

The Legacy of Drive-In Theatres

Movie theatres have been part of the American culture that has provided out-of-home entertainment for almost eight decades. In a span of ten years from 1948 to 1958, the number of drive-in theatres rose from 1,000 to 5,000 in the U.S. Imagine during that time there were over 255 of them in California alone! They became a place where even a family with young children could enjoy a movie without worries. The drive-in playgrounds provided a pastime for the kids as the family concentrated on the movie.



During the month of June 2012, the American Drive-in Movie Theatre celebrated its 75th anniversary. The event wasn't that much significant considering the fact that compared to 1958 when there were approximately 5000 drive-ins in the country, at the moment there are only about 400 of them. These are mostly located in Pennsylvania and Ohio. Some states like Hawaii, Alaska and Delaware don't have a single drive-in!

The theatre with the largest capacity was the All-weather Drive-In in Copiague in New York. This establishment had a capacity to hold 2500 cars with an indoor area that could hold 1200 seated patrons and a play area for kids. The theatre also boasted of a restaurant providing full service. If patrons wanted to tour the 28 acre theatre lot, a shuttle train was available to take them around. Theatres became advanced and had fly-in services with people with small airplanes being also accommodated. An example is Ed Brown's Drive-In and Fly-In that accommodated 500 cars and 25 small planes.



Many people love watching movies. Apparently, nowadays most of us watch movies from the comfort of our own homes or at a movie plex. From being one of the most appealing destinations for movie goers, drive-in theatres have become a place where people even don't consider ever going for shows.

On June 6, 1933 in Camden, New Jersey, the first drive-in opened and with time it became to be known to movie-goers as: "a place where the whole family is welcome, regardless of how noisy the children

are." The drive-in movie theatres became very popular during the 1950s and 1960s. With television becoming the medium of choice during the 1970s, the industry started slumping badly. The theatres could not compete with television and with VCRs coming up in the late 1970s and early '80s, the concept of drive-in theatres started dying off slowly.

At the moment, most drive-in theatres have been replaced with real estate and those that are still there record minimum attendance. Right now most of the sites where drive-in theatres were located have been replaced with malls, a housing development scheme or a car lot. Of the ones that are still standing, they are just shadows of the glorious and fun times that many people remember them for. What really happened to the nights under the stars, a big screen showing a good movie and you with some buddies packed in the trunk of a car?



Memories abound for those who went to the drive-in when they were in vogue. Remember this was the one place that you would head to with your girlfriend and be sure of privacy while enjoying hotdogs, nachos or a bucket of popcorn. The rows of cars lined up facing the screen having paid for one movie but getting a bonus of two!

But all is not lost. While the attendance is not all that good, the remaining drive-in theatres are still operating having escaped the wrecking ball. This means that you can get to enjoy the experience. There are those that offer multiple screens for your pleasure. Places like the Hollywood Drive-in found on Route 66 (not the famous Route 66, remember near Troy, New York!). With new technologies like video projection, someone needs only a blank wall or a screen plus enough space to make a drive-in theatre in any location. The Ragtag cinema is also still open and has of late done some shows in a parking lot in Columbia, Missouri. You can get a drive-in in your location by checking out sites like Drive-Ins.com or DriveInMovie.com.

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