

POINTS OF VIEW

'Movie palace' caps new era in showy style

Time will tell whether or not the 20-theater movie mall opening tomorrow in Southfield marks a new era in movie-going or a huge investment gone awry. For now, I find it interesting that the gigantic, art-deco style "movie palace," the final piece of the 76-acre Galleria Officecenter development, has at its co-helm such a trim, down-to-earth, contemporary woman.

Barrie Lawson Loeks, formerly of Grand Rapids and now of Rye, N.Y., graciously led a "Hard Hat Preview Tour" for the media of the "Star Southfield Entertainment Complex."

Remarks by a number of principals and dignitaries were received silently by an ever-skeptical media. Her response to the hand-clapping that greeted her introduction was to say, with a warm smile: "I haven't done anything yet."

Of course that's not true. A University of Michigan-educated attorney (she finished first in her class), she is president of the highly successful Star Theatres (husband Jim is chairman). In 1992, she became co-chair (with husband Jim) of Sony/Lowes Theatres. She is the first woman to receive the film industry's Robert W. Selig Award as ShowWester of the Year.

Dressed in tan pants, vest and shoes ("I purposely wore dust-colored clothes"), Lawson Loeks apologized in advance for the dirt and noise that would lie in our path as hordes of workers labored to complete the theater portion of the complex on deadline.

Passing through a welcoming "guard" of red-shirted young men chanting "Welcome to the Star Southfield," Lawson Loeks was way ahead of us. We found her pointing to a 20-foot tall bucket of popcorn with basketball-sized kernels atop what she described as "the largest concession stand ever built."

"See the kernels popping," she said as excitedly as a mother documents her baby's first steps. "That's never done that before. Today's the first day."

As we stood at the entrance below the movie mall's 76-foot tower, she highlighted two features that, "as a native" she knew would be important to the weather-sensitive Michigan audience: the availability of valet parking and "a really cool overhang. If you don't want to get wet, you'll never have to get cold or wet," she said. Like ancient Gaul, the new Star is divided into three parts: You enter via Hollywood Boule-



JUDITH DONER BERNE

vard, lined by faux palms and topped by a constellation-dotted deep blue sky (a cloud machine had yet to be installed). Eventually it will be devoted to restaurants. Three eateries — California Pizzeria, Dick Clark's American Bandstand Grill and Johnny Rocket's — have committed to the six available spaces. Originally-planned retail stores have been downgraded to kiosks offering movie-related products.

In the middle sits the Hollywood Sound Stage — the heart of the megaplex — boasting the concession stand as well as what Lawson Loeks promises are "more box offices per seat than anywhere else." Three-dimensional replicas of movie sets and rotating memorabilia from popular films set the stage.

The rear third is the "Historic Detroit Lobby," again with stage-like sets depicting such landmarks as the Ambassador Bridge, Fox Theatre and Tiger Stadium. Lawson Loeks assured us that floor is a map of Detroit complete with the Detroit River and streets designated in brass.

Oh yes, the movies. Theaters 1-10 veer off to the left and 11-20 off to the right of the Hollywood Sound Stage. Lawson Loeks describes the groupings as "two 10-screen complexes" with a total of 6,000 seats. They range from four 96-seat theaters dedicated to art and second run films to two with 700 seats and 65-foot wide by 35-foot tall screens. Indeed each theater has curved wall to wall, floor to ceiling screens, state-of-the-art digital sound, stadium seating, oversized rocking seats and extra leg room.

The Star Southfield is the flagship of the Star Theatres, Lawson Loeks says. "We wanted to do something for metro Detroit. The whole concept is a modern day movie palace so gorgeous that it is worth the price of admission just to be there." Admission is the same as at other metro-area Star Theatres.

As you might guess, Lawson Loeks likes to go to the movies. She said her favorite film is "E.T." Before returning to Southfield for the opening, she headed home to celebrate daughter Jamie's 11th birthday at, of all things, a movie party.

Judith Doner Berne is former managing editor of the *Eccentric Newspapers*. You can comment in this column by calling (313) 953-2047.

Best knockout for segregation is in economics



PHILIP POWER

I write this column once a week, which is both a curse and a blessing.

The curse is that by the time my deadline comes around, what I wanted to write about is often no longer news, bypassed by the constant ebb and flow of events. At its worst, this tends to make the column feel just a little out of date, puffing slightly to catch up with the rapidity of contemporary life.

The corollary blessing is that by the time my deadline comes around, there has been time to reflect on what I wanted to write about, freed of the requirements of instant analysis endured by my journalistic colleagues in TV or daily newspapers. At its best, this tends to make the column feel reflective, possibly even providing the insight which comes from seeing how events fall into underlying patterns.

One of my tutors at Oxford once said to me that the main thing he sought in training people to think was to instill in them the capacity to cuff aside the superficial and transient in order to focus a clear gaze on the underlying patterns of reality and cause. Nearly 40 years later, I still think this admittedly old-fashioned view still makes a lot of sense.

And so it was with the events of early June. The Red Wings won hockey's Stanley Cup Saturday evening, June 7, followed on Tuesday by that enormous (some estimated one million people came) celebration parade in downtown Detroit. My impression is that folks in the crowd lived mostly in the suburbs, pleased, however, to go downtown to celebrate the end of 42 years of frustration.

More importantly: no riots, no pictures of drunk crazies burning cars and running amok. And, crucially, another link in the great chain, of hope that maybe Detroit might claw its way back from the dubious distinction of being America's first Third World city.

Despite all the progress, I still don't think it's going to be easy. Detroit has come a long way, but race and race-based politics in southeastern Michigan are still incredibly divisive, splitting city from suburbs and politicians from common sense.

A Gallup poll published that same week suggested that majorities of both blacks and

whites believe that America's racial problems will never be solved. Although the gaps between races have narrowed — nine out of 10 whites would vote for a black for president, for instance — there are still enormous gulfs in perception between the two communities that will take years, perhaps decades to work out.

I believe, however, that ultimately the best battering ram to knock down the walls between races is economics, not politics or ideology.

A case in point: A survey that same week published in *The Detroit News* indicated that black families in West Bloomfield, as well as in some other suburbs, are better off financially than their fellow white residents. The survey found that black per-capita incomes in West Bloomfield average more than 60 percent higher than white average incomes, \$47,981 versus \$31,636. According to the *News* survey, black incomes in Farmington Hills, Troy, Southfield and Bloomfield Township were also above average white incomes.

These data suggest that once you cuff aside the superficial, you see more clearly that the underlying cause for patterns of segregation in Michigan are based more on economics and less on race than commonly thought. Capable, educated, ambitious and successful black families are moving to the suburbs in the 1990s, just as capable, educated, ambitious and successful Polish, Irish and Chaldean families moved to the suburbs in the '60s, '70s and '80s.

Why? Most folks with good incomes want to live in a nice place near nice neighbors, to bring their kids up safely in safe neighborhoods, and to take advantages of good schools and local services. Families, regardless of ethnicity, found these things in the suburbs and are prepared to work darn hard to get there.

That's the underlying lesson of the events of early June, heightened and made concrete and by the sense of delight shared by the entire region in the Red Wings victory.

Phil Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper. His Touch-Tone voice mail number is (313) 953-2047 ext. 1880.

Turn support for Wings into helping to make a difference

I want to make one thing crystal clear from the start: I am a big Red Wings fan and was as proud as anyone when the team finally captured the Stanley Cup. The picture of Steve Yzerman holding the cup over his head for the first time literally sent chills down my spine because that picture is what all of us in Detroit have coveted for years.

I also am as sorry as anyone over how our week-long celebration ended so tragically in a median off Woodward Avenue Friday night. My prayers go out to those injured and their families as do hopes for speedy recoveries.

Those of us who live or work in the Birmingham area may feel a special closeness to the team because so many of the players call this town home. During the season, it was not uncommon to see a player in a local restaurant having lunch, or sharing a beverage in a favorite watering hole after a game.

Just two days after winning the Most Valuable Player trophy, goalie Mike Vernon was spotted enjoying lunch with friends at a local eatery. And the Stanley Cup itself was spotted in several taverns accompanied by jubilant players wanting to share their success with friends and neighbors. In a small way, the Stanley Cup and the Wings' triumph became part of all of us.

That being said, I am amazed at how some people have reacted to the accident, and how an hour can't seem to go by without getting some news bulletin about the condition of the players or the status of the police investigation into the accident. Hundreds have flocked to the accident scene like some sort of pilgrimage, causing such a dangerous situation that the Birmingham Police were forced to shut the whole mess down last Monday.

Two of the most incredible stories I have witnessed surrounding this continuing "vigil" involves a person who has set up temporary residence outside Beaumont Hospital, vowing not to leave until Vladimir Konstantinov regains consciousness; and a gentleman who, while visiting the accident site Monday, carried a sign offering to trade places with the fallen Wings defenseman.

There have also been reports that the limou-



JOE BAUMAN

These folks need your help even more than the fallen Red Wings, and they don't have nearly the support to care for themselves.

sine company, which provided the car and driver involved in the accident, has received death threats against employees over the tragedy. While the first two cases may be characterized as misguided loyalty or fan adoration gone amok, the last case is a pathetic affirmation of what can happen when people become obsessed with hero worship.

I am sure the entire Red Wings organization has been touched by the outpouring of love and support its fallen comrades have received since the accident. But it is time for all of us to move on and let the two players, the team masseur and yes, even the driver, recover from their injuries in peace and privacy.

And some advice for those who feel they simply can't go on without continuing their vigil: Find a charity, a group or an individual to help instead with your spare time. Volunteer at a homeless shelter. Work at a soup kitchen. Put in some time at a nursing home or shelter for battered women and their children.

These folks need your help even more than the fallen Red Wings, and they don't have nearly the support to care for themselves.

Joe Bauman is editor of *The Birmingham-Bloomfield Eccentric*. He welcomes your comments by calling (248) 901-2662.

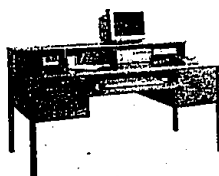
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