

Movie Nights Focus in on Cost Control

Operators of outdoor screenings see rise in audiences, expenses.

As the outdoor movie season gets underway, one of Los Angeles County's defining cultural experiences is suffering from blockbuster production costs.

Thousands of filmgoers gather under the stars to watch iconic hit films at a series of venues each weekend from May through October. But organizers of such events said that despite big attendance numbers, profits are small.

Increased competition has led organizers to provide a wider range of entertainment than cinema alone, adding live music, comedy shows, magic acts, karaoke, and food trucks. However, the growth in scope and scale has pushed costs up.

"We've doubled both in revenue and attendees since 2012 because we've grown to three different L.A. locations. Still, profit margins are thin," said **Steven Allison**, chief financial officer at Pasadena's **Street Food Cinema**. "The cost of one screen and projector is over \$50,000, we hire professional comics and cover bands for every event and the cost of a single stage can be \$2,000."

His firm's competition includes **Eat See Hear**, based



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Setting Course for Stars: Steven Allison at Street Food Cinema in Pasadena.

in Sherman Oaks but with several venues across the county, which claimed 3,000 attendees per event last year, up from an average of 1,200 in 2012.

"Our highest costs come from venue rentals, ranging anywhere from \$6,000 to \$8,000," said founder **Sharon Sperber**. "We also

pay all our staff higher than minimum wage. The greatest challenge is balancing these costs and maintaining the quality of our experience."

Ticket prices at Eat See Hear increased this year to \$14 for general admission and \$21 for reserved seating. Street Food Cinema left its 2016 prices at the same level

as last year, \$13 general and \$18 reserved.

Next weekend's offerings will be 1987's "Dirty Dancing" from Eat See Hear at Santa Monica High School, while Street Food Cinema presents 1996's "Romeo and Juliet" at downtown L.A.'s Exposition Park.

— Amal Khan

Emojis Take Shape in App For Realtors

Association pitches symbols as positive signs for real estate.

The high-stress environment of real estate just became a lot more lighthearted.

The **California Association of Realtors** has launched an app featuring a line of emojis focused on real estate.

The "Carmojis," which

are free to download, reflect the industry's increasing focus on digital technologies and enhanced agent-client communication, said **Ziggy Zicarelli**, president of the association, which is headquartered in Koreatown.

"Buying or selling a house is an emotional process. We created the app because we think the interaction with Realtors needed more



Signed In: 'Carmojis.' RTO+P, the emojis

range from "sold" signs to superheroes and bottles of celebratory champagne. "As more and more people are communicating through screens, we wanted to try and find digital platforms to help

oomph than a traditional text can convey," he said.

Designed by the Santa Monica office of advertising agency

Realtors do their jobs better," said **Steve Red**, the agency's chief creative officer. "Emojis are a bit of nonobtrusive fun, but they also reflect a wider, growing business trend."

Zicarelli said they can help agents connect with clients during the process of buying and selling property.

"In this day and age, Carmojis add excitement to Realtors' interactions with clients and each other," he said. "They're a free and amusing tool and they provide a human touch."

— Amal Khan

Angling for Movie Credits

Fraser Heston, chief executive of **Agamemnon Films**, has long enjoyed rock climbing, mountaineering, sailing, and scuba diving. But the more leisurely pursuit of fly fishing is his true love.



Heston

It's not just for fun either, he said, a day after getting back from a trip catching bonefish in the Bahamas.

"There's kind of a business side of it, too," Heston said, pointing to his latest thriller, "Desolation Sound," which he co-authored with writing partner **Heather McAdams**. The film opens with a fly-fishing sequence set in British Columbia.

Heston, 61, credits **Joe Cunniff**, a stuntman on films including "Ben-Hur," "The Planet of the Apes," and "El Cid," along with his late father, **Charlton Heston** (who starred in those three films), with sparking his interest in a sport that now gives him creative material.

"It really makes it possible for you to write with some verisimilitude, and with some real accuracy and understanding," Heston said. "Even people who don't know the world will pick up on what you're talking about and it rings true."

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JONATHAN DIAMOND



Rogo

Space for Sci-Fi

For a couple of years while writing his science-fiction novel, Westwood real estate agent **Mark Rogo**, 62, hardly got a wink of sleep.

"I could close my eyes and transport myself to this planet Yavari," he said. "I

would let my imagination just fly."

Those nighttime imaginings became "23 Hours," a 350-page book self-published in January about a

machinist from Gardena who gets stuck on an alien planet for 250 years. He eventually becomes the Grand Galactic Overlord but can never shake the sadness of outliving his first wife left behind on Earth.

Rogo's active imagination was just the starting point for the book. He eventually learned, "It's really hard to tell a story."

"I wanted to make it interesting, but I didn't want

there to be a battle scene every other chapter," he said. Rogo also took on the challenge of weaving in Jewish history

through "humanoid" characters that had adopted biblical laws. There was also hefty research required to make alien planets scientifically feasible.

Now, as Rogo continues to work at **Coldwell Banker's** Beverly Hills office selling homes throughout the Westside, he is finishing a sequel meant to depict humans more admirably than they appear in "23 Hours."

"The first book really painted Earthlings as the scum of the galaxy," he said. And he might write another.

"I could care less if this book never sold," he said. "It was probably the most difficult thing I've done in my life, but it was such a fun process."

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