

Livonia Mall movie screen lights up again on Friday

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After more false starts than a sprinter who downed too many double espressos, the Livonia Mall Cinema is planning another opening.

At 5 p.m. Friday, the three-screen cinema will show "Scorpio King" starring The Rock and other first-run features, "The Sweetest Thing" and "Panic Room."

Showing new releases marks a change in strategy for shopping center theater, which has been mired in bad luck.

The theater's new operator American Family Cinemas is also shaving \$2 off standard admission prices. Tickets will be \$8.50 (\$4.50 before 6 p.m.) instead of \$8.50.

"What do they say about the third time being a charm?" Livonia Mall General Manager Karl Zarbo asked rhetorically.

The GM is hopeful this time, because instead of a one-man operation is in the past, American Family Cinemas is comprised of five individuals.

One of those involved has experience operating the Bel Aire cinema on Van Dyke and Eight Mile.

"We're making less money," said Ron Kwiatek, an American Family Cinemas partner. "Big corporations have to make a big profit for their stockholders. We're happy with a fair profit."

By attracting large numbers of theater goers, the group believes it can "make it up on the backside," said Allan Studenberg, an attorney who is also part of the consortium.

"We recognize being a three-plex as opposed to those mega theaters that we're at a distinct disadvantage. The big part of this is running the right movies."

In April 2000, Livonia Mall Cinemas reopened after all three auditoriums underwent major

renovations, which included a new sound system, screens and seats.

Second-run films were shown at discounted admission prices.

The cinema's run was short-lived, though. A burst water pipe flooded one auditorium, causing the floor to sink and the cinema to shut down in December 2000.

A St. Clair Shores theater operator David Tolfree took over management and the cinemas reopened again in May last year.

In December, personal problems and the economic downturn caused the theater to close again.

Kwiatek's group was among those who expressed interest in running the cinema last year. The five-man consortium didn't let the chance slip.

"This just presented itself as very promising," Kwiatek said.

Aside from discounted admission for first-run movies, filmgoers will receive free soft drink and large popcorn refills.

To coincide with this Friday's reopening, the new operator has planned a contest with Detroit Red Wings playoff tickets as a prize.

The cinema remains within the mall's mantra of offering value while providing the quality of first-run films.

"That's the home run for us," Zarbo said.

For show times, phone American Family Cinemas at Livonia Mall (248) 476-4607.

POLICE CALLS

Farmington Hills Police are investigating a criminal sexual conduct complaint involving a 13-year-old Livonia girl and a 23-year-old Farmington Hills man described as her boyfriend.

A police report stated that the girl had been visiting the man at his Farmington Hills home on Saturday, April 13. She told police and her mother, 41, that she and the Farmington Hills man had intercourse in his basement. She was driven to the home by the man, who was accompanied by his cousin, of undisclosed age.

Items collected into evidence included a condom wrapper, various items of bedding and a hooded sweatshirt belonging to the girl, as well as a cotton swab containing bodily fluid.

The girl was taken to St. Mary Hospital in Livonia to have a sexual assault kit performed.

Window smashed

A 10-by-10-foot window at Rong Rong Buffet, 26333 Grand River, was reportedly smashed with a rock sometime before Friday, April 12. No entry was gained into the restaurant and police have no suspects.

Assault

A 42-year-old Detroit woman was arrested for assault Friday, April 12 at Botsford Commons, 21450 Archwood following an altercation with a 20-year-old Farmington Hills woman. The 20-year-old woman told police that she was assaulted by the Detroit woman and her 22-year-old daughter with fists and with a broken bottle. The two women are both co-workers and do not get along with each other.

Drunken driving

A 47-year-old South Lyon man was arrested for operating under the influence of liquor 11 p.m.

Friday, April 12 on westbound M-6 near Drake. Police administered various field sobriety tests and a Breathalyzer test, which showed a .13, exceeding Michigan's legal limit of .10. A police report stated that the man was pulled over for making an unsafe lane change and for weaving.

A 42-year-old St. Charles, Mo., man was arrested for operating under the influence of liquor at 2:50 a.m. Saturday, April 13 on westbound M-6 near Orchard Lake. A Breathalyzer test showed a .14 level, and police performed the traffic stop because he was traveling 85 mph in a 65 zone during heavy rain.

A 28-year-old Fowlerville man was arrested for operating under the influence of liquor 3:58 a.m. Sunday, April 14, on westbound Grand River near Wheeler. A Breathalyzer test showed a .17 level. The man's wife, 25, was taken to a friend's home after the vehicle was impounded.

A 19-year-old Farmington Hills woman was arrested for operating under the influence of liquor and for having an unlawful blood alcohol level at 4:12 a.m. Monday at the intersection of 12 Mile and Orchard Lake. The woman reportedly failed field sobriety tests and showed a .16 level on a Breathalyzer. The woman's roommate and passenger, a 21-year-old West Bloomfield woman, was released.

Domestic violence

A 44-year-old Farmington Hills man was arrested for domestic violence 9:22 a.m. Sunday, April 14, at a residence located in the 31000 block of Oak Valley following an incident with his wife, 41. She told police that he had started "throwing her around" and tried choking her with both hands. She reportedly screamed for help from her daughters, and one of them called 911. The man told police that she had assaulted him, and

the police report stated that both parties showed evidence of injury.

Dog complaint

A 21-year-old Farmington Hills man was cited for allowing his Doberman to run loose Saturday, April 13, at his home located in the 20000 block of Apple Blossom. A police officer's initial attempt to catch the dog, which had a tag reading "Killer" along with a phone number, was unsuccessful.

Dead geese

A resident living in the 28000 block of Willow Creek reported seeing two dead geese, with apparently broken necks, lying near a pond on his property Sunday, April 14. The man told police that one of the geese was a nesting mother with four eggs in a nest. Police have no suspects, but the resident told police that he had seen teenagers with sticks walking on the property.

Vehicle break-ins

A \$500 wireless phone valued at \$600 and a \$600 stereo with a CD and cassette player were reportedly stolen from a vehicle parked in front of Custom Care, 38410 Grand River, sometime before Saturday, April 13. Entry was reportedly gained by smashing out a rear window, causing \$1,000 damage.

In another incident, a Ford F-150 pick-up truck was reported stolen from the same site, and the missing items were found inside a 1988 Pontiac Grand Am, which was impounded. The vehicle's owner tried to get the car later. Police are investigating the incidents to determine whether they are related.

Compiled by staff writer Heather Needham from reports filed with the Farmington Hills Police Department.

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