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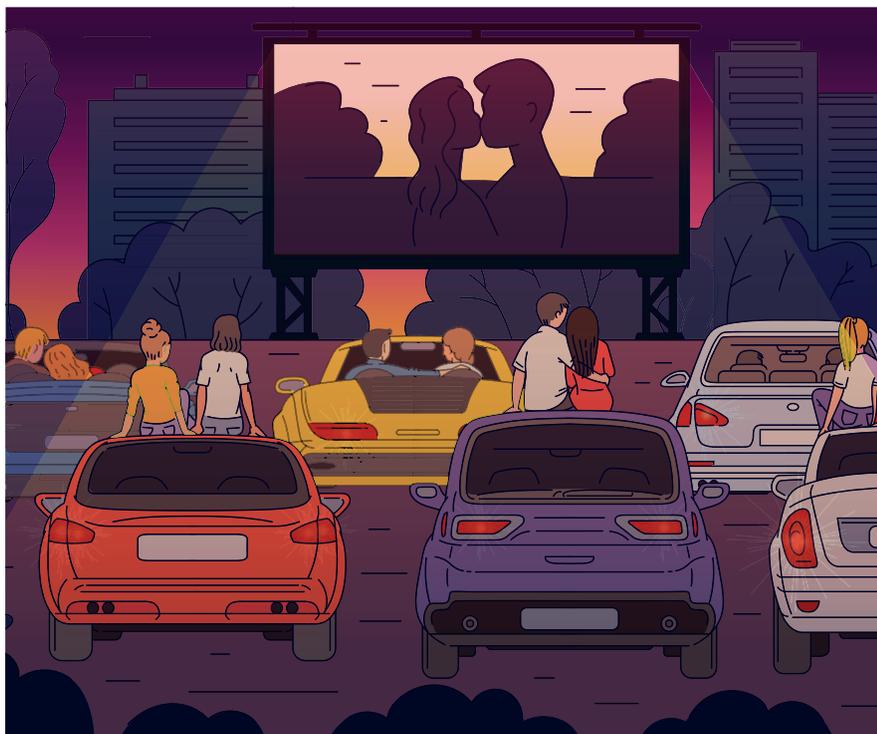
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"Overall, we were happy to be open and serve customers, provide an outlet, and keep the pulse of the theatrical business going during the hardest months of the pandemic."

John Vincent Jr., p. 16

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RELEARNING THE MOVIEGOING HABIT

The pandemic isn't over—it looks like it won't be for quite some time. Despite that grim reality, 2021 proved that cinema can still thrive at all levels.

➔ I hadn't realized how much of my identity—both personal and professional—was tied to my moviegoing habits, until the disruption of 2020.

It first became obvious when I found myself covering film festivals from home in 2020 and early 2021. While I thought Sundance offered the best digital version a festival could provide, there was still something fundamentally off about being among the first people to watch a new film—while hearing the dishwasher running in the kitchen. I followed my colleagues' coverage of Cannes intently online, so when the New York Film Festival came around—the All-Star Game of film festivals—I was raring to see as many in-person screenings as I could.

The highlight of that experience was catching Ryusuke Hamaguchi's *Drive My Car* in its U.S. premiere at a packed Walter Reade Theater. I'm a big fan of the original story's author, Haruki Murakami, and had finished reading the book on the subway ride down to the screening. I first saw Hamaguchi's work at home, during the pandemic, watching the entirety of the *Happy Hour* trilogy and *Asako I & II* with my wife, as a sort of cinematic binge. *Drive My Car* was my first time seeing one of his films on the big screen, and I remember the distinct burst of energy in the auditorium once the opening credits appeared on-screen 45 minutes into the running time. A couple of weeks later, I went to Film Forum with my wife to see Hamaguchi's other 2021 release, *Wheel of Fortune and Fantasy*, for our first dinner-and-a-movie date since this whole mess began. That was just as special.

On another occasion, again for pleasure, I went to see Denis Villeneuve's *Dune* in Imax at the AMC Lincoln Square at a midweek matinee. I was surprised that the auditorium was as full as it was—I figured it must have been repeat viewers. I quickly realized why. *Dune* proved to be the best Imax experience I've ever had; I was completely blown away by the presentation. I enjoyed the technical aspects of seeing it at a cinema so much that I returned to the same theater by myself two days later to see it again in another premium format, Dolby Cinema, so I could experience it with a Dolby Atmos track. This is a film that I wasn't particularly looking forward to—it was available to stream at home on HBO Max—but that I went out of my way to see twice, in premium formats, because of the theatrical experience alone.

It isn't a coincidence that both Hamaguchi and Villeneuve have been among the most vocal filmmakers in advocating for the moviegoing experience since the onset of the pandemic. Hamaguchi was heavily involved in a fundraising campaign for Japan's art house cinemas—following up that advocacy by releasing two (great) new films since cinemas reopened. Villeneuve did not hesitate to put his own money on the line when speaking out against Warner Bros.' unilateral decision to make *Dune* a day-and-date release on HBO Max, even when there was no guarantee he'd be given the opportunity to direct a sequel. Based on the films they released in 2021, and my experience watching them in a cinema, Hamaguchi and Villeneuve are the 2021 filmmakers of the year.

The year began with the cinema industry deeply embroiled in the biggest crisis of its history. It ended with Sony's *Spider-Man: No Way Home* scoring the second-biggest opening weekend of all time in North America (third in the world) on its way to crossing \$1 billion globally—Hollywood's first billion-dollar hit of the pandemic. Unfortunately, the pandemic is still causing significant disruption throughout several markets. As of this writing, cinemas in several countries have once again been forced to implement operating restrictions, some closing temporarily, because of another fast-spreading variant.

The pandemic isn't over—it looks like it won't be for quite some time. Despite that grim reality, 2021 proved that cinema can still thrive at all levels—from local titles to art house hits and, yes, even global blockbusters—thanks to the resiliency of those who remain committed to this industry's success. The success of *Spider-Man: No Way Home* proved that audiences are willing and excited to come back. Our challenge in 2022 is to ensure the moviegoing experience continues to exceed their expectations. Reconnecting with the moviegoing habit, as I learned last year, is the next phase in this prolonged recovery from the pandemic. As we enter 2022, I am confident we have the necessary momentum to achieve it. ▶

Daniel Loria
SVP Content Strategy & Editorial Director,
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- Release Window Patterns and Potential Impact on Exhibition
- Exhibitor Roundtable – How Has Pandemic Affected Your Business
- Distortion, The Elephant in the Room
- Seventy Years of Movie Attendance
- Networking and Control for the New Cinema Entertainment Center
- Gaming Events at Your Cinema
- Presentation of Intersociety Ken Mason Award
- Update on Direct View Screens
- Innovations in Exhibition
- Dealers Roundtable: How Pandemic Affected Your Business
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INDUSTRY



“They know it has an incredibly high recall; we’re a captive attention channel. In some senses, what happens in Hollywood is reflected in our industry.”

Cheryl Wannell, p.21

STRONGER THAN EVER

Jackie Brenneman Promoted to Executive Vice President and General Counsel; Todd Halstead Named Director of Government Relations and Strategy Development

BY JOHN FITHIAN

For this month's column, I took a moment to talk with Jackie and Todd about their new roles and the future of our industry.

→ As NATO and the exhibition industry begin the new and promising year of 2022, we are thrilled about two association leadership decisions that will make us stronger than ever. With the support of NATO's Executive Board of Directors, Jackie Brenneman has been promoted to executive vice president and general counsel—a new “second-in-command” position at the association. Meanwhile, Todd Halstead has accepted our offer to join the national association management team as director of government relations and strategy development.

Jackie has served NATO members in a variety of capacities since 2014, after coming to NATO from the prestigious law firm of Foley & Lardner LLP. During the pandemic, Jackie made her historic mark on our industry by developing and leading a number of essential relief programs that helped domestic exhibitors survive the existential challenges of these times. Now Jackie is poised to lead the industry into a new era with the creation of the Cinema Foundation (more details coming soon!). NATO members, team colleagues, and I have all been inspired through these difficult times by Jackie's keen intellect, strategic foresight, passion, and tireless work ethic.

Todd Halstead first joined NATO's government relations team in 2007 after working on Capitol Hill. Later, he migrated from his full-time position in the national association to lead a NATO-affiliated regional association, the Theatre Owners of Mid-America (TOMA), while continuing to help NATO as a part-time strategy

consultant on key industry projects. I can think of no one in the industry with Todd's breadth of experience and insight into federal government relations, state and local government relations, and the long-term development of industry strategies. NATO members, colleagues, and I are thrilled to have Todd “back home” full-time in a key management position.

For this month's column, I took a moment to talk with Jackie and Todd about their new roles and the future of our industry.

What are your main immediate goals in this new role, Jackie?

Jackie Brenneman: My biggest short-term goal is to launch NATO's Cinema Foundation. The Foundation has an incredible board of dedicated volunteers who are working to develop a very exciting vision for this new venture. Once we have secured seed funding, we hope to make an immediate impact on this industry. Please consider making a donation to this cause in 2022. These funds will allow NATO to expand our scope and impact on a number of fronts, including promotion, recruitment, data and research, and charitable giving, all while allowing NATO to continue to grow its lobbying efforts. More information on the foundation will be coming very soon, and I hope you will be as excited as we are about this opportunity.

Looking ahead to 2022, what are you most excited about?

Brenneman: Finally beginning to move past this pandemic! Much of the past two years has been spent strategizing pandemic efforts on multiple fronts. In 2022 I look forward to finally building some new programs to continue our industry's long history of innovation and resiliency as we emerge from the pandemic. Most importantly, I hope to continue to build on the wonderful relationships I have built with members, which have only grown in the past two years. NATO is member driven, which means that our strength comes from member ideas, participation, and collaboration. I hope to continue to grow our volunteer base and add important new perspectives to the conversation. Finally, as noted above, I believe that the



Cinema Foundation offers a significant opportunity for various stakeholders to come together in a meaningful way to grow and promote this incredible industry. Are you interested? Do you have ideas? Please do not hesitate to reach out to me!

What do you think the exhibition industry will look like five years from now?

Brenneman: Two words: vibrant and responsive. I would not be here if I did not believe in the future of this industry. Movie theaters matter. They matter to filmmakers, they matter to audiences, and they matter to communities. We also know that movie theaters have survived more “fatal” existential threats than probably any other industry. And this is in large part because movie theaters have been responsive to these changes by investing in what their audiences wanted—from technology to food and beverage to recliners and more. I think once the dust settles in the streaming wars, we will see an industry that is better positioned to participate in the dramatic investment in content by studios of all sizes. If exhibitors continue to be responsive, then innovation is inevitable.

What are the main priorities for you as you take over this role, Todd?

Todd Halstead: Cinema exhibitors should be extremely proud of the legislative victories that both NATO and the regional associations achieved during the darkest days of the Covid-19 pandemic. NATO invested significant resources to successfully advocate on industry-saving policy initiatives, ranging from restoration of the net operating loss carryback and passage of the historic Save Our Stages Act at the federal level to the establishment of state grant programs that benefitted exhibitors of all sizes.

These successes were achieved through a government relations program built on a hybrid top-down and bottom-up approach. To that end, NATO will continue to build and foster relationships with key officials on congressional committees and at regulatory agencies that oversee issues that directly affect the association’s members. I also believe that trade associations must work collaboratively through coalitions and alliances to advance their members’ interests on both



macro- and micro-policy issues. But just as important is applying the tools and resources necessary to grow our grassroots network of industry advocates.

And while attention is often hyper-focused on policy developments at the federal level, it’s important to note that the actions of states and localities can have more impact on the day-to-day operations of our members. It’s not rare for federal legislation to begin as a multitude of laws that germinate in one state and spread to other states. For this reason, I look forward to working with my colleague Alex Rich, manager of state government relations, and our regional association partners to proactively meet these state and local policy challenges and opportunities.

What lessons have you learned since last holding this position at NATO?

Halstead: I’m returning to NATO after working with two great organizations that have significantly broadened my understanding of the industry and the benefits trade associations bring to their members. At their core, trade associations bring together competing organizations to protect and promote an industry. Through my work with both Theatre Owners of Mid-America and the Independent Cinema Alliance, I’ve had the opportunity to work with great teams of dedicated exhibitors to build these associations from the ground up. In the process, I’ve learned more about association management—ranging from communications and marketing to membership development and strategic

planning. I look forward to applying these experiences and the connections I’ve made to build on the great work that NATO has done on policy and strategic issues.

What is the most important thing that exhibitors can do to help NATO’s government relations efforts?

Halstead: Almost no other industry experienced more economic disruption than movie theaters. As the leading advocate for movie theaters of all sizes, NATO had to quickly pivot to protect the industry’s more than 150,000 jobs—and downstream the millions of Americans who work in front of and behind the movie camera. NATO’s work in support of Covid-19 relief generated more than 378,000 messages to Congress and mobilized hundreds of industry advocates. This level of engagement carried into NATO’s most successful advocacy day in Washington last November with more than 60 advocates meeting with members of Congress.

Going forward, it’s vital that exhibitors continue to build upon the relationships they’ve made with lawmakers and staff during the pandemic. We have proven over the past two years that exhibitors have a great story to tell and the ability to influence the outcome of legislation. Now more than ever, it is important that cinema exhibitors become active members of NATO and their regional associations and advocate for the industry on issues that impact their bottom lines. Put simply, all politics is local, and exhibitors have the home field advantage. ■

CHARITY SPOTLIGHT

➔ **Cineplex** is proud to have once again partnered with Food Banks Canada for a holiday season fundraising campaign. Fundraising efforts touched every facet of the business, including employee contributions; a corporate donation; and Movies that Give Back, a playlist on Cineplex’s PVID platform where \$1 from each purchase was donated to Food Banks Canada. All told, Cineplex is thrilled to have successfully reached its goal of providing over 10,000 meals.

The holiday season saw Dallas, Texas-based **Cinergy Entertainment Group** operate the fifth edition of its annual toy drive, giving guests the opportunity to receive a \$5 game card or a free popcorn in exchange for donating a toy valued at \$5 or more. Cinergy has donated thousands of toys to local children in need through community partnerships; this year, the chain partners with Toys for Tots and various local groups. “The holidays can be an especially difficult time for families in need,” says Traci Hoey, Cinergy’s vice president of marketing. “We are so happy to be able to bring toys to thousands of children in our communities.”

With the help of their great partners at **Marcus Theatres**, the 2021 holiday season saw **Variety – the Children’s Charity of Wisconsin** welcome 116 Variety kids and family members to a magical morning at the movies. Marcus opened locations in Appleton and Delafield, Wisconsin, to bring back Variety of Wisconsin’s 2021 Holiday Party, where families enjoyed holiday crafts, a photo booth, gift bags, and a sensory-friendly screening of *The Boss Baby: Family Business*.



On December 4, **Variety – the Children’s Charity of Eastern Tennessee** hosted its Variety Children’s Holiday Party for more than 300 attendees at the Regal Riviera in Downtown Knoxville. Children and their families enjoyed breakfast while watching Disney’s *Encanto*. In addition, each child was given a large gift bag full of toys and got a picture and a socially distanced visit with Santa! Afterward, 200-plus gift bags were delivered to the East Tennessee Children’s Hospital to spread cheer to those children who could not attend.

Lance Burton, (below, left) considered by his peers to be the greatest stage magician of the past century, returned to the Las Vegas stage for a special appearance to benefit **Variety – the Children’s Charity of Southern Nevada** and Opportunity Village.

In its 14th year, **Variety Detroit** adopted hundreds of children across southeastern Michigan in need of a special holiday. Donors received a child’s wish list, went shopping, and were invited to Santa’s Workshop to share in the holiday spirit with music, food, and present-wrapping stations. 2021’s iteration of Santa’s Workshop was on December 4, and 237 children were sponsored.

Thursday, December 16 saw the return of the **Motion Picture Club’s** annual holiday dinner, held at Ruth’s Chris Steak House in Manhattan. MPC president David Ostrander was on hand to present checks to four charity groups: Variety the Children’s Charity of New York; Will Rogers Motion Picture Pioneers Foundation; Rising Ground; and Ronald McDonald House. In addition, **Variety of New York** presented young Skyler (below), who has cerebral palsy, with her very own adaptive bike. 🎄



CHARITY HEROES NICHOLE OVERTON



General Manager
Regal Riviera
Knoxville, Tennessee

Variety – the Children’s Charity recognizes the incredible job done by Nichole Overton in assisting with the Variety Children’s Holiday Party held at the Knoxville Regal Riviera. She and her staff made sure that every detail on the theater end was set to go when the doors were opened for the children, including having the theater fully decorated for the holidays, setting a cheerful holiday mood for all who entered. During the event, Overton and her staff pitched in alongside all the Variety volunteers to make sure this day was extra-special for all the children who attended. Three cheers for Regal’s Nichole Overton and team!

Boxoffice Pro invites you to honor a Charity Hero—someone in the exhibition space who has gone above and beyond to help those in need. Nominations—along with a description of the person’s charity activities and a photo—can be sent to numbers@boxoffice.com.




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MADAM PRESIDENT

Heather Morgan Leads the Will Rogers Motion Picture Pioneers Foundation into the Future

BY REBECCA PAHLE

➔ Growing up in Soldier, Kansas—population 83, although slightly more when she lived there—put Heather Morgan a solid 20 minutes away from a grocery store or gas station, with the closest movie theater a further 10 minutes out. In high school, if a boy *really* liked you, he'd drive you 50 miles to the nicer, newer theater in the West Ridge Mall in Topeka—an occasion that could be easily marred by a ripped screen, sticky floor, or rude employee. In Soldier, explains Morgan, people had the money to get what they needed, but blue-collar jobs and small-town values meant they “didn’t often spend on frivolous things”—making a trip to the movie a rare, special event, “something to be celebrated.”

“I bring this small-town perspective to everything that I do,” says Morgan—especially her work in the exhibition business, including a stint at AMC (some of it as their director, guest experience) and in her time as V.P., content and programming, at Harkins Theatres. “I hold the moviegoing experience sacred, not just for myself and my family, but on behalf of everyone that steps through our theater doors,” she says. “People are spending their hard-earned money with us, and I don’t take that for granted. I’m very grateful for it and very protective of it. It is absolutely essential that we deliver the very best that we can for every person in every aspect.”

On January 1, 2022, Morgan added a new role to her résumé: president of the Will Rogers Motion Picture Pioneers Foundation. In operation since 1936, Will Rogers had perhaps the most challenging—and rewarding—year of its long existence in 2020, when it mobilized its own small staff and a supportive industry to gather funds to assist those in the exhibition ecosystem affected by



“I hold the moviegoing experience sacred, not just for myself and my family, but on behalf of everyone that steps through our theater doors.”

the Covid-19 pandemic. During that time, Morgan was serving on the board as Will Rogers’s vice president, a role that she accepted in January 2020, right before Will Rogers—and the exhibition industry—got turned on its head.

Morgan didn’t join the Will Rogers board with the expectation that she’d be helping to shepherd the nonprofit through its most turbulent period. She hadn’t had much formal experience working with charities or nonprofits up to that time; rather, her Soldier, Kansas roots imbued her with a naturally charitable spirit that saw her frequently volunteering with various organizations whenever the opportunity presented itself. Growing up in such a small town, says Morgan, means “you grow up with a very strong sense of community and an instilled ideal that we are all supposed to care for the people around us. If someone needs something

and you have it to give, you give it. If there's something that needs to be done, you do it. That is, and will forever be, in my DNA."

In college, Morgan combined her passion for helping people with a newly discovered love of business to study industrial-organizational psychology. "People spend so much of their lives at work. As an I-O psychologist, you have the ability to build better working environments for people by improving organizational climate and culture, teaching leaders how to be more effective, and educating companies about critical issues such as employee motivation, work-life balance, and stress management."

Morgan got her master's and Ph.D. before embarking on a career path that gradually led her away from a more tangible helping profession. "I love this industry, the relationships I have and the impact I bring," she says—but she missed the direct involvement of helping others in times of need. So she reached out to Universal's Jim Orr, a member of the Will Rogers Institute board since 2008. Seeing her energy and desire to get involved, he brought her into the fold—a step that

"We have a number of questions to answer. Most importantly, why are we important to this industry? How are we contributing to its current health and future success?"

eventually led to her becoming the next president of the Will Rogers Motion Picture Pioneers Foundation.

Morgan and the rest of the Will Rogers team will have a full plate throughout her two-year term. "Everything [Covid] did to ravage our industry, shutter theaters, and disrupt people's lives really thrust the Pioneers Assistance Fund into the limelight and increased people's awareness of it. Many people in this industry were not aware of the Pioneers Assistance Fund, or the Will Rogers charity altogether"—meaning that, among other things, they couldn't donate to the charity to help others in need or reach out to the group if they, themselves, needed help. Now, after an extremely difficult two years, "everyone at the organization is incredibly proud of the work that we've done and grateful for all the partners that helped us and each other during that difficult time."

With the industry now in recovery, yet still carrying scars from the past two years, Will Rogers will be turning its attention to the future needs of the exhibition community. Morgan cautions that no final strategic decisions will be made until

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the Will Rogers executive board has had a chance to meet, assess the issues, and evaluate the best path forward. “But we do know that the direction of the charity is going to shift somewhat,” she says, “because the needs of our industry are shifting, as are people’s financial positions and their ability to contribute to charities.”

First, to the basics: As president, Morgan will take up the work done by former president, Paramount’s Mark Christiansen (now serving as Will Rogers’s chairman), to get Will Rogers’s charity rating up to the maximum of four stars. “We’re going to run our charity like we run a business,” she says, “with laser focus on our core objectives and clear metrics in place to measure our performance against our goals.”

The “why” of Will Rogers is also up for fine-tuning. What are the core needs of the exhibition, distribution, and vendor communities, and how can Will Rogers help meet them? “Our industry is going through a tremendous period of change, and it will continue to do so,” says Morgan. “That means we have a number of questions to answer. Most importantly, why are we important to this industry? How are we contributing to its current health and future success? What do our partners need most from us, and how can we serve them better?” To that end, several concepts are on the table, including mentorship programs, financial-literacy/money-management courses, and leadership-development training, as well as some difficult-to-tackle issues including relationship building, collaboration, and diversity and inclusion. Part of that is already under way with Will Rogers’s Film

Row, a group of up-and-coming executives who have been making strides in diversity and inclusion education, as well as testing the launch of an industry-wide mentoring program in 2021.

Then, increased marketing—“Because people can’t support us, they can’t be evangelists for us, they can’t share information or utilize our services if they don’t know about us.” And the flip side of that: Once people *know* about Will Rogers, it should be as simple as possible to donate. The direct donation button at wrpioneers.com/donate is still there—but it’s joined now by a program that allows those interested in giving to Will Rogers to do so by rounding up purchases on their credit card, with a few cents at a time going to the charity, capped at a monthly maximum set by the giver.

“You can donate stocks and mutual funds,” says Morgan. “You can donate vehicles. We’ll even take boats. It’s not just about finding a strong ‘why’ that compels people to support you ... [it’s also about] making it very convenient for them to do so and trying to meet people where they are, so that if they want to contribute, you can offer them a number of ways to do that.”

In addition to overseeing Will Rogers through an unprecedented period, Morgan has accomplished another milestone in her appointment as Will Rogers’s president: She is the first woman in the charity’s 86-year history to hold the title. “When you are given the opportunity to advance causes that are important to you and to society, I think you have a responsibility to seize them,” says Morgan. “While I am truly humbled and honored

to have been chosen as the first to pave the way, it is far more gratifying knowing that I will not be the last.” Under Morgan’s leadership, the charity will install its first-ever all-female-led executive board, composed of leaders from exhibition, distribution, and vendor partners. This signals a dramatic shift for the charity, given that the Will Rogers executive board was exclusively male until Nikki Rocco, former head of distribution at Universal Pictures, came on board in 2005. When asked about this development, Morgan said: “To be clear, I did not set out to select women for the executive board. I set out to select the very best leaders to tackle the difficult task at hand. They just so happen to be women.”

“Heather is an accomplished executive with innovative ideas whose expertise will lead the Will Rogers Motion Picture Pioneers Foundation to new heights as we create a path for growth and continue to care for members of our community in times of need. We are all looking forward to working with her.”

—Todd Vradenburg, Executive Director, Will Rogers Motion Picture Pioneers Foundation

WILL ROGERS EXECUTIVE BOARD

Joining president Heather Morgan and chairman Mark Christiansen are the members of Will Rogers’s female-led executive board. Its officers include the following industry leaders:



Treasurer:
Mary Nakagawa,
President, IMOXIEmedia
(VCS)



Secretary:
Lisa Bunnell,
President, Distribution,
Focus Features



EVP:
Michelle Maddalena,
Head of Worldwide
Content & Industry
Relations, Dolby
Laboratories Inc.



SVP:
Shelli Taylor,
CEO, Alamo Drafthouse
Cinemas



V.P.:
Melanie Valera,
V.P. Sales, Theatrical
Distribution, Paramount
Pictures

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DRIVE-INS VENTURE INTO THE POST-PANDEMIC ERA

UDITOA's John Vincent Jr. Talks about Covid Recovery and Conventions and Debunks the So-Called Drive-In Boom

BY DANIEL LORIA

→ A popular narrative emerged during the first phase of cinema reopenings in the summer of 2020: drive-ins—purportedly unaffected by most Covid-19 restrictions—were enjoying off-the-charts business. The reality was significantly bleaker than the rosy picture painted in those reports. BOXOFFICE PRO spoke with United Drive-In Theatre Owners Association (UDITOA) president John Vincent Jr. ahead of the association's first convention since the onset of the pandemic to get a sense of how Covid-19 did, in fact, affect the drive-in business—and why he believes the sector's recovery will carry on unabated, despite the hardships of recent years.

Drive-ins led the reopening process for cinemas in the United States in 2020, and although there were many headlines heralding a renaissance for the sector, the reality of the situation was not quite as positive as it was made out to be. What was the overall impact of the pandemic on the drive-in business in 2020?

We were happy to be open and provide the public with a much-needed escape during the very early post-quarantine timeframe. That being said, a lot of what the public might perceive as a silver lining for drive-ins in the pandemic was negated by a lot of factors. We had to make sure we had social distancing in our lots [Vincent is also president of Wellfleet Cinemas on Cape Cod, Mass.]. Many of us, including myself, had to go to half capacity. By the time you're done with half capacity, given the way the rows of parking work, it really was 40 percent capacity. Many drive-ins

really only have one day a week, in the summer, to make money: Saturday night.

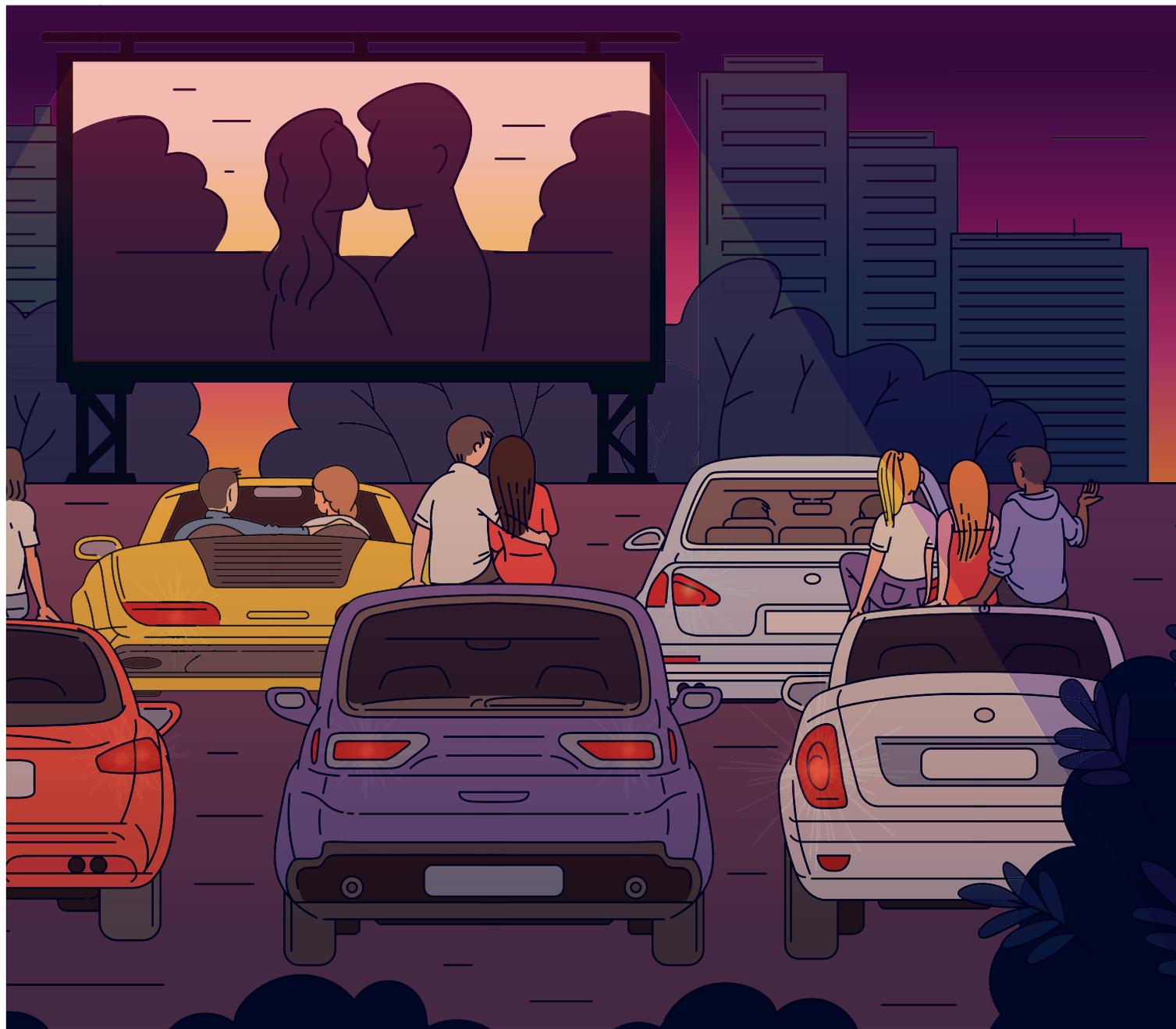
The other half of the coin is, just like our indoor counterparts, we make a lot of our money on concessions. We had to implement new procedures and policies to get food delivered to customers. My theater was historically cafeteria style: people would walk through one of three lanes and there would be a lot of impulse buying going on. They didn't have to pre-order the food; they could just pick it up and walk out after visiting the cashier. We had to transition completely into that McDonald's style where you go up, place your order, and wait for it to be delivered to you. It prevented us from being able to handle crowds very well, because the line would back up pretty profusely, especially with six-foot distancing. Our concession sales were down dramatically. So no, 2020 was not one of my drive-in's best years whatsoever. But I do want to emphasize that operators like myself were just ecstatic to be able to provide an outlet for the public that had very few out-of-home entertainment options at the time.

2021 was a recovery year for the cinema industry at large. How did drive-ins fare during this period?

Well, one thing we've learned in the drive-in industry from the pandemic is that Hollywood is not going to release their blockbuster movies just for drive-ins. We learned that in 2020, and we knew it coming into 2021, when the entire industry was not up to the levels where studios would like us to be in terms of attendance, because of the lingering



“One thing we’ve learned in the drive-in industry from the pandemic is that Hollywood is not going to release their blockbuster movies just for drive-ins.”



Covid concerns. A lot of the product was delayed and films that were released day-and-date with some of the streaming services also hurt our business. 2021, for my theater in particular, wasn't one for the record books either. In fact, honestly, it was one of the worst years we've had in the last two decades.

Are you concerned about any long-lasting effects the pandemics may have on drive-ins?

We're happy to be here and provide valuable out-of-home entertainment. We look forward to the many years to come.

You're not going to see a big reduction in the drive-in theater count. We really need a robust theatrical business, including all the indoor theaters, from the largest chains down to the smallest single-screen hometown theaters, to be up, running, and at their best in order for the entire industry to thrive. We're very thankful our indoor counterparts were able to receive funds from the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant (SVOG), which really did save our hometown theaters. If it wasn't for that and the work of the National Association of Theatre Owners we'd be in a very different place.

You mention the SVOG funds. Drive-ins were excluded from that program, were they not?

That's correct. I will add an asterisk to that though, in that it wasn't a poison pill like the policy that stated if you're a publicly traded company, you're not eligible for SVOG, period. While drive-ins, in and of themselves, were not eligible, many indoor cinemas were, of course, eligible. We did have some drive-ins, near major cities, that did tend to do OK in the pandemic. But many, especially as you get into the rural areas, did not. But we did benefit from other government

programs outside of SVOG, like the Payroll Protection Program. That definitely helped some drive-ins; it wasn't like we were without any support whatsoever.

Overall, we were happy to be open and serve customers, provide an outlet, and keep the pulse of the theatrical business going during the hardest months of the pandemic. There were a couple of times in 2020 when drive-ins took over the list of the 10 highest-grossing theaters in the country, but it was nothing like the narrative that was out there that drive-ins were doing fantastic and going through this resurgence. I've been in this business for 33 years, and drive-ins truly saw that resurgence in the early '90s, when we started to get mainstream product again. There is a whole host of issues why drive-ins will never have the same screen count we had in the 1950s: land value, seasonality, I'm not going to go down the line and mention all of them. But the drive-ins that are left, they're here to stay.

What types of movies have worked best at drive-in theaters during the pandemic?

For your three-, four-, or five-screen drive-ins, they can take pretty much everything. From the single-screen perspective, you really need to attract the widest-possible audience to make it work. *Jungle Cruise* and *Free Guy*, in August of last year, really helped carry the weight, not only at the drive-ins but at indoor theaters as well. Family movies draw the widest attraction—something adults can appreciate and all the way down to five-, seven-year-olds.

“There are outliers that do really well, horror movies and the like, but at most drive-ins, it's the family movies that draw the widest attraction: movies watchable by the vast majority of audiences.”

There are outliers that do really well, horror movies and the like, but at most drive-ins, it's the family movies that draw the widest attraction: movies watchable by the vast majority of audiences.

Aside from that, we continue to perform well with so-called “retro” movies. We wish more of them were out of the vault and available to program. Most drive-ins do quite well with classics such as *Dirty Dancing*, *Grease*, *Jaws*, *The Goonies*, *Gremlins*. You can't go wrong with those—but you can't play them all summer, either. They're good to program once or twice a season. We do quite well with those older movies that Generation X saw growing up; now the millennials are responding to some '90s titles.

One of those new releases you mentioned was available day-and-date on PVOD. Did that have any impact on attendance?

Absolutely. Of the two new releases I mentioned, we did see a more precipitous drop in the one that was available on PVOD week to week than the one that wasn't. Without PVOD, they definitely last longer. I think that benefits the entire industry, not only theaters, to have that length in theaters.

Last summer, you had some competition from drive-ins that were outside the exhibition business. City parks, big box stores that put pop-up drive-ins on their parking lot—companies that have no business in exhibition that came in to compete against authentic drive-ins. That led you to open a website where moviegoers could find an authentic drive-in nationwide. How is that project going?

We launched AuthenticDriveIns.com, and it espouses the assets that we consider [necessary for] an authentic drive-in. Primarily, was it built to be a drive-in? We also take into consideration some technical features, like having a large, permanently constructed screen and DCI-compliant equipment for Hollywood first-run movies that meet the proper brightness and color controls. The right sound. A fixed concession building, possibly a playground. And a lot of other smaller things that, on the whole, make up the authentic drive-in experience, versus being in a parking lot with a screen



thrown up in some manner. We think that the public understands the difference. The website is a great way to find your local drive-in. If you're not familiar where they are, there's a geographical search you can do on it, and you'll find the local UDITOA drive-in near you.

What really irks us as an industry is the availability of product. There are certain movies that are in the vault for real theaters, indoor or outdoor, that we don't have access to. A lot of these temporary venues had access to that repertory product, including in 2020, that we were forbidden from playing. That is particularly troubling to our industry—that for a variety of reasons, we're not allowed to play some of these retro movies while these pop-up venues are allowed to play them. Aside from that, I think the public does appreciate the authentic drive-in experience and they will seek it out. I encourage everyone to seek out an authentic drive-in experience, if you haven't been. We know there are a lot of areas in the United States that don't have one within a drivable distance, but if you have the opportunity, please visit your local drive-in. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised and love the experience.

This is the off-season for drive-ins, which coincidentally overlaps with the Major League Baseball season. Instead of the MLB's winter meetings, you have your annual UDITOA convention in January. What do you have lined up for this year's event?

We're eager to get back to meeting in person. We will be at the Grand Orlando Resort, soon to be Delta by Marriott, in Kissimmee [Florida]. It's a perfect facility for us. just the right size, where we have the entire convention facilities and we have some flexibility in going back and forth between rooms, versus being in a facility that's too small or a facility that's so big that you're one of many conventions there.

This year, we're going to focus on getting together, the social side of things. It's going to be similar in spirit to CinemaCon last August, where we're not going to worry about a tentpole event, speakers, or anything like that. We just want to get together, enjoy each other's company, and catch up. Many of us have not seen each other in two years.

“What really irks us as an industry is the availability of product. There are certain movies that are in the vault for real theaters, indoor or outdoor, that we don't have access to.”

We are going to have a panel discussion on lessons learned over the last two years. A lot of us got forced out of our comfort zone. For example, although I've had a point of sale at my indoor cinemas since 1986, several of us didn't have that coming into 2019. We were always worried: How do we deal with selling advance tickets? What do we do with possible sellout nights in fishing out the people coming in who bought advance tickets? We had never intended on going to advance tickets in my drive-in. Eventually, we knew we were going to have to go to a credit card system at the box office, but Covid accelerated that.

One of the lessons we learned is that selling advance tickets at the drive-in is a very good thing on so many levels. It gives us a serious indicator of how busy the night's going to be. You can plan to staff accordingly by calling in extra people at four or five o'clock, when we didn't have that intelligence before. That's the type of information we're going to exchange with each other to learn and help us collectively improve our business. That's always been a big component of the drive-in industry. We're very forthright, sharing ideas on how to do our operations and make more money. ■



CINEMA ADVERTISING ON THE COMEBACK TRAIL

Interview with Global Cinema Advertising Association CEO Cheryl Wannell

BY DANIEL LORIA

→ Cinema advertising, one of the most consistent revenue drivers for movie theaters, was derailed by the Covid-19 pandemic alongside the rest of the global exhibition business. After enduring a difficult year and a half of closures and restrictions, the sector is looking to bounce back through collaboration among members of its trade group, the Global Cinema Advertising Association (SAWA), by bringing major brands back to the movies in 2022 and beyond.

BOXOFFICE PRO spoke with Cheryl Wannell, SAWA's chief executive officer, to better understand the association's challenges during the pandemic—and learn about its immediate plans to overcome them.

From your perspective at the Cinema Advertising Association, when did this recovery begin in earnest?

Initially, when this all started in March 2020, most of the industry thought we were going to be closed for eight weeks and the recovery would take place right after that. As we learned, it comes in waves. As one part of the world closed, another opened, with some countries under capacity restrictions while others had them lifted because of all these different variants. I think we've started to really properly recover in Q4 of 2021.

Australia first led the way in the recovery process—and in the advertising

market as well. China, being the first country to be hit by the pandemic, also started to recover very well. Japan, Denmark, places that could be propped up by local content being released in cinemas. They had some very early success. But then, of course, the variants arrived, and those markets started to close again. It caused a roller-coaster effect around the world that has been extremely hard to manage. Now you look at Denmark as one of the markets leading the world at the moment. They've been open for about six months, their capacity levels are good, they've got local content in the market as well, and they're doing very well. The U.K. has recovered well. Australia has recovered well—even though we've just been in a four-month lockdown, which kind of turned Australia upside down. But we've come out of it strong because we've got a very good movie slate at the moment, as you know.

From a global perspective, where does cinema advertising find itself today as we're entering 2022?

I think Q4 has been great because we've got a great movie slate. We're lucky that we're a very old medium. We've been around a long time, even though we've modernized, digitally, so we have a lot of trust and people have used cinema [advertising] for a long time. They know it has an incredibly high recall; we're a captive attention channel. In some senses, what happens in Hollywood is reflected in our industry. We've worked very hard to communicate with our brands and our agencies; we didn't just sit back for the last 18 months and do nothing. We worked very hard to make sure we were still visible, even though cinemas in a lot of countries around the world were being either closed for part or a lot of that time. I think we're in a good position; we are feeling positive. If you look at the U.K., revenue and audiences in lots of parts of Europe, but especially in the U.K., are now pretty much aligned with 2019 during the same period. That's why we are heading into 2022 very comfortable and positive.

You mentioned those 18 months where everybody in the industry had to go back to the drawing board and innovate. Here in the United States, you had exhibitors reopening and selling concessions to-go, we saw pop-up



drive-ins. From the Global Cinema Advertising Association's perspective, what were some of those stories of your members' resiliency and innovation?

One of the things I thought was wonderful during this period was the collaboration between our members. A lot of our members are in competition with each other in very similar markets. We built a global task force so they could help each other. They were so transparent with their information, with their research, their marketing. We built a wonderful forum they could all log into and get this rich information from. That type of collaboration has really been great for the cinema medium, because we're all in it together. We've always had a very successful trade body; we've been around 68 years. But I think it's become even more successful, collaborative, and united than ever.

What are some of the initiatives that SAWA has taken on in helping drive cinema advertising now that theaters are open?

When this all happened, there were two schools of thought. One was, do we stop our membership fees, step back from SAWA, and go into a dormant environment for as long as needed? No one knew if that would take eight weeks or 18 months. Do we just sit back and wait it out? Or do we step up, become more aggressive, community-minded, involved with our members, to be a network of communication and support? We took the second option and decided to step up our game, and it's been very successful for SAWA because we are now completely stable financially. We are back on track as a trade body, even though a lot of trade bodies probably couldn't say that in today's market.

We started this global task force, which I mentioned a moment ago. Now that was a great initiative. It was difficult to pull off because we had 10 prominent companies in the cinema advertising space around the world that came together every Monday night on Zoom, sometimes at midnight in some countries. We met some great people, built great relationships between companies. Whether they were in America, South Africa, or London, they became closer and worked together. We worked up five challenges that we needed to work on and built webinars around

them. We solved issues by research and hard work, putting all that information into a new forum we built at Sawa.com, for members only, where they could go and find research from all around the world that had been done before or during Covid. They could then use that research and adapt it to their local market, put it in their own language, adapt it to their culture as needed. That was a huge collaboration. It was so great that members were prepared to really help each other.

One of the other things we developed was a thing called Hello Big Screen. We went to six of the biggest advertising legends in the world and we asked them to do an endorsement on video, a 60-second piece, to camera, for a six-week social media campaign. These are people who understand the power, captivity, and attendance that cinema advertising gets on the big screen. All our members worked together to have these go viral and it's been amazing.

After a recovery year in 2021, the big question for 2022 is the time frame for a full global recovery. Do you expect cinema to hit 2019 admission levels in several countries?

Many countries are already at 2019 levels. Of course, the new variant, Omicron, who knows the effect that's going to have on everybody? If you'd asked me last week, I'd have had a different answer for you than the one I'll give you this week. That's how we've been living the last 18 months in our lives. I think it's important to be positive and to always remember that there's nothing like going to the big screen. There's nothing like the viewability of cinema.

There's no doubt that streaming had a massive effect on the cinema industry when the pandemic first hit. Cinemas were closed—where were they supposed to run the movies? There was nowhere else to go but streaming. But if you look at [*No Time to Die*], for example, they held that off for 18 months because it wasn't going to make the money to cover the film if they ran it on streaming. They needed to have it theatrically released. And you look at all the big films at the moment, whether it's *Spider-Man*, James Bond, *Dune*, or *Eternals*, all these films need a theatrical release. ■

"They know it has an incredibly high recall; we're a captive attention channel. In some senses, what happens in Hollywood is reflected in our industry."

BACK TO THE BIG SCREEN

Industry Leaders on In-Cinema Advertising's Pandemic Journey

BY REBECCA PAHLE

➔ The recovery of the cinema sector—the ebbs and flows, the changes from market to market, and its eventual return to pre-pandemic levels—is mirrored by the community of companies that work with cinemas to make their operation possible. Included in this, of course, is the cinema advertising community, which was hit by downturns not only in exhibition, but in myriad

other industries that buy ads to put on cinema screens, from restaurants to travel. Below, BOXOFFICE PRO speaks to representatives from leading cinema advertising agencies—including international outfits Pearl & Dean (U.K.) and Val Morgan (Australia and New Zealand)—to get their take on how their corner of the exhibition industry has weathered the pandemic storm.

Pearl & Dean

Kathryn Jacob, CEO

National CineMedia

Tom Lesinski, CEO

Screenvision Media

John Partilla, CEO

Spotlight Cinema Networks

Michael Sakin,
President

Val Morgan

Guy Burbidge,
Managing Director;
Paul Butler, Group
Insights and Analytics
Director

CAN YOU DESCRIBE, IN GENERAL TERMS, WHAT THINGS WERE LIKE FOR YOUR COMPANY IN THE FIRST FEW MONTHS AFTER COVID SHUT DOWN THE CINEMA INDUSTRY? DID YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW LONG IT WOULD LAST?

Spotlight Cinema Networks: As with everyone in our industry, Covid had a tremendous impact on our business. While we knew business would be operating again at some point, we knew we needed to get creative, pivot, and prioritize plans for the type of company we wanted to be coming out of the pandemic.

National CineMedia: It was a difficult time, as it was such an unusual situation for movie theaters to completely close with no understanding of a timeline for reopening. The company went into full evaluation mode of what we needed to do to survive and come out thriving on the other end.

Screenvision Media: Like so many businesses, we were severely impacted by the suddenness and the severity of the Covid-19 outbreak. We moved within days to a 100 percent remote work model and initiated immediate outreach to our employees, our theater partners, and our advertisers to plan for a 90- to 180-day shutdown. Honestly, we were hopeful for a Labor Day return, but we made difficult cutbacks and decisions that could help us endure for a much longer time frame. If we hadn't made the very difficult calls as quickly as we did, it would have been very hard for us to have made it through [to this point].

Pearl & Dean: I think initially we were, like many companies, in a mixed state of surprise and suspense. We had to pivot to remote working very quickly (though luckily, we had just finished a major systems and operations update, which made doing so possible). After that, it was just a waiting game until restrictions would stop. It felt like managing a continually changing landscape. One

constant we knew we had to focus on was the reaffirmation of the cinema experience as the clamor around streaming grew.

Val Morgan: In the first market-wide lockdown, cinemas in Australia and New Zealand closed in late March 2020. New Zealand reopened early June, with Australia following a couple of weeks later. We were initially expecting this to last a few months and worked quickly to keep our advertising clients informed. Soon after the initial reopening, we had the first (of what has now been many) periodic shutdown in certain markets, at the same time the industry was realigning itself with titles and release dates moving around in the schedule. At the outset we built different scenarios for the business, with no firm view at the time on when this might be over.

HOW DID YOUR COMPANY'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS CINEMA PARTNERS CHANGE OVER THE PANDEMIC? WHAT KINDS OF CONVERSATIONS WERE YOU HAVING WITH YOUR EXHIBITOR PARTNERS AS THE PANDEMIC WENT ON? HOW ABOUT YOUR ADVERTISING PARTNERS?

Pearl & Dean: Our cinema partners were in as much flux as we were. Our outdoor and pop-up cinemas had to change their models to drive-ins, and we worked through that with them. In the bricks-and-mortar bit of our business, we communicated frequently, shared information, and worked with the UKCA (the trade body for exhibition) and the FDA (the distribution trade body) to keep on top of any news, trends, and developments. In both exhibition and advertising, communication was absolutely key. We held webinars and regular catch-up sessions—anything that ensured we were helping out and keeping cinema top of mind.

Screenvision Media: Essentially, our overarching position was to be the very best partners we could be. It's the standard we hold ourselves to during "normal operating times," and we felt our culture of

excellence and of forbearance to be all the more critical during the pandemic force majeure. Specifically, that meant being flexible and creative with our exhibitor partners and maintaining a high level of communication and touch. With our advertisers, it meant shifting or canceling massive advertising-budget commitments no matter what the contracts may have specified. At our core, it was humanity above all. We all took off our respective advertiser or exhibitor or media hats and just became human beings trying to weather the most severe crisis any of us had ever professionally confronted.

Val Morgan: Transparent and open conversations, with both our exhibitor and advertiser partners, have built on the strong relationships we already had with them. For our exhibitors, it was about keeping them up to date with the resulting impact of changes to advertisers' plans and the subsequent impact on revenue. For advertisers it was about providing reassurance that we were delivering audiences and that campaigns were going to be delivered. As time has gone on, we've moved back into the conversation with both parties about the future and getting back to the growth plan we had in place prior to the pandemic.

National CineMedia: We stayed very close with exhibitors on how things evolved and were in constant communication throughout. We had ongoing communication with advertisers about how they were doing and how their business was evolving, and we kept them up to date on what was happening in the world of cinema, which at times during the pandemic was a very fluid situation. We made sure to keep our advertising partners informed of the movie release schedule and when audiences started to return to theaters.

"It was a difficult time, as it was such an unusual situation for movie theaters to completely close with no understanding of a timeline for reopening."

ARE THERE ANY PIVOTS THAT YOUR COMPANY MADE, CHANGING THEIR STATUS QUO TO BETTER REFLECT THE REALITIES OF THE COVID ERA?

Val Morgan: Agility, communication, and flexibility have been key. The business quickly transitioned to enable our teams to work from home effectively. Communication across the business has been a major focus throughout this period, keeping our teams engaged, informed, and motivated. To connect effectively with our advertising partners, we also developed a range of initiatives to keep the profile of cinema high amongst media agencies and clients, who were working from home themselves.

Screenvision Media: We pushed ourselves to try to help our theater-exhibitor partners maintain and deepen their own customer and community relationships. We could only mostly provide counsel and creativity, but we also invested some of our hard-earned dollars to build a new loyalty digital app that could help some of our exhibitors provide fresh and updated trailer previews while incorporating local and customized theater messaging. In some instances, we were able to create shared advertising monetization that benefited our advertisers and our theater partners.

We also looked to experimentally pivot into some other adjacent audience platforms, such as health care, sports, and essential retail advertising. Though this did not directly benefit our theater exhibitors, it was not unrelated to their long-term interests in that it helped sustain our Screenvision Media business and economic health.

Pearl & Dean: What came out of Covid was the closeness and focus of the team here. You can take that for granted in more regular times. It made us stronger as a group.

Spotlight Cinema Networks: Spotlight is known for its dedication to serving the needs of luxury, dine-in, and art house cinemas. Our exhibitor- and advertising-partner relationships were reinforced during the pandemic. Communication

was key and the message was clear: “We are all in this together.” We worked relentlessly to continue providing new opportunities, services, and resources throughout the pandemic. In fact, Spotlight is emerging with a few key accomplishments post-Covid-19:

We strengthened and grew our exhibitor network over the past 22 months. This includes an expansion of our long-term relationship with Cinépolis Luxury Cinemas, where we now exclusively represent all of their locations. We also welcomed new exhibitor partners, including LOOK Dine-In Cinemas and Cinema Lab. We are proud that we were able to grow our network during this difficult time, with our national screen count growing 14 percent and our local screen count growing 35 percent.

Expanded media portfolio for our advertising partners to reach and engage with moviegoers. Options include in-theater pre-show and vertical networks; outdoor and premium streaming AVOD.

Enhanced proprietary digital-distribution technology to include media and content delivery without use of servers, installation costs, and thumb drive shipments

National CineMedia: We’ve been closely examining all of our business since the pandemic began. We’ve pivoted and have gotten into the digital OOH media space, along with enhancing and expanding our digital and data offering, and have much more advanced audience targeting capabilities.

DURING THE YEAR, HOW HAS YOUR COMPANY BEEN ABLE TO HELP YOUR CINEMA PARTNERS THROUGH THEIR RECOVERY PROCESS?

Screenvision Media: We continue to stay highly communicative, flexible, and adaptable. Fundamentally, we are focused on generating maximum advertising revenues as quickly as we are able to help supplement our exhibitors’ finances during these very difficult times.

We have also taken on additional creative and marketing support responsibilities where most helpful to some of our partners.

Spotlight Cinema Networks: Our event cinema division, CineLife Entertainment, provided much-needed content to exhibitors as their theaters reopened across the U.S. Highlights include the release of John Carpenter’s *Halloween*, which reached over 1,000 screens across the U.S. and Canada during the fall of 2020. 2021 included releases of the critically acclaimed *Chicago: America’s Hidden War*, *Sopranos Sessions: A Special Theatrical Triple Feature*, and another screening of fan-favorite *Halloween*.

Pearl & Dean: We have offered to support them in any way we can. There isn’t a pattern to the support we give, as our partners are varied. But they know we’re here to support and help in any way we can. We also linked up with one of the big advertising groups, Omicron, to run a £2 million “Cinema Is Back” campaign, where other media platforms gave us inventory to publicize the return of cinema. The help that Omicron gave us was exceptional, and they were brilliant partners. At that time no one was in a position to spend much on advertising, so we were delighted to do that.

Val Morgan: Working closely with our partners in exhibition and providing realistic revenue forecasts based on our conversations in-market with advertisers and their agencies.

“What came out of Covid was the closeness and focus of the team here. You can take that for granted in more regular times. It made us stronger as a group.”

WE'VE SEEN HOW CHANGES THAT OCCURRED DURING THE PANDEMIC—SHORTER EXCLUSIVITY WINDOWS, TO USE ONE PARTICULARLY BIG EXAMPLE—WILL HAVE A LONG-RANGING IMPACT ON THE INDUSTRY. HAS THE PANDEMIC CAUSED ANY SHIFTS IN THE CINEMA ADVERTISING LANDSCAPE THAT YOU THINK MIGHT BE PERMANENT?

Screenvision Media: Beyond the truncated exhibition windows, I believe cinema operators have more fully recognized they are deeply allied with the talent industry of this tremendous sector. Theater owners and Hollywood talent—directors, actors, producers—are uniquely aligned in their fierce determination to protect and promote the most valuable and impactful canvas on the planet.

Spotlight Cinema Networks: I expect some change as a consequence of the pandemic. Everyone and everything has changed. While the dust has not settled yet on what the new normal will be, I believe moviegoing remains a magical experience and cinema advertising will rebound as it emerges from Covid-19. It is encouraging how well films such as *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*, *No Time to Die*, *Dune*, and *House of Gucci* have done at the box office.

Val Morgan: Early after the first national lockdown ended in Australia, we commissioned research to gauge sentiment about cinema. The findings showed the desire for out-of-home experiences and that Australians' love of cinema was as strong as ever. Importantly for brands, those with the most positive outlook and those most willing and able to make big purchase decisions were also the first to come back—we dubbed this segment "the Great Escapers." Whilst we've faced several periods of closure across the year, we've been encouraged by the appetite to get back to the movies. Whilst many have suggested the death of cinema, we believe in the future more than ever based on cinemas' sheer power for

brands and the "experience" factor it offers versus in-home media and movie viewing.

National CineMedia: The streaming day-and-date experiment generally failed, as studios are leaving money on the table. The theatrical window has shortened and looks to be settling in at 45 days. The audience's pent-up demand and passion for shared live experiences and seeing the world's best content has come back with a vengeance. During the pandemic, the move of audiences to non-ad-supported streaming platforms has only increased the value of cinema as one of the last places to reach young people at scale. We are seeing strong and consistent attendance and box office numbers, particularly among the hard-to-reach 18-to-34- and 18-to-49-year-old audiences.

WHERE WOULD YOU SAY THE CINEMA ADVERTISING LANDSCAPE IS IN ITS RECOVERY PROCESS? DO YOU HAVE A BALLPARK ESTIMATE AS TO WHEN YOU'LL BE BACK TO PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS?

National CineMedia: We've been bringing our partners back to cinema throughout most of 2021, and that rebuild will continue into 2022.

Spotlight Cinema Networks: We are hopeful for 2022. Cinema is a resilient business, and I think the lessons we have learned over the past two years will help set us up for future growth. Audiences love to immerse themselves with great content in a great theatrical environment.

Pearl & Dean: I would say that we are cautiously optimistic regarding the recovery. Industry forecasts show that advertising revenue in 2022 will show strong growth, and we expect cinema revenues to follow suit. Our advertising revenues in Q4 2021 are ahead of the same period in 2019, so we are starting 2022 with a positive outlook.

Val Morgan: We are in the early stages of the recovery cycle, as our vaccination rate initially lagged behind the world for the first half of 2021. The key markets of Sydney and Melbourne only came out of

the last lockdown in October 2021, and Auckland has just reopened again at the beginning of December. It's still early days, but I estimate that we could be back to pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2022.

WHAT'S THE NUMBER ONE LESSON YOU'VE LEARNED FROM THIS PANDEMIC?

Screenvision Media: At the core, humans fundamentally need socialization, storytelling, and shared experiences. No couch or pandemic can negate that truth. Ever.

Pearl & Dean: The number one lesson is the importance of our team. During the darkest times of the pandemic, our mutual support helped us enormously. We are also part of the global family that is SAWA [Global Cinema Advertising Association], so sharing experiences, knowledge, and plans with colleagues in other markets was really great.

National CineMedia: The cinema experience has survived 100 years of change, ranging from technological innovation to audience behaviors—yet we still survive and thrive. Our company will continue to reinvent itself to meet our audience and advertiser needs.

Val Morgan: The importance of a long-term perspective.

Spotlight Cinema Networks: The biggest lesson I learned over the past two years is to be prepared for the unexpected. It is imperative to have an efficient emergency plan to activate. Spotlight jumped right into action to effectively work remotely and keep Spotlight top of mind while reflecting on-the-ground realities. ■

"While the dust has not settled yet on what the new normal will be, I believe moviegoing remains a magical experience and cinema advertising will rebound as it emerges from Covid-19."

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“The whole idea of The(Any)Thing is that we want to pop up at places where you would want to have access to cinema.”

Thomas van de Weerd, p. 42

A FOND FAREWELL

Mark Zoradi Looks Back on His Time as Cinemark CEO

BY REBECCA PAHLE

"It's nice to be leaving at the end of this year, when I really feel like we're on an upswing."



→ 2022 marks a year of new beginnings for Cinemark, the third-largest movie chain in North America. Last summer the circuit announced that Mark Zoradi, CEO since 2015, would officially retire from his position at the end of 2021, leaving the company in the capable hands of former CFO and COO Sean Gamble.

A 40-plus-year veteran of the entertainment business, Zoradi came up on the distribution side—serving as president of the Walt Disney Motion Pictures Group, among other roles—before shifting over to exhibition. His tenure at Cinemark has been marked by a period of growth, with 2019 representing the fifth consecutive year of record grosses for the chain. Then, of course, came Covid. Though Cinemark suffered along with the rest of the industry, many of the innovations put in place during Zoradi's time as CEO—including an aggressive conversion to recliner seating, expansion of food and beverage, the introduction of North America's first exhibitor-driven subscription program, and the adoption of a dynamic theatrical exclusivity window—left Cinemark in a position to weather the storm.

Below, Zoradi speaks with BOXOFFICE PRO about his time at Cinemark, his thoughts on the future of the industry, and his plans for his post-Cinemark life.

You're leaving Cinemark with a lot of interesting initiatives on the table for Sean [Gamble, incoming CEO] and the rest of the team to really sink their teeth into. I'm excited to talk to you about what the future holds.

It's nice to be leaving at the end of this year, when I really feel like we're on an upswing. The fourth quarter is going to be a strong quarter. The month of December, especially with *Spider-Man* opening up, is going to be very strong. Then the strong lineup into '22. So I feel like we're clearly on the upswing and in a recovery mode.

The news about *Spider-Man* being Cinemark's second-largest single-day pre-sale was certainly hopeful.

What's interesting: it wasn't just in the U.S., either. We do business in 15 Latin American countries. It was the *biggest* pre-sale of all time for us in Latin America. The sales in Latin America have even been, on a relative basis, larger [than in the U.S.]. This movie's going to be a worldwide success.

Speaking of Cinemark's operations in Latin America: As of the end of Q3 2021, all your screens were open, albeit with some restrictions in different markets. What's the state of recovery for Cinemark in Latin America?

I would put it this way. We are open in all of our theaters. We're somewhere in a 60- to 90-day lag to the recovery in the U.S., depending on the country itself. The primary reason for that isn't because of the number of vaccines *today*, because actually the major countries of Argentina, Brazil, and Chile have percentages of vaccine equal to and above the United States. But they were slower getting there. The vaccine didn't come as quickly to Latin America. But once it came, the adoption rate was very, very strong. So I would put them somewhere from 60 to 90 days behind the U.S. in terms of actual recovery. But [I'm] *highly* encouraged with the pre-sales on *Spider-Man*. As I said, they're the biggest pre-sales that we have ever had, in the history of Cinemark, in Latin America.

Of the many, many changes this industry has seen over the last two years, certainly near the top is the shifting of theatrical windows. Cinemark was relatively early to see

the writing on the wall there, with your dynamic theatrical-window model. Given that everything during the Covid era has been a bit of an experiment, now, at the end of 2021, what's your assessment of how the dynamic window has worked for Cinemark?

We announced several months ago that we did new licensing agreements with all the studios and major content providers that take us all the way in through '22. The only exception to that is that Disney wanted to do it at a little bit of a slower pace. We have a deal that takes us through the calendar year of '21 with Disney, and we expect that '22 will be a year in which Disney will continue to have exclusive windows. With all the movies since *Free Guy*, they've been having an exclusive window.

The windows are going to probably map out somewhere from 30 to 45 days for the big movies, and potentially slightly less than that for the smaller movies. But I think that the studios and content providers have realized that having an exclusive theatrical window helps eventize movies, helps increase the ancillary market benefit to them, and also significantly reduces piracy. When movies that went day-and-date in the home were tested during the pandemic, it highly increased the piracy rates. Effectively, you were putting a pristine copy of the movie into a home environment that could be easily duplicated and sent around the world. I think we're going to settle down into '22 with a more consistent distribution pattern.

Notwithstanding that, I think it's important to say we're not naive to think that there won't potentially be some additional tests and thoughts along the way. By the way, we're testing, too. We're testing with Netflix, and we'd like to test with Amazon as well. We're willing to test shortened windows for significant reductions in film rental. We anticipate continuing to test with Netflix. The key thing with the streamers is that, not only does it have some form of an exclusive window—whether that's 17 days or 24 days or 31 days—but also that the streamer puts forward a substantial marketing campaign. If a movie just gets laid out there without a significant marketing campaign, then it's not going to do very well. Netflix and others are in the process of testing that out.

Late in 2021, we hosted a State of the Art House roundtable, where one of the thoughts brought up—by Paul Serwitz, president and COO of Landmark—is that when streamers release films theatrically, what's important to them isn't so much box office as it is a handful of other things: marketing, awards contention, keeping filmmakers happy, attracting new filmmakers. How can you make sure that your goals are aligned with what a streamer wants from a theatrical release?

What we're trying to do is convince streamers that they can have both. In other words, they can release the movie theatrically, have a box office success, and eventize that movie, which in turn makes it more valuable for the first home exposure. We're going to continue to try and do that. Maybe we'll get some key markets that we'll test it in, so that they can see the results of doing a significant test in three or four key markets and really going after those markets with an aggressive consumer marketing campaign that we would then supplement with an aggressive *retail* marketing campaign with our web and app and in-theater to be able to show them that, ultimately, that's more profitable for them.

The research has shown over the years that people who stream more content,

[including] movies, also tend to go to the movies more. These are people that have a big appetite for entertainment. So they're not mutually exclusive. People actually like to see a movie in the theater, enjoy it, and then have the ability, in a relatively short amount of time, to access it in the home as well, whether it's streaming or pay-per-view or VOD. That's what we're trying to work with the various streaming services to illustrate.

On the subject of marketing, you discussed in Cinemark's Q3 earnings call that, moving forward, Cinemark would retool and revamp your marketing campaign. Can you expand a bit on what's changed?

Over the past, I would say, 12 to 24 months, we have really increased our digital marketing reach. That's on our app, it's on our website, it's on our email. It's actually spending marketing money to create e-commerce. More and more of our ticket sales are now online, because we're going to existing customers, and we're going to customers that we think will have the likelihood to want to go to that movie. We're acting much more like a traditional retailer would act to attract customers into our theaters.

We have the database. We have millions of people in our free loyalty program. And





we have over 900,000 people in our Movie Club subscription program. We know exactly who they are. They have movie credits in their account. We know exactly what they've seen. So we can actually go to that family and know that they've seen animation before, so therefore, you're going to talk to them about *Sing 2*. Or you know they've seen action-adventure before, so you're going to go to them and promote the next James Bond or Spider-Man movie. The access to data that we have today is significantly greater than what it was even 24 months ago, and we have a marketing team that specializes in digital and social marketing.

How does this marketing piece tie into Cinemark's premium amenities, whether it's Cinemark XD or Cinionic laser projectors? The average moviegoer might not know what those things actually mean or why they're better than a typical cinema experience. How do you communicate that to them?

We had a previous XD campaign in the past. We're going to continue to aggressively market our XD theaters.

"One other thing that doesn't get talked about enough is really solid guest services. We put a big emphasis on training our people, both hourly people and our management teams in the theater."

We're building a brand with XD. It's the largest PLF format in the United States. When we put a movie like *Spider-Man* on sale, the first screens that get sold out are our XDs. They're charging, usually, \$3 more. But they're the first ones [to sell out on a] big action-adventure movie. We'll have quarters where only 4.5 percent of our theaters are XD, and we'll do 12 or 13 percent of our box office out of XD auditoriums. We're continuing to build and convert into XD auditoriums, both domestically and internationally. We're continuing to add more D-Box across the country. We have the highest penetration of recliners of any of the majors. Sixty-five percent of our screens have been fully reclined with the luxury electric seats, the majority of them heated. Consumers absolutely love the recliner seats. I think it's been one of the keys to our success. We've grown our market share from just under 13 percent to a pretty consistent 15 percent market share right now. It's been the combination of marketing, film, recliners, XD, D-Box—it's all these things.

One other thing that doesn't get talked about enough is really solid guest

services. We put a big emphasis on training our people, both hourly people and our management teams in the theater. People go to the theater because it's a good place to go see a movie, but they also go because they're treated nicely and fairly. Somebody welcomes them, and the concession prices are reasonable, and the ticket prices are reasonable. The emphasis that we put on guest services is equally, maybe even more, important than XDs and recliners.

You can't forget about that baseline. You can have the most advanced seats in the world, but if the basics of customer service aren't there, it doesn't matter.

If somebody is not friendly to you, you'll find another place to go. A lot of our people are hourly people. Some of them are seasonal. They're students. You have a relatively significant turnover in those hourly people. Those are the people that are interacting with our customers. It's very, very important to continue to train them into the culture of Cinemark, which has always been, going back to the early days of Lee Roy Mitchell, really focusing on the guest experience.

Cinemark has also revved up its gaming content over the last year, hiring a vice president to work on gaming initiatives and partnering with the app-based Mission Control gaming platform. For cinemas, e-gaming feels like something that's been in the works for a while, but it's never gotten fully off the ground. What's your view of e-gaming and how it plays into the future of Cinemark?

We think it's a potentially significant growth area. It's not a big, significant portion of our business today. That's why we've decided to get very serious about it and bring in an executive who understands the gaming world and then [can] tie that into the theatrical world. Every time we've experimented with things, we're learning more and more. You may know what we did with "Critical Role," where we rolled that out into 30 cities. It was highly successful. ["Critical Role" is a streaming series featuring a group of professional voice actors playing an ongoing game of Dungeons & Dragons.]

We've had everything you mentioned, from Mission Control to Super League Gaming. We haven't fully cracked that nut yet. But we are putting real assets and time

and effort and money [into it]. Alternative content is really, really important to us, especially in the world that we're living in. People will come out to be within their gaming universe and to experience things both as a player and as a spectator, even though they could spectate some of that online. But it's the fact of being in a community together. That's what "Critical Role" was all about. They could have watched that online, but they came out to the theater, and they paid a significant amount to get in and see it, because they wanted to experience it as a community of people who love that particular game. Gaming is a real strategic initiative for us as we move into 2022.

Looking back on your time with Cinemark, is there anything that you're especially proud of?

I'd say it's a couple of things, all kind of [interconnected]. One is the way that we very aggressively reoutfitted our theaters and redesigned our theaters to put recliners in. Two is the digital transformation that was put in place to market and promote our films. And three is the real emphasis that we put on data and consumer loyalty. Consumer loyalty is not only our free [loyalty program]. We were the first exhibitor-sponsored subscription program [in North America]. We put a unique twist on it. The models coming out of Europe had been unlimited [tickets]. We tested that and researched that. We also researched it against the model of the rollover plan, which is more like what you see at Amazon Audible, or what you see with data plans. Our Movie Club subscription program has been highly successful.

And then the expansion of our food and drink and other amenities. We now offer expanded food in about 70 percent of our theaters and alcohol in about 50 percent. Now, also, you can order online. We've rolled out a whole new concept called Snacks in a Tap. The consumer can order online and either pick it up when they get there—and it's made fresh, because as soon as they scan their phone, we know you're there and we make it fresh—or you can walk to your seat, and we'll deliver it to you. That's all part of the guest experience.

After Covid hit, you've had great success with private watch parties.

Thank you for bringing that up. That was an initiative by a person here who had

the idea to do it. It wasn't me. It was a person on the team. And boy, we heard it and said, "That's a great idea." And, effectively, what it was, was to help people feel comfortable going back to the cinema when the vaccines weren't as broadly distributed. For \$99, you could get up to 20 of your friends and have a bubble. We sold over 3 million tickets with Private Watch Party. Especially in the beginning, the vast majority of those people hadn't been to the cinema for six months, either because [the cinemas] were closed or they weren't quite ready to come back. We'll continue with private watch parties. Obviously, they're not as big as they were when the cinemas didn't have first-run content. But each and every weekend we're selling as many as 500 to 1,000 private watch parties, still.

What does the future hold for you post-Cinemark?

I've been in this business—I hate to admit it—for 40 years plus. I'm going to stay in it, but I'm going to stay in it more strategically. I'm going to remain on the board of Cinemark. That's more of a strategic role. I'm also on the board of National CineMedia and three philanthropic boards. The truth is, I've been married for 45 years, and I look forward to a little bit more time with my wife. She has been incredibly patient as I've done the Cinemark adventure. We now have five grandkids, with a sixth one on the way. Between the [Cinemark] board work and NCM and philanthropic [work] and having a little bit more time to ourselves, I think I'm going to keep myself more than busy. What I'm *not* looking for is the next full-time gig. If I wanted a full-time gig, I'd be staying at Cinemark.

Sounds like a nice work-life balance ahead of you. Hopefully we'll still get to see you at CinemaCon, though!

I'll come to CinemaCon if there's a good reason for me to come. It'll probably be more of a fly-in, fly-out as opposed to the death march that we've always done in the past, where you show up and you're busy from morning to night. I don't think I'm going to have to live that CinemaCon life again. ■

INDIE FOCUS

As the cinema industry begins to emerge 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.

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LAEMMLE THEATRES

Interview with Greg Laemmle, President

→ **The name "Laemmle" is hugely significant in the movie world. Can you explain a bit about the history of Laemmle Theatres?**

This circuit was started by my grandfather and his brother when they took over the operation of two neighborhood movie theaters in [L.A.'s] Highland Park. My grandfather's brother had previously been running a theater in Lowell, Indiana, the Ritz Theater. They decided to go into business together and chose Los Angeles. They had gotten their start in the movie business working for their father's first cousin, Carl Laemmle, who was the founder of Universal Studios and one of the titans of the industry from all the way back.

Can you tell us more about Laemmle's Sneak Preview Club, where your loyalty members get to attend one-off

screenings of smaller movies that you are testing on the market?

We believe that word of mouth is still a powerful tool in terms of helping smaller, quality films find an audience. Films that are good films, well made, and that are going to appeal to an audience have that advantage even when other films have larger advertising budgets. We like to be able to give a little more attention to smaller films, to start generating some buzz in a way that can be more organic than just spending dollars.

[The program] grew out of frustration. There were several films that we thought were really great, but the competition is very fierce. If you don't get your grosses in in the first three days, you may not have an opportunity to develop word of mouth. So many people are finding these films after the fact. So this was an idea of saying, let's jump ahead. Let's give this film a little extra visibility first, with a separate recruitment email that goes out to our full list. And then [loyal customers will have] an opportunity to screen it and talk about it.

The specialty market, particularly, is so crowded. Smaller films are competing against bigger outfits, which have major marketing budgets behind them.

Searchlight, Focus, Neon, A24, Sony Classics—they all make and distribute quality films. But there are smaller films that are equally worthy of an audience's attention. First, they don't have the dollars. And second, they may not have the

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marketing hook that comes from cast or director or genre. They need that extra visibility. The Sneak Preview Club is a way to generate that visibility and develop word of mouth.

We're big believers that films should play the festival circuit so that they can start acquiring fans who will support the release of that film. Because some of these films will only have one week in the marketplace, we want to make sure that everybody that should see this film is aware that the film is playing. And ideally, if they see it in the first three days, then maybe it gets another week. That's really how it works. We don't determine which films hold over and get to play for a second and third and fourth week in the marketplace. That's the audience.

So many great films at festivals don't get North American distribution at all. Some don't even show up on home video.

Yeah, they're not acquired for distribution. The problem with the festival circuit is, it's separated from the theatrical timeline. If you play a film festival in April but

your film doesn't open in that market till December, a lot of that momentum is gone. The challenge is, how do you keep that momentum going? The Sneak Preview Club and other promotional partners that distributors can work with really become important. We'd like to think that people talking about the film, people recommending the film, is going to generate more awareness and more ticket sales.

Laemmle has a robust discount program. You have a discount program for seniors, a free popcorn day, and then also a discount day for students, which you don't see chains do too often. What value does that bring to your circuit?

We're big believers in regular moviegoing, not event moviegoing. We like to think that, before the pandemic, the typical Laemmle movie patron was seeing a movie a week, whereas the average American sees a movie a month, if that. You have to recognize that there's a financial choice there. If people are seeing lots of movies, moviegoing needs to be less expensive. We try to encourage volume

programs. If you're coming on Friday or Saturday night to see the biggest film, you probably should expect to pay full price. But if you're coming to see a smaller film, if you're coming on Monday or Tuesday for a matinee, and so on and so forth, that's where we want to give you the discount, because we have the added capacity at that time. And we know that if people are going to see lots of movies, it needs to be priced accordingly.

There's a concern that younger people are not seeing movies, and it's especially a concern in the [specialty market]. Where's the next generation of art house moviegoers coming from? To not pay attention to the financial realities that younger people have to face in terms of lower wages and higher rents and costs growing elsewhere is just pointless.

What are some of the other things Laemmle Theatres does to draw in a younger demographic? How does that fit into your approach to programming?

If you're trying to get more diverse audiences to see traditional art house



films, that's a worthy goal. But you're also not meeting the audience where they want to be. There are certain films that are going to appeal to a younger audience, or certain films that are going to appeal to niche audiences that are not necessarily coming to see traditional art house films. You have to offer them something that they want to see to get them in the door, and then you can expose them to the concept of art house films, of foreign-language films. But you've got to meet the audience halfway. That comes about with price, and it comes about with programming. If you don't program films that are going to appeal to a younger audience, you're not doing outreach. You can try to reach them, but getting them to see something they don't want to see, traditionally, is just a fool's errand.

By the same token, trying to get the traditional art house audience to see something that they're not going to enjoy, or something that is a little off their radar, that's a fool's errand as well. There are films for all kinds of audiences. Maybe the traditional art house audience does not want to see a really great horror film, or they may not want to see a film from a country or a region or a language that is not something that is traditionally on their radar. But there is an audience that wants to see those films, and you have to put it in the theater and give them a shot to see it.

Ultimately, it's about making the films available, doing the best that you can to get the information about the release in front of the audience that is most likely to attend, and then hoping that there's some crossover once you've achieved that immediate goal. You have to know where your audience is, and that's in terms of both mind-space and geography. If we know that the Farsi-speaking community lives out in the San Fernando Valley around our Encino theater, playing a film from Iran in Pasadena is not helpful for that audience.

In a recent State of the Art House webinar we did with Spotlight Cinema Networks, Tori Baker of the Salt Lake Film Society spoke about the idea that the art house space can be seen as elitist gatekeepers of the indie film world, and that that's not necessarily inviting to potential customers.

We deliberately try to reject the gate-

keeper concept. I have films that I like. I have a personal set of tastes. There are films that I'm not necessarily going to be the primary audience for. But it's not about my taste. On some level, even my determination of what's good or not good is immaterial. You have to be very careful about seeing yourself as a curator or a gatekeeper. It's about understanding what it is that the audience wants to see, or may want to see. And creating a place and an environment where everyone has an opportunity. One of the more transformative films that we—[laughs] transformative is probably the wrong word—I'm the guy who played *The Room*! [Tommy Wiseau's infamous midnight movie classic had its premiere screenings at Laemmle Theatres' Fairfax and Fallbrook locations, kicking off one of the most entertaining movie success stories of recent years.] One could argue that [*The Room* has] done very well for art houses around the country, because it brought in a nontraditional audience to see something outside of the mainstream, which is what we're really all about. That was clearly a situation where the audience perceived something in a film, and if we didn't give it an opportunity to be seen in [a theatrical environment], the whole thing doesn't happen.

If *The Room* had just dropped onto a streaming platform, it wouldn't have become the phenomenon that it did.

Right. Now, I'm not saying that I should have played *The Room* instead of some really great French film, [for example]! But I should find room for *The Room*. And that's where expanding your programming becomes important. Yes, the traditional art house audience may not come out after 10 p.m. for a movie. But other audiences will! And if you program regularly for that audience, in that part of the day, in a part of town where midnight shows will do well—not everything has to be *Rocky Horror*. You can program *Rocky Horror* on Friday night and do something else Saturday night. There are many instances—obviously, *The Room* is the most successful example—of things that we've been able to do with midnight shows, with late shows, things that we can do on Saturday and Sunday mornings before we open for our regular programming, things that you can do on midweek evenings that create more vibrancy and more life.

"You have to offer them something that they want to see to get them in the door, and then you can expose them to the concept of art house films, of foreign-language films. But you've got to meet the audience halfway."



What has been your experience with virtual cinema, and what place does it have for Laemmle Theatres moving forward?

The experience with virtual cinema was great because it really exposed how tied together the exhibition market and the distribution market are. Within 10 days of shutting down, we had launched virtual cinema. Now, we didn't launch it. Distributors figured out, we're going to put up these platforms, and we're going to modify them so that we can track audiences coming from each exhibitor, and we're going to find a way to share. They wanted to help keep us alive. They wanted to help us maintain a connection. And they also recognized that we provided a service for them, because if they're just putting their films out on VOD platforms, the audience isn't going to find these smaller films.

Thanks to Kino Lorber, thanks to Film Movement, thanks to a number of other smaller distributors, we were able to present films to our audience through transactional VOD, which is ultimately what virtual cinema is. Our audiences were having a little bit of trouble because each

[distributor platform] was a little bit different. After a few months, when we realized the pandemic was not ending anytime soon, we launched a proprietary platform. That was in early October of 2020.

Even though we reopened in April of 2021, we're still keeping the virtual platform going. The numbers are way off from where they were at the beginning of the pandemic, but it still provides an opportunity for people who are not comfortable coming out to the movie theater in this environment to still be able to see some of these films. What is the future of virtual cinema? I'm not sure. But is there a role for these art house exhibitors to play with an ancillary platform? I think the answer is yes. Exactly what that is, is to be determined.

We have never had the attitude that ancillary is an enemy of theatrical. We understand that we exist in a competitive relationship in terms of where people are going to see films. But ultimately, the fact that distributors and producers can see a longer cycle of revenue for their films means that more films are made, means that more *good* films are made, and means

more good films are going to be given an opportunity to be seen in movie theaters. I firmly believe that we are, at some level, providing a completely different experience from seeing a film on your TV or whatever platform you use to see it at home. [At a theater], big screen, great sound, smaller screen, not-so-great sound, doesn't matter. You're out of your house. You're focused on the film in a way that you can't be at home.

Theaters in L.A. and New York opened a lot later than theaters in the rest of the country. And the year's more high-profile specialty films only started coming out closer to the end of the year, which is of course normal. Given that, what has the recovery process been like for Laemmle? Where are you compared to where you were in 2019?

We're well below pre-pandemic box office levels. Some theaters are doing better than others, and in part that's about the age of the audience that typically supports those locations. Films in general that are appealing to a younger audience

are having an easier time achieving a higher percentage of box office. The older audience is still very much on the fence. We were seeing some good momentum from April to May to June. July was off to a really good start. And then the Delta surge just really kicked our ass.

Everybody knew that vaccines were not 100 percent effective, but the idea of breakthrough infections scared a lot of people. And lost in the messaging was the fact that, yes, you might get a breakthrough infection, but you're not likely to be hospitalized or not likely to have a severe case. People did not want to get infected in any way, shape, or form. And anybody who felt that they were more susceptible, even if they were vaccinated, even if they're boosted at this point, they're on the sidelines.

I was really hoping that the Delta surge ... as we hit October, November would be less of a factor in the United States. But the Omicron variant has again thrown people. But, look, we have a long Oscar season this year. The awards are not till March. I'm hopeful that even as some of these films start going out on the ancillary platforms, we can get to a place where people can put the risk of Covid on an appropriate level. This is no more dangerous than driving to the theater. Sitting in the theater and watching the movie is maybe *less* dangerous than actually *driving* to the theater. If we can A) get that risk to a lower level and B) mentally start accepting where it's at, the audience will start coming back. We're going to have to accept that right now we're still fighting an uphill battle.

There are people who still don't know that their movie theaters are open. ... It's going to take time to reacquire an audience, to reacquire them with moviegoing. And you have to be careful. How much effort do we put into outreach during this environment? Do we need to save our ammo until the coast is clear? We're open right now, and we're catering to an audience that is ready to come out. But that real effort to reacquire that audience that has some reasonable concern about coming out—maybe we just need to wait till this whole thing is past us. It's kind of like the riptide concept. If a riptide is carrying out to sea, the last thing you want to do is swim against the tide. Let it take you where it's going to take you. Eventually you'll get out of that riptide and you can

move to the side and get back to where you need to be. But save your energy until you can have an impact. Swimming against the stream isn't going to get you anything. Except tired!

Laemmle Theatres has been around since 1938. You have a very strong brand, very strong community connections. Given that, what do you take into consideration when choosing choosing an in-theater advertising partner?

The traditional art house audience, in many respects—their demographics, where they fit financially into the world—are a desirable audience, and they're heavily marketed to. What you need to have is advertisers who respect the audience, and therefore you need an agency that respects the audience. For us, what's really important is that we don't want to put inappropriate ads in front of an audience. It makes it much easier when the company that's coordinating that effort doesn't bring crap to me. For me to reject! The other thing is, [with Spotlight] I have the right to approve an ad. If I feel like I'm really flush this week and I don't need the money, I want to be able to say no to an inappropriate ad. Whether I do or not, I certainly want the *right* to say no to an inappropriate ad.

It's very helpful that the stuff that is brought to me is by and large appropriate for my audience. That the length of the program is respectful of where my audience is and doesn't tax them with a 20-minute pre-show advertising reel. That the interstitial stuff—trivia questions and news bits and so forth—is respectful of the audience. Spotlight was formed from the very beginning with the idea of recognizing that—this is a different audience, and we're going to bring stuff to them that's appropriate. It started with that, and it continues to stay true to that. And as long as it stays true to that, it's going to be a welcome partner in the art house field. ■

"There are people who still don't know that their movie theaters are open. ... It's going to take time to reacquire an audience, to reacquire them with moviegoing."



ALAMO DRAFTHOUSE TAKES MANHATTAN

Tim League on Alamo's Long-Awaited Downtown Debut

BY DANIEL LORIA

➔ When Tim League, founder and executive chairman of Alamo Drafthouse, opened his first Alamo cinema, in Austin in 1997, the rookie exhibitor used **BOXOFFICE PRO** as a kind of how-to guide. It helped him keep tabs on (and glean pointers from) an unfamiliar and sometimes baffling industry. The scrutiny has gone both ways, and this publication has kept close tabs on Alamo over the years as well, as it has grown from a one-screen upstart into a national leader in dine-in cinemas, with 37 U.S. locations. Now, after more than six years in development, the opening of Alamo's first Manhattan (New York) location in October caps an effort that League calls among the most challenging of his career as an exhibitor.

Located in the heart of the financial district, a short subway ride away from Alamo's existing Brooklyn location, which opened in 2016, Alamo Drafthouse's Lower Manhattan cinema expands the circuit's reach in one of the world's top exhibition markets. The site features 14 screens (matching Alamo's Springfield, Missouri location as its biggest), all boasting recliner seating with call-button service, 7.1 surround sound, and 4K laser projection from Cinionic. The high screen count is strategic, meant to expand Alamo's programming options in the New York market (the Brooklyn location has 7 screens), but it was intentionally designed to have an intimate feel: its highest-capacity auditorium seats fewer than 60 people.



That flexibility in programming is crucial for a circuit known for being at the intersection of mainstream, independent, and repertory cinema. Alamo's combined 21 screens in New York City allows it to stake a claim as a leading player in arguably the most important market for the type of films Alamo champions. Complementing its dine-in moviegoing experience is a themed bar, The Press Room, which features a unique collection of vintage movie-advertisement printing plates on display—and prints available for purchase. The spacious bar, which can accommodate live performances and private events, has a fully customizable drink menu, where customers can pick from a list of ingredients and have a mixologist prepare a bespoke cocktail.

Alamo Drafthouse's Lower Manhattan location represents an important milestone in the circuit's return from Chapter 11 bankruptcy, a result of the financial impact of the pandemic on the cinema industry. *BOXOFFICE PRO* spoke with Alamo's League shortly after the Lower Manhattan location's official opening to find out where the iconic dine-in chain is today—and where it's headed.

It's been a real roller coaster ride for Alamo Drafthouse. The circuit filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy during the pandemic, and you're now opening a new theater in New York City.

Bankruptcy is such a loaded word. It was part of a longer-term restructuring process. So we entered bankruptcy by design and knew that there was a clear path out of it. Having a fire sale and putting the

projectors out on the curb was never part of the process. And you know, the good side is we're refinanced and stable and have rebuilt the team, and we're ready to open more. So we're actually aggressively out there looking for new locations.

While we were in the thick of the pandemic, one of the things that really made me smile was when Alamo Drafthouse released some of its recipes to make at home. It was something that helped Alamo Drafthouse moviegoers keep in touch with the Alamo experience. How else did you engage with your audience while theaters were closed?

It was such a strange time. There's lots of things that we tried to do when we weren't able to show movies. We built Alamo on Demand, an on-demand platform where we started doing some of our signature shows. We would do group watch parties for AGFA [American Genre Film Archive] screenings, our programming series *Weird Wednesday*, and we did a virtual *Fantastic Fest*. Not only did it keep the community together as best as we could, but it also expanded it. Strangely, we'd have people tuning in from all over the globe that had heard about some of these programming series and had never had the opportunity to come to Austin or New York and experience them.

Your milestone opening here in New York City has been more than six years in development. I remember when you were looking at a location on the Upper

"Strangely, we'd have people tuning in from all over the globe that had heard about some of these programming series."





West Side, but you're now open in the financial district of Lower Manhattan. Is this the most difficult opening of your career?

It's a tie between this one and San Francisco. San Francisco was a full inside-and-out historic renovation of a 1914 theater, and that had its own challenges. So we had to seismically reinforce the lobby. We had to tear down historic plaster, scan it, and then rebuild it. It was a ridiculous process. This is a close second.

One of the things that stands out in this New York location is its retail component—a lobby gift shop selling movie-related merchandise. It's not something we see often in cinemas. What was the vision behind that?

[My wife and I] started as a mom-and-pop theater, a single screen. It was literally mom-and-pop: I was Pop, she was Mom. And then, as we started to expand, we developed this idea of adding other elements to the brand that spoke to the same audience. You know, "For movie lovers, by movie lovers." That was the impetus for starting Mondo [a merchandise line celebrating cinephile

culture] 15 years ago. It was an on-site retail store. We've expanded over the years into a lot of different categories, like posters and vinyl soundtracks. During the pandemic, I ran the board games and puzzles division for a year, and [I loved it] because I love board games; I love puzzles. And it's going to continue on. During the pandemic, Mondo was really successful. People were at home and wanting to do things at home, wanting to listen to more records and play more two-person games. I want people to come to an Alamo Drafthouse and have a feeling like, "Oh my gosh, this doesn't feel like a regular movie theater." Having a really cool, interesting bar, like The Press Room. Having a retail component. I'm a movie lover, and [movie merchandise] is something I might want to take back home to continue that experience.

You're also experimenting with ticket bundles, where the ticket purchase includes a themed product. That makes moviegoing more of an experience, leaving the house and coming back with a memento.

I think the best version of that is right here at the Manhattan theater, by incorporating

The Press Room, which is a print shop with vintage movie ads at the heart of it. Over the next few months, we're going to really explore that in a big way. Like, if you are going to watch *Some Came Running* with Shirley MacLaine, you'll be able to print a little poster or a note card from the original 1960s plate [the ad] was made from. It's an amazing experience. We're going to allow the guests to actually run the press themselves and explain how it works and what the history behind it is. It's part of this idea that, yeah, you can just see a movie, but how can we make this incredible memory for you that's really special and you'll remember forever?

You have seven screens already open in Brooklyn. You're adding 14 in New York with this Manhattan location. What does that permit you to do here in New York?

It means we get to play everything we want to play. Some of the toughest decisions and conversations we have are like, "I'm sorry, but we have to open *Spider-Man* or we have to open up *The Avengers*." And that means we can't play other movies like documentaries, foreign-language films, and the smaller indies that don't

get the screen placement when there's a lot of blockbusters. We are a weird hybrid that plays repertory, blockbusters, and indie. With 14 screens, and they all have a relatively low seat count, that means we can open up everything we want. And we want to show everything. We want to support Sony Pictures Classics, Kino Lorber, and Oscilloscope. And we haven't been able to do as good a job as we want to, especially in New York, and the city is a hugely important market to open a film, so I'm excited to be able to support more movies we love.

Alamo Drafthouse has been able to crack the code on repertory during off-peak periods, going into the AGFA [American Genre Film Archive] library on Tuesday or Wednesday night. How has that part of your business grown over the last five years, when the rest of exhibition is wondering, "How can I make off-peak work?"

I think it speaks to building an audience. We have some signature shows that run weekly in our big cities: Terror Tuesday, Weird Wednesday. And there's a vibe to it. The people that are interested in watching a pretty strange repertory movie from the '60s, '70s, '80s and having a host talk about why this is special and why they love it. Watching vintage trailers. It's like a little micro-community. Committing to that: We love this, we know it's awesome, and I know in this city of 8 million people there's other weirdos like me. So let's gather and let's make Wednesday our day.

Earlier this summer, there was an embarrassingly bad hot take on the death of cinema in *The New York Times*. We've seen these reports pop up for as long as there have been movie theaters—they've always been wrong—but you spoke up and replied to this one. Why is it important for industry people to stand up and correct the record when we encounter some of this uninformed speculation?

Anybody that loves movies inherently gets it. The idea that, "Oh, cinemas are dead, cinema is dying," they've been predicting that since the advent of black-and-white television in the '50s, to the VCR to the DVD player to streaming to Netflix to everything. I'll give you a concrete example of what happened earlier this month, with the opening of *Dune*. You

"It's part of this idea that, yeah, you can just see a movie, but how can we make this incredible memory for you that's really special and you'll remember forever?"

can watch *Dune* on HBO Max. I cry for those human beings that are going to make that decision and watch it on their goddamn iPads. That movie *is* cinema, it's grand ... just even talking about it, I've got goosebumps because it's so immersive, such a visceral experience. It is cinema. But it's not cinema on your iPad or on your phone or when you're multitasking and checking your email on the train. Yeah, I guess you can get the basic plot points, and you can talk about it at work and say you saw it. But did you really see it? That movie is intended for the cinema. At its best, it's a phenomenal experience. I love that there's a bit of pressure on the industry to say, "No, we know at our best that this is an unstoppable force, and people want to get out of the house and experience it. So let's be on our top game, everybody." We all *should* be on our top game, and we're going to be just fine. ■



INNOVATION IN SMALL PACKAGES

The(Any)Thing Serves Dutch Moviegoers, 14 Seats at a Time

BY REBECCA PAHLE

→ Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, private cinema rentals and microcinemas have become a hot topic of conversation in the cinema space—they were named the 2020 Trend of the Year in our most recent Boxoffice Barometer poll. For lovers of the microcinema experience, a two-seater for a couple's night out has to be the ultimate dream—a dream that now can be fulfilled, as long as you're willing to travel to the Netherlands.

Enter The(Any)Thing. Located in the O.T.T.O. boutique hotel in Wijk bij Duurstede, Netherlands, The(Any)Thing boasts a whopping 14 seats spread across three auditoriums—of seven, five, and two seats apiece. A proof of concept for what co-founder and CEO Thomas van de Weerd plans to turn into a chain, The(Any)Thing was honored with ICTA's Special Innovation EMEA Award in 2020. It's a concept that local moviegoers have already responded to—speaking with BOXOFFICE PRO in the autumn of 2021, van de Weerd said that approximately three months after The(Any)Thing's opening, they had already hosted approximately 500 screenings. Here, van de Weerd shares the origin, operations, and goals of this small-but-mighty cinema.

Private cinema rentals and microcinemas have become more popular since the Covid-19 pandemic—but I can't imagine TheAny(Thing) came together in just 18 months. When and where did the idea come from, and what went into creating it?

It actually started in 2011. That's when the first thought came to mind of a private

cinema experience. My girlfriend and I, we'd just had our first kid, and due to the pregnancy we weren't able to see *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows — Part 2*.

That's the last one! Tell me you didn't miss it.

She really got me into the *Harry Potter* franchise, but we were unable to see the last one in a theater. But I had some good connections back then, because I was working for a cinema company. In the end I saw it on a Monday morning [in] a private viewing in a really big auditorium. And that's when I thought, this is a great experience, having the cinema all to yourself.

My background is in technology. I actually started building a streaming service in 2011. I thought, well, technology is advancing, we're getting into digital cinema, digital projection—there should be an option to combine all these ingredients and build a private cinema. So that's already 10 years ago. Five years ago, the partner in my [streaming service] company and I really started to develop the idea [of a private cinema] further and decided to invest in it. For The(Any)Thing as we have it today—the first concept—we really increased investing two years ago,

"The whole idea of The(Any)-Thing is that we want to pop up at places where you would want to have access to cinema."





building it and combining a team. So the idea: 10 years ago. Really building what we see today: two to three years ago.

What was your timeline for opening the theater?

Our original plan was to launch in summer 2020. We found a location in January 2020. The whole idea of The(Any)Thing is that we want to pop up at places where you would want to have access to cinema. The whole idea is not to build our own locations but to work with already-existing locations. But we decided early in the project that the first location we would do ourselves, just to learn from technical issues and user journeys, etc. In January 2020, we rented the place to open our location, but then in three months Covid happened. Long story short, we launched June 5 [2021]. We had over a year's delay. But, to be honest, we spent that time fine-tuning and building the product. In hindsight, I think we needed that time to really get everything together.

You have three auditoriums with seven, five, and two seats each. The customers get to decide what movie they watch

when they book, so it's not like you have a set schedule. Can you give me a sense of how The(Any)Thing works from an operational perspective?

From a technology standpoint, in terms of video and security and audio, we are just like any other digital cinema. We use DCPs, we use KDMs. From a back-office perspective, we are a cinema, with the only big difference being that we don't have a programming department to decide what movies we play at what time. We have customers that decide what movie at what time. We are currently offering a little over 500 movies, including first-run movies, from Disney, Warner, and local independents.

The customer goes to the app, decides which movie, which auditorium, and what time. First, we look at the length of the movie. We're going to look at the schedule, what auditorium you want to see the movie in, and then we'll give you all the options that are left. Our software calculates, OK, this is a two-hour movie. We need 15 minutes before the show and after the show. We'll give you all the options that are available, and then you pick. And that's how it works. Which is maybe scary

from an efficiency perspective, because you don't get to efficiently program all the shows back to back. But what we see now is in our most popular room, on average in the past six weeks, we have three showings a day. And on a good day, we do five shows, on a Saturday. Without us having to interfere. It's just the customer deciding, and it ends up pretty well.

Which is the most popular room?

Well, that's funny. When we had to decide on the capacity, we were thinking of eight seats, six seats, that kind of size. But we ended up, in this location, trying out three different capacities, just for learning purposes. So that's why we built seven, five—and then we thought, "Well, for P.R. purposes, it's going to be really great to do a two-seater. It probably won't be the most successful one, but it'll be great to be able to say we have the smallest movie theater in the world." But now, after about 500 shows, I can tell you the most popular one is the two-seater. Maybe we shouldn't be that surprised, because of course the largest addressable audience, at least in the Netherlands, is couples going to the movie theater. It's kind of harder for a



group to organize a cinema visit, because you need five, six people agreeing on what time you want to go, agreeing on the movie, etc. It's way more convenient for parties of two to book a movie, so that's where we have the biggest demand.

How did you work out what the pricing would be?

When we first developed the idea, I thought, "This should be something priced quite high, because it's a really unique and exclusive experience." But then we decided along the way that in order for this to really work, you need scale. And in order to get scale, you need volume. So we switched from being, let's say, *expensive* to being very accessible so we can do more volume. It's something we're experimenting with. It really is going to depend on location. For New York, it's going to be totally different than where we are in the Netherlands. For the two-seater, the most popular one, we are asking for 29 euros. I think that's about \$35 [USD]. Most people think that's really reasonable. The biggest room, the seven-seater, is 69 euros. We would be able to increase those prices a little bit in big cities. We're in a small town right now, with 30,000 citizens. I think in bigger cities, those prices could go up.

What's the concessions situation like?

In this location, we are part of a restaurant and hotel. It's a very small hotel, with eight rooms. And there's a restaurant with about 40 seats. We make it possible for [customers] to order within the app we built. There's a small button that you can click, and then you go to the menu—just like, these days, you have a lot of Q.R. menus in restaurants. We offer that, and it's connected to the food and beverage offerings of the restaurant. As soon as you order, it will be delivered to the screening room. There's a wide variety of options, so it's not just popcorn and cola, but it's also food from the kitchen.

So you don't have to hire cooks and runners and all that.

Yeah. That's really the philosophy of the project. That's why we named it The(Any)Thing. You can watch anything. The interior of the room can be anything. Every screening room we add to the network will be different. And the locations we work with will have their own personality. In this location you can order a certain type



of food, but in our next location that we are going to add, that might be different. So you really get a lot of options in locations and movies and interior.

Can you elaborate a bit on your expansion plans? Your first one is in a hotel. I could see this concept working well in an airport, where you have a bunch of people trapped on a long layover with nothing to do.

We have a couple of phases in the project. The first phase is the pilot phase, and that's where we are right now. We are validating all the thoughts we had prior to launching. And then the next phase is adding locations. When we launched the idea, we had a lot of local P.R. Even international P.R. A lot of hotels,

"That's why we named it The(Any)Thing. You can watch anything. The interior of the room can be anything. Every screening room we add to the network will be different."

restaurants, airports reached out to us because they were interested in the idea. I think those are exactly the locations where you could add a screening room. Places where there's already traffic, where there's already hospitality, and where there's time and desire to watch premium content. But I also believe this could really fit in traditional multiplexes. In my opinion, the multiplex of the future will offer Dolby, Imax, 4DX, and private cinema.

What have been the challenges of launching this pilot theater? Was there anything you didn't anticipate?

No big surprises. It was kind of scary to [anticipate] how people would react. Of course, we had tested a small screening room before we launched and asked people what they thought of it, and everybody was excited. But it's always very scary when you invest money and launch a product. It was exciting, but not surprising, because everybody loves movies, and everybody loves a personal experience. For me, the most surprising thing was the demand for the two-person room.

The most challenging for our project so far has been to secure rights—besides everything else we had to do, software development, physical realization of the building. There was a lot of hard work. But the real challenge was to secure rights. It took us a while to convince everybody, because this is something new and something weird.

Studios have to wonder, "What am I getting from this? An affordable, two-person auditorium?"

Of course, they are usually negotiating with big exhibitors with thousands of seats, and we have 14 seats right now. That's what we told them: "We have 14 seats *right now*. But we are really ambitious, and this is going to be a long-term investment." And I think because we had the experience in streaming—we built a very popular Dutch streaming service—we had good relationships with all the studios, so they trusted us. But it took a while.

What sort of films are most popular at The(Any)Thing? Is it more first-run titles?

We've done a little over 500 shows. Of course, everybody's interested in movies, no doubt about it. But if you give customers the option to watch older movies, we thought there would be a



market there, too. What we see right now is that 50 percent, so half of all the shows we do, are movies that are in their fifth week or later. If you take a look at the Dutch market, roughly 80 percent of the movies that are shown are in their first, second, third, or fourth week. So we're already seeing a long-tail development there. What's interesting for both consumers and rights holders is that you get to show your movies longer in this concept, because we keep them available as long as we can get the rights.

That's interesting. If you're a super fan of something, you might go see it on the biggest screen during opening weekend. But, with The(Any)Thing, if you want to catch up with something a bit later, you still can.

Exactly. We have to see how the theatrical market is going to develop after the pandemic. But before the pandemic, on average in the Dutch market we had somewhere between 400 and 500 movies released in a year. And I think on average they would run for seven weeks in a cinema. One of the reasons that I got excited about the project is that I wanted to see movies, but I would be too late to see them in cinema. I'm not really a first-week kind of guy. Now you're able to decide to watch it two months after release. It really gives you some options.

You have to experience it yourself. You have to watch a movie here to see that it really gives you a cinema experience. It's more than a small room.

It doesn't feel like a home theater.

No, not at all. We do get a lot of customers that are so excited. They don't go to the cinema anymore, because they are maybe a little older and they haven't liked the experience. They're telling us, "This feels like a cinema. This is a great way for me to watch movies." But we also get visitors who really love Imax, who really love Dolby Cinema, and who would prefer to see a big title in [one of those formats]. But there are other movies they would rather see here. So we are addressing both audiences: the audience that doesn't go to the cinema anymore, but also the audience that goes to the cinema and wants to mix it up.

One of the things that caught my eye, as someone who tends to get cold in cinemas, is that the app lets you adjust the temperature of each auditorium.

It's funny, because one of my team members used to run one of the biggest theaters in the Netherlands for 11 years, and he always tells me that one of the biggest complaints, usually from women, is that movie theaters are too cold. We found a solution. Every screening room has its own climate control, and you can adjust it in the app.

So the men and women seeing the film will just have to fight it out. Not your problem.

Exactly! 🍷

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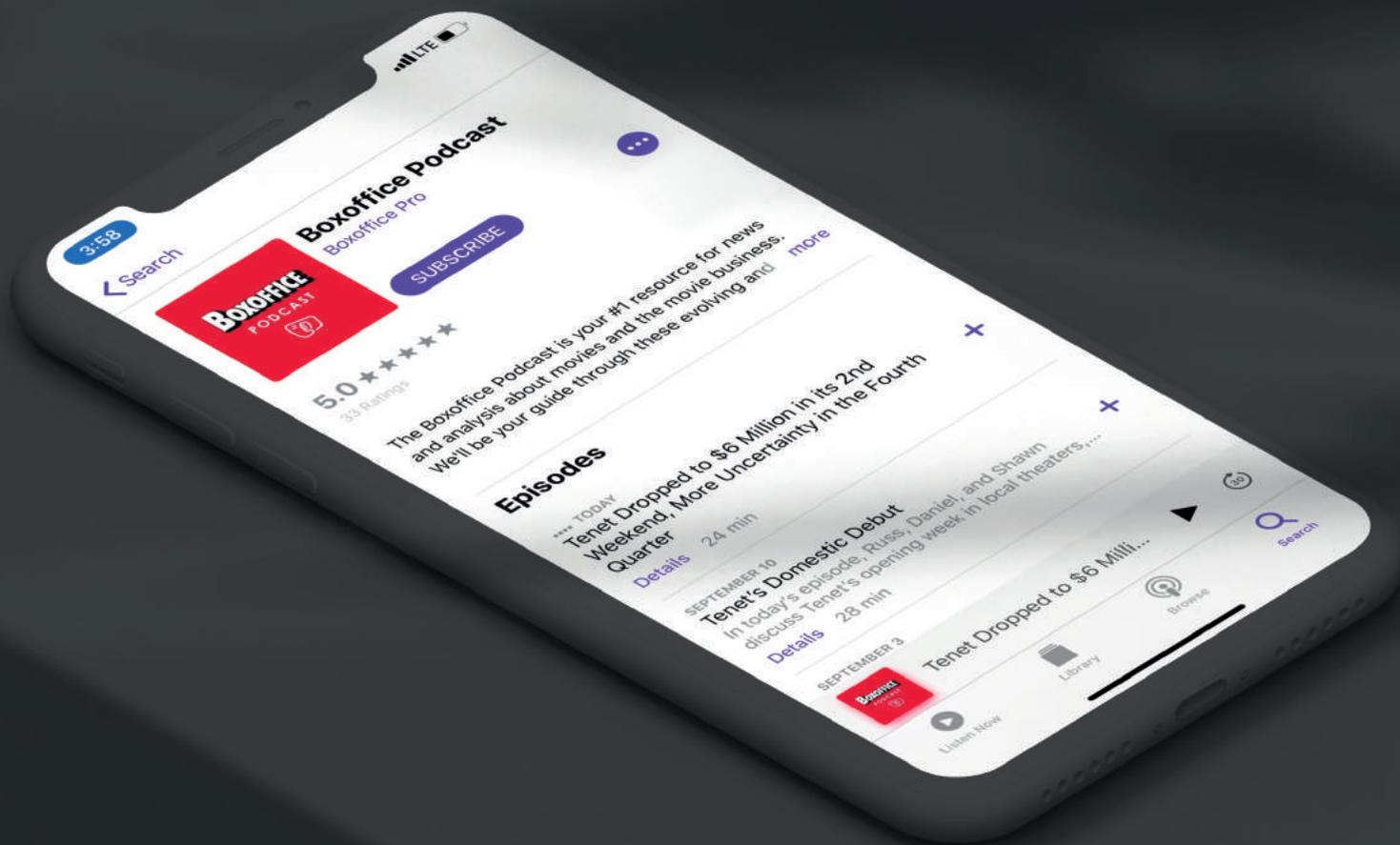


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ON SCREEN



“You’re going to get the oohs and aahs, the laughs, the jump scares with people tossing popcorn because they jumped out of their seats a little bit.”

Chad Villella, p. 76





CHART TOPPER

Director Ruben Fleischer Shows His
Comedy Chops with Action-Adventure
Uncharted

BY JESSE RIFKIN

Back in 2010, Mark Wahlberg was attached to play the young protagonist Nathan Drake in the film adaptation of the video game franchise *Uncharted*. Yet the project remained trapped in development hell for so long, that when the film actually comes out, in February 2022, Wahlberg will play Drake's much older partner and father figure, Victor "Sully" Sullivan. (Tom Holland, of *Spider-Man* fame, is now Drake.)

A globe-trotting action-adventure in the mold of *Mission: Impossible*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, and *National Treasure*, the movie is based on one of the best-selling video game series ever, one that takes the player on various treasure-hunting quests. The film, from Sony Pictures and Columbia Releasing, is exclusively in theaters February 18.

Ruben Fleischer is no stranger to directing action-comedies, having helmed 2018's *Venom*, 2009's *Zombieland*, 2019's *Zombieland: Double Tap*, and 2011's *30 Minutes or Less*. He spoke to BOXOFFICE PRO about how the Covid-19 pandemic hit during the first week of production, how he includes Easter eggs for fans of the games, and how his path to directing movies was largely accidental.

I have to start with the obvious question: In this film, does Tom Holland open up a multiverse featuring Tobey Maguire and Andrew Garfield?

I mean, I feel like you've already seen this movie! [*Laughs.*] No, there is only one Tom Holland in this movie. Not any multiverses that I'm aware of. But I appreciate the suggestion.

Where were you in the production process in March 2020?

March 16 was our very first day of production. If you remember, at that time it was way worse in Europe than it was in America. It wasn't even really on people's radar quite the same in the U.S. We were in Europe, and that's where it kind of sparked up. We were in Germany. It was really becoming something that collectively we were concerned about, but nobody really knew what was going on.

That week, you could feel it. As we were just about to get started shooting, crew members—especially the Germans—were starting to get nervous about what was

potentially going to be a reality. We were deep in the thick of prep. The actors had just arrived in Berlin to start rehearsing. We were putting the finishing touches on all the sets. We were going to start shooting, our first day of production, on March 16. On March 15, the studio said, "Let's just see how this thing evolves. Don't shoot on March 16—continue to prep and let's see what happens. We're going to consult all the right people."

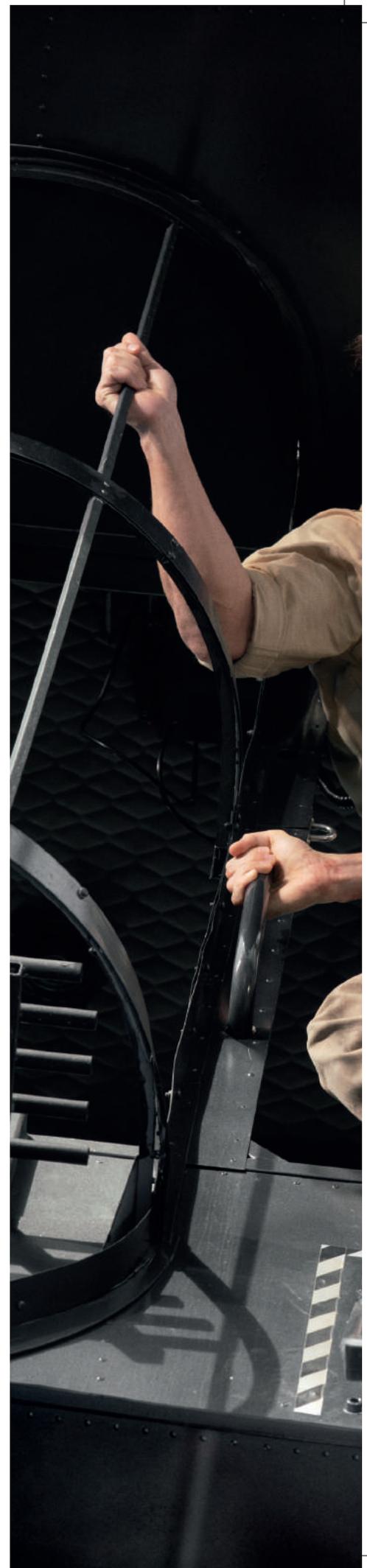
Then on March 17, they basically said, "You guys have got to come home." And we came home the very next day. We shut down for three or four months. We were one of the first big movies to come back up and start shooting again, in July.

When you returned, did it feel like starting from scratch?

No, not at all. We basically locked the doors on all the stages; we didn't break anything down. We shut the doors, put locks on them. And then when I came back to Berlin in the summer, it was kind of like we had never left. Everything was just like we left it, except maybe a little dustier. The actors came back as well, and we all just kind of fell back to where we'd left off. For everybody, it was this bizarre and unprecedented experience. There were certainly a lot of nerves, collectively.

But Germany, at that time, was really doing great. They had locked down aggressively during the pandemic, and cases were way less in Germany than they were in L.A. at that time. So I felt more comfortable there than I did at home! We didn't have a single issue during production. We didn't have to stop shooting for a single day. It was a really safe and positive experience, largely because Germany was doing so well, in terms of pushing back against the pandemic.

"This is a huge-scale film. It takes place on three continents. The visuals are incredible. It's a movie made to be seen on a big screen."





TOP VIDEO GAME ADAPTATIONS

*Based on domestic grosses

1.
Sonic the Hedgehog (2020)
\$148.9M

2.
Pokémon Detective Pikachu (2019)
\$144.1M

3.
Lara Croft: Tomb Raider (2001)
\$131.1M

4.
The Angry Birds Movie (2016)
\$107.5M

5.
Rampage (2018)
\$101M

6.
Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time (2010)
\$90.7M

7.
Pokémon: The First Movie - Mewtwo Strikes Back (1999)
\$85.7M



This film is being released exclusively in theaters. Why is it important for audiences to see this on the big screen?

There's nothing like being in the theater and watching a movie with other people. This is a huge-scale film. It takes place on three continents. The visuals are incredible. It's a movie made to be seen on a big screen. It's so incredibly visually impressive. A super-entertaining movie with tons of laughs. There's nothing like laughing with other people and having that collective experience. So whether it's the visuals, the entertainment quality, just the experience of watching a giant globe-trotting adventure, it's definitely one that should be seen on the big screen.

This film had quite the arduous journey to the big screen, with about a half dozen different directors publicly attached at various points over more than a decade. So how did this project ultimately come to you?

I just got really lucky, I think. Growing up, *Indiana Jones* [movies] were my all-time favorite films. I've always wanted to do a globe-trotting, treasure-hunting

movie. Having the opportunity to make this film, especially with Tom and Mark, was beyond a dream come true. So I just consider myself super-lucky.

What are some of your funniest stories from the shoot?

The experience of making a movie during a pandemic, everybody was masked up the whole time. At the end of the shoot, people want to take group pictures. When they pulled their masks down, even though I had spent 80 days shooting with them, I was like, "Oh, Hans, I didn't know you had a goatee!" People just looked so different with their masks off, but we were so strict about it that I hadn't seen some people's faces the whole shoot. It's funny seeing them for the first time without a mask, at the end.

It was an unprecedented process of making a movie, for everyone involved, no matter how experienced the person. No one had ever had to make a movie while wearing a mask, getting tested every day, just all the Covid protocols. So it wasn't one of those everyone-was-pulling-pranks-on-everyone kind of sets. It was

such a heightened circumstance under which to be making a film. This was July through November 2020.

There was hilarious improv, great performances, things like that. But the reality is, it was a pretty heightened experience of having to make a film, which was new to us all. At this point, anyone working in the film business has done more than their fair share of shoots wearing masks and everything else. At that time, it felt completely novel.

You just said there was hilarious improv. Were there any that made it into the final cut?

Oh yeah, tons. Both Mark and Tom are so funny. The joy of the movie to me is their relationship and their dynamic. If you know my work, I come from a comedy background, so I always encourage improv. If you're lucky enough to have actors that can elevate the material on the page, I always try and take advantage of that. Throughout the film, there's tons of lines that those guys came up with. Other people too, but especially Mark and Tom.

I won't tell you a line, you'll have to



see the movie, but I can tell you a scene. They're below a church, they've just found this hidden tunnel and they're following the clues. There's this exchange between Mark and Tom about using cell phones. A lot of those jokes were improvised and were just super laugh-out-loud funny moments.

Were you a fan of the Uncharted video games?

Yeah, though more of a casual fan as opposed to hardcore. But I played Uncharted prior to getting involved with this. I love *Indiana Jones* and those types of movies, and the Uncharted games were very much inspired by those, so it really crossed a lot of interests for me. I was also just a fan of the games' irreverent sense of humor, and all the puzzle solving. Super-fun games. What attracted me to them originally was they felt so cinematic, almost like a movie. So actually getting to turn it into a movie was really exciting.

Do you include any Easter eggs for fans of the games?

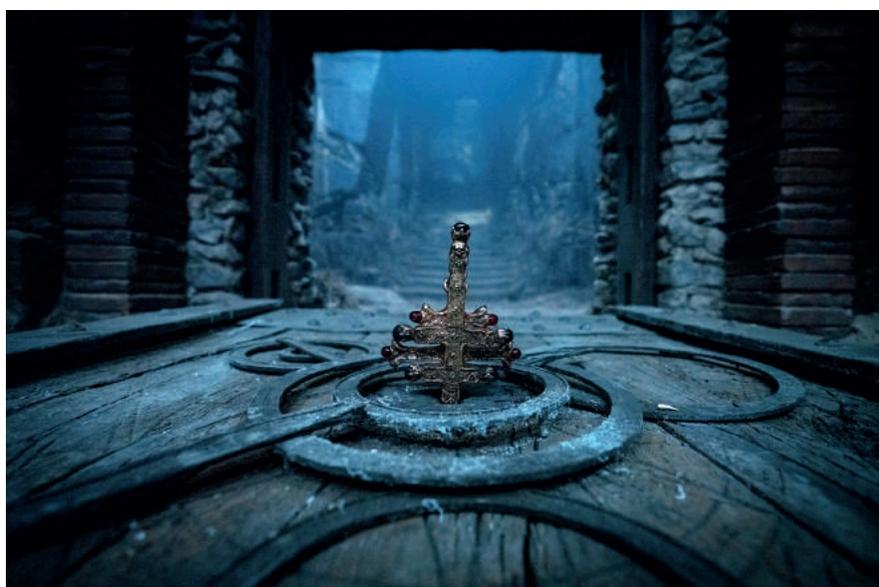
Yeah, there's a lot of Easter eggs for the observant fans. They're sprinkled throughout. Some are visual, some are auditory, but I think they'll be really happy if they're paying attention.

On the other end of the spectrum, what are the biggest differences between the film and the games?

The most noticeable is the characters are a lot younger than they are in the games. Tom is certainly not the middle-aged Nathan Drake. Mark plays the younger version of Sully, pre-mustache. The idea is to have these characters catch up to the versions that people are more familiar with from the games. But as an introduction for moviegoers, it's a great way to get to know these characters. Hopefully get invested in them, so they can watch them go on both this and many more adventures.

What about the music? How closely did you try to mirror the games' score, versus original music?

My driving instinct was to make this a movie that could work on its own, that wasn't dependent on the game. Games are so immersive and so experiential, it's difficult for a film to compete with that, because it's a more passive experience. It has to work as a film, first and foremost,



"It was an unprecedented process of making a movie, for everyone involved, no matter how experienced the person."

while paying respect to the source material. So in an effort to distinguish it as a film, I didn't want to just repurpose the score and have it feel like the game. I want it to feel like its own stand-alone thing. But again, you asked about Easter eggs? If people are paying attention, they might notice moments from the game's score throughout the film.

Is it true that your first job in the entertainment industry was as a production assistant on "Dawson's Creek"?

Yeah, I was a P.A. in the writer's room. So I didn't even get to go near the set, which was in Wilmington [North Carolina]. I had originally moved down to Los Angeles from San Francisco, to do some internet stuff, but the company I was working

for—like many a start-up—folded. I was looking for a job, and I knew Mike White because he went to my college [Wesleyan]. He was a writer on the show, and he got me a job being a P.A., which was my first introduction to any kind of filmmaking. I didn't go to film school and initially didn't have ambitions of being a director. But that experience got my feet wet. Then I started down that road.

When you later started directing, did you feel like you had to play catch-up to leapfrog the people who had indeed gone to film school?

The way I did that was first being an assistant to a director, Miguel Arteta, on two movies: *Chuck & Buck* and *The Good Girl*. After watching him do the job, I got inspired to try and figure out how to do it myself. I just ended up shooting real low-budget short films and music videos, teaching myself. I produced them, edited them, even did the costumes. I just learned by doing. In terms of catch-up, it was largely just learning how to do the craft. The whole Malcolm Gladwell thing, that you just need to spend the time.

Gladwell said it requires 10,000 hours.

That much? Maybe I haven't reached that yet. [Laughs.] But I'm still learning every day. That's the great thing about my job: You're constantly encountering new challenges. Even the most experienced director will find things that they haven't had to face before. You just draw upon that experience.

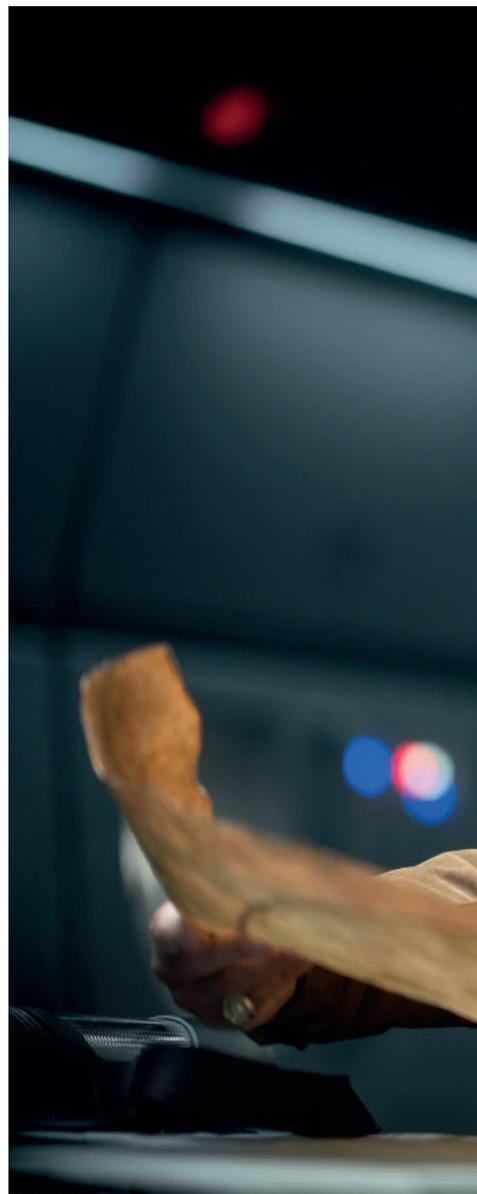
So on *Uncharted*, what was the challenge you hadn't had to face before?

It was hardly one thing! The action certainly was far beyond anything I'd done before. It's just giant rigging situations. When it comes to the VFX, with *Venom* there was a huge learning curve, but this is even more so. I mean, learning how to shoot a movie in a pandemic. I'd never shot a movie in Europe, just working with international crews. Every single day, that's the joy of my job. It's all unprecedented. You're learning constantly, which is terrific.

There are constant challenges of cultures. I think we had at least 15 or 20 different nationalities represented on the set, between all the different crew members and cast members. It was so international. People come to Berlin from all over the E.U. to be a part of filmmaking. Add to that our Australian and New Zealand stuntpeople, and all of us Americans and Canadians and North Americans, it was just really international.

Speaking of stuntpeople, how did you try to balance live stunts versus VFX? I'm thinking of the moment in the trailer where Tom Holland is jumping one by one over all the shipping containers as they're falling out of the airplane.

It's a real combination of everything. We didn't really shoot Tom Holland hanging out the back of a cargo plane; that was done with a green screen. All the environments are C.G. or VFX, so the



“Even the most experienced director will find things that they haven't had to face before. You just draw upon that experience.”



entire sequence has a VFX component to it. But in terms of the scale of the stunts that I was doing for the first time at that level, that scene is a great example. We had five of these robotic arms that they use to make cars at an auto factory. We had the boxes all programmed to be moving in sync on these robotic arms. And then Tom and the stunt guys and Tom's stunt doubles, everybody was on wires, running across those boxes. You're employing every tool in the box to bring a sequence like that to life.

Finally, I have to ask this question. You directed the first and second episodes of "Between Two Ferns with Zach Galifianakis" in 2008. Did you have any idea how massive that would become?

No. They had Obama on, and that's just crazy. I mean, the first episode was Michael Cera. [Laughs.]

You know, the whole reason "Between Two Ferns" exists—they were doing a pilot based on Scott Aukerman's comedy. I directed a few of the taped pieces, and one of them was "Between Two Ferns." And the pilot never even made it to air. But it's one of the things I'm most proud of on my résumé. Zach is truly one of the world's funniest people, to me. The very first thing I ever directed for television was Zach's show on VH1, kind of a parody of a talk show [2002's "Late World with Zach"]. So Zach and I go way back; he was always my favorite comedian. I'm just stoked that it did become what it became. 🍷

AT THE MOVIES WITH RUBEN FLEISCHER

What's your all-time favorite moviegoing memory or experience?

I grew up in Washington, D.C., and the audiences in D.C. are super vocal and interactive. My favorite thing in the world would be to go to an opening-night movie when it was packed, when I was in high school, like [1988's comedy] *I'm Gonna Get You Sucka* or [1992's] *White Men Can't Jump*. I'd go to the Uptown [a single-screen theater that opened in 1936 and closed in March 2020].

The energy of being with that audience in that room, hearing people yell, "Don't go in there!" or throwing things at the screen. It was just a really fun, participatory experience. It made me aware at an early age just how [great] that collective experience of a film, together in a theater, could be. Any Eddie Murphy movie, any movie that was highly anticipated, that energy in the theater of the audience, just so excited, having visceral reactions. Sometimes when it was a movie they didn't like, they could be really harsh. It was just so fun. When I make films, I really do make them for a [theater] audience.

What's your favorite snack at the movie theater concession stand?

Traditionally, Sno-Caps. That's my go-to. I like to keep it old-school.



ON SCREEN | **THE WORST PERSON IN THE WORLD**

A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN

Joachim Trier Returns to Oslo
with *The Worst Person in the World*

BY DANIEL LORIA





Norwegian filmmaker Joachim Trier rose to fame on the international film-festival scene following his 2006 debut feature, *Reprise*. The film established many of the themes the writer-director would return to in the ensuing years: identity, ambition, and love among a new generation of adults looking for their place in contemporary society.

Trier's 2011 film, *Oslo, August 31st*, became the second part of what would eventually be known as his Oslo Trilogy, three films linked by overlapping themes and set in the Norwegian capital. That triptych reaches its conclusion with the upcoming release of *The Worst Person in the World*, a movie chronicling four formative years in the life of Julie (Renate Reinsve) as she juggles professional and artistic ambitions and navigates romantic relationships with two very different men (Anders Danielsen Lie and Herbert Nordrum).

BOXOFFICE PRO spoke with Trier following the film's overwhelmingly positive reception at the New York Film Festival and ahead of its February theatrical release in North America.

Movies about a particular generation's connection to love, ambition, sex—they are tough to get right and often don't age well, to be perfectly honest. When I was watching your film for the first time, I kept thinking back to one of those films that did get it right, Jean-Luc Godard's *Masculin Féminin* (1966), which covers many of the same topics in a very playful style—and takes some of the same filmmaking risks you do in your own film. Did you have any stylistic influences in mind when you began work on *The Worst Person in the World*?

It's shot on 35 mm. I wanted to have a broad spectrum of color. I wanted it to feel like a modern take on the kind of warm, funny cinema that we saw in the '60s and '70s. The playfulness and romance of Paul Mazursky and Éric Rohmer, honest portraits of human beings. I also like the classic screwball comedies of the '40s, George Cukor and the great Katharine Hepburn movies. I think cinema has always made these romantic films. The good ones that we keep remembering are the ones that go deeper existentially and see how vulnerable we are when trying to negotiate love, to find a place

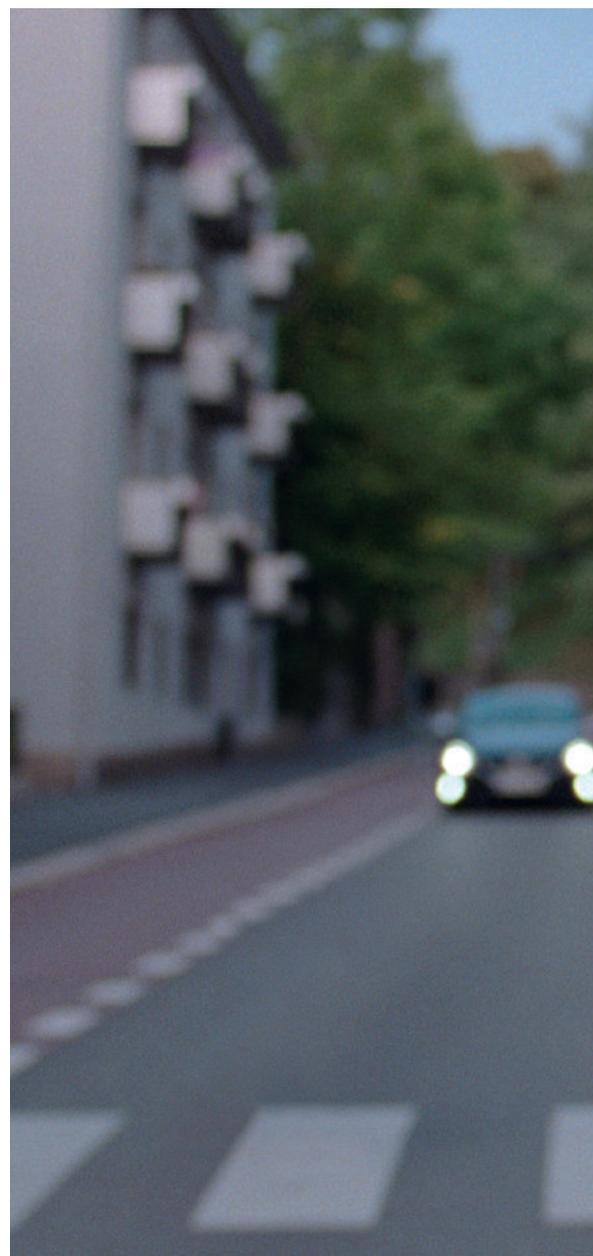
for ourselves, and find who we want to be with or who we are.

You're back in Oslo for *The Worst Person in the World*, a city you've returned to throughout your career. This is a film that is utterly universal, that could easily apply to most young people living in countless countries. What makes this an Oslo film?

It's because I know the city intimately. I grew up admiring Martin Scorsese's New York or Spike Lee's New York or the French New Wave filmmakers you were mentioning. People like Godard or Truffaut had their Paris, their subjective way of using the city as material. Not only sociologically: You know that that street corner is romantic in the morning when the sun is just right; you know all these intuitive emotional things. Film is about making spaces emotional. It's what film does well. And that's not an intellectual endeavor. That's something that just happens, whether it's the nights in *Mulholland Drive* by David Lynch—it's that feeling that someone has been very specific. Since *Reprise*, and going forward, I've realized more and more that I do meet people in New York. Chicago, L.A., Mexico City, or in Paris, that feel the specificity of Oslo relates to them, not because they know Oslo but because I have a specific angle on something they can engage in. Not making a general city film, but trying to find that kind of flavor, the mood, and I can do that in my own city.

It reminds me of how Woody Allen films are able to connect with audiences around the world through the New York that he shows, a very specific type of New York. It's not a documentary type New York, but you know it's his. You mention Scorsese, Spike Lee—the way they tell stories with universal themes that retain this intrinsic New York identity—you bring that trait to Oslo in this film.

I hope so. Someone was saying that the Oslo city travel board should start paying me. [*Laughs.*] But to be honest, that's not why I do these films. I'm also showing the complexity of coming from Norway, the epitome of a privileged, middle-class country in the north of Europe. And the themes deal a lot with ambition and also, at some point, the sense of failure Julie feels about herself. She feels that she has had these possibilities in this very successful



"Because we knew Renate was so good, I had real faith in her as an actor. I felt that we could make a character that was quite multilayered."



democracy of Norway that people are so proud of; if you fail there with the access to free education, a very modern liberal approach to love, then you feel like the worst person in the world. You feel like a failure. I see a lot of people around me, particularly in their 30s, with this feeling that they should've been a grown up by now but they're still coming of age.

How did you come to the character of Julie? And how did you find Renate Reinsve to play the role as you were casting the film?

It happened at once. I had worked with Renate in a small part in *Oslo, August 31st*. She wasn't getting any really good parts

in movies, no leading parts for 10 years, so Eskil Vogt (my co-writer) and I, we decided to write this for her. Because we knew Renate was so good, I had real faith in her as an actor. I felt that we could make a character that was quite multilayered. In a way, the consistency of Julie is her inconsistency. Her ambivalence, her chaos is what makes her exciting as a character to write. We can all fill into her our own curiosity, imagination, romanticism. She's a very romantic character in that tradition of being fleeting and all over the place. I also wanted to show the coming-of-age journey of someone that becomes more grounded, that finds a space to accept herself. It's coming of age in that sense.

It's also about coming of age at the wrong time for certain life milestones or experiences. And about how society's norms for when these life events should happen has changed across generations. This is a recurring theme in your Oslo films.

I think that's accurate. The film is ultimately about time and how we deal with it. The pressure of time, the bad timing of relationships, meeting someone when you're not ready for each other, or you're at different stages in life and you feel trapped by that lack of aligned experience. So that's the sadness of that particular love story in the film. I didn't want it to come off as



an intellectual notion; I wanted people to feel that Julie comes to terms with mortality and time through experiencing her deeper understanding of what Aksel is going through. Sometimes in love we can learn a lot from each other, even though the relationship doesn't work out. I think that's a consoling notion, that we do affect each other regardless of whether we're able to sometimes create a successful romantic relationship with someone. We grow together—I think that's a nice thought, and that was at the core of making this film. We live in a society now, or at least I do, where we have this series of relationships and not everyone finds the right partner at the age of 18. Maybe that's healthy, maybe that's good, but that also asks us to accept the grief, the turmoil and the joy of those breaks and re-engagements. I wanted to do a snapshot about how I perceive that in today's society, where everything becomes quite transactional. I think a lot of people feel that they have to come to the "marketplace" of love with a value in order to be allowed to be loved. You can swipe on Tinder and seemingly be free, but it's also quite inhibiting. That paradox is a modern notion.

I take it as a compliment when people say it's a generational portrait. We are all in this generation—whether you're 40 or 30, you are going through the time we're in. And to have that conversation, as you're pointing to, between a man in his 40s and a woman of 30, about how differently they perceive the same question, "What did I do in my life?" I think that's an interesting discourse.

Julie is someone who initiates all the changes in her life. She is the one who starts and ends relationships on her terms. She has total agency in where she wants to take her life, but she never seems to be completely satisfied with where those decisions take her. By the end of the film, you ask whether she has to define herself at all through a relationship.

Making a film today, it would feel completely untruthful to tell a story about a young woman where the conclusion would be, "Oh, if you find the right man, you'll be fine." That would be bullshit. Julie's not perfect. She avoids intimacy. She has great anxiety of knowing whether and how she's going to have a relationship. But, ultimately, it's also about her relation to herself. I am interested in people that have high ambitions. The dreamers, the driven people that also come to a conclusion that they are not only driven by joy, but also by a sense of escapism and denial of vulnerability. I think the bravery of Julie's character is in her journey towards accepting her vulnerability and accepting to be with herself. I was thinking, jokingly, about what Oscar Wilde says, "To be in love with oneself is a lifelong romance." As a Norwegian making a film called *The Worst Person in the World*, I can say, "To hate oneself is a lifelong romance." That would almost be a Freudian take on it. [Laughs.] I think Julie is grappling with that. ♥

AT THE MOVIES WITH JOACHIM TRIER

I grew up in a cinema [Trier's father is noted Norwegian film sound technician Jacob Trier]. I think it's wonderful to come to the end of a film that you really felt. You come out of the darkness and the light goes up. Maybe you're alone, maybe you're with some friends, and you're like, "Wow, I was transported somewhere else," because of the mechanisms of the big screen. Looking at other people, and you're hearing they're talking, and you feel you shared something together. And maybe if those films are about the intimacy of emotion and character, like the cinema that I'm curious to explore at the moment, then it's almost like you've had a private conversation. I sometimes think that I want to make films for my friends that I don't know. I'm trying to be entertaining, and I want people to laugh and feel, but I also want to leave space for them to interpret and wonder with me about these things. I don't have all the answers. If you want to have strong opinions, go on Facebook. Art, to me, is a place where we try to stay more open about things.

A lot of people have the habit of watching things at home. And there's great stuff there as well. So let's not make that the enemy. But let's just admit to the fact that we've done a lot of takeout, and now we love the restaurant. You know, we want to have both.

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JACKASS

FAMILY



REUNION



Jeff Tremaine Brings the Band Back Together for More Big-Screen Carnage in *Jackass Forever*

BY REBECCA PAHLE

→ In 2000, a show called “Jackass” premiered on MTV—and American culture was never quite the same. Created by Jeff Tremaine, Spike Jonze, and Johnny Knoxville, the short-lived show featured Knoxville and a band of daredevil ne’er-do-wells (or, as Tremaine calls them, “idiots”) performing stunts and pranks that were typically either highly dangerous or highly disgusting, or both.

The show itself lasted only three seasons, during which time it drew intense public ire—much of it spurred on by then-Senator Joe Lieberman, who called for it to be canceled due to its supposed outsize impact on the country’s youth. Tremaine, Jonze, Knoxville, and company decided to make a *Jackass* movie on their way out the door—and, when that movie grossed nearly \$80 million worldwide on a \$5 million budget, a franchise was born.

Twenty years later, on February 4, the fourth film in the *Jackass* series—fifth, if you count spin-off *Bad Grandpa*—hits the big screen. In addition to the safety requirements of a normal *Jackass* movie, director Tremaine had to deal with Covid, which split production in two and caused the film to be delayed from its original October 2021 release date—though, for Tremaine, *Jackass Forever* skipping the big screen was never an option. To quote Steve-O: “You don’t want to ride a roller coaster alone.”

When did you start working on this film? By which I mean: Where did production fall on the dreaded Covid timeline?

It was in spring, maybe early summer, of 2019. [Johnny] Knoxville came to me and said, “Hey, man. I’ve got that itch. I’m thinking I want to do another *Jackass* movie.” And I was shocked, because every other movie came from me going to him and saying, “Hey, man, I think it’s time to do another one.” This was him coming to me. The other movies were always like four years apart. This one is 10 [years after *Jackass 3D*]—not counting [spin-off] *Bad Grandpa*. And he had been writing. He not only came to me with the idea that he wanted to do it—he had a 100-page document of all the shit he’d been writing over the last 10 years.

I was like, “All right, let’s get the guys together and see what they think.” And everyone was instantly, “Hell yeah, let’s do it! Let’s do it!” But I had a little trepidation—and Spike [Jonze] definitely did—about, “Man, but what’s it going to look like? We’re all entering our middle-ages. Even the youngest of the original guys are in their 40s. Is it still funny? Is

“The dynamics were all there, still. It’s like a funny old family reunion, with all the baggage and everything that comes with it.”

the spirit still there?”

And so, we decided: We’re going to get all the originals and then bring in some new blood. And before we committed to doing this, we came to Paramount and said, “Hey listen, we want to do a two-day shoot to see what it feels like before we decide to move forward. Two days is going to tell us whether it’s a good idea or not.” We got all the old guys together, got them to also embrace the idea of shooting with the new guys. And five minutes into this two-day test shoot, it was obvious. The magic was clearly there. The middle-agedness actually worked in its favor more than it was a hindrance. The dynamics were all there, still. It’s like a funny old family reunion, with all the baggage and everything that comes with it. I think even our fans are aware of a lot of that. It was so fun, right away. After those two days, it was clear, and we hit Paramount up to say, “All right, we’ll do it.”

That happened in December of 2019. We got the green light right after that, so we went into production on January 3 to start shooting in March. The beginning of March, we got five days into it, and the pandemic hit. We were screaming out of



the gate, too. The momentum couldn't have been higher. The rug got pulled out from underneath us. It was like, "Holy shit." At the time, like all of the world, we didn't know if this a two-week shutdown, if it was a two-month shutdown ...

During the lockdown, we just kept writing and meeting through Zoom. We got used to that. And then it was seven months later, and we were probably one of the first movies back to shooting, at least in L.A. We were sort of guinea pigs as far as, what are the safety protocols? *Jackass* is so funny, because it's like, let's be safe so we can shoot dangerous shit.

The stunts look so unsafe, but you know they're professionals so they're taking precautions that you might not necessarily see as a viewer. And then you add Covid into that—how do you make the set of a *Jackass* movie Covid-safe?

Everything we do is real, too! There's not a road map on how to shoot this, but we do as much safety as we can. As far as the crew and everyone else goes, we wanted to make sure that this was safe. Everybody took the safety protocols seriously. Top to bottom. One fuckup from the crew, it'd fuck the whole thing up. We had a couple of little hiccups, but nothing that really shut it down. Knock on wood, because it could have easily happened even with everybody taking it seriously.

Thinking back to the earlier *Jackass* movies, you have bodily fluids flying around—

Right. With *Jackass*, we shoot 360. That it made it a little harder, because I didn't want to see a bunch of masks. Everybody—the cameraman, all the people that you would normally see their faces reacting to shit—had masks on. But we just learned to embrace it. And we actually took advantage of the fact that, well, now there's these new safety protocols, we put all the guys through a fake Covid safety meeting. We had them under a tent. This was the first day back to shooting. We had a stuntman [who was] posed as the safety officer on the set. We have them all around a table under this pop-up tent. The meeting starts going. They didn't realize: We had an inflatable bounce house under the middle of the table that was packed super tight. We had a hyper-inflator, and we dug the hose underground to this truck,



"Everybody took the safety protocols seriously. Top to bottom. One fuckup from the crew, it'd fuck the whole thing up."

so we could blow the thing up instantly, almost like those airplane safety rafts. And so they're sitting there, and all of a sudden everything just explodes on them. We just made it work. Everyone got used to it quickly. There were little hoops you had to jump through to get the day started, but once you got it started, the magic was back.

Since the pandemic started, studios—including Paramount—have had to rethink their release strategies for some films, with certain titles going day-and-date and others bypassing theatrical entirely. Did you have any discussions about how *Jackass Forever* would be released?

The main thing for us is that this thing is theatrical. It's so important that people experience—like, to me, *Jackass*



is a theatrical experience. I think it was Steve-O that said, “You don’t want to ride a roller coaster alone.” We had an October release date, but that was right when Delta was hitting. And we all collectively, sadly, uprooted it and put it here in February. And we’re watching carefully as things unfold. For us, it was never a discussion of just going full digital with it, full streaming. I think it’s so fun to watch this movie in a theater.

Jackass’s whole thing is hanging out with your friends and having a good time.

I think that’s the magic of it—you get to hang out with this group of idiots, but you feel like you’re part of it. And it’s a collective thing. Every time I’ve peeped in on the audiences watching these movies on opening weekend, it’s a visceral audience! They’re jumping out of their seats. They’re closing their eyes. It’s a roller-coaster ride.

Is there one of those times, watching the audience, that sticks out for you at all?

There’ve been a few times where people have thrown up.

“I think that’s the magic of it—you get to hang out with this group of idiots, but you feel like you’re part of it.”

Those poor theater employees!

We have some very expressive fans. We’ve filmed [audiences] with night vision. I’m telling you—their hands go up, their hands over their eyes, they hug the person next to them, they throw their popcorn. It’s a very interactive movie!

Is this supposed to be the last one?

I mean, hey, we’ve made every one of these as, “This is the last one.” The first movie was supposed to be the last movie. The second movie, the third movie. And this one definitely felt like the last one. But if you told me a year from now that it’s time to make another one—hey, maybe it is!

I ask because maybe in Jackass 5 you can have that immersive seating element, where the seats move, and stuff gets sprayed in your space. Though, what would be sprayed in your face, actually, for a Jackass movie? That might be disgusting.

Everyone needs to be careful what they wish for.

Have you screened this one for an audience yet?

AT THE MOVIES WITH JEFF TREMAINE

Was there a hometown movie theater that you grew up going to?

Every summer we would go to this little town in northern Wisconsin. It had two theaters: a drive-in and your classic ma-and-pa theater. It was so special to go see movies there. It was a little, tiny town. When I was younger, I lived on an army base, and they had a theater that was really cool.

What's an army base movie theater like?

Oh, it was cool! It was a real movie theater. I grew up on the Presidio in San Francisco. The army hospital my dad worked in is now Lucasfilm's main building. It was like a little town. It had its own bowling alley and a little movie theater. Movies were a quarter.

What's your go-to movie theater snack?

I'm a Red Vines sucker. I'll just plow through the whole thing. Red Vines taste like a movie to me. I never have them besides then, but when I'm at a theater, that's what I want.

Yeah, we were able to do that. The hard thing about this one was, never to a maskless audience, never to a full audience. So it was tricky to gauge. You can still see them move, but you can't see their faces reacting. We film the audience—we've done it every time. We do a test screening to see what works. It's really important for me to watch that, because I get to see what works. *Jackass* is so modular, I can just shuffle bits around. There's no collective, long narrative.

How much shifting around comes from those screenings where you're watching the audience? Will it be a completely different cut afterward?

It's a completely different cut. I learn so much from watching people watching. I need to [tone it down], usually. Which sounds strange—the movie would be so extreme if it was just me doing it.

People need a chance to breathe and reset their brains for something truly filthy.

Sometimes I cut things too tight. When you open them up—it's actually funnier to let it breathe. I've learned that you really need to show it to people and let them feel it. Little things are more important than I realized.

What sorts of movies do you like to see in a theater that give you that communal rush?

A great comedy, when it's really working. I remember going, opening weekend, to *The Hangover*. It was *raucous* in there. I was falling out of my chair. It was so fun to be part of that. And a good horror movie, too. When the horror movie's working, everybody's on the edge of their seat. And then there's other movies that you have to see just for their beauty and their filmmaking. Both types: one, the interactive audience, and two, "This movie is just too big and awesome not to see in the theater."

Have you been able to go to the theater much since L.A. reopened?

I haven't really been much, no. Most of my theatergoing now is with my kids, and, until recently, my kids were unvaccinated and in school. It's so easy to fuck up, and I don't want to shut their grade down. Now that we're all vaccinated, I feel a lot safer about taking them. I want to get back to

it so bad. I've gone to a few screenings to see things—I didn't realize how badly I'd missed it.

How old are your kids?

I've got a 10-year-old and a 12-year-old.

Have they seen any *Jackass*?

They've seen very little of it. The big thing around our family is, "Daddy, when are you going to make something that we can watch?" They know I make naughty stuff.

We were editing a lot during the lockdown. Even when we were back up and shooting, we weren't back in the office to do editing. We finally, towards the end, got to go back, keeping it small. My kids were at home on their Zooms doing the remote learning. I was in my office, right next to where my daughter was doing her schooling. So she overheard a lot of inappropriate stuff. I didn't think she was paying attention. "You don't know what's happening!" She's like, "Daddy. Here's what happened." And she lays the whole thing out. I'm like, "Oh, my God."

The trailer, where it starts with footage of the older movies overlaid with "We'll meet again" and a message about hanging out with old friends—not going to lie, it hits emotionally after the last few years.

For us, it's a family reunion. When we started shooting, it felt like we hadn't been apart for a day. Everyone is back, all the old baggage is back, all the old relationships are still—the dynamics of the group are still there. It was so fun to bring it all back. I missed it until we started shooting again. We shot it against all odds, and to me it's as good as anything we've ever done. And we're very careful with what we put the brand name on. I think this one lives right next to all the others and is as good as any of them. ■

ON SCREEN | SCREAM



A person with dark hair, wearing a pink sweater, is seen from the side, looking out of a window at night. The window has multiple panes, and the view outside is dark. The scene is dimly lit, with light coming from the window and possibly from the person's sweater.

TAKING ANOTHER STAB

Filmmaking Team Radio
Silence Steps in for Wes Craven
for the Fifth Installment of the
Scream Franchise
BY DANIEL LORIA



One of the most iconic horror franchises in recent history, *Scream* rang into movie theaters during the Christmas corridor in 1996 and revived the slasher picture for a new generation of moviegoers. The film brought a playful, new energy to what had become a tired, straight-to-video horror subgenre. Infused with Gen-X ironic detachment, the original *Scream* (1996) poked fun at the conventions and gratuitous excess that had until then defined slasher movies: It was a self-reflexive whodunit drenched in blood and guts. *Scream*, with its young cast, ushered in a new wave of slasher movies for mainstream audiences—horror movies for the MTV generation—and was a catalyst for the genre’s late-1990s revival in movie theaters.

The men behind the filmmaking team known as Radio Silence—Matthew Bettinelli-Olpin, Tyler Gillett, and Chad Villella—are members of that generation. Together, the trio has produced some of the most memorable horror movies in recent years, including *Devil’s Due* (2014) and *Ready or Not* (2019). Tasked with reviving the franchise 25 years after the release of the original—the first time a *Scream* movie has been entrusted to someone other than horror legend Wes Craven—the filmmakers remain tight lipped ahead of the film’s January release. In this interview with BOXOFFICE PRO, the directors, while not providing many details (or spoilers), talked about their connection to the franchise and their fan-

driven approach to tackling the fifth entry in the *Scream* saga, which shares a title with the original.

Where are the main characters—Sidney (Neve Campbell), Dewey (David Arquette), and Gale (Courteney Cox)—since we last saw them in *Scream 4* (2011)?

Tyler Gillett: Part of the challenge of talking about the movie right now is being able to give satisfying answers to questions without spoiling anything. What I can say is that what we were really excited about and really loved about the script, as fans and filmmakers who were taking it on, was to tell the story of where we find these legacy characters 10 years after the last movie. Guy Busick and Jamie Vanderbilt, the writers, did such a beautiful job of answering that question and grounding the movie in how those three individuals have dealt with the trauma they experienced over four movies, now that they’re being pulled back into the mix. That was such an exciting part of what the read was for us, wanting to know what happened to Sidney, Gale, and Dewey. We think audiences are going to be absolutely thrilled with how we present that story and answer those questions.

As a filmmaking team, how did this project land on your desks?

Chad Villella: We did *Ready or Not* with the Project X team: William Sherak, James Vanderbilt, and Paul Neinstein. We had



“When we finally got back to the studio in-person after more than a year, long-gone iterations of characters and storyboards were pinned up on the walls.”



SCREAM FRANCHISE IN NUMBERS

*Based on domestic grosses

SCREAM

(1996)

\$103M

SCREAM 2

(1997)

\$101.3M

SCREAM 3

(2000)

\$89.1M

SCREAM 4

(2011)

\$38.1M

an incredible experience with them and were very proud of that movie, doing it for what we could budget-wise and seeing the results it had in the bigger world. We went in for a general meeting, at least we thought it was a general meeting, with Gary Barber, the head of Spyglass Entertainment. They called to give us a pep talk beforehand: "Guys, just go in and be normal, don't do anything silly. Just go in and talk to Gary." And we're like, "Why did they just call to give us a pep talk before a general meeting, our first time meeting this guy?" In the meeting, Gary let it slip that they have the rights to *Scream*, and that Jamie Vanderbilt and Guy Busick would be writing it. When we

got out of the meeting, we were thrilled that two of our friends were writing *Scream*, because we're lifelong fans of *Scream*. It's a movie that is near and dear to our hearts in terms of [our] coming up in the horror space. It wasn't until a little bit after, when we were getting to our cars, where we were like, "Wait a second, what was going on there? What were they doing?" About an hour later they called us and asked if we'd like to be a part of this. It was a very quick, without question, "Yes." It is one of our favorite franchises of all time, and we couldn't be happier to be a part of it, making it with people that we really get along with and who we know share the same sensibilities we do.





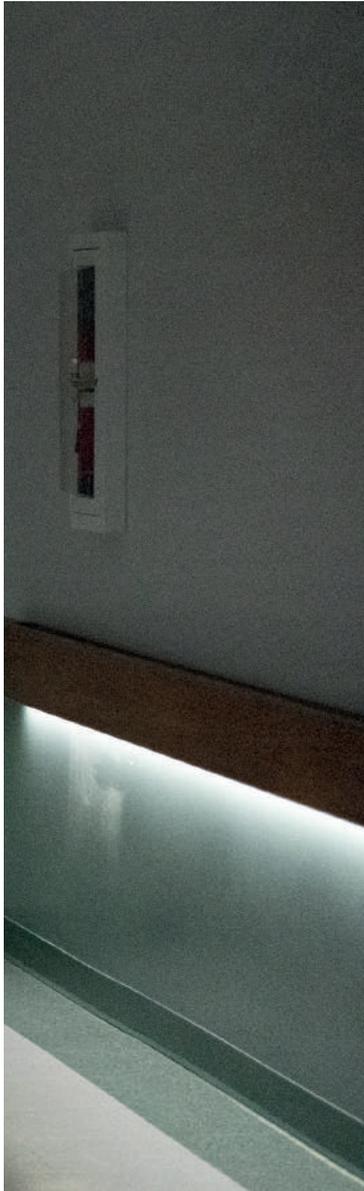
The opportunity is also daunting. You're inheriting a franchise from one of the masters of the genre, Wes Craven, who died in 2015. How much pressure did that bring as you came in with a new approach to this series?

Matthew Bettinelli-Olpin: *The* most important thing to us, throughout this process, was to be conscious of how to honor what Wes Craven created. How do we expand on that? How do we learn and use the tools that we've picked up from him over the years to make this next chapter of *Scream* something he would have been proud of? We wanted to make sure [his vision] was in the DNA of this movie, and Guy and Jamie did an incredible job in the script of making sure that was true on a

foundational level. We were really conscious the whole time of how Wes would do things: What would Wes do? That was something we talked about all the time. We immersed ourselves in interviews and books to get every little tidbit of information we could about him. We embraced it. We talked to all the legacy cast, we talked to Patrick Lussier, his editor on the [first three] *Scream* movies, his wife, everybody we could talk to. And [screenwriter] Kevin Williamson, of course, had so much information from Wes to share with us. Hopefully all of that is in the movie, because in a lot of ways, the movie is a love letter to Wes that also pushes the franchise forward. We also wanted to make sure we didn't get stuck in nostalgia, because that's not something we think would do the franchise justice.

That's such an important balance to strike. What did you learn to emulate and what did you learn to avoid from the sequels?

Tyler Gillett: One of the things that we had the advantage of, having been fans of the original four movies, was this sense of muscle memory of what it feels like to be [watching] *Scream*. It's so specific in the way these movies are, how they mix tone and genre; the alchemy of a *Scream* movie is such a singular thing. For us, what we learned and what those movies taught us was to follow that feeling. This goes back to our first read of the script—did it feel like it was of the same cloth? We carried that with us throughout the process as well. At every stage of production we



asked ourselves, does this feel like a *Scream* movie? Is this a choice that a *Scream* movie would make? You dig into the specificity of that. One of the things that we strived for, and it's what we love so much about the franchise, is how it always plays with and subverts expectations. The second that you think the movie is going to go right, it goes left. We just love that. So much of the experience is being on this wild ride and thinking you know what's going to happen, but also knowing the movie is probably a few steps ahead of you the whole time.

Matthew Bettinelli-Olpin: The first one, for the three of us, is one of the greatest movies of all time. Full stop, period. Not

as a horror movie, no disclaimers—just as a movie. One of the things that we learned is that the subsequent ones all live in that same world and that the fans of *Scream* really care about all of those [details]. Some franchises have [sequels] that everybody just writes off, and they don't count anymore. With *Scream* there is a long legacy. A large part of that is because Wes Craven directed all four of them, and Kevin [Williamson] wrote three of them. We wanted to make sure that we never let go of that. Good, bad, or whatever anybody's point of view is on the previous four, we wanted to make sure that ours can stand with those in terms of what the ultimate story is.



"The most important thing to us, throughout this process, was to be conscious of how to honor what Wes Craven created."



When I think of *Scream*, I think of how it is so willing to play with the formulas of the genre. How it's very playfully self-reflexive. The series is a commentary on where horror is when those individual movies come out. The most recent installment, *Scream 4*, addressed a lot of that found-footage horror film that we were seeing during its time. What does your *Scream* have to say about where horror is today?

Tyler Gillett: That question is a bit slippery for us to answer, unfortunately. What we can say is that we were excited to see how [the writers] tackled that. How it's self-reflexive, how it's providing some form of commentary about pop culture and the genre and where we're at in a very specific moment in time. All of that is there, but it's not so mired in it that it forgets to be a thrilling horror movie. For us, it was essential you didn't find yourself being reminded the whole time that you're watching a *Scream* movie. The short answer is that we're really excited to be able to have

"You're going to get the oohs and aahs, the laughs, the jump scares with people tossing popcorn because they jumped out of their seats a little bit."

these conversations after the movie has come out. There's a whole lot to unpack in what the movie is providing commentary on.

It's great that this movie is going to be playing in movie theaters, where the audience can experience it in a communal atmosphere. I get that home video plays a role in the horror genre, but when you think of *The Exorcist*, the original *Scream*, *Halloween*—these were cultural events at the movie theater. What does it mean for you guys to have this film in theaters?

Chad Villella: It's surreal that this movie is coming out within days of the 25th anniversary of the original. The fact that we were able to work with our partners at Spyglass and Paramount to do a theater-only release, given the state of the world in the last 19 months, we were just in awe. We can't wait to see it in a packed theater. That's the best way these movies are watched. *Scream* will benefit greatly from being in an environment where

people are having this shared experience. You're going to get the oohs and aahs, the laughs, the jump scares with people tossing popcorn because they jumped out of their seats a little bit. That's the way we approached it and the way we approach all our projects: We want to be in the theater. We want to have that communal experience. The best fans in the world in a theater are horror fans because they are so vocal, energized, and passionate about their movies. We're three of them. On opening weekend, we're gonna go from theater to theater and experience not just the movie we made but experience *Scream* with a larger group. It's honestly a dream come true.

Tyler Gillett: There is something profound about the experience of having a shared catharsis. People have been experiencing isolation and loneliness in some form, collectively, over the last couple of years. That's why you're seeing people showing up to movies like *Halloween Kills*, like *Candyman*. There's a real desire and hunger to not only be back out in the world, but to share these emotional experiences. It's something that we've all missed so dearly. To get to be a part of that reopening and revival is emotional, honestly. The movie theater has shaped all of us in such profound ways over the course of our lives; to get to

have this movie open during this time is truly profound.

Matthew Bettinelli-Olpin: Movie theaters are the last place left where we can disconnect and have an experience. I don't know where else I can go and not see people on their phones—maybe roller coasters? There's just something so special about being able to dip into the subconscious and have that uninterrupted experience. I'll just speak for myself, but I try so hard to not look at my phone when I'm watching a movie at home. It's almost inevitable that at some point I'll pick it up and do something dumb on it.

Tyler Gillett: We've all been back to the theater recently, and one of the things we've all talked about since that first experience back was how we had to relearn how to put the phone away and just be focused on one thing. It was weird. It felt strange and was difficult at first, but once you're in that experience, the muscle memory of being in the theater takes over. I didn't realize how much I missed it until I was having the experience again. ▶



AT THE MOVIES WITH RADIO SILENCE

Do you remember the first time you watched *Scream* in a movie theater?

Matthew Bettinelli-Olpin: I saw it in Oakland, California, at the Grand Lake Theater, which is my favorite theater in the entire world. It's the theater that I grew up going to, so I saw every movie I love for the first 20 years of my life there. *Scream* was one of them. It's a wonderful, old-school theater. They play the Wurlitzer before [the show]; it's like a movie experience from another era. I saw it a couple weeks after it came out. I got back from school, or from the holidays, and you know, everybody was talking about it.

Tyler Gillett: I was too young and too much of a chicken to see it in person in the theater. I was at a slumber party; someone's older sibling probably rented it. I remember being absolutely terrified. My experience with the movie is inextricably linked to this social experience of seeing it with a group of people. My first theatrical experience with *Scream* was with the second one. It was the same group of friends; we were scared shitless the first time and were all ready to show up and have the exact same experience in the theater for the second one.

Chad Villella: The first time I saw it was in Erie, Pennsylvania, as a freshman in college. Right after we watched it, we wanted to go see it again. I think we went two days later to see it again in that theater. Hearing the audience's reactions after the opening scene is something I'll never forget.

A CINEMATIC

Joe Wright Brings a Musical
Cyrano de Bergerac to the Big Screen

BY REBECCA PAHLE



ESCAPE



Call him the modern-day master of the period drama. Director Joe Wright, whose award-winning films have taken audiences through Britain of the 1940s (*Darkest Hour*, *Atonement*), 19th-century Russia (*Anna Karenina*), and Georgian-era England (*Pride & Prejudice*) turns to 17th-century France with *Cyrano*, in theaters January 28 from MGM.

An adaptation of Edmond Rostand's 1897 play *Cyrano de Bergerac*, this new version of the classic love story—based on a 2018 stage adaptation penned by Erica Schmidt, who also wrote the screenplay—makes several key changes to its source material. One: It's a musical, with music by Bryce and Aaron Dessner of Grammy-winning band The National, and lyrics

by The National's Matt Berninger and his frequent collaborator (and wife) Carin Besser.

Two: Schmidt has eliminated Cyrano's signature long proboscis, instead presenting Peter Dinklage (who is married to Schmidt and starred in the stage *Cyrano*) as the witty, lovelorn lead. Cyrano offers to woo his beloved Roxanne (Haley Bennett, also reprising her role) on behalf of another man by writing love letters for the handsome Christian (Kelvin Harrison Jr.) that the younger man then delivers under his own name. "I think with any other version there was the feeling that the actor—however convincing—can at the end of the day sit in the makeup chair and pull the big nose off of his face," says Wright. "Pete brought an inherent truth

and honesty to Cyrano that I found deeply affecting."

The result is a profoundly moving film buoyed by a career-best performance from Dinklage, who seems born to play a character both brash and deeply wounded by the world. In advance of the film's theatrical release, Wright spoke to BOXOFFICE PRO about making a film about human connection during the middle of a worldwide pandemic.

First off, congrats on the film. I loved it, as did my boyfriend, who is not typically a musical or period-drama person.

Oh, good. I'm not really much of a musical person myself. I think the movie is almost a musical for people who don't normally like musicals.



How did you get attached to this project, then? I know it's based on a preexisting musical stage adaptation of *Cyrano*—

Haley Bennett invited me to go and watch a tiny workshop production [of it] at a theater in Chester, Connecticut, which seated like 120 people. I'd always loved the story of *Cyrano*. I felt somehow emotionally connected to Cyrano as a character, especially as a teenager. But when I saw Erica's workshop production, with Peter Dinklage playing Cyrano and Haley playing Roxanne, suddenly it was like a fresh, new light had been shed on an old, dusty piece of material, and I understood how it might be possible to turn that into an exciting new movie.

When I think of *Cyrano de Bergerac*—obviously, it's a classic, well-respected piece of literature. But in terms of movie adaptations, the most common reference point for most people would probably be *Roxanne*, with Steve Martin and his big fake nose. Not that Peter Dinklage isn't a funny actor, but your movie is much more emotionally affecting than that prior approach.

The story has an emotional and spiritual depth that I feel is often missed from the original source material. That's not to say that I wanted to treat it with a kind of [over-the-top] seriousness, but I think it's there in the material. Certainly, the complications of that love triangle I find incredibly moving. I see myself and my fellow humans reflected in those characters. There's a beauty and a

tenderness. I find tenderness itself very moving.

Since you have that emotional connection to the source material, I was wondering if I could get your thoughts on how you approached the ending. It's a bit of a hard one to land, because you get used to seeing the story as a traditional love triangle, and then—I don't know, can you spoil a play that's 125 years old?

One of the interesting things about the Steve Martin version, *Roxanne*, is that it had a happy ending, and this doesn't. I sometimes think the happiest ending available to us is simply acceptance. And I do think there is acceptance at the end of the story, you know? If one grounds that ending in that sense of acceptance, then that will hopefully see us through. It also, for me, inspires me to try and do better. I don't think it's a hopeless feeling. I think there is hope for the audience at the end of the movie. Hope in the story they've seen, but hope in their own lives, too.

When was production on this? Where did it fall in the pandemic timeline?

Right bang in the middle. We'd been adapting it for about three years. I already felt that, with the Internet age and social media and so on, there was a pertinence to the story, which I saw as being about human connection and our need, as humans, to connect with other humans, which we often fail to do. I felt that already spoke to the Internet age. Then the pandemic hit, and all human connection

"We took it to MGM, and literally within 24 hours they came back and said, 'Yes, we want to do this, and we're betting on the future of cinema because if we don't bet on the future of cinema, then we're betting on the death of cinema.'"



ON SCREEN | **CYRANO**

was literally severed. It was June 28, 2020, when I felt we'd gotten the script to a place I was happy with and ready to start production.

So I called up Eric Fellner at Working Title and I said, "We've got to make this movie. We've got to make it now." Because of the themes of the film, but also because I knew that a lot of my friends and colleagues—actors, dancers, crew—were in Britain having a lot of trouble putting food on the table, because our government was very, very late in supplying any financial help to the self-employed, especially in the arts sector. I knew a lot of people, especially those actors who work mainly in the theater, who were having a really bad time. So I called Eric Fellner and said, "We've got to make this movie, and

we need to do it now." And he said, "You're crazy. There's a global pandemic on." And I was like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, I don't care about that. Tell me, what is the percentage of likelihood that we can get this film made?" And he said, "About five percent." So I said, "Great. I'll go with that."

We went to my usual backer, Focus, and they weren't doing anything. We tried a few people. We took it to MGM, and literally within 24 hours they came back and said, "Yes, we want to do this, and we're betting on the future of cinema because if we don't bet on the future of cinema, then we're betting on the death of cinema." I found that really moving. And so we were off. We started shooting at the beginning of October 2020, and we wrapped on December 18, 2020, on





the island of Sicily. We made it in a spirit of defiance, almost, against this bleak situation that we'd found ourselves in. I don't know if the film would be quite as passionate were it not for those circumstances.

It's such a bright, airy film. Visually, it's a little escape for two hours.

Exactly. A little escape that also reflects back on us, on our hearts and our need for human connection.

As you're making *Cyrano*, you're seeing all these films continue to get pushed down the schedule, to in some cases go day-and-date or bypass theatrical entirely. Were you having conversations about that, about how this film would

be released? Was there ever any question that it would be theatrical?

There was never any question from [MGM's] Mike De Luca and Pamela Abdy, and indeed [MGM board chair] Kevin Ulrich, that the film would receive a theatrical release. They believe strongly, as I do, in the theatrical experience. The collective experience, you know? And I think so far they've been proved correct. They seem to be doing OK.

Have you had the chance to go back to cinemas much since they reopened in London?

Yeah, very much so. I think it's really important. And I love it. There's been recent scientific proof that when you collect an audience together in a theater,

their heartbeats actually synchronize. Literally. Which I'm sure we are aware of subconsciously, if not consciously. I think we feel that. Sure, you can have that synchronized heartbeat at a music concert or even in church, but for me, my church is the cinema and storytelling. I feel that experience when I'm in a theater with other people. I feel like I'm connected to them, and that together, we're collectively connected to the story we're being told. If it's a good one.

And if it's a bad one, you're connected too, just in a different way. We've all been to those screenings.

Yeah, that too! But also, the other thing, there's a lot of talk about the big-screen experience. To me, yes, it's about the



big screen, but it's also about the big *sound* experience. The totally immersive experience of the 7.1 surround sound system, or even the Atmos system, which I love. To feel fully immersed in the wonder of that bass and that treble is something quite different from the home experience, where if you're lucky the sound is coming out of a couple of decent speakers. But that's rare.

I forget the name of the song—the one with Glen Hansard [musician and star of *Once*] and other soldiers singing before going off to war. It's very somber and touching. The way it's filmed isn't flashy. You need to be immersed in it through sound.

Absolutely. I've tried to make a film

that isn't flashy. I feel like, as my career develops, I'm more and more interested in the challenge of apparent simplicity and how difficult that is, how challenging it is.

I was flashing back to *Anna Karenina* watching this—they're both very fluid, dancierly films.

I always conceived *Anna Karenina* as being a ballet. It was choreographed by the same choreographer [as *Cyrano*], Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, who is a dear friend and absolute genius. The most incredibly focused artist I think I've ever worked with. That felt like a ballet, and this feels like a natural progression from that work.

What was the first movie that you went to see, after things opened back up?

"My imagination feels constrained by contemporary life. Everything has to be real, you know? Whereas with a period fantasy/fairy tale, my imagination is freer, and I can take greater leaps of imagination and faith."



The first movie I went back to was *Cruella*, with the kids.

Both that and *Cyrano* have just amazing costumes. I love a well-costumed movie.

I loved that movie. I recently saw *Don't Look Up*. I love that movie. I love comedies. I love the Judd Apatow comedies. I was excited to speak to [*Don't Look Up* director] Adam McKay the other day, because he's the guy who directed *Anchorman*. That's a fucking masterpiece.

Reminds me of how Christopher Nolan is a *MacGruber* superfan. It doesn't seem like it would fit, but y'know, the man has good taste.

My taste is eclectic. Just because I often make literary adaptations and period movies—which is a whole other subject—my taste for movies is certainly not that narrow.

Well, since you brought it up, is there something in particular that drives you toward period dramas?

I see them as being fantasies. I don't really see them as reenactments of a past. I was brought up in a puppet theater in London, and we did fairy tales. There's something of the fairy tale about the period movie. I can invent worlds. I like the whole kind of—without sounding like an egotist—the world-building thing. I feel constrained by contemporary life and contemporary drama. I find it difficult to—my imagination feels constrained by contemporary life. Everything has to be real, you know? Whereas with a period fantasy/fairy tale, my imagination is freer, and I can take greater leaps of imagination and faith. That, to me, is really exciting.

But also, there's something I find personally reassuring when I realize that people in the past have gone through similar difficulties and experiences. It makes me feel less alone and more understood. It helps me.

I also think cowboy movies are period movies. I think sci-fi movies are period movies. They're just a future period. I'd love to do a sci-fi movie one day. I think they're all period movies. Being English, I've tried to break down, a little bit, the walls of what is considered a "British period movie." Not least because I think there's a perceived reactionary—even, dare I say it, conservative—persona of

period movies. And I've tried to fight that from within and reclaim the past for a good, old-fashioned Democratic Socialist like myself.

And, in *Cyrano*, for the outcasts, for the misfits, for a woman who doesn't want to get sold off to a man she doesn't love—who wants more out of a romance.

Absolutely. I remember reading *Atonement*, the novel, for the first time and for the first 90 pages feeling like I was in a very traditional English period novel and not really understanding why I should be thinking about this as a movie. And then suddenly—on, I think, page 96—Ian McEwan uses the C-word. It hit me like an atomic bomb. I suddenly went, "Oh, wait a minute, this is something completely different. I need to sit up and pay attention here, because this isn't what I thought it was."

Your adaptation hit that note in exactly the same way.

That's why I put a giant typewriter sound on that specific word, because I wanted it to sound like a bomb, too.

To what you said about fantasy world-building: I remember reading an interview with Keira Knightley about how she's drawn to period dramas because they have more complex, meaty roles for actresses. And—unlike in a lot of modern movies—her character probably won't be sexually assaulted.

It was interesting. With *Cyrano*, it felt—I feel like [*Cyrano de Bergerac* playwright] Edmond Rostand didn't show much respect for Roxanne in his writing. He mocks her literary aspirations. He calls her literary group "des Précieuses," which means "the precious." This idea of these precious, fussy women who are interested in words. One of the things that Haley and I were determined to do was to turn that around and make sure that our Roxanne was given some proper agency within that love triangle and within that society. ■

EVENT CINEMA CALENDAR

Updated through December 30, 2021.
Contact distributors for latest listings.

CINELIFE

cinelife.com

NEW WORLDS: THE CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION

From Feb. 2
Genre: Music

FATHOM EVENTS

fathomevents.com
855-473-4612

THE METROPOLITAN OPERA LIVE IN HD: RIGOLETTO

Jan. 29 (live), Feb. 2 (encore)
Genre: Opera

THE METROPOLITAN OPERA: FIRE SHUT UP IN MY BOES

Feb. 12
Genre: Opera

TCM BIG SCREEN CLASSICS: LADY SINGS THE BLUES (50TH ANNIV.)

Feb. 20, Feb. 23
Genre: Classics

BOLSHOI BALLET: SWAN LAKE (2022 ENCORE)

Mar. 6
Genre: Ballet

THE METROPOLITAN OPERA LIVE IN HD: ARIADNE AUF NAXOS

Mar. 12 (live), Mar. 16 (encore)
Genre: Opera

TCM BIG SCREEN CLASSICS: THE QUIET MAN (70TH ANNIV.)

Mar. 13, Mar. 17
Genre: Classics

THE METROPOLITAN OPERA LIVE IN HD: DON CARLOS

Mar. 26 (live), Mar. 30 (encore)
Genre: Opera

TCM BIG SCREEN CLASSICS: SINGIN' IN THE RAIN (70TH ANNIV.)

Apr. 10, Apr. 13
Genre: Classics

BOLSHOI BALLET: THE PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER (2022)

May 1
Genre: Ballet

THE METROPOLITAN OPERA LIVE IN HD: TURANDOT (2021)

May 7 (live), May 11 (encore)
Genre: Opera

THE METROPOLITAN OPERA LIVE IN HD: LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR

May 21 (live), May 25 (encore)
Genre: Opera

TCM BIG SCREEN CLASSICS: SMOKEY AND THE BANDIT (45TH ANNIV.)

May 29, June 1, June 2
Genre: Classics

THE METROPOLITAN OPERA LIVE IN HD: HAMLET

June 4 (live), June 8 (encore)
Genre: Opera

TCM BIG SCREEN CLASSICS: WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE? (60TH ANNIV.)

June 12, June 15
Genre: Classics

TCM BIG SCREEN CLASSICS: CABARET (50TH ANNIV.)

July 17, July 20
Genre: Classics

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

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

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

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

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

Oct. 16, Oct. 19
Genre: Classics

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

ROMEO AND JULIET

Feb. 14 (live), Feb. 20 (encore)
Genre: Opera

RIGOLETTO

Mar. 10 (live), Mar. 13 (encore)
Genre: Opera

LA TRAVIATA

Apr. 13 (live), Apr. 17 (encore)
Genre: Opera

SWAN LAKE

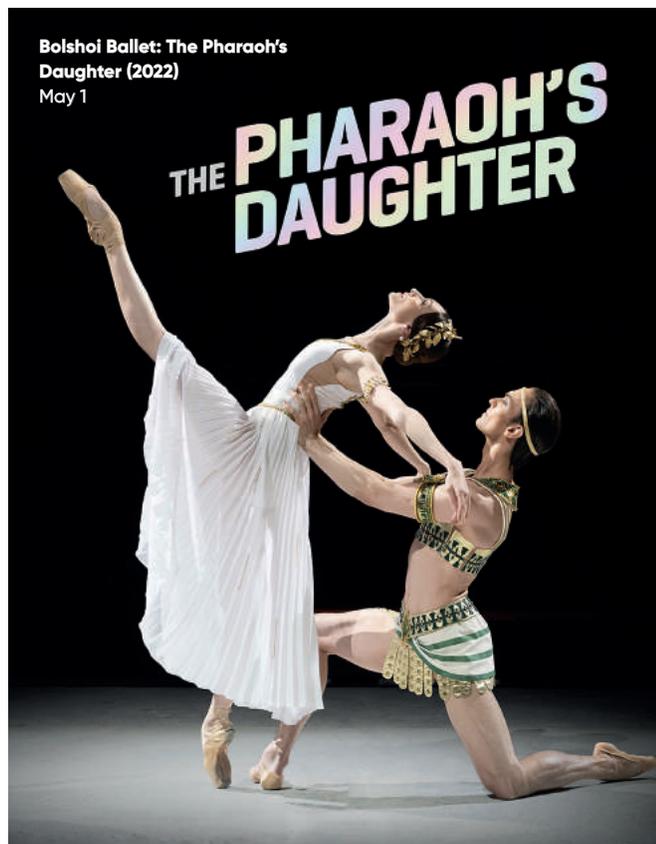
May 19 (live), May 22 (encore)
Genre: Opera

TRAFALGAR RELEASING

trafalgar-releasing.com

ANYTHING GOES THE MUSICAL

Mar 27, Mar 30
Genre: Musical



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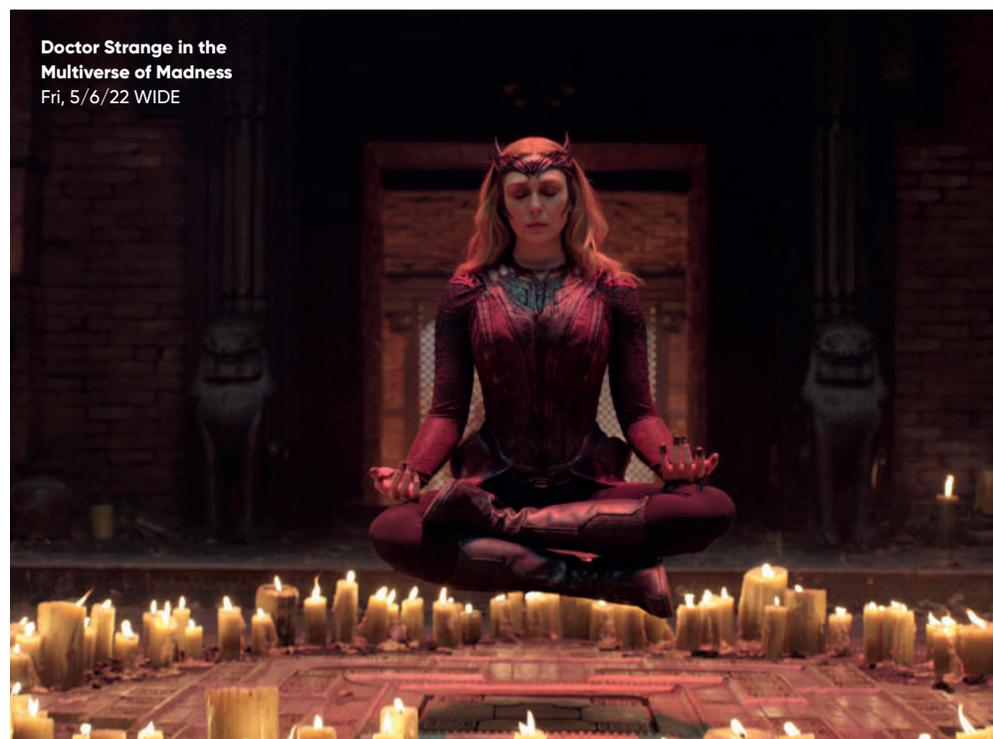


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company.boxoffice.com/boost to book a meeting with us.

BOOKING GUIDE

Release calendar for theatrical distribution in North America

Release dates are updated through December 30, 2021.
Please consult distributors to confirm latest listings.



Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness
Fri, 5/6/22 WIDE

20TH CENTURY STUDIOS

310-369-1000
212-556-2400

DEATH ON THE NILE

Fri, 2/11/22 WIDE
Stars: Tom Bateman, Annette Bening
Director: Kenneth Branagh
Rating: NR
Genre: Cri/Dra/Mys

THE BOB'S BURGERS MOVIE

Fri, 5/27/22 WIDE
Stars: H. Jon Benjamin, Kristen Schaal
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

UNTITLED 20TH CENTURY 2022 1

Fri, 9/23/22 WIDE
Rating: NR

UNTITLED DAVID O. RUSSELL

Fri, 11/4/22 WIDE
Rating: NR

AVATAR 2

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

UNTITLED 20TH CENTURY 2022 2

Fri, 12/23/22 WIDE
Rating: R

UNTITLED 20TH CENTURY 2023 1

Fri, 9/15/23 WIDE
Rating: NR

UNTITLED 20TH CENTURY 2023 2

Fri, 10/23/23 WIDE

BLUE FOX ENTERTAINMENT

William Gruenberg
william@bluefoxentertainment.com

THE PINK CLOUD

Fri, 1/14/22 LTD
Stars: Renata de Lélis, Eduardo Mendonça
Director: Iuli Gerbase
Rating: NR
Genre: Thr

THE WOLF AND THE LION

Fri, 2/4/22 MOD
Stars: Molly Kunz, Graham Greene
Director: Gilles de Maistre
Rating: NR
Genre: Fam/Adv

BUTTER

Fri, 2/25/22 WIDE
Stars: Alex Kersting, Mira Sorvino
Director: Paul A. Kaufman
Rating: NR
Genre: Com/Dra/Rom

DISNEY

818-560-1000
Ask for Distribution

TURNING RED

Fri, 3/11/22 WIDE
Stars: Rosalie Chiang, Sandra Oh
Director: Domee Shi
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani
Specs: 3D

DOCTOR STRANGE IN THE MULTIVERSE OF MADNESS

Fri, 5/6/22 WIDE
Stars: Benedict Cumberbatch, Elizabeth Olsen
Director: Sam Raimi
Rating: NR
Genre: SF/Fan/Adv

LIGHTYEAR

Fri, 6/17/22 WIDE
Stars: Chris Evans
Director: Angus MacLane
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

THOR: LOVE AND THUNDER

Fri, 7/8/22 WIDE
Stars: Chris Hemsworth, Tessa Thompson
Director: Taika Waititi
Rating: NR
Genre: SF/Fan/Act

BLACK PANTHER: WAKANDA FOREVER

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

ON SCREEN | BOOKING GUIDE

STRANGE WORLD

Fri, 11/23/22 WIDE

Director: Don Hall

Rating: NR

Genre: Ani

THE MARVELS

Fri, 2/17/23 WIDE

Stars: Brie Larson, Teyonah Parris

Director: Nia DaCosta

Rating: NR

Genre: Act/SF/Fan

UNTITLED DISNEY LIVE ACTION 2023 1

Fri, 3/10/23 WIDE

Rating: NR

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

UNTITLED PIXAR 2023 1

Fri, 6/16/23 WIDE

Rating: NR

Genre: Ani

UNTITLED INDIANA JONES

Fri, 6/30/23 WIDE

Rating: NR

Genre: Act/Adv

ANT-MAN AND THE WASP: QUANTUMANIA

Fri, 7/28/23 WIDE

Stars: Paul Rudd, Evangeline Lily

Director: Peyton Reed

Rating: NR

Genre: Act/SF

UNTITLED DISNEY LIVE ACTION 2023 2

Fri, 8/11/23 WIDE

Rating: NR

UNTITLED MARVEL 2023

Fri, 11/3/23 WIDE

Rating: NR

ROGUE SQUADRON

Fri, 12/22/23 WIDE

Director: Patty Jenkins

Rating: NR

Genre: Act/SF/Fan

FOCUS FEATURES

THE OUTFIT

Fri, 2/25/22 WIDE

Stars: Mark Rylance, Dylan O'Brien

Director: Graham Moore

Rating: NR

Genre: Dra



MRS HARRIS GOES TO PARIS

Fri, 3/4/22 WIDE

Stars: Lesley Manville,
Isabelle Huppert

Director: Anthony Fabian

Rating: NR

Genre: Dra

DOWNTON ABBEY: A NEW ERA

Fri, 3/18/22 WIDE

Stars: Hugh Dancy, Laura Haddock

Director: Simon Curtis

Rating: NR

Genre: Dra

YOU WON'T BE ALONE

Fri, 4/1/22 WIDE

Stars: Noomi Rapace,
Anamaria Marinca

Director: Goran Stolevski

Rating: NR

Genre: Hor

THE NORTHMAN

Fri, 4/22/22 WIDE

Stars: Alexander Skarsgård,
Nicole Kidman

Director: Robert Eggers

Rating: NR

Genre: Act/Dra

GREENWICH ENTERTAINMENT

A COPS AND ROBBERS STORY

Fri, 1/14/22 LTD

Director: Ilinca Calugareanu

Rating: NR

Genre: Doc

CHARLI XCX: ALONE TOGETHER

Fri, 1/28/22 LTD

Stars: Charli XCX

Directors: Bradley Bell,
Pablo Jones-Soler

Rating: NR

Genre: Doc

LET ME BE ME

Fri, 2/25/22 LTD

Directors: Dan Crane, Katie Taber

Rating: NR

Genre: Doc

IFC FILMS

bookings@ifcfilms.com

SEE FOR ME

Fri, 1/7/22 LTD

Stars: Skyler Davenport,
Laura Vandervoort

Director: Randall Okita

Rating: NR

Genre: Thr

CLEAN

Fri, 1/28/22 LTD

Stars: Adrien Brody, Glenn Fleshler

Director: Paul Solet

Rating: NR

Genre: Act/Thr

CATCH THE FAIR ONE

Fri, 2/11/22 LTD

Stars: Kali Reis, Daniel Henshall

Director: Josef Kubota Wladyska

Rating: NR

Genre: Cri

A BANQUET

Fri, 2/18/22 LTD

Stars: Sienna Guillory,
Jessica Alexander

Director: Ruth Paxton

Rating: NR

Genre: Hor

HUDA'S SALON

Fri, 3/4/22 LTD

Stars: Maisa Abd Elhadi, Ali Suliman

Director: Hany Abu-Assad

Rating: R

Genre: Thr

THE TORCH

Fri, 3/18/22 LTD

Director: Jim Farrell

Rating: NR

Genre: Doc

NITRAM

Fri, 3/30/22 LTD

Stars: Caleb Landry Jones,
Judy Davis

Director: Justin Kurzel

Rating: NR

Genre: Dra

LIONSGATE

310-309-8400

SHATTERED

Fri, 1/14/22 LTD

Stars: Cameron Monaghan,
Frank Grillo

Director: Luis Prieto

Rating: R

Genre: Thr

MOONFALL

Fri, 2/4/22 WIDE
Stars: Halle Berry, Patrick Wilson
Director: Roland Emmerich
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/SF

THE DEVIL'S LIGHT

Fri, 2/25/22 WIDE
Stars: Virginia Madsen, Ben Cross
Director: Daniel Stamm
Rating: NR
Genre: Hor

THE UNBREAKABLE BOY

Fri, 3/18/22 WIDE
Stars: Zachary Levi, Meghann Fahy
Director: Jon Gunn
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra/Fam

THE UNBEARABLE WEIGHT OF MASSIVE TALENT

Fri, 4/22/22 WIDE
Stars: Nicolas Cage, Pedro Pascal
Director: Tom Gormican
Rating: NR
Genre: Com/Act

JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 4

Fri, 5/27/22 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Act

SHOTGUN WEDDING

Wed, 6/29/22 WIDE
Stars: Jennifer Lopez, Josh Duhamel
Director: Jason Moore
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Co

WHITE BIRD: A WONDER STORY

Fri, 9/16/22 WIDE
Stars: Bryce Gheisar, Ariella Glaser
Director: Marc Forster
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra/Fam

MAGNOLIA PICTURES

212-379-9704
 Neal Block
 nblock@magpictures.com

ITALIAN STUDIES

Fri, 1/14/22 LTD
Stars: Vanessa Kirby, David Ajala
Director: Adam Leon
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra

A TASTE OF HUNGER

Fri, 1/28/22 LTD
Stars: Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, Katrine Greis-Rosenthal
Director: Christoffer Boe
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra

INDEMNITY

Fri, 1/28/22 LTD
Stars: Jarrid Geduld, Gail Mabalane
Director: Travis Taute
Rating: NR
Genre: Thr

ULTRASOUND

Fri, 3/11/22 LTD
Stars: Vincent Kartheiser, Chelsea Lopez
Director: Rob Schroeder
Rating: NR
Genre: SF

MUSIC BOX FILMS**STRAWBERRY MANSION**

Fri, 2/18/22 LTD
Stars: Kentucker Audley, Reed Birney
Directors: Kentucker Audley, Albert Birney
Rating: NR
Genre: Com/SF

NEON

hal@neonrated.com

THE WORST PERSON IN THE WORLD

Fri, 2/4/22 LTD
Stars: Renate Reinsve, Anders Danielsen Lie
Director: Joachim Trier
Rating: R
Genre: Com/Dra

ALL MY FRIENDS HATE ME

Fri, 3/25/22 LTD
Stars: Georgina Campbell, Dustin Demri-Burns
Director: Andrew Gaynord
Rating: NR
Genre: Com/Hor

OPEN ROAD FILMS**BLACKLIGHT**

Fri, 2/11/22 WIDE
Stars: Liam Neeson, Aidan Quin
Director: Mark Williams
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Thr

STUDIO 666

Fri, 2/25/22 WIDE
Stars: Foo Fighters, Whitney Cummings
Director: B.J. McDonnell
Rating: NR
Genre: Hor/Com

MEMORY

Fri, 4/29/22 WIDE
Stars: Liam Neeson, Guy Pearce
Director: Martin Campbell
Rating: NR
Genre: Thr

PARAMOUNT

323-956-5000

SCREAM

Fri, 1/14/22 WIDE
Stars: Melissa Barrera, Kyle Gallner
Directors: Matt Bettinelli-Olpin, Tyler Gillett
Rating: R
Genre: Hor

JACKASS FOREVER

Fri, 2/4/22 WIDE
Stars: Johnny Knoxville, Steve-O
Director: Jeff Tremaine
Rating: NR
Genre: Com

THE LOST CITY

Fri, 3/25/22 WIDE
Stars: Sandra Bullock, Channing Tatum
Directors: Adam Nee, Aaron Nee
Rating: NR
Genre: Com

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2

Fri, 4/8/22 WIDE
Stars: Ben Schwartz
Rating: NR
Genre: Adv/Fan

TOP GUN: MAVERICK

Fri, 5/27/22 WIDE
Stars: Tom Cruise, Miles Teller
Director: Joseph Kosinski
Rating: PG-13
Genre: Act/Adv
Specs: Imax/Dolby Vis/Atmo

UNDER THE BOARDWALK

Fri, 7/22/22 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

SECRET HEADQUARTERS

Fri, 8/12/22 WIDE
Stars: Owen Wilson
Rating: NR
Genre: Fam/Adv

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE 7

Fri, 9/30/22 WIDE
Stars: Tom Cruise
Director: Christopher McQuarrie
Rating: NR
Genre: Act

UNTITLED PARAMOUNT

Fri, 10/21/22 WIDE

UNTITLED BEE GEES

Fri, 11/4/22 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra/Mus/Bio

BABYLON

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

TIGER'S APPRENTICE

Fri, 2/10/23 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

Fri, 3/3/23 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Fan

UNTITLED A QUIET PLACE SEQUEL

Fri, 3/31/23 WIDE
Director: Jeff Nichols
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 8

Fri, 7/7/23 WIDE
Stars: Tom Cruise
Director: Christopher McQuarrie
Rating: NR
Genre: Act



The Lost City
 Fri, 3/25/22 WIDE



Compartment No. 6
Fri, 1/26/22 LTD

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

Fri, 8/12/23 WIDE
Director: Jeff Rowe
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

PAW PATROL: THE MIGHTY MOVIE

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

THE SHRINKING OF TREEHORN

Fri, 11/10/23 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

UNTITLED RYAN REYNOLDS/ JOHN KRASINSKI FILM

Fri, 11/17/23 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Com/Fan

UNTITLED STAR TREK

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

ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS

323.882.8490

ALINE

Fri, 1/21/22 LTD
Stars: Valérie Lemercier, Sylvain Marcel
Director: Valérie Lemercier
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra/Bio/Mus

ALICE

Fri, 3/18/22 LTD
Stars: Keke Palmer, Common
Director: Krystin Ver Linden
Rating: NR
Genre: His/Dra

SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES

212-556-2400

UNTITLED SEARCHLIGHT 2022 1

Fri, 4/8/22 WIDE
Rating: NR

UNTITLED SEARCHLIGHT 2022 2

Fri, 6/10/22 WIDE
Rating: NR

UNTITLED SEARCHLIGHT 2022 3

Fri, 8/12/22 WIDE
Rating: NR

SONY

212-833-8500

MORBIUS

Fri, 1/28/22 WIDE
Stars: Jared Leto, Matt Smith
Director: Daniel Espinosa
Rating: PG-13
Genre: Act/Thr/SF
Specs: Imax/Dolby Vis/Atmo

UNCHARTED

Fri, 2/18/22 WIDE
Stars: Tom Holland, Mark Wahlberg
Director: Ruben Fleischer
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Adv
Specs: Imax

65

Fri, 4/29/22 WIDE
Stars: Adam Driver, Ariana Greenblatt
Directors: Scott Beck, Bryan Woods
Rating: NR
Genre: SF/Thr

OH HELL NO

Fri, 6/17/22 WIDE
Stars: Jack Black
Director: Kitao Sakurai
Rating: NR
Genre: Com

BULLET TRAIN

Fri, 7/15/22 WIDE
Stars: Brad Pitt, Joey King
Director: David Leitch
Rating: NR
Genre: Act

WHERE THE CRAWDADS SING

Fri, 7/22/22 WIDE
Stars: Daisy Edgar-Jones, Taylor John Smith
Director: Olivia Newman
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra

MAN FROM TORONTO

Fri, 8/12/22 WIDE
Stars: Kevin Hart, Woody Harrelson
Director: Patrick Hughes
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Com

THE BRIDE

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

SPIDER-MAN: ACROSS THE SPIDER-VERSE (PART ONE)

Fri, 10/7/22 WIDE
Stars: Oscar Isaac, Shameik Moore
Directors: Joaquim Dos Santos, Kemp Powers, Justin K. Thompson
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

LYLE, LYLE, CROCODILE

Fri, 11/18/22 WIDE
Stars: Javier Bardem, Winslow Fegley
Directors: Will Speck, Josh Gordon
Rating: NR
Genre: Fam

I WANNA DANCE WITH SOMEBODY

Wed, 12/23/22 WIDE
Stars: Naomi Ackie
Director: Kasi Lemmons
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra/Bio/Mus

KRAVEN THE HUNTER

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

HAROLD AND THE PURPLE CRAYON

Fri, 1/27/23 WIDE
Stars: Zachary Levi
Rating: NR

UNTITLED GEORGE FOREMAN BIOPIC

Fri, 3/24/23 WIDE
Director: George Tillman Jr.
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra/Bio

UNTITLED SONY/MARVEL UNIVERSE 1

Fri, 6/23/23 WIDE
Rating: NR

UNTITLED SONY/MARVEL UNIVERSE 2

Fri, 10/6/23 WIDE
Rating: NR

SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

Tom Prassis
212-833-4981

WHO WE ARE: A CHRONICLE OF RACISM IN AMERICA

Fri, 1/14/22 LTD
Directors: Emily Kunstler, Sarah Kunstler
Rating: NR
Genre: Doc

COMPARTMENT NO. 6

Fri, 1/26/22 LTD
Stars: Seidi Haarla, Yuriy Borisov
Director: Juho Kuosmanen
Rating: R
Genre: Dra

MOTHERING SUNDAY

Fri, 2/25/21 LTD
Stars: Odessa Young, Josh O'Connor
Director: Eva Husson
Rating: R
Genre: Rom/Dra

THE DUKE

Fri, 3/25/22 LTD
Stars: Jim Broadbent, Helen Mirren
Director: Roger Michell
Rating: NR
Genre: Com

STX ENTERTAINMENT

310-742-2300

OPERATION FORTUNE: RUSE DE GUERRE

Fri, 3/18/22 WIDE
Stars: Jason Statham, Hugh Grant
Director: Guy Ritchie
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Thr

THE CONTRACTOR

Fri, 4/1/22 WIDE
Stars: Chris Pine, Ben Foster
Director: Tarik Saleh
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Thr

BED REST

Fri, 7/15/22 WIDE
Stars: Melissa Barrera
Director: Lori Evans Taylor
Rating: NR
Genre: Hor

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CYRANO

Fri, 1/28/22 LTD
Stars: Peter Dinklage, Haley Bennett
Director: Joe Wright
Rating: PG-13
Genre: Dra/Mus

DOG

Fri, 2/18/22 WIDE
Stars: Channing Tatum
Directors: Reid Carolin, Channing Tatum
Rating: NR
Genre: Com

THIRTEEN LIVES

Fri, 4/15/22 WIDE
Stars: Viggo Mortensen, Colin Farrell
Director: Ron Howard
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra

SAMARITAN

Fri, 8/26/22 WIDE
Stars: Sylvester Stallone
Director: Julius Avery
Rating: PG-13
Genre: Act/Thr

ON A WING AND A PRAYER

Fri, 8/31/22 WIDE
Stars: Dennis Quaid, Heather Graham
Director: Sean McNamara
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra

DARK HARVEST

Fri, 9/23/22 WIDE
Stars: Casey Likes, E'myri Crutchfield
Director: David Slade
Rating: NR
Genre: Hor

TILL

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

CREED III

Fri, 11/23/22 WIDE
Stars: Michael B. Jordan, Tessa Thompson
Director: Michael B. Jordan
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra

UNTITLED RUSSO BROTHERS FAMILY FILM

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

UNIVERSAL

818-777-1000

THE 355

Fri, 1/7/22 WIDE
Stars: Jessica Chastain, Lupita Nyong'o
Director: Simon Kinberg
Rating: PG-13
Genre: Thr

REDEEMING LOVE

Fri, 1/21/22 LTD
Stars: Abigail Cowen, Logan Marshall Green
Director: D.J. Caruso
Rating: PG-13
Genre: Rom/Dra

MARRY ME

Fri, 2/11/22 WIDE
Stars: Jennifer Lopez, Owen Wilson
Director: Kat Coiro
Rating: PG-13
Genre: Rom/Com

EASTER SUNDAY

Fri, 4/1/22 WIDE
Stars: Jo Koy, Jimmy O. Yang
Director: Jay Chandrasekhar
Rating: NR
Genre: Com

AMBULANCE

Fri, 4/8/22 WIDE
Stars: Jake Gyllenhaal, Yahya Abdul-Mateen II
Director: Michael Bay
Rating: R
Genre: Act/Thr

THE BAD GUYS

Fri, 4/22/22 WIDE
Stars: Sam Rockwell, Marc Maron
Director: Pierre Perifel
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

UNTITLED BLUMHOUSE PRODUCTIONS PROJECT 2022 1

Fri, 5/13/22 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Hor

JURASSIC WORLD: DOMINION

Fri, 6/10/22 WIDE
Rating: PG-13
Genre: Act/Adv

Redeeming Love
Fri, 1/21/22 LTD



ON SCREEN | BOOKING GUIDE

THE BLACK PHONE

Fri, 6/24/22 WIDE
Stars: Ethan Hawke, Mason Thames
Director: Scott Derrickson
Rating: R
Genre: Hor

MINIONS: THE RISE OF GRU

Fri, 7/1/22 WIDE
Stars: Steve Carell, Taraji P. Henson
Director: Kyle Balda
Rating: PG
Genre: Ani

NOPE

Fri, 7/22/22 WIDE
Stars: Daniel Kaluuya, Keke Palmer
Director: Jordan Peele
Rating: NR
Genre: Hor
Specs: IMAX

BROS

Fri, 8/12/22 WIDE
Stars: Billy Eichner
Director: Nicholas Stoller
Rating: NR
Genre: Com/Rom

BEAST

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

DISTANT

Fri, 9/16/22 WIDE
Stars: Anthony Ramos, Zachary Quinto
Directors: Josh Gordon, Will Speck
Rating: PG-13
Genre: Com/SF

PUSS AND BOOTS: THE LAST WISH

Fri, 9/23/22 WIDE
Stars: Antonio Banderas
Director: Joel Crawford
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

HALLOWEEN ENDS

Fri, 10/14/22 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Hor

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

MARIO

Wed, 12/21/22 WIDE
Stars: Chris Pratt, Anya Taylor-Joy
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

UNTITLED UNIVERSAL EVENT FILM 2023 1

Fri, 1/13/23 WIDE
Rating: NR

THE LAST VOYAGE OF THE DEMETER

Fri, 1/27/23 WIDE
Stars: Corey Hawkins, Aisling Franciosi
Director: André Øvredal
Rating: NR
Genre: Hor

KNOCK AT THE CABIN

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

UNTITLED DREAMWORKS ANIMATION

Fri, 4/7/23 WIDE
Rating: NR

FAST & FURIOUS 10

Fri, 5/19/23 WIDE
Rating: NR
Genre: Act

UNTITLED UNIVERSAL EVENT FILM 2023 2

Fri, 6/9/23 WIDE
Rating: NR

UNTITLED ILLUMINATION ANIMATED FILM 2023

Fri, 6/30/23 WIDE
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 3

Fri, 8/4/23 WIDE
Rating: NR

UNTITLED UNIVERSAL EVENT FILM 2023 4

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

WARNER BROS.

818-977-1850

THE BATMAN

Fri, 3/4/22 WIDE
Stars: Robert Pattinson, Zoë Kravitz
Director: Matt Reeves
Rating: NR
Genre: Act

FANTASTIC BEASTS: THE SECRETS OF DUMBLEDORE

Fri, 4/15/22 WIDE
Stars: Eddie Redmayne, Dan Fogler
Director: David Yates
Rating: NR
Genre: Fan/Act

DC LEAGUE OF SUPER PETS

Fri, 5/20/22 WIDE
Stars: Dwayne Johnson, Kevin Hart
Director: Sam Levine
Rating: NR
Genre: Ani

ELVIS

Fri, 6/24/22 WIDE
Director: Baz Luhrmann
Rating: NR
Genre: Dra/Bio/Mus



The Black Phone
 Fri, 6/24/22 WIDE



DC League of Super Pets
Fri, 5/20/22 WIDE

BLACK ADAM
Fri, 7/29/22 WIDE
Stars: Dwayne Johnson, Aldis Hodge
Director: Jaume Collet-Serra
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Fan

UNTITLED WB EVENT FILM 2022 1
Fri, 8/5/22 WIDE
Rating: NR

SALEM'S LOT
Fri, 9/9/22 WIDE
Stars: Alfre Woodard, Lewis Pullman
Director: Gary Dauberman
Rating: NR
Genre: Hor

DON'T WORRY DARLING
Fri, 9/23/22 WIDE
Stars: Florence Pugh, Harry Styles
Director: Olivia Wilde
Rating: NR
Genre: Thr

UNTITLED WB EVENT FILM 2022 2
Fri, 10/14/22 WIDE
Rating: NR

THE FLASH
Fri, 11/4/22 WIDE
Stars: Ezra Miller, Kiersey Clemons
Director: Andy Muschietti
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/SF/Fan

UNTITLED WB EVENT FILM 2022 3
Fri, 11/18/22 WIDE
Rating: NR

AQUAMAN AND THE LOST KINGDOM
Fri, 12/16/22 WIDE
Stars: Jason Momoa
Director: James Wan
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/SF/Fan

WONKA
Fri, 3/17/23 WIDE
Stars: Timothée Chalamet
Director: Paul King
Rating: NR
Genre: Fan

THE LAST TRAIN TO NEW YORK
Fri, 4/21/23 WIDE
Director: Timo Tjahjanto

SHAZAM! FURY OF THE GODS
Fri, 6/2/23 WIDE
Stars: Zachary Levi, Asher Angel
Director: David F. Sandberg
Rating: NR
Genre: Act/Adv/Fan

COYOTE VS. ACME
Fri, 7/21/23 WIDE
Director: Dave Green
Rating: NR
Genre: Com/Ani

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
Rating: NR
Genre: Mus

UNTITLED WB EVENT FILM 2023
Fri, 12/25/23 WIDE
Rating: NR

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

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

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UNWELCOME
Fri, 3/11/22 LTD
Stars: Hannah John-Kamen, Douglas Booth
Director: Jon Wright
Rating: NR
Genre: Hor

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