

# The Storyteller **The BIG picture**

NAPERVILLE SUN.COM

A new way to do dinner and a movie

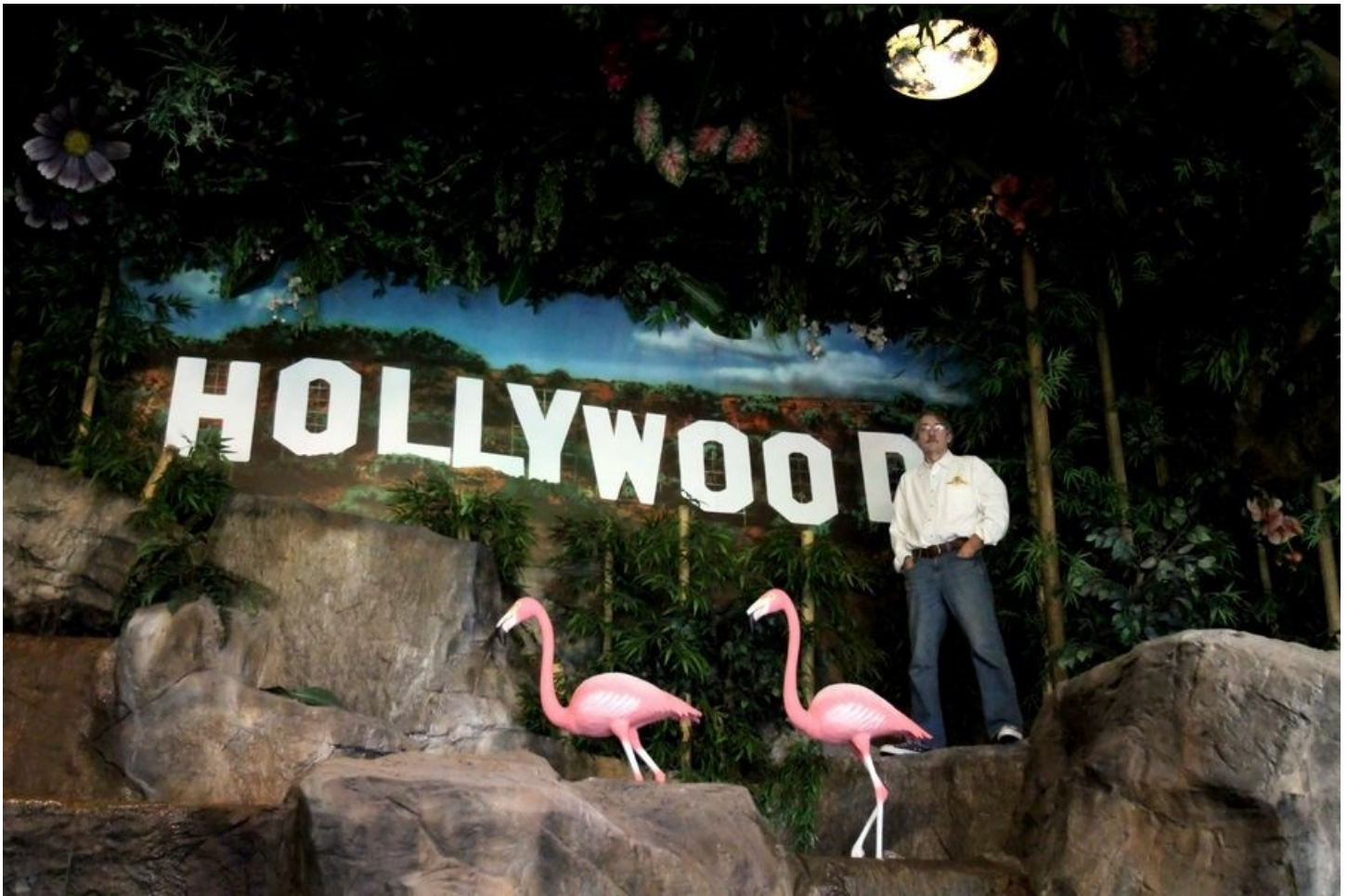


Seems he has the whole world . . . .

# IN HIS PALMS

## Native Texan brings his grand style to new movie palace

By Katie Foutz



Ted Bulthaupt, owner of the Hollywood Blvd Cinema and the new Hollywood Palms Cinema in Naperville stands on top of a 70 foot wide, three story tall cascading waterfall behind the usher stand at the new Palms location. Opulence and customer satisfaction are goals for Bulthaupt, a Downers Grove South High alum.

Anyone who has been to Hollywood Blvd Cinema knows the owners style. BIG! Cinema owner Ted Bulthaupt brought that style to his new Naperville movie theater, Hollywood Palms Cinema celebrates its grand opening is this weekend at 352 S. Route 59 hosted by Roger Ebert and Oscar-winning actor Richard Dreyfuss. Tall palm trees, bamboo, coffee plants and other tropical greenery nearly scrape the ceiling of the entryway's glass atrium. A two story, seventy foot wide, cascading waterfall in the lobby was designed by Bulthaupt and built by a company that specializes in outdoor zoo enclosures that turns any

conversation up to a shouting match over the rush of falling water. An art deco pair of gold winged men flanking the screen in one auditorium stand 17 feet tall and were movie props in the 20th Century Fox warehouse. This is a true movie palace.

Each auditorium has a different color scheme and decorative theme, ranging from the Deep Blue Sea to an Egyptian Tomb decked out in gold. Bulthaup attributes his big style to his native state of Texas. "Everything is bigger there," he said pointing to a massive framed painting of the Alamo behind his equally massive desk stacked full with papers.

He also has some big name connections. Among people he calls friends are Karen Allen who starred opposite Harrison Ford in "Raiders of the Lost Ark". She's making personal appearances at both Hollywood Palms and Blvd next weekend to host screenings of the classic adventure film. I built an Egyptian Auditorium and I had set Karen up months ago to come before I decided to take it a bit further. I had some friends at Paramount and gave them a quick call, they still had the blueprints for the ark in the movie and made one for me just in time.



He was invited to the 86th birthday party of Margaret Pellegrini, one of the last surviving Munchkins but sent regrets because it happened to be the week of the Hollywood Palms grand opening.

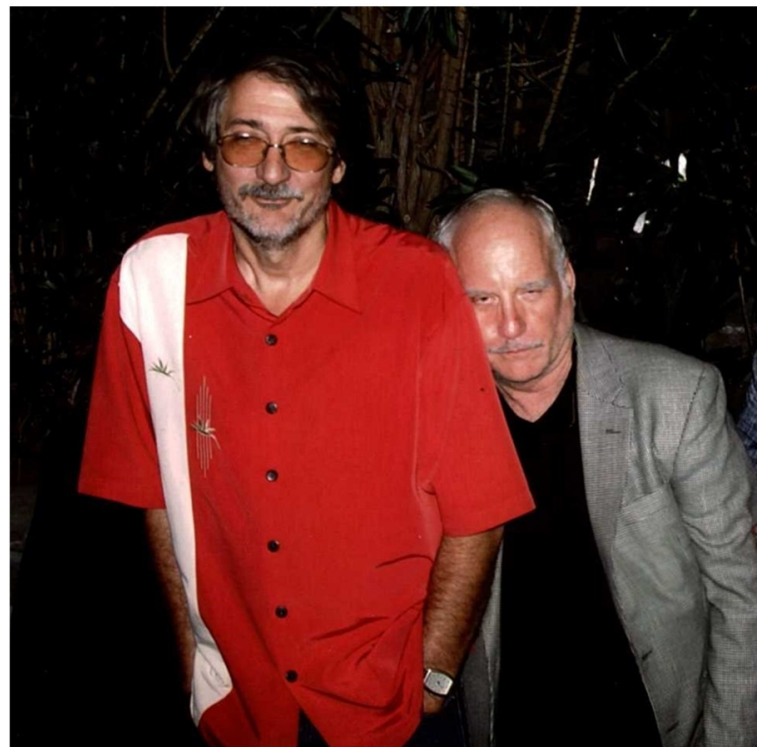
He persuaded heads of multiple film studios, plus Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, Ted Turner, and friends Mickey Rooney, Jane Russell, Tippi

Hedren, Roger Ebert and more to call or write letters in support of "The Wizard of Oz" Munchkins receiving their star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. He's known the famous Little People for years and they will be at the Palms to host screenings over Veteran's Day weekend.



Bulthaup and his Munchkin friend Margaret Pellegrini hosts annual screenings of The Wizard of Oz. She and three other Munchkins will be at the Palms in November.

For the Grand Opening weekend Richard Dreyfuss came in to host screenings of "Jaws", "What About Bob", "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" and "Mr. Holland's Opus".



Palms owner Ted Bulthaup and Oscar winning-actor Richard Dreyfuss hang out in the lobby waiting for the doors to open to a flood of awaiting first day customers.



So he knows people and he speaks in hyperbole—his theaters are the first this and the best that. But Bulthaup is no Donald Trump, who puts his name on everything he builds. He is soft spoken. (“I get accused of mumbling a lot,” he said. He prefers to stay in his office behind a door that says, “Nobody sees the Wizard. Not nobody, not now how.”) “The work speaks for itself, I’m just a tour guide”

To create the cinemas’ grand style, he picks up set pieces while travelling the world. Then he stores them at warehouses or the theater until he can find the perfect place to use them.

“I seem to notice little details that other people don’t, but it’s the little things that add up in the big scheme of things and make the impact,” he said.

He’s not kidding. While giving the tour of the new cinema, Bulthaup took notes out loud. “That blue light bulb is out, that trim needs to be dusted, that chandelier is one bulb short, that placard needs a larger typeface. If they weren’t fixed by the grand opening his vision for the customer experience wouldn’t be complete. He’s been in show business for awhile.

Now in his 50’s, Bulthaup started promoting concerts when he was 17. In 1975 as senior class president at Downers Grove South High School he booked Styx to play a concert in the gym the same month the song “Lady” hit number one on the national charts, He went on to promote concerts and line up outdoor concerts while attending college.



**Right:** This pair of 17 foot tall gold winged art deco statues came from the 20th Century Fox prop warehouse. Originally built as replicas of the pair on the Hoover Dam, they were last seen on the Ellen DeGeneres show.



**Below Left:** For the Egyptian auditorium Bulthaup called a friend at Paramount and was able to have a replica of the ark made using the original blueprints from “Raiders.”

Shifting to the film industry he opened his first movie and dinner theater in downtown Indianapolis in 1991.

“Downtown Indy was dead back then,” he said. Back then we were the only downtown business open on Sunday night, and we were the only operation that wasn’t a get drunk pick up chicks bar type place the other nights of the week.”

He started running both current and classic films shortly after their national release date because studios wouldn’t sell his theater movies immediately because we served liquor. He finally convinced them that “prohibition was over.” It was in Indianapolis that Bulthaup developed the design sense moviegoers now see in his Woodridge and Naperville cinemas. He would go in early mornings and add things like quarter-round trim and green paint. He says his wife knew he was ready to open another location after he was done “tinkering for ten years in Indy.

”The celebrity personal appearances started in Indianapolis when he had the Munchkins host screenings of “The Wizard of Oz”, but those events came into their own at Hollywood Blvd with the “Star Wars” actors. Then came Michael Madsen with screenings of “Reservoir Dogs” and successive actors from the Harry Potter films at their Chicago openings causing lines around the block.

Hollywood Blvd created a loyal following of moviegoers, with 160,000 subscribers to the weekly

email blast with the new movie schedule. Its because of that loyal following that he is expanding now.

Bulthaupt had opportunities to expand before. Offers have included Disney's Pleasure Island but he passed saying he would rather build a cinema for Chicago area locals who would become regular customers than a tourist spot and a one time visit. He backed off co-venturing with Regal Cinemas and later two venture capital groups each promising \$100 million in equity approached him.



While other theaters might struggle to compete for customers, Bulthaupt maintains his Hollywood Cinema, Bar & Eateries work because they provide an entire nights entertainment including food and bar with first run films in auditoriums each with their own distinct personalities.

He shows disdain for theaters that that use the same carpeting and décor throughout calling them neon-trimmed film bunkers. They just show movies and the industry phrase labels them exhibitors. "I'm surrounded by a bunch of exhibitionists."

"I don't work on the theory of being an exhibitor. I consider us to be in the hospitality business. We take care of the customers. We embrace them as soon as they cross the threshold and treat them to superior sensory experiences from the décor, the service, the sound, the picture; everything they see, hear, smell, taste and feel throughout their visit and they love us for it. Nobody ever likes our theaters, they love them. "Love" is invariably the word they use. They tell us it's the best movie-going experience they have ever had."

"What's the most frequently heard word here at Hollywood? It's 'Wow!'. "That's just what we do"

## From the Storyteller

During the past year, Ted Bulthaupt worked many 14-hour days at the new Hollywood Palms Cinema even during the summer when the air-conditioner wasn't working and the indoor temperatures soared.

He said he "lost 30 pounds opening this theater." That's why his three-piece suit is too big. (He wears it with beat-up blue Converse sneakers,)

"People may say my style is a bit offbeat" he said. Then he rolled his eyes, "But it's show biz." People might also find it strange that Bulthaupt, the owner of two movie theaters, hasn't seen a movie in years. He can't go to his own theater, he said. Some staff member invariably taps him on the shoulder about something. He can't go to anyone else's theater, "because it's junk," he said.

He doesn't watch movies at home because he would rather watch documentaries or feed his news addiction. But he loves the classics. "Lawrence of Arabia" is his favorite The Marx Brothers still crack him up.

And his theaters are well known among fans of "The Wizard of Oz" for personal appearances of the surviving Munchkins. It was through his friendships with the Munchkins that he learned they didn't have their own star in the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Nominating them the first time he could hardly believe they were not accepted. He started a letter writing campaign with powerful friends in the industry and people like the Governor of Kansas - "Because what else is Kansas known for?" The Munchkins got their star in 2008, right in front of the world famous Grauman's Chinese Theater and next to Hollywood's Mayor. "I guess they got the message," Bulthaupt quips. The event received worldwide media coverage and the ceremony is a special feature on the 70th Anniversary Wizard of Oz DVD.

For the ceremony, he had a rainbow made from colorful helium balloons arched over the famous Grauman's forecourt. He hired a carriage pulled by a purple "horse of a different color" to bring them parade style to the ceremony led by the Hollywood High School Band playing "We're Off To See The Wizard". Judy Garland's son, Joey Luft was the keynote speaker. Bulthaupt spent \$250,000 on staging the mammoth event.

So you might call him strange for a number of reasons. But unlike many personalities associated with Hollywood, you can't call him selfish.

- Katie Foutz





## Where did he get that?

Hollywood Palms owner Ted Bulthaup gets his memorabilia, artifacts and architectural pieces from all over. See if you can find the following items on your trip to the theater.



### Spanish Moss & Hanging Vines

Harvested by Bulthaup often with their branches attached from trees around Charleston, South Carolina and in the Mississippi delta near Vicksburg. Ted even waded hip deep through swamps with branch cutters, carefully selecting, packing and driving them home in a cargo van.

### Life-sized ET Figure

The last collectors piece bought from Steven Spielberg's warehouse in Little Rock, Arkansas.

### Pair of 1200 lb Carved Elephants

Made in India 250 years ago, these are carved teak, overlaid with pounded brass that were located outside an architectural antiques shop for many years. Bulthaup finally convinced the owner to sell them for \$13,000.



### Ark of the Covenant

When designing the Egyptian room, Bulthaup put a "Raiders" twist on the theme by calling a friend at Paramount. He was able to finesse getting an exact copy made from the original prints.

### Large Octopus

Fabricated in Florida by company that reproduces large fiberglass game fish from photographs, so fisherman can release their catch but still have a wall trophy.

### Full-size Wicked Witch of the West

A limited edition collectors item made for the 70th Anniversary; a friend with an Oz Store offered to pick up one at cost for Ted and deliver it when she came in for the annual screenings of the film. Ted bought four, can't have too many witches in your closet.

### Five foot tall Pink Panther

Bought at the Kane County flea market for \$14.

### Granite Chinese Fu Dogs (lions)

A pair of carved green stone temple door guards, weighing in at about a thousand pounds each, bought when Bulthaup spotted them while driving by a closed Chinese restaurant.

### Six foot tall Bugs Bunny

Bought as part of a dozen other 4 to 6 foot tall figures from a closing Warner Bros store.

### Chinese Terracotta Warriors

Exact full-sized replicas of actual individual soldiers originally dug up in Xi'an China, made nearby from the same clay with each weighing from 600 to 800 lbs. Bulthaup bought an even dozen.

### Giant Mayan Wall Carvings

Bulthaup was so inspired when visiting Mayan ruins in the Yucatan, he combed tourist sites buying 5 dozen different small souvenir plaster castings and shipped them home. Years later when Bulthaup toured the set for the opening sequence of Indiana Jones and the Search for the Crystal Skull, Karen Allen put him in contact with the Universal Prop Dept., who reproduced 8 castings but giant sized up to 12 foot tall.



## HOLLYWOOD REMAKE

Theater renovations  
set stage for new way  
of going to the movies

**STORY ON PAGE 4**



The city has approved major modifications to the Nova 8 Cinema to make it similar to the Hollywood Blvd Cinema in Woodridge. The new theater will be called Hollywood Palms.

## Unique moviegoing experience on the way

**Owner very excited by  
prospects for revamped  
Naperville theater**

**by Hank Beckman**  
Special to the Sun Times

Movie lovers have a choice. They can eat good food and drink adult beverages of their choice while they enjoy relatively new movies on cable in the comfort of their own home.

Or they can experience film the way it was meant to be, in all its big screen splendor, complete with an audience, the latest sound system and stale popcorn and overpriced candy.

Soon Naperville movie-goers will be able to have both the fine fare and big screen excitement.

Hollywood Palms, a Cinema, Bar & Eatery is a theme-based movie house similar to Hollywood Blvd Cinema in Woodridge is scheduled to open in the Fall of 2009, bringing restaurant quality food and great cocktails, beer & wine to the cinematic experience.

Saying the project is now on the way, Hollywood Blvd Cinema owner Ted Bulthaupt said that with the recent approval of the Naperville City Council the only hold up is signing

the deal for the Naperville property which houses the Nova 8 Cinemas in the Westview Shopping Center at 352 South Route 59.

Hollywood Boulevard is unique in that it serves alcoholic beverages and food with first-run movies. While there are other "brew-and-view" cinemas in the Chicago area, none of them show first-run movies or provide the full range of fare, and the spectacular facilities that Hollywood offers.

Movie fans at Hollywood Boulevard can nosh on Bubba Gump Cheese Shrimp or Lord of the Onion Rings. For the main course, they can have the Whoopi Goldburger or the Jake & Elwood Beef & Cheddar. Wednesday is college night with half-priced admission for students, Thursdays are \$5 Rat Pack Martini's.



Continued from page one

The various auditoriums—there are nine in Woodridge with several lobbies—are tributes to “Casablanca”, “The Maltese Falcon” and Marilyn Monroe.

“We believe we are the best movie-going experience there is,” Bulthaup said, promising the same experience awaits his Naperville patrons. “We don’t just show movies, we are a bigger experience and consider ourselves in the hospitality business”.

He wouldn’t let on as to the secret of his success, saying he suffered a “long learning curve” and wouldn’t want to give any future imitators any help.

But he did say a key was the rapport he has with customers. “Ask our customers, you won’t find anybody that ‘likes’ our theater. They invariably say they love it.”

The fans that came out in the heavy snow Tuesday seemed to agree.

“I drive here all the way from Joliet,” said Tony “the Tiger” who brought his friend Amy to their first date to see “The Day the Earth Stood Still”. Jessica Bearden and Sam Lang work at Argonne National Laboratory and came to see the latest James Bong flick.

“I like the dinner and a movie concept”, Bearden said, while Lang liked it because of the location. In keeping with its Hollywood theme, Hollywood Boulevard hosts film stars on a regular basis, the most recent being Leslie Nielsen for “Airplane” screenings. This coming weekend Karolyn Grimes, who played ZuZu in “It’s a Wonderful a Life” will make her annual return appearance. Bulthaup promised more of the same for Hollywood Palms.

Bulthaup got his start with this concept in

## Celeb hot spot

**A roster of movie stars who have visited Hollywood Blvd Cinemas in Woodridge in the last year includes:**

Chicagoland’s own Jennifer Hudson for “Dreamgirls”

Amanda Bynes & Channing Tatum for “She’s the Man”

Film Legend Tony Curtis, hosts annual screenings of his film “Some Like It Hot”.

Paul Riser & Peter Falk debuted their Riser written and produced film “That Thing About My Folks”.

Film Legend Jane Russell, most famous for her role in “Gentlemen Prefer Blondes”.

Michael Madsen & David Carradine for “Kill Bill”.

Karen Allen for “Animal House” & “Raiders of the Lost Ark”.

Tia Carrara for “Wayne’s World”

Roger Ebert Film Critic for the Chicago Sun Times

Leslie Nielsen for “Airplane”

Oliver & James Phelps, te Wesley Twins from Harry Potter

Linda Blair for “The Exorcist”

Peter Fonda for “Easy Rider”

Burt Reynolds for “Smokey & the Bandit” & “Deliverance”

Karolyn Grimes who played ZuZu for her annual appearance with “It’s a Wonderful Life”

.....and 7 of the remaining Munchkins for their annual appearances with screenings of “The Wizard of Oz”

a 130 year old warehouse he renovated in downtown Indianapolis almost 20 years ago. Noting that his business in Woodridge is up 22 percent this year, he looks forward to the same success in Naperville.

The City Council recently gave him the go-ahead to install roof-top searchlights to let people know the new cinema is open. “They were a necessity,” Bulthaup said. “Without them we are invisible from Rt 59”.

If Bulthaup is happy about coming to Naperville, the city is just as pleased to have his cinema. “It will be a great addition to the shopping center”, City Planner Katie Forystek said. We hope it will be as successful as the cinema in Woodridge . . . . It will be unique to the city”.



Eager crowds await the arrival of Paris Hilton for the World Premiere of "Pledge This"

When Ted Bulthaupt was the senior class president at Downers Grove South High School in 1975, he managed to get Styx — which had the No. 1 song "Lady" in the country at the time — to perform there.

When he returned home for his 25th high school reunion, he took another big chance — he decided to buy a movie theater. But he wanted to do something a little different: he wanted to combine the dinner and a movie into one experience.

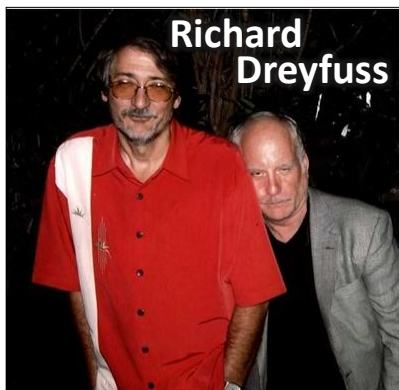
That's how Hollywood Blvd. Cinema in Woodridge, and later Hollywood Palms Cinema in Naperville, was born.

The formula is simple: serve gourmet food and specialty drinks in intimate theaters that employ comfortable executive chairs and tables. Show a first-run movie, a campy cult flick or something from the classic cinema vault.

Every few months bring in an actor fans wouldn't normally ever get the chance

# Hollywood Palms & Boulevard Cinema bring in celebs, and big crowds

by Annie Alleman  
for Sun-Times Media







**William Shatner**

to meet to sign autographs and pose for pictures.

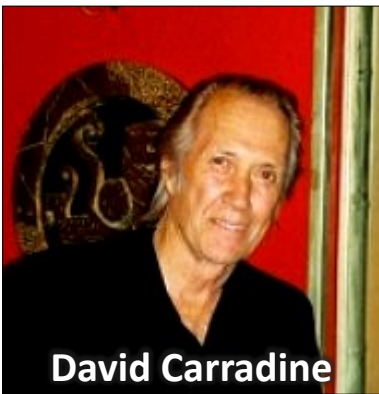
It's no secret that people can stream newer releases from the comfort of their own homes, yet his theaters are thriving because of these extra touches.

The Styx concert was his first taste of event promoting, and he was hooked. After several years in the music promotion business, he turned his attention to the big screen — literally. In 1991, he turned a 130 year-old warehouse in Indianapolis into a three-screen theater called Hollywood Bar & Filmworks, the first multiplex in the nation to do dinner and a movie with first-run pictures. He was even one of the first to use a touch screen for ordering food.

At his high school reunion he was ready to return to his Illinois roots. Bulthaupt saw the vacant building on 75th Street in Woodridge. He saw through the spiders, dust and other creepy crawlies, and



**Mark Metcalfe** **Karen Allen** **Martha Smith** **Stephen Furst** **Otis Day** **Judy Belushi**



**David Carradine**



**Michael Madsen**



**George Chakiris** **Rita Moreno** **Russ Tamblyn**



**Cindy Williams** **Mayor Pradel** **Henry Winkler** **Penny Marshall**



**Johnny Knoxville**



saw its potential as a new theater in his Hollywood line.

In March 2003, he opened Hollywood Blvd. with only four screens. In between 2005 and 2010, he made five major expansions to the theater. In between expansions four and five, he opened Hollywood Palms in Naperville in 2009.

The theaters are all exotically and exquisitely decorated, with the original location of Hollywood Blvd. even housing a museum of movie memorabilia.

It was tripping over a Munchkin 15 years ago that gave him the idea to start booking celebrities. "I had no idea that there were any still alive, and now there's only one left," he said. "He was doing a signing at a restaurant in downtown Chicago. I kept circling back to that (idea)."

The Munchkins were the first celebrity signings he booked into Hollywood Blvd. Since then, he's had Tippi Hedren (from Alfred Hitchcock's "The Birds"), actors from "Star Wars," Zachary Gordon from the "Wimpy Kid" movies, James and Oliver Phelps (Weasley brothers from the



Roger Ebert

Karen Allen



Zach Gordon

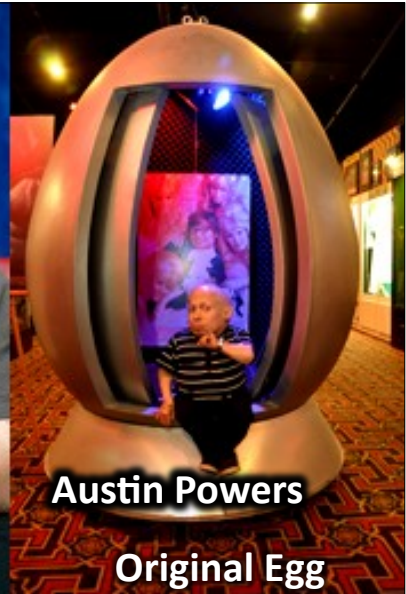
"The Wimpy Kid"



Shirley Jones



Verne Troyer



Austin Powers

Original Egg



Karl

Margaret

Clarence

Meinhardt



Christopher Lloyd

Claudia Wells

Lea Thompson

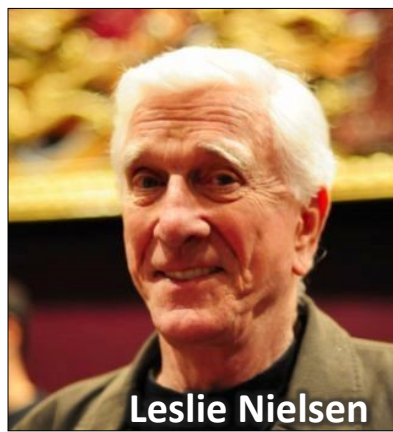
James Tolkan

BACK TO THE FUTURE Cast Reunion





**David Arquette**



**Leslie Nielsen**



**Josh Mostel**

**Barry Dennen**

**Ted Neeley**

**Yvonne Elliman**



**James & Oliver Phelps**  
"The Weasley Twins"



**Tom Felton**  
"Draco Malfoy"  
Harry Potter



**Kellan Lutz**  
Twilight



**Ashley Greene**  
Twilight



**John Heder**  
Napoleon Dynamite

"Harry Potter" movies), Robert "Freddy Krueger" Englund, Dan Aykroyd, Jennifer Hudson, Mickey Rooney, William Shatner, Tony Curtis, Lauren Bacall, Ernest Borgnine, Richard Dreyfuss, Debbie Reynolds, Michelle Pfeiffer, Peter Falk, Leslie Nielsen and Paris Hilton.

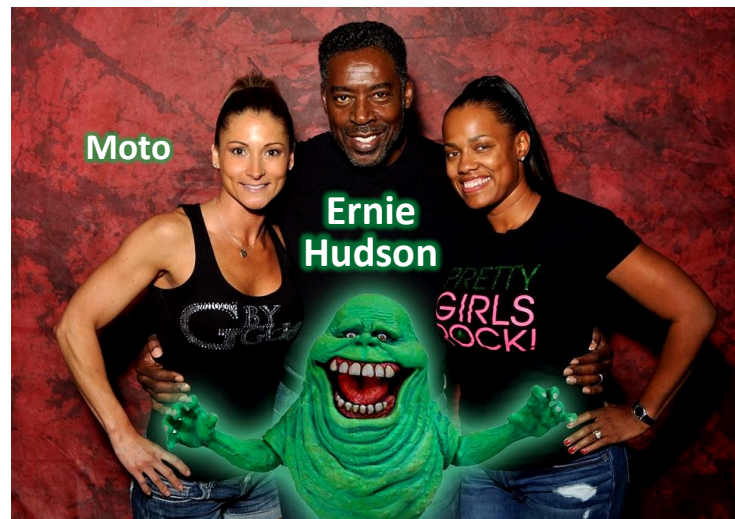
The biggest lines he can remember were for Tom Felton, who played Draco Malfoy in the "Harry Potter" movies, Ashley Greene from "Twilight" and Robert Englund.

"The lines have been six or eight hours long for some of those people," he said. "They've always been very nice."

Other events have helped Hollywood carve out its niche. About 10 years ago, they added midnight screenings of "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" at Hollywood Blvd.

"I purchased a search light and mirror ball and a fog machine and confetti cannon and some other accoutrements to make sure it was an exciting show," he said. "Along with the cast that's been there from the beginning."

Then there's the Hollywood Classic Film Series, which goes along with actors'



**Moto**

**Ernie Hudson**

**BRETTY GIRLS ROCK!**



appearances. Next up in that line will be actress Bo Derek and the movie "10" in the upcoming months.

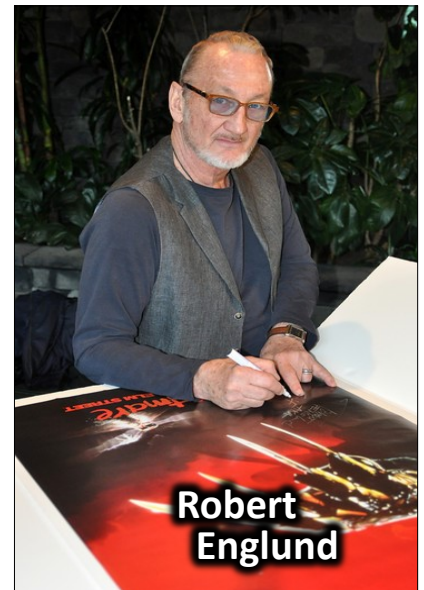
"We will be starting off a classic series once or twice a week in the not too distant future that is not associated with any particular actor," he said.

He's also going to roll out a membership program with a perks card this year. In addition to Bo Derek, other celebs slated to visit Hollywood this year include Rosario Dawson for "Sin City 2" in August, Sean Astin and Paul Reubens from "Pee Wee's Big Adventure."

"I think Paul with his 'Big Adventure' would be just amazing," he said. "I'm really excited about Paul. He comes in costume when he does appearances and I just think it would be hilarious and very well-attended."



Virginia Madsen



Robert Englund



Channing Tatum

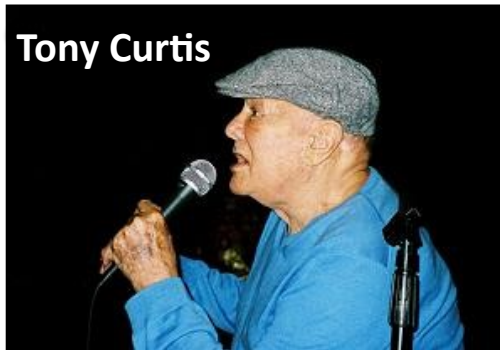


Terry Garr



Linda Blair

The Exorcist



Tony Curtis



Karolyn "ZuZu" Grimes

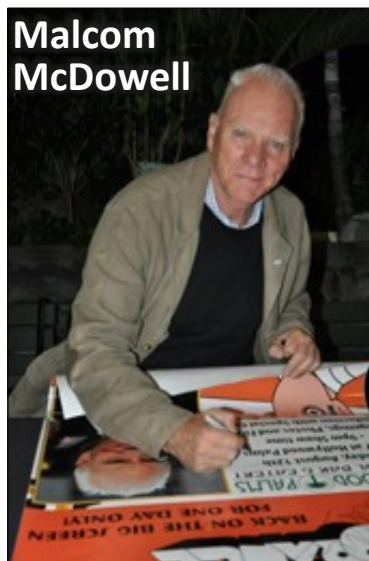
It's a Wonderful Life



Corey Feldman



Paris Hilton



Malcom McDowell



Peter Fonda



.... and don't forget all these stars!



The Hanson Bros from "Slapshot"



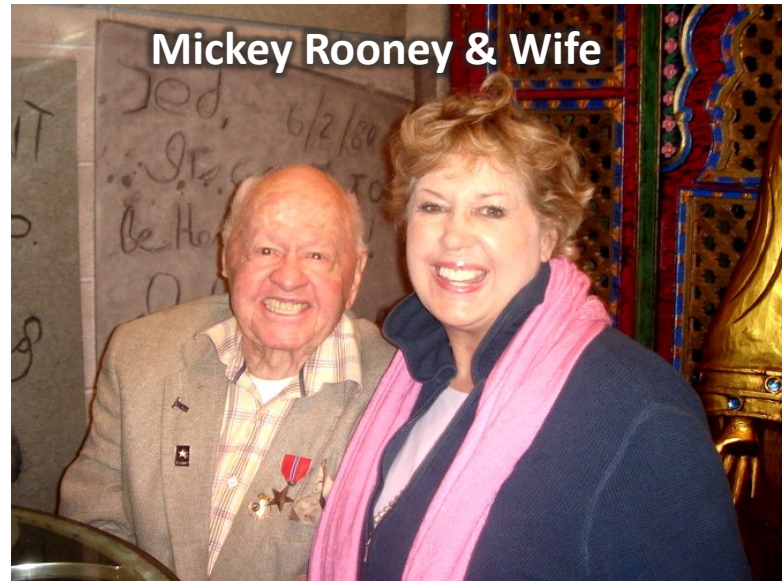
Pamela Sue Martin

Reunion

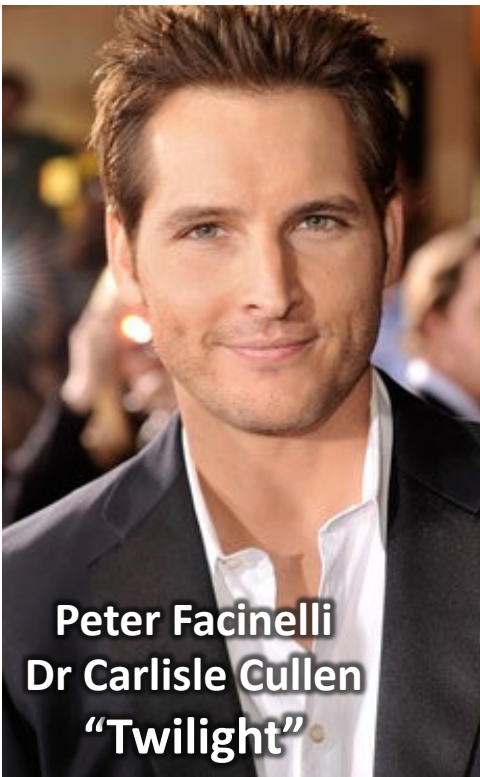
Stella Stevens Ernest Borgnine Carol Linley



Peter Falk Paul Riser



Mickey Rooney & Wife



Peter Facinelli  
Dr Carlisle Cullen  
"Twilight"



Willie Garson  
"Sex & the City"



WGN's Dean Richards