

To serve and project

Wheels meet reels at Newport PAC Picture Show

By GRETCHEN AMMERMAN
For the TODAY

As I'd love to think is true with many other parts of our cultural heritage, the first patented drive-in movie theater was created because someone wanted to do something nice for their Mama. Legend (and a few historical websites) tell that a New Jersey man named Richard Hollingshead opened the first drive-in theater in 1933 after having tried a few other ways for his mother, apparently not a petite woman, to enjoy movies without having to squeeze herself into the tight movie theater seats of the era.

Soon, people began to appreciate the freedom of being able to enjoy movies on the big screen with their rambunctious children, while smoking an unbroken chain of cigarettes or while having a romantic tryst that just might get a little wild.

At their heyday in the 1950s, there were more than 4,000 outdoor theaters. Today, there are closer to 300 hanging on for dear life, banking on nostalgia to keep the bills paid.

In this spirit of providing a fun, family experience during a time when gathering in large groups is prohibited, the Oregon Coast Council for the Arts has created an outdoor movie experience on the outside of their flagship building, the Newport Performing Arts Center.

"With so much being closed to the public due to COVID-19, including the PAC, we wanted to find a way to provide our community with a safe, socially-distanced option to enjoy a much-needed night out," said Darcy Hogan, who is on the OCCA Board of Directors. "It's a way for us to continue to provide entertainment, even while our stages are dark."

There are a few rules the group who put this together, primarily Hogan, Randy Storms and Justin Gleeson, have had to follow.

"We can't call it a drive-in," Hogan said. "and we can't list the names of the films in advertisements, but people can go to our website, www.PACPictureShow.com, to find out what movies we will be playing. I can tell you that they are all fun classics on the more family-friendly side (PG)."

The movies are scheduled to be shown



every Friday and Saturday evening just after sunset until at least the end of June, and possibly into July.

"How long we do this is based on a number of factors, not the least of which being public interest," Hogan said. "We are still waiting for approval for some of the films we want to show. We sent out a poll early in the process and some of the top picks are still on the wish list for now."

There is no charge for the movies, but donations are more than welcome, and can help ensure you get a spot in the lot, which has a capacity of only 40 vehicles for the movie nights.

"Those who donate \$15 or more can receive reserved parking as a 'thank you' for their donation if it is made through the PAC Picture Show website," Hogan said. "The OCCA is, like all arts organizations, is struggling at this time. Venues, museums and showrooms are closed, performances have been postponed, workshops and classes canceled. We're used to being a very active and thriving arts community, so being 'dark' for this long is really hard on us all, both artistically and financially. We know everyone is facing challenges during this time, and we hope that this modest offering will allow people a bit of a respite — an escape, if only for a couple of hours."

I attended a movie night where the film was "Field of Dreams" accompanied by my dog Scout. A quick walk (wearing my mask, as is required at all times except



while inside the vehicle with the windows closed) around the parking lot showed me that I was definitely not alone in my choice of companion.

The quality of the picture on the screen, custom built by Storms, was surprisingly good and tuning the car radio to the station set up to broadcast the show gave a sound quality much better than the individual speaker experience I have had at drive-in movie theaters in the past. And though we were both up past our bedtimes, it was such a fun experience we had no problem staying awake.

If you have a handheld radio that gets FM reception, it can help you not take a chance on draining your car battery. Should you run your battery down, though, the team is prepared with a number of ways to get your car back up and running.

"One of the only things we aren't providing is the experience of having your dad drive off with the speaker still attached to the car door," Hogan said. "I can still remember the time mine did it."

To reserve a spot at the PAC Picture Show, go to www.PACPictureShow.com, click on a film poster, and select your vehicle size.

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