



The inside of a Cinema 'n' Drafthouse reflects the philosophy of combining movie going with comfortable dining and drinking experience and is designed for young professionals, 21-35 years of age. photos by JIM JACOFFELD/staff photographer

Eat, drink and . . . enjoy the movie

By Annahid Derbalian
special writer

Just when you thought all the fun things in life were already invented, something new and fresh appears.

Enter the Wayside Cinema 'n' Drafthouse in the Ann Arbor/Vpsilanti area. "It's a new entertainment concept for Michigan," said Garry Smyth, who along with Jon Kirn are managing partners of the new dining/drinking/movie watching emporium.

Take some friends and saunter into Wayside's art deco theater/restaurant. Ease into comfortable, movable, swivel chairs at round cabaret-style tables. A waiter appears, takes your beverage — beer, wine or pop — order while you peruse the menu choices. The lights dim, but not too dark, and suddenly a popular movie begins, shown on a full-sized screen.

Michigan's first Wayside Cinema 'n' Drafthouse will open Nov. 1 in the old Wayside Cinema on Washtenaw Avenue. Its philosophy of combining movie going with comfortable dining and drinking experience is designed for young professionals, 21-35 years of age.

"I'm originally from Washington, D.C., and I've been going to the Cinema 'n' Drafthouse ever since I was able to drink," Kirn said. "It's inexpensive and a lot of fun. When I came to Michigan, I looked for

something similar and found that it just didn't exist."

THE ORIGINAL Cinema 'n' Drafthouse opened in Orlando, Fla., in 1975. Its immediate success prompted a franchise start-up a few years later. Today, 19 Cinema 'n' Drafthouse establishments exist throughout the southeast and southern United States.

Smyth and Kirn came together in 1989 as partners, due to their enthusiasm about Wayside and a shared belief that Michigan would welcome and enjoy such an activity.

"When I was first exposed to the Cinema 'n' Drafthouse in Orlando, I thought to myself, 'This is the best way to see a movie that I've ever come across,'" Smyth said.

Movable tables and chairs allow friends and families to assemble themselves in any fashion and enjoy the experience of eating, drinking and movie as close together or as far apart as they desire.

"The theme is art deco," Smyth said. "A lot of glass block and neon in the lobby. Indirect lighting and Charlie Chaplin motif can be found inside the theater."

The movies are intermediate run, which means they are accessible to Wayside six to eight weeks after their first release.

Standard, state-of-the-art projection and sound equipment is used. The screen is the size of those found in theaters. The 13,000-

square-foot building houses two 200-seat theater/restaurants, with shared kitchen and lobby space.

THE CUSTOMER chooses one of two movies being shown at the Wayside. Each movie is shown twice each evening weekdays, with a midnight showing on weekends.

"On the weekends, between the late show and the midnight show, we offer a live, stand-up comedian in each theater," Smyth said. "They perform for 15 minutes each and then switch theaters and perform again."

And although the age minimum for the Drafthouse will be 21, there will be exceptions, Smyth said.

"We plan on running specials during the Christmas holidays, spring break and summers as well as special events for families, children and the elderly," he said.

Smyth and Kirn estimate that customers spend about \$7.50 each at the Wayside. That includes the admission price — \$2 Sunday-Thursday and \$3 Friday-Saturday — with the balance food and beverage.

"It's an inexpensive night out," Smyth said.

The menu consists of sandwiches, salads and desserts, along with a variety of drinks.

You'll find party platters filled with such foods as baby back ribs, spicy chicken wings, potato skins and teriyaki chicken strips. There's also the usual nachos, tofuu chips

and salsa, popcorn, veggie platters, hamburgers, clubs, subs and sandwiches, coney dogs and pizza.

FOR DESSERT, there's chocolate suicide cake, cheese cake, root beer float or hot fudge sundae.

Beer is served in chilled mugs or the pitcher. Wines, wine coolers and champagne can be ordered by the glass, carafe or bottle. Soft drinks come in regular and jumbo sizes, and there's also iced tea and coffee.

Walters and Waitresses walk among the tables throughout the evening, taking orders, serving food and quietly removing dishes.

"The service is what you would find at a casual restaurant, such as a Benigan's and TGIF," Smyth said. "You don't need any special skill to go to the Wayside. You don't need any special attire. You don't need to make reservations. You don't need to spend a lot of money."

"Everyone knows how to eat, drink and dress casually. It's for everyone."

Smyth and Kirn also plan on featuring special events, such as close circuit broadcasts of boxing matches, NBA games University of Michigan and Eastern Michigan University away games as well as evenings targeted for special groups.



Garry Smyth (left) and Jon Kirn are bringing a new kind of dining/drinking/movie watching emporium to Michigan with their Wayside Cinema and Drafthouse in Ann Arbor.

JIM JACOFFELD/staff photographer

Metro boutonniere

Belle Isle Conservatory reflects a lush world

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"Basically, we sit down and think about what would look good (when planting the gardens)," Justus said. "If it looks good and grows well, we go with it. We try not to get real fancy."

Maybe they don't try hard enough. The gardens and the conservatory are the only places in Michigan in the "Don't Miss" section of "The American Garden Guidebook," which lists the finest gardens in the nation.

Justus and his staff of 18 full-time employees and 10 summer youth workers have to make the most of their limited budget.

Detroit's financial woes leave lit-

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tle for such amenities as gardens. "None of us is getting rich," Justus said. Still, the crew does and impressive job. Not only do the gardens generate their own flowers, but also supply plants for all the city's municipal offices and builders' shows held at Cobo Hall and more than 200

flower boxes and beds throughout the city.

And not to be overlooked is the huge floral clock at the entrance to the island. The gardens supply more than 3,000 flowers for the 30-foot-wide clock face.

ALL OF THESE plants, of course,

aren't grown in the conservatory and formal gardens. Behind the scenes (actually across the street from the aquarium) are the 20 greenhouses where thousands of plants are nurtured, including one of the largest orchid collections in America.

Aside from the six flower shows, Justus said the conservatory and gardens offer a peaceful retreat year-round.

"In winter, people come for the solitude," he said.

And the gardens are large enough to handle the summer throngs. About 500,000 people visit the gardens annually.

In any season, they find a garden of earthly delight.



BILL HANSEN

The glass dome of the Whitcomb Conservatory is a fitting cover for the showhouse, where flowers bloom by the thousands.