

Big game increases demand for big screen TVs

By Richard Lech
staff writer

Local wide-screen television dealers are finding out that when it comes to the big game, there is nothing like a big screen.

"They report that demand is up for rental of wide-screen TVs in preparation for Super Bowl XVI this Sunday. Restaurants, bars, offices, clubs, churches and just plain homeowners have shelled out between \$450 and \$550 per screen for that one day."

The renters range from a Birmingham restaurant which has leased three screens for an extravaganza that will feature marching bands and ballpark vendors to an insurance salesman who will throw a wide-screen Super Bowl party in his home.

"We definitely have had an increase in rentals," said Cindy Shanahan of Troy, manager of Video Alternatives in

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Royal Oak. "We started renting in August, and we've been rented out for two months. For the past three or four weeks there have been five, six up to 10 calls per day from people wanting to rent them for the Super Bowl. But we've been rented out for quite some time."

The firm rented out its 14 wide screens at the rate of \$450 per day, Ms. Shanahan said.

"I've never seen so many requests for rentals," agreed Tim Martin of Southfield, a salesman for Video Concepts in Southfield. "They've been calling us since September. Strangely enough, it's been all calls; a lot have not panned out. A lot of people don't want to pay that much."

Video Concepts, which usually rents out its wide screens at \$350 per day, has rented all three of its big screens at

a Super Bowl price of \$550 per day, Martin said. The third one was rented just this week, Martin said.

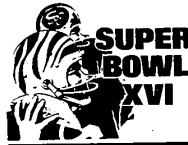
BOTH VIDEO firms have rented out wide screens before, their representatives said, but the demand is much greater this year — particularly among homeowners. Despite the high cost of viewing, for instance, Martin reports that two of his sets were rented by homeowners in the Birmingham-Bloomfield area.

"One fellow won a sales contest at his insurance company for selling the most medical insurance coverage," Martin said. "The other is for a group of doctors. The fact that the Super Bowl is local is generating a lot of excitement in this town. Generally, in years past, we've rented out units for the Super Bowl, sometimes two or three. But generally it was for some group out of one of the auto companies. I can't recall any in the home before. That's pretty unique, really."

"We always rent as many as we have in stock," Ms. Shanahan said of the big screens and Super Bowls past. "There's definitely been an increase this year, more so for homes than in the past." Roughly half of the firm's 14 sets were rented out to homeowners.

But most of the area renters are bars and restaurants which don't normally stock the movie-size TVs. Jacques Restaurants in Birmingham probably has planned one of the more spectacular uses of the big screens. Jacques, which includes Marvin's New York Deli, rented not one but three big screens from World Wide TV and Appliance of Farmington Hills. The sets will be positioned in such a way that every seat in the restaurant will be like sitting on the 50-yard line, Jacques manager William Fraker of Birmingham said.

"That way, if your neck gets tired of looking to the right, you'll be able to look to the left," Fraker said with a laugh.



To add to the "you-are-there" atmosphere, Fraker plans on having vendors hawk hot dogs, popcorn, ice cream — as well as Jacques' seafood — during the game. At halftime a mini marching band and pompon girls will perform inside the restaurant.

WHILE RENTALS may be on a roll, however, big-screen sales are just making small gains, dealers report. Price is the big key there. Purchase prices run from \$1,797 to \$4,000.

The Greek likes himself and 49ers

By Gary M. Cates
staff writer

San Francisco will win the Super Bowl in a high scoring battle with Cincinnati according to Jimmy the Greek.

The Greek, a prominent oddsmaker and member of the CBS sports team, gave his prediction while stopping at Don Massey Cadillac in Plymouth Township. Massey loaned him a car for his Super Bowl stay.

Dressed in a sweater, sports coat and traditional gold chain, Jimmy loved the spotlight. He signed autographs, smiled for the cameras and commented on nearby women.

Jimmy boasted at length about his odds-making ability. "I discovered odds. I invented them, nobody had them before me."

"I'll set odds on everything but life. Only the good Lord knows those odds," he said.

A salesman getting an autograph for his son asked Jimmy what the odds are for Frank Sinatra making his scheduled

performances in Detroit this week? "I don't think he'll show," he said. Jimmy has a staff which does his research and then he sets the odds based on their information.

Regardless of his information, the Greek wouldn't set the odds on whether the auto companies will make a comeback.

"We're all rooting for them. They buy 25 percent of our advertising," he said.

The Greek says he likes Detroit, but he doesn't think the Super Bowl will be back at the Silverdome until at least 1985.

Escorting the Greek Tuesday were representatives from the Detroit Chapter of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, based in Southfield.

"Jimmy's done some public service announcements for Cystic Fibrosis. You know, he lost two children to cystic fibrosis," said Pat Thompson, assistant executive director of the Detroit chapter.

Tally Hall

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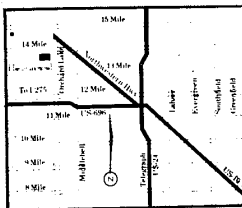
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