



PHOTOS COURTESY OF IPIC ENTERTAINMENT LLC AND TK ARCHITECTS INTERNATIONAL

New Experiences for the Modern Day Moviegoer

BY TAYLOR MOSON

The phrase “going to the movies” has recently taken on a whole new meaning with the innovative theater concepts nationwide that cinema owners are rapidly rolling out. In 1946, the average American went to the movies 28 times per year; that number has since fallen to less than five times per year. Various sources attribute this decline in attendance to the fact that there is simply too much competition from high-end home theaters, early DVD releases, pirated movies and other forms of entertainment.

Cinema owners are not simply sitting back and waiting for another summer blockbuster like *Avatar* or *Alice in Wonderland* to increase sales. Many exhibitors throughout the nation are incorporating some type of “alternative concept” into their business model including Regal & AMC. These exhibitors are reconfiguring a percentage of their current auditoriums in multiplex locations with a newer, more luxurious concept. In comparison, exhibitors like Gold Class, IPIC, Cinopolis, Alamo Drafthouse, and Studio Movie Grill have been pioneering the non-traditional cinema concept for several years. In many cases, retrofitting to alternative theater concepts is achieved by converting

the current sloped floor auditoriums into stadium seating or renovating existing stadium seating auditoriums with a deeper or wider stadium platform. This is accomplished by building over the existing sloped floor, or by “filling in” an existing stadium level to accommodate the deeper platforms. In a new construction project there may also be framed out space under the rear seats to accommodate the concessions, a prep kitchen, bathrooms, party rooms, etc. With a retrofit, this space is usually difficult to capture due to the lower ceiling height, however, if the mezzanine can be deleted in the process of converting the auditorium into digital projection you can utilize the space under the platforms without issue. The construction of these theaters is roughly identical to any standard theater, just with deeper platforms, larger seats, and in many cases higher end finishes and premium quality concession vendors.

In the upscale concepts, prepare yourself for a gourmet experience because this isn’t your average popcorn and soda concession stand. The menus include things from Angus beef sliders, flat bread pizzas, wraps and quesadillas, to Italian gelato and coconut shrimp. Some concepts even offer Dom Perignon should you feel like splurging. A worldly selection of wines and spirits for every patron’s tastes can be found on many of these menus.

These upgrades to more generous stadium platform configurations distinguish the new auditoriums from the theaters with traditional stadium seating and popcorn. The concepts can offer larger screens, better sound, and a clearer digital projection of the film for a minimally premium ticket price. In some cases, moviegoers even have the chance to reserve their seat in advance, much like any sporting event or concert.

The cinema industry as a whole has a completely revolutionary concept ahead of it and is moving toward an “entertainment destination” type of business. With these “innovative cinemas” becoming more prevalent, we will certainly be seeing more theaters introducing their own alternative concepts in the near future. The only question is, what sort of new experiences lay ahead for the modern day moviegoer?

TAYLOR MOSON IS A PROJECT MANAGER AT STADIUM SEATING ENTERPRISES

