

News**Hollywood** cont'd from pg 12

cinema.”

But many of the filmmakers speaking out for the service (including Ron Howard and Brian Grazer) are advisers or shareholders. Others without a financial stake, such as James Cameron and Christopher Nolan, have denounced it as a misguided effort that will devalue the big-screen experience.

The six major studios declined to comment about the Screening Room. But numerous interviews with studio executives, who requested anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak publicly about the matter, described the presentation by Parker and Akkaraju (a former SFX Entertainment ex-

ecutive) as polished and interesting enough to warrant consideration, but said the service was doubtful to gain studio participation.

Major theater chains, which split box-office revenue with distributors, were also courted by the Screening Room, which proposes to give them a hefty cut of each \$50 rental. The two largest chains, AMC Theaters and Regal Cinemas, declined to comment. Mark Zoradi, chief executive of the third largest chain, Cinemark, said “any day-and-date propositions must be critically evaluated to avoid the devaluation of the exhibition window and all subsequent revenue streams of our content

providers.”

The National Organization of Theater Owners, a trade organization, acknowledged that “more sophisticated window modeling may be needed for the growing success of a modern movie industry.” But NATO added that such changes should be developed by distributors and exhibitors – the traditional twin powers of the movie industry – “not by a third party.”

Nevertheless, the stir caused by the Screening Room promises to be the all-consuming topic at NATO's annual convention, Cinema-Con, in Las Vegas in April.

Some studios and even exhibitors may want to hedge their dependence on theaters, where all but

the most prepackaged blockbusters often struggle to find audiences. Paramount Pictures has recently experimented with a shorter theatrical window (usually 90 days) for a pair of low-budget horror films: “Scouts Guide to the Zombie Apocalypse” and the fifth “Paranormal Activity.” Neither performed well, however, nor did the improvised day-and-date release of Sony's “The Interview.”

But for the first time, the question of theatrical release isn't just up to studios and exhibitors. Netflix has been aggressively buying up new movies for its streaming service, though it's had difficulty getting them into theaters. Many sim-



PHOTO BY JORDAN STRAUSS/INVISIONAR.P. FILE

In this Jan. 9, 2016 file photo, Sean Parker arrives at the 5th Annual Sean Penn & Friends HELP HAITI HOME Gala in Beverly Hills, Calif. Some 17 years after Napster shook the music industry Sean Parker is now rattling the movies. The Screening Room, a startup backed by Parker and Prem Akkaraju, is seeking to upend the theatrical release of movies and bring films, through an encrypted set-box service, directly into the home.

ply refuse to screen day-and-date releases. To play last year's “Beasts of No Nation” in theaters, Netflix had to “four-wall” some theaters, buying up the tickets themselves.

The latest upstart, Amazon Studios, has taken a different tact, however.

It has embraced theatrical releases for its films, happy to simply add the movies to its streaming offerings after a run in cinemas.

Even disruptors like Amazon, it turns out, still like a night out at the movies.

Soul cont'd from pg 3

business development include collective co-working spaces called “The Bridge,” sponsorship of Black entrepreneurs at events like “Pitch Black.” The group would also like to create a pipeline of future technology workers, through science, technology, engineering, art and math youth workforce development.

A draft report from the SOUL District website lists four strategies to pursue to make the district a reality:

Study the business market, identify the businesses in the district, identify the needs of the district and to categorize Black-owned businesses in and near the area.

Make an inventory of available commercial development sites within the district

Create a list of federal, local, state and foundation funds available for use.

Create an investment vehicle to acquire the land and develop the businesses using things like investment trusts, small business development funds, community development funds.

The group is now working with the research firm DHM Research to conduct a business and community survey. Talton said they wanted input to connect with other community builders and to get a sense of what people would want from the SOUL District.

Interested community members can visit www.souldistrictpdx.com/.

souldistrictpdx.com to take the survey.

Talton says the community is running out of time to secure commercial properties for Black-owned businesses and it is “getting less possible every day.”

“If we don't anchor now we are going to lose all the opportunities,” Talton said. “The same thing will happen that happened with housing, they'll all be gone.”

The SOUL District report suggested using available land on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard for these Black business commercial properties. The report said that most of the development over the last 20 years has been affordable housing projects.

Talton said this strategy takes on gentrification through the economy – that there has to be good paying jobs and thriving businesses at the foundation.

“This is the anti-gentrification plan. Gentrification is all about the economics of the community,” Talton said. “Gentrification is not about displacement, it is about the economics that displaced them. Once people control and participate in the economic vitality of community, then changes in the community just don't affect them that much.”

If you would like to know more about the SOUL District, please visit <http://www.souldistrictpdx.com/>.

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