizabeth Banks
Rating: NR

SUPER MARIO BROS.

Fri, 4/7/23 WIDE
Stars: Chris Pratt, Anya Taylor-Joy
Directors: Aaron Horvath, Michael Jelenic
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

RENFIELD

Fri, 4/14/23 WIDE
Stars: Nicholas Hoult, Nicolas Cage
Director: Chris McKay
Rating: NR
Genre: Hor, Com

FAST X

Fri, 5/19/23 WIDE
Stars: Vin Diesel, Charlize Theron
Director: Louis Leterrier
Rating: NR
Genre: Act

STRAYS

Fri, 6/9/23 WIDE
Stars: Will Ferrell, Jamie Foxx
Director: Josh Greenbaum
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

MIGRATION

Fri, 6/30/23 WIDE
Director: Benjamin Renner
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

OPPENHEIMER

Fri, 7/21/23 WIDE
Stars: Cillian Murphy, Emily Blunt
Director: Christopher Nolan
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra/War

UNTITLED UNIVERSAL EVENT FILM 2023 1

Fri, 8/4/23 WIDE
Rating: NR

THE LAST VOYAGE OF THE DEMETER

Fri, 8/11/23 WIDE
Stars: Corey Hawkins, Aisling Franciosi
Director: André Øvredal
Rating: NR
Genre: Hor

UNTITLED UNIVERSAL EVENT FILM 2023 2

Fri, 9/29/23 WIDE
Rating: NR

EXORCIST FRANCHISE IP

Fri, 10/13/23 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Hor

TROLLS 3

Fri, 11/17/23 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

UNTITLED UNIVERSAL EVENT FILM 2024 1

Fri, 1/12/24 WIDE
Rating: NR

UNTITLED UNIVERSAL ANIMATED EVENT FILM 2024 1

Fri, 2/9/24 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

UNTITLED UNIVERSAL EVENT FILM 2024 2

Wed, 2/14/24 WIDE
Rating: NR

UNTITLED UNIVERSAL ANIMATED EVENT FILM 2024 2

Fri, 3/22/24 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

UNTITLED UNIVERSAL EVENT FILM 2024 3

Fri, 3/29/24 WIDE
Rating: NR

UNTITLED UNIVERSAL EVENT FILM 2024 4

Fri, 5/10/24 WIDE
Rating: NR

UNTITLED UNIVERSAL EVENT FILM 2024 5

Fri, 6/21/24 WIDE
Rating: NR

DESPICABLE ME 4

Wed, 7/3/23 WIDE
Stars: Steve Carell, Kristen Wiig
Director: Chris Renaud
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

UTOPIA MEDIA

SHARP STICK

Fri, 7/29/22 LTD
Stars: Kristine Froseth, Jennifer Jason Leigh
Director: Lena Dunham
Rating: NR
Genre: Com

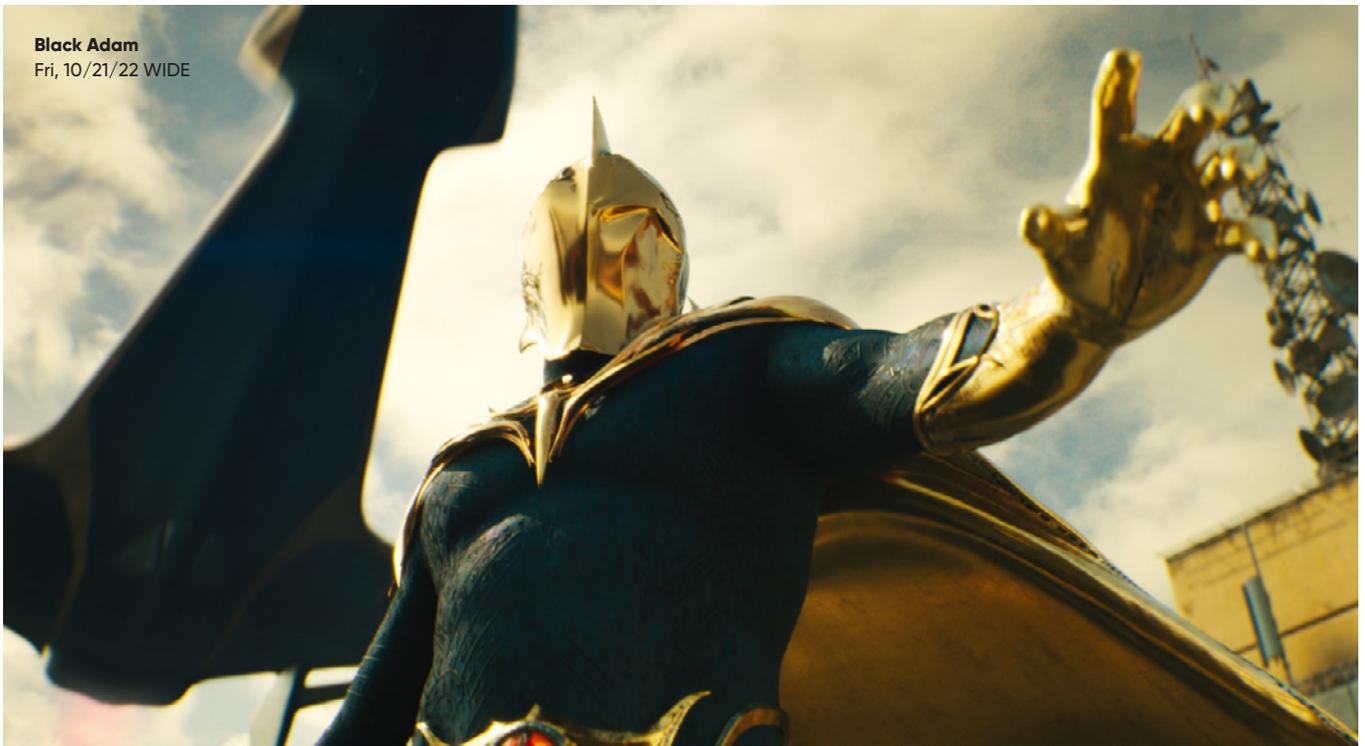
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DC LEAGUE OF SUPER-PETS

Fri, 7/29/22 WIDE
Stars: Dwayne Johnson, Kevin Hart
Director: Sam Levine
Rating: PG
Genre: Ani
Specs: Dolby Vis/Atmos

Black Adam
Fri, 10/21/22 WIDE



SALEM'S LOT

Fri, 9/9/22 WIDE
Stars: Alfre Woodard, Lewis Pullman
Director: Gary Dauberman
Rating: NR
Genre: Hor
Specs: Dolby Vis/Atmos

DON'T WORRY DARLING

Fri, 9/23/22 WIDE
Stars: Florence Pugh, Harry Styles
Director: Olivia Wilde
Rating: R
Genre: Thr

BLACK ADAM

Fri, 10/21/22 WIDE
Stars: Dwayne Johnson, Aldis Hodge
Director: Jaume Collet-Serra
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Fan
Specs: Imax

SHAZAM! FURY OF THE GODS

Wed, 12/21/22 WIDE
Stars: Zachary Levi, Jack Dylan Grazer
Director: David F. Sandberg
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Adv/Fan
Specs: Imax

AQUAMAN AND THE LOST KINGDOM

Fri, 3/17/23 WIDE
Stars: Jason Momoa
Director: James Wan
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/SF/Fan
Specs: Imax/Dolby Vis/Atmos

THE LAST TRAIN TO NEW YORK

Fri, 4/21/23 WIDE
Director: Timo Tjahjanto
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Hor

THE FLASH

Fri, 6/23/23 WIDE
Stars: Ezra Miller, Kiersey Clemons
Director: Andy Muschietti
Rating: NR
Act/SF/Fan
Genre: Imax

BARBIE

Fri, 7/21/23 WIDE
Stars: Margot Robbie, Ryan Gosling
Director: Greta Gerwig
Rating: NR
Genre: Com

THE MEG 2

Fri, 8/4/23 WIDE
Stars: Jason Statham, Wu Jing
Director: Ben Wheatley
Rating: NR
Genre: Act

BLUE BEETLE

Fri, 8/18/23 WIDE
Stars: Xolo Maridueña
Director: Angel Manuel Soto
Rating: NR
Genre: SF/Fan/Act

UNTITLED DC EVENT FILM 2023

Fri, 9/22/23 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Act

DUNE: PART TWO

Fri, 10/20/23 WIDE
Stars: Timothée Chalamet, Zendaya
Director: Denis Villeneuve
Rating: NR
Genre: SF

THE COLOR PURPLE

Fri, 12/20/23 WIDE
Stars: Corey Hawkins, Taraji P. Henson
Director: Blitz Bazawule
Rating: NR
Genre: Mus

WONKA

Fri, 12/15/23 WIDE
Stars: Timothée Chalamet
Director: Paul King
Rating: NR
Genre: Fan
Specs: Imax

UNTITLED WB EVENT FILM 2023

Fri, 12/25/23 WIDE
Rating: NR

TOTO

Fri, 2/2/24 WIDE
Director: Alex Timbers
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

UNTITLED DC EVENT FILM 2024 1

Fri, 3/15/24 WIDE
Rating: NR

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE WAR OF THE ROHIRRIM

Fri, 4/12/24 WIDE
Director: Kenji Kamiyama
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani/Fan

FURIOSA

Fri, 5/24/24 WIDE
Stars: Anya Taylor-Joy, Chris Hemsworth
Director: George Miller
Rating: NR
Genre: Act

UNTITLED DC EVENT FILM 2024 2

Fri, 6/21/24 WIDE
Rating: NR

UNTITLED NEW LINE HORROR EVENT FILM 2024 1

Fri, 7/12/24 WIDE
Rating: NR

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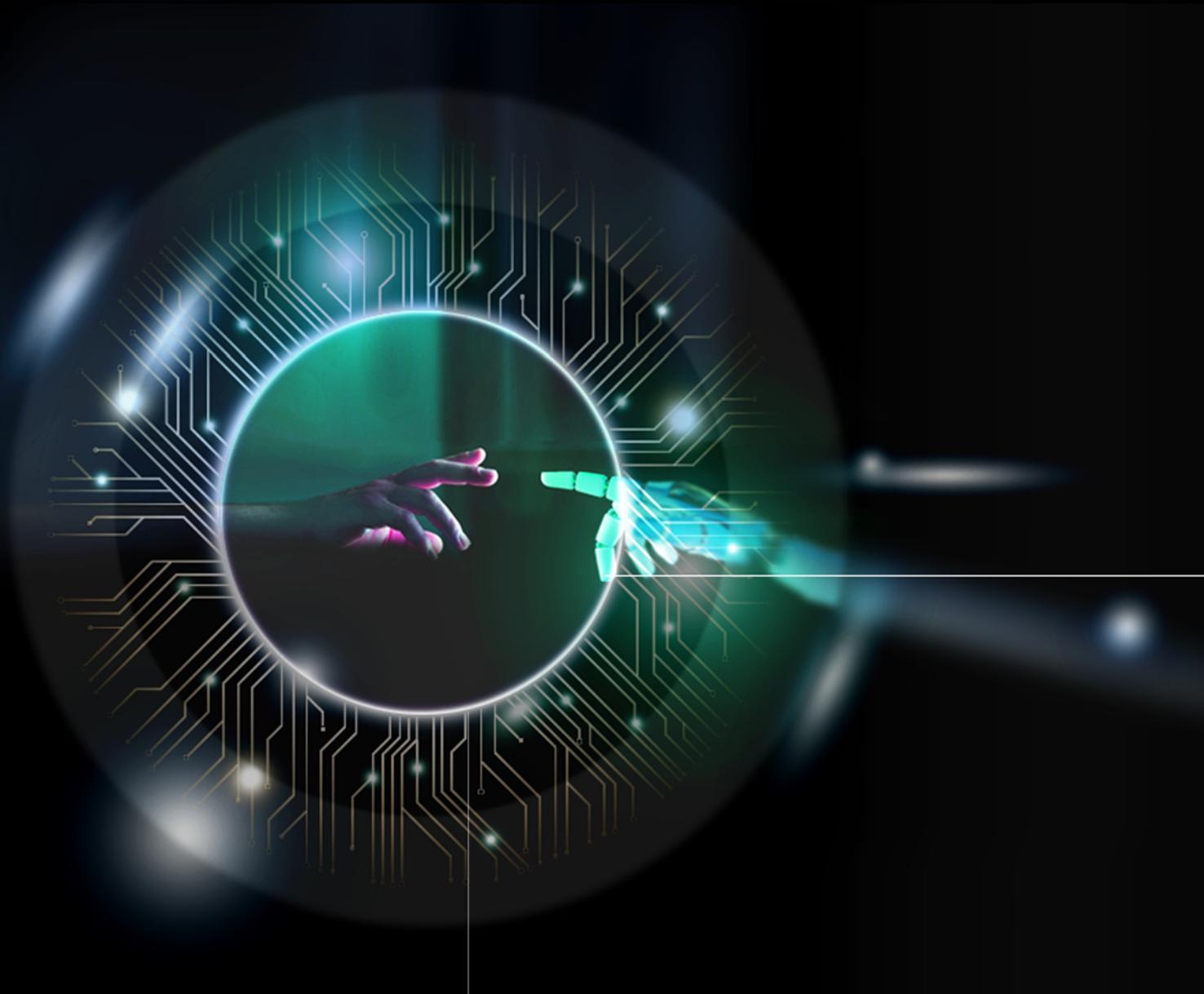
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