

Theaters

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between the time a movie is released and when it reaches video stores and cable networks.

In effect, smaller theaters aren't only losing out to megaplexes, but feeling the squeeze as moviegoers increasingly choose to stay at home in front of their VCRs to watch movies, many of which are released on video just five months after their cinematic debut.

According to a New York Times/CBS News poll taken last summer, about two-thirds of Americans prefer watching movies at home. With the emergence of pay-per-view, it's expected more movie-watchers will remain in their homes to select a film.

Mammoth Video in Troy expects a 30 percent increase in rentals through the holidays. "In cold weather, people would rather sit at home and watch videos at their convenience," said Mary Stone, store manager at the Crooks Road location.

With upcoming video releases of "Mon In Black," "Speed II," "Con Air," and "Chasing Amy," video stores will carry the same movies that appear at dollar-

houses.

For now, however, the attention is clearly on the more than 30 movies scheduled to be released before the end of the year, including the long-awaited "Titanic," Steven Spielberg's "Amistad," the adaptation of the best-selling book, "Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil," Robin Williams in "Flubber," "Jackie Brown," Quentin Tarantino's follow-up to "Pulp Fiction," Woody Allen's latest, "Deconstructing Harry," and a remake of Charles Dickens' "Great Expectations," starring Gwyneth Paltrow, Robert De Niro and Anne Bancroft.

No saturation

Few other megaplexes combine the intimacy of a bustling downtown with the range of choices from a blockbuster action picture to arsy independent films than the 8-screen Birmingham Theatre in downtown Birmingham.

While revenue at many local theaters has declined since the Star Southfield Theatre opened, the Birmingham Theatre has recorded steadily increasing ticket sales, said David Trepeck, co-owner of the Birmingham The-

atre.

"Movie-going is a social experience," he said. "Our goal was to blend state-of-the-art megaplex features with service. It's all part of the trend back to providing a neighborhood experience. People like to see and be seen."

To accommodate the growing demand, the Star Southfield is planning to increase the number of screens at its \$35 million theater-restaurant complex by at least six.

"First there were single theaters, then twin and it just has kept going," said Star Theatre spokesperson Bylund. "We're just responding to the moviegoers desire for a total night out. We're still one of the more affordable (entertainment) options."

The Star Theatre's \$7.50 ticket price is slightly more than the \$6.50-\$7 at other theaters. But even at that rate, a night out for a family of four could reach \$50, including pop corn, pops and few packs of gum drops.

"People like new things, and in

our business, you always have to upgrade the presentation," said Corey Jacobson, assistant district manager for United Artists Theatres, which has five metro locations, including Oakland Mall, Twelve Oaks and along Nine Mile in Farmington Hills.

In mid February, a 14-screen United Artists theater complex will open at the northwest corner of 14 Mile and Haggerty in Commerce Township. It's the first new construction in metro Detroit for United Artists in more than a decade, said Jacobson.

New megaplexes are also planned in Waterford and Auburn Hills.

But today, there's a haunting difference between the bustling megaplexes, which are adding staff and concessions for the holiday rush, and the ominous lack of activity as evidence by the "For Sale" sign in front of the Americana West.

In Hollywood terms, it's simply called a change of scenery. As natural as sunrise, sunset,

Steamroller

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with the characters," Davis said.

In the atrium and the concourse levels of The Palace, 12 area high school students will perform a cappella as the "Perfect Harmony" choir. During intermission, the choir will perform on stage, and will return to the atrium after the concert.

Choir director Susan Ciccone and her daughter Laura picked the members of the choir from high school choirs and the Oakland Singers. "Perfect Harmony" is Ken Appledorn, Amanda Bayly, Sean Berg, Laura Ciccone, Mason Dixon, Mike Ryckman, Kristopher Sutherland, Molly Thomas and Allison Zaleski, all of Troy, Jennifer Lumm of West Bloomfield, Jeremy Nabors of Birmingham and Ben Rickett of Waterford.

"Mannheim Steamroller Christmas gives those young men and women a wonderful opportunity to showcase their musical talents in front of several thousand music lovers at The Palace," Ciccone said. "We are thrilled to be a part of this family-oriented, holiday show."

Inside the arena, one end of the floor has been transformed into an elaborate 6,000-square-foot holiday village display featuring toy soldiers, gingerbread houses and snow-covered trees encircled by a moving train and a multitude of lights.

The six-member band and a 25-piece orchestra perform at the

opposite side of the floor. With the orchestra backlit and separated by the audience from a screen, the stage takes on the look of Walt Disney's "Fantasia." Musically, the band is a combination of classical music, rock rhythms, and Old World folk music. Davis plays the drums.

Fire brothers, sword swallowers and other ancient Renaissance entertainers will join them on stage.

"It's been an obstacle for me to make sure this is for the family," Davis said. "All the seats are really good. If you try to imagine this, you know those music box globes that you shake up and it snows and there's a little Christmas village? Well, that's what this looks like. We do actually make it snow."

"It's eye candy for the kids, but we're having parents of the show that are fundamentally educational. You'll end up learning by osmosis."

Mannheim Steamroller performs at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 26, at The Palace of Auburn Hills, 2 Championship Dr. (I-75 and Lapeer Road, Auburn Hills). Tickets are \$32.50, \$22.50 and \$12.50. Groups of 15 or more receive \$3 off the ticket price. For more information, call (248) 377-0100, (248) 646-6666 or Ticketmaster Online at <http://www.ticketmaster.com>.

BBAA Holiday Sales Show features local artists

Artwork and crafts by more than 150 artist will be displayed at the 13th annual Holiday Sales Show at the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association, Dec. 1-13.

The show features ceramics, glass, jewelry, wood, fibers, toys, wearables and Judaica as well as Christmas ornaments.

A committee of artists headed by Andrea Tama will wrap the outside and inside of the BBAA with iridescent netting, plastic and cellophane. "The design is a visual impression of the energy of the BBAA," said Tama of Farmington Hills. Among the artists are two local residents who've not only shown unusual dedication to their art, but incredible courage. Martin Lowenberg of Southfield was studying art while living in Europe in the late 1930 at the onset of World War II. He was imprisoned in a concentration

camp for four years. After the war, he continued to design fine jewelry, metallic sculptures and Judaica.

Today, Lowenberg's work is included in museums, synagogues and many private collections. Justin Anderson of Birmingham Farms began his art education at the prestigious Rhode Island School of Design, where he studied fine arts and apparel design. An auto accident in 1987, however, left him severely injured with a closed-head injury and unable to speak for four years.

Anderson continues a rigorous physical and speech therapy schedule. Meanwhile, he has continued his studies in design. His playful forms are hand-stenciled onto natural fabrics, then sewn into scarves and clergy stoles. Anderson's collection is entitled, Holywear.

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