

## Critics Praise Hollywood Boulevard

by Megan Waitkoff

### Best Movie Theater

Chicago Magazine

### Top Ten New Concepts

Restaurant Business

### Only Cinema with A+ Rating

Chicago Sun Times



The Office Manager of Hollywood Blvd Cinema, the drink and dine-in movie theater located at 1001 West 75th Street in Woodridge was listening to WGN-AM 720 two weeks ago while driving her car on a typical weekday afternoon when she heard the news.

Hollywood Blvd has just been named “Best Cinema” in Chicago Magazine’s esteemed ‘Best of Chicago’ issue. It was radio personality John ‘Records’ Landecker who spread the news.

Hollywood opened last March to wide acclaim. It was named one of 2003’s “Ten Best New Concepts” by Restaurant Business magazine last December. The theater has also been featured recently in the Indianapolis Star, the Chicago Tribune and the Chicago Sun Times where it received the only A+ rating in Chicagoland. They sent in secret shoppers to every cinema in the region and nobody else received anything higher than a ‘B+’.

“Would you expect anything less from us?”, asked Ted Bulthaupt, owner of the theater. “My office manager almost drove off the road when she heard it.”

The theater opened in March 2003 and has had nothing but positive feedback from locals

and people who have driven as much as 100 miles to catch a flick there.

“We are becoming well know throughout the region”, Bulthaupt said.

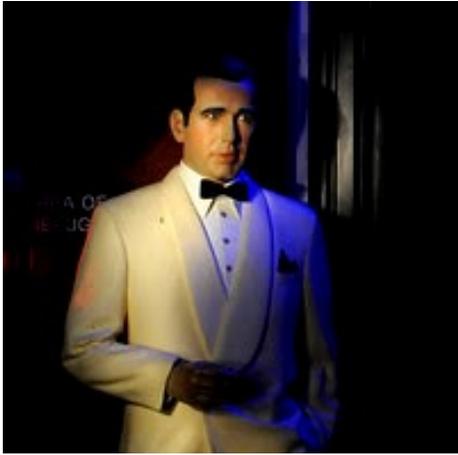
“Last week, I talked to two separate people from Northern Indiana calling about local hotels because they wanted to drive over to the theater. That startled me.”

Hollywood Blvd is cast as a cinema, bar and eatery serving food and cocktails directly to moviegoers seats during the shows.

“You just walk through the lobby and it gets better from there”. Bulthaupt said. “It’s everything. One thing is better than the next.”

While the success of the theater is not surprising to Bulthaupt - he’s been running another one in Indianapolis for 14 years - the recent nods from Chicago Magazine, the Chicago Sun-Times and Restaurant Business were unexpected. He didn’t even know Hollywood Blvd was being considered , much less that the theater was recognized.

“I have never spoken to anyone from these publications. All I know is, you open the magazine and there’s our name.” Bulthaupt said.



# THE SHOW IS ON!

**Woodridge's newly remodeled  
Hollywood Boulevard Cinema enhances  
viewing experience for patrons **PAGE 4-5****



Owner Ted Bulthaupt inspects the end of day results in detailing the new Casablanca Auditorium at Hollywood Boulevard Cinema in Woodridge. The facility has almost completed a \$3 million renovation and plans to open before Christmas.



A statue of Rick greets the patrons at the entrance of the new Casablanca Auditorium.

# A HOLLYWOOD FINISH

## Hollywood Boulevard Adds Screens, Seating In \$3 Million Expansion

By Don Grigas



Moviegoers deserve more than just a few hours of letting images on a screen for their hard-earned money, said Ted Bulthaupt, owner of Woodridge-based Hollywood Boulevard Cinema.

To back up his claim, Bulthaupt recently spent over \$3 million expanding the theater complex in the Woodridge Festival Shopping Center, building a two-story concrete structure in the back of the building, added an attached large freezer area tripling their existing cold storage, took over the adjacent Coldstone Creamery for a new entry, box office, private party

room and more washrooms, and then building over the front main plaza with a glass atrium to more than double the size of the main lobby. (Bulthaupt quips, “We now have enough freezer storage that we can rent out space to a morgue”)

The results, Bulthaupt said, justified the investment. “We’ve expanded our seating capacity 25%, from 1000 seats to 1250 with these new auditoriums”, said Bulthaupt, a 1975 graduate of Downers Grove South High School. “I don’t have the specific numbers for attendance since opening, but it has gone extremely



The new Casablanca Auditorium features 11 Moroccan building facades with 1100 fiber optic stars above.

well. Fortunately, research shows the movie industry is recession-proof.” “It didn’t take us long to surpass the annual attendance to Chicago Bears attendance at Soldier Field.”

The new construction houses three newly constructed and distinctly themed auditoriums, an expansive women’s washroom, and an area to house a Hollywood Museum to be stocked with Ted’s movie memorabilia.

“That’s why the public embraces us – because we care so much about all we do and we give them their money’s worth”, said Bulthaupt. “Even if the movie might not be good, the overall movie experience makes sure they have a great evening and consider it money well spent.

Bulthaupt is a Woodridge resident who, in 1991 in Indianapolis, pioneered the idea of blending comfortable seating and a full food-and-beverage menu with movie theaters vastly different from the cookie-

cutter multiplexes that dot the urban and suburban landscape.

In 2003, Bulthaupt opened Hollywood Blvd Cinema with four auditoriums in the Southwest corner of the shopping center. Two more auditoriums with separate lobbies were opened in 2005. Over the past 6 months he has spent another \$3 million on the latest expansion.

Four more retail storefronts are already under contract for an already planned expansion.

“I have those plans in my head, but not on paper yet. . . . but I’ll be a little busy over in Naperville for while”, Bulthaupt said, “starting next month we begin converting a whole new theater complex into what I do.

“We are gutting the building, ripping out all the concrete floors, tearing off the front and backs of the building.” To be called the Hollywood Palms,



“I don’t use interior designers or public relations people. They tend to think in traditional terms. This place is designed to my vision and I build it and sell it that vision”

**Ted Bulthaupt**—  
Hollywood Blvds Owner

A view of Dorothy’s house is visible in one of the new auditoriums with a Wizard of Oz theme, and the meticulous detail once you get inside.

Bulthaupt said, “We are building a 7000 sq.ft. glass atrium almost three stories tall as the new lobby”, landscaping the interior with fully grown palm trees.

“I’ll be shipping up whole truckloads of plants from Miami for the entryway and lobby, constructing a two and a half story tall, 70 ft wide cascading waterfall as a backdrop.”

Contractors are telling Bulthaupt the work will take 16 months. Bulthaupt made himself co-construction manager and plans on having it open in 9 months.

“Then I’ll be back in Woodridge for the fourth expansion here,” he said, making time for getting married in his spare moments. “We’ve been together for 25 years, Its probably time to slow down a bit so I can squeeze in a honeymoon.”

Among the new auditoriums are two with themed from classic movies. “Casablanca” and “The Wizard of Oz”. The third is dedicated to classic movie palaces of yesteryear. The Casablanca screen is based on the Humphrey Bogart classic with two life-sized statues of his character “Rick” greeting moviegoers as they enter. Architectural woodwork, ceramic tiles, stained-glass light fixtures, furnishings, tapestries and more were imported from Morocco topped off with a domed sky ceiling that twinkles with a blanket of stars in artificial moonlight under a full moon.

A scale replica of the Ford-Trimotor from the film hangs in the sky and the scene-setting nuances are a tribute to Bulthaupt’s vision.





We brought in eleven different types of stone to the finishes on the building walls and foundations, and two sets of antique wood archway, one 24 foot long, among balconies, window frames and doors that came from Morocco through a place Bulthaup knows in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The result is the town coming right out of the movie.

## A Mayoral Nod

Woodridge Mayor William Murphy took a private tour of the facility prior to the grand opening and agrees the new facility is impressive. "It's difficult to pick out one aspect over another as my favorite because Ted has gone into so much detail in each space and has significantly enhanced what was already a very successful entertainment venture", Murphy said.

To enter the "Wizard of Oz" auditorium, moviegoers pass beneath a brightly colored stained-glass rainbow arch and through a simple Kansas farmhouse living room, replete with an antique clock, fireplace mantle, sewing machine, rocking chair, carpeting, wallpaper, lamps with a full wall image from the movie of Dorothy, Auntie Em, Mrs. Gulch and of course Toto. After you enter the auditorium and look back, you find you exited the wrecked house after being dropped from the tornado on the Wicked Witch of the East.

The third auditorium presents a series of large framed art deco style murals of Los Angeles movie palaces from the Golden Age of Hollywood.

"I first became interested in this type of style when I helped renovate some old movie palaces into concert venues", Bulthaup said.

## His Own Handiwork

While much of the standard work was contracted out, Bulthaup put in his share of time designing, nailing and painting. The Casablanca auditorium was a



big empty box and he did all the carpentry, building each of the eleven building facades and installing all the windows, doors, arches and balconies, placing all the antique light fixtures, the backlit moon, and the meticulous detailing that has facilities have become known for.

A space has been dedicated as a museum which will house various items that Bulthaup describes as "movie treasures" such as artifacts from "Cleopatra" and Ben Hur", John's Wayne's "The Alamo" to more current films such as big transporter egg from "Austin Powers", the Christmas light gun from Jim Carrey's "The Grinch". Ted is especially proud of a slave costume from "Spartacus" that his friend Tony Curtis gave him, as well as two flute's Tony used in "The Sweet Smell of Success". One had been bought from a second-hand store so Curtis could learn for his role in the film the second Sinatra had ordered from London and gave Tony when Frank was so impressed by Tony's rehearsing in Frank's living room.

"The overall affect we look to achieve is the ooos and ahhs that of an old-fashioned, classic movie palaces would elicit from their audiences; unlike the cookie-cutter, neon-trimmed film bunkers that are prevalent today", Bulthaup said. "I think we've done that."

## Quick Facts

**Bogie Genealogy** Stephen Bogart, son of Humphry Bogart and Lauren Bacall, was a guest of honor when the Casablanca Auditorium opened on November 4th.

**Still to Come** A Chinese restaurant to be called "The Formosa Café" attached with the theater complex is in early planning.

**And More** Bulthaup is going to be opening a Hollywood Boulevard type theater in Naperville with work to begin next month.