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## Blvd. drive in theatre kansas city

Published May 14, 2020 at 6:00 am Over photo credit: Boulevard Drive-In is set for its 70th season in Kansas City, Kansas (Courtesy | Boulevard Drive-In) Weekends of silence in the shadow of the 100-75-foot-inch screen may indicate that Wes Neal's 70-year-old Boulevard Drive-In cinema is on the ropes. For years, April showers have been the biggest concern during the spring start of the season on the Boulevard. This year, however, is unlike anything Boulevard has ever seen. Instead of cars lined up early to enter the cinephilic time capsule off Merriam Lane in Kansas City, Kansas, the COVID-19 clampdown has put an end to Friday and Saturday night screenings. But don't roll credits for Boulevard. Not yet. A screenwriter would weave the global pandemic into a feature film about Boulevard, perhaps as the region's premiere drive-in theater ultimate challenge. Now is the moment when Boulevard must be creative - even more creative than when Neal, now a 92-year-old man, came up with the early morning Swap 'N' Shop, which continues today, to save the beloved theater back in 1975. It was 20 years after Neal took another job directing cars through boulevards plot during the height of drive-in popularity, when more than 4,000 such outdoor theaters dotted America. Fresh from the farm, Neal tired of his desk job in Bayer, found hard work that kept him on his feet. Rows of Boulevard Drive-In's 600 parking spaces (Courtesy | Boulevard Drive-In) Nine years after Swap 'N' Shop's success, Neal bought the theater directly in 1984, despite drive-in theaters' long slide in popularity. Thanks to digital and audio adaptations, staying ahead of the curve technologically through the turn of the century, boulevard remains among some 350 operating drive-in theaters in the country. But, like life on the farm, the hard work never stops. The theatre now faces serious questions about no-go at public gatherings smack in the middle of what will be its 70th season, not to mention recent film industry chaos. Leawood-based AMC Theatres, the country's largest operator, has closed its theaters and is gasping for money to survive social distancing forced by coronaviruses. Major film producers, meanwhile, are flirting with pushing more features directly to streaming services instead of dropping them first for theatrical runs. Neal's hopes now ride on some drive-in (novation) and on the shoulders of KCK high school seniors. And no, not those who sneaked beer into their back row date spots over the years. Last month, the Kansas City, Kansas School District announced plans to hold six nights of graduation on Boulevard Drive-In, from January 1, 2017. Brian Neal, Wes Neal's grandson and Boulevard president, welcomed the conference call from KCK Mayor David Alvey, the Health Department and school district officials, who laid out the plans for the family theater's unofficial opening. Start-up will be half capacity — 350 cars. No bathroom. No snack bar. No one gets out of the car. Nods for closing ceremonies with strict social distancing guidelines have junior Neal thinking. There is now a template in place – and not just for movies. Dance concerts, private parties, companies like Keller Williams - I spoke to them just today - and many bands, I must have had 10 or 12 requests from bands. There's a YouTube comedian who wants to do a drive-in tour, Neal said, rifling through a list of event requests in what could only be an era of drive-in resurgence. Another is the Kansas Department of Agriculture, he added. They called me and wanted to rent the theater to continue the education for their pest control certification. Although Neal has not accepted any of the oddball offers outside exams, he notices when each incident might take place. All of this raises an emicing question for Boulevard and its brothers. Could it be that the coronavirus in a plot twist straight out of Hollywood can suddenly make drive-ins the center of popular culture again? Should boulevard be true to its groundbreaking ways, with an OK from city health officials of course, Neal's theater would join the likes of drive-in theaters across Europe that have drawn off raves and concerts for fans in the comfort of their cars. Just last week, Live Nation CEO Michael Rapino said the concert and ticket giant is testing drive-in concerts heading into the summer, which may come as welcome news for Neal, who falls in let's get back to work camp and just so happens to have a stage built for live music on the drive-in estate. We've had 10 or so live bands play there before, usually in concert with a triple function, Neal said, citing a Clint Eastwood and John Wayne screening a few years back, which also rolled out a mechanical bull riding competition, musical performance and an entertainer on horseback doing a trick yelling and guns routine. Speaking of John Wayne, shows retro movies are also not out of the realm of opportunity as Boulevard lays out its plans, especially considering the number of new movies pushed back due to COVID-19, along with the film industry issues that recently rocked AMC. The latest straight-to-streaming release of Trolls World Tour, which earned nearly \$100 million in its first three weeks, prompted AMC, which has closed all its theaters due to coronavirus, to issue an open letter threatening to ban Universal Studios movies from its theaters. Universal's unilateral actions and intentions have given us no choice, AMC Theatre Chairman and CEO Adam Aron wrote. Therefore, effectively immediately AMC will no longer play any Universal movies in any of our theaters in the United States, Europe or the Middle East. Neal, who supports AMC in the controversy, said: It's not good for theaters. There's really a problem with that. The only concrete plan that we know is that Disney is going to be one of the first to release a new film July 24, 'Mulan', Neal added, thinking about how his family business will get by. We are very lucky that we own our property and do not have to pay rent on our property. But I think to do these events and show some older retro movies, if the studios will give them to us at a reasonable price ... I don't need the snack bar to be open to make money if I can get a retro movie that people will come out and see, Neal said. I think they'll come out and see something, they're just bored. Until then, Boulevard plans to stay afloat thanks to Grandfather Neal's experiences growing up during the Great Depression. And whether it's a movie that everyone and their mother has seen a dozen times, or a landmark first event for the famous drive-in, getting back to work won't mean what it has for boulevard lonely resident, when the 70th and perhaps strangest season to date actually hits. Boulevard Drive-In's 100-by-75-foot screen. (Courtesy | Boulevard Drive-In) If you ask his grandson, the years of hard work were hardly about what was shown in the theater. Wes Neal was simply not done at a social distance. Shaking hands and chatting with customers has always been more important than what plays in his garden, says the younger Neal, who admits that despite the desire to return to normal, he has concerns about Boulevard's owner, who had a quadruple bypass heart surgery several years ago. The theatre is what keeps him alive - and this kills him. Editor's note: The story has been updated to correct the time it took for the Trolls World Tour to approach \$100 million in gross revenue. It was almost three weeks, not the first weekend. Discover more unheard stories about Kansas City, every Thursday. Marquee &t Search &t; Owner/Operator &t; Wes NealThe Marquee &t; By Region &t; Kansas &t; Wyandotte &t; Kansas CityThis cinema is located near Rosedale, Kansas City, Mission, Westwood His. Fairway, Mission Woods, Westwood Hills, Shawnee Mission, Roeland Park, Shawnee MSN, Westwood. The 2020 summer movie season like Boulevard Drive-In Theatre is now complete, but it's still cheap fun and bargains to be had there. Boulevard Drive-In Swap 'n ShopThe Boulevard Drive-In operates a Swap 'n Shop collection from 5 a.m p..m. every Saturday and Sunday. Shoppers pay \$1 to attend, children 121 and under are FREE. Bring cash and accurate change. Here are health and safety measures set up at the weekly Swap 'n Shop meetings. Vendors and customers are prompted to wear masks or scarves. Suppliers may refuse to serve customers who do not wear masks. Vendors are asked to have hand sanitizer on their stalls and use it between transactions. Sale of prepared food and beverages is NOT allowed. Sampling of raw materials is NOT allowed. Suppliers and customers must observe social distancing. Keep a safe distance of at least six feet between individuals. Customers will not be allowed to handle goods before buying, touch the goods on the Suppliers will serve you. See the full set of health and safety measures for Swap Shop providers and customers here. Boulevard Drive-In is located at 1051 Merriam Ln, Kansas City, KS. Boulevard Drive-In Movies Summer 2020The last weekend for summer movies on Boulevard Drive-In is Labor Day 2020. Check back in the spring for updates on 2021.Like watching movies under the stars? Take a look at these other outdoor movie options in Kansas City. B&B Twin Theatres Drive-InScreenland Armour TheatreWalmart Pop-Up Drive-in MoviesAdmission is \$10 per person. Children 11 and under come in FOR FREE. Tickets can be purchased at the box office upon arrival. Boulevard Drive-In is a cash-only business. Boulevard Drive-In Movie ScheduleHere is the current schedule. All movies begin on the p.m and appear rain or shine. Gates open at 7 p.m p.m. September 11: Jurassic World (PG13) September 12: Beetlejuice (PG) September 13: Jaws (PG) Boulevard Drive-In concessions, toilets, playground and MoreBoulevard Drive-In are limited to 50% capacity. Here's what to expect. The concession stand is currently closed. Only a limited number of people will be allowed to the toilet at once to maintain social distancing. The playground remains closed. The playground remains closed and frisbee or other games outside cars are not allowed. Lawn chairs can sit up outside vehicles. Please place lawn chairs between the vehicle and the screen; not next to the vehicle. You will be asked to park cars at least 2 meters apart. Staff will be pre-screened for well-being and wear gloves and masks. Guests must wear masks when not in the car. More free and cheap things to do in Kansas City's Day December 26, 2020Swap 'n ShopWeekly on Sunday and Saturday @ 5:00-1pm (starting September 19, 2020)Boulevard Drive-In Theatre 1051 Merriam Lane Kansas City, KS 66103 66103

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