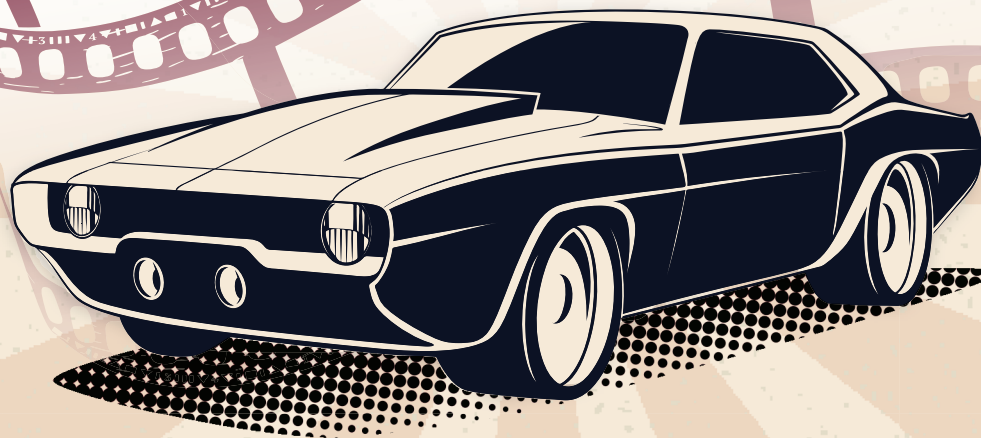


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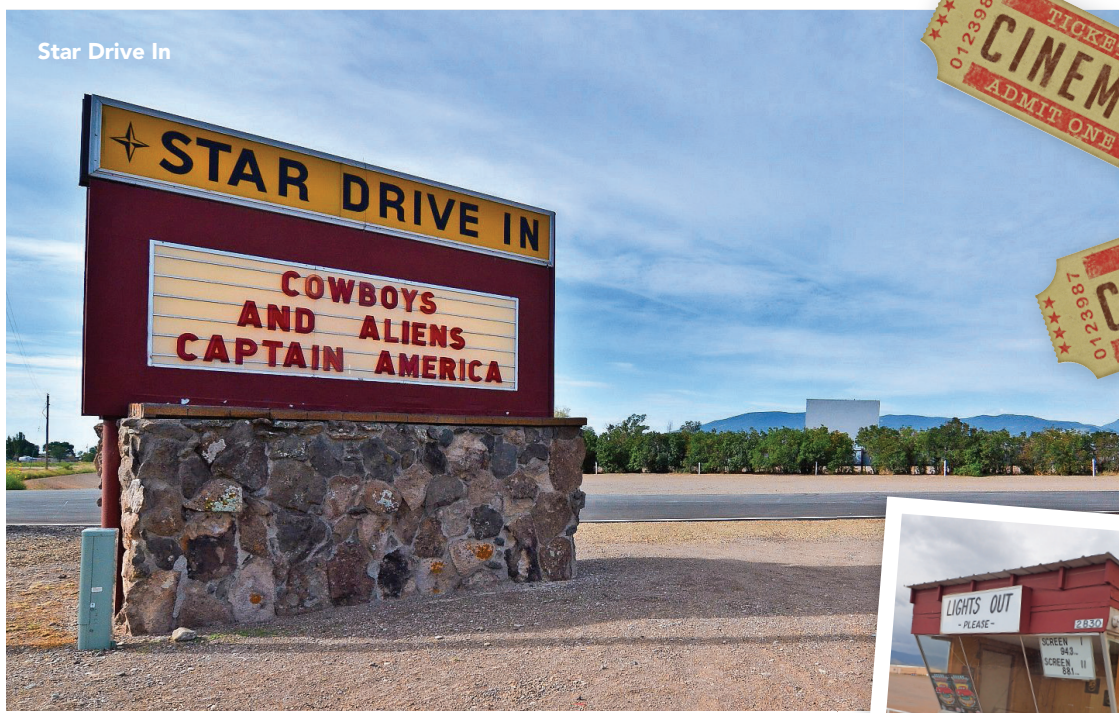
Movie



CREATE NEW DRIVE-IN
MEMORIES IN CLASSIC LOCATIONS

BY MELANIE D.G. KAPLAN

Star Drive In



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Last August, while visiting national parks in Colorado, I happened upon a real treat: Star Drive In, an outdoor theater that opened in 1955 in the southern part of the state. But my delight didn't end there.

Next door, I found the Best Western Movie Manor Motel, where you can look out a big window and watch the Star's outdoor screen ... from your bed! Each room is named for a movie star. Booking a night at the motel was a no-brainer. I checked into my no-frills Mel Gibson room and crawled into bed for the feature.

According to Wheeler Winston Dixon, a film expert at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the first drive-ins appeared in 1933 in Camden, N.J. They hit their peak midcentury with about 4,000 locations, roughly one-quarter of the nation's total movie screens. Now, he says, they account for just 1.5 percent.

"Like so many things, it belongs to the past," Winston Dixon says. It was tough for all the theater operators to run a business dependent on weather, he notes; the fuzzy projection and tinny sound from the window speakers didn't help.

"Today's audiences want a huge screen, enormous chairs and surround sound," he says. "They want a more immersive experience."

But moviegoers who long for nostalgia and low-cost fun are in luck. A few hundred drive-ins still exist, and we've highlighted a few of our favorites. Remember two things: Use your parking lights when entering and exiting, and please take a moment to enjoy the stars on the ceiling. >



Star Drive In

ADMISSION: Adults, \$8 • Kids, \$3. Open nightly March through October.

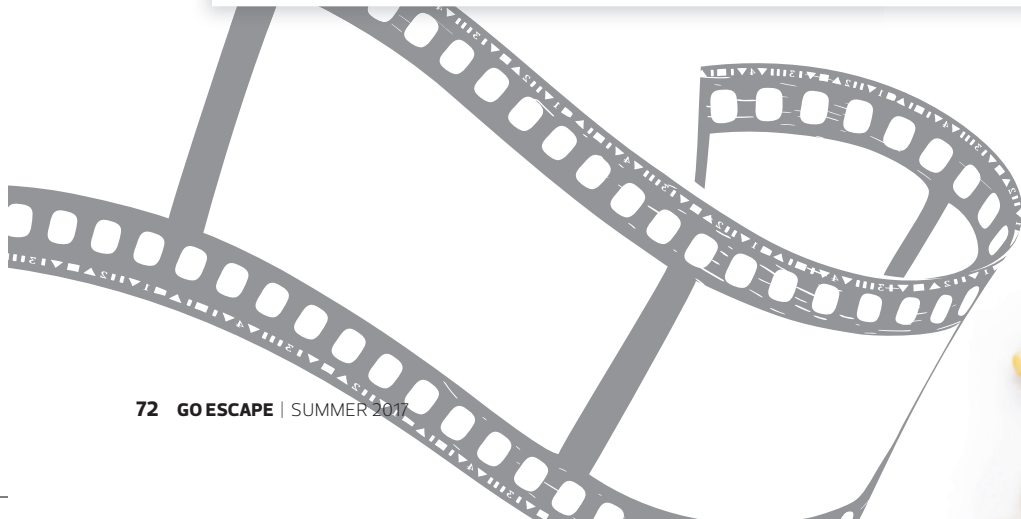
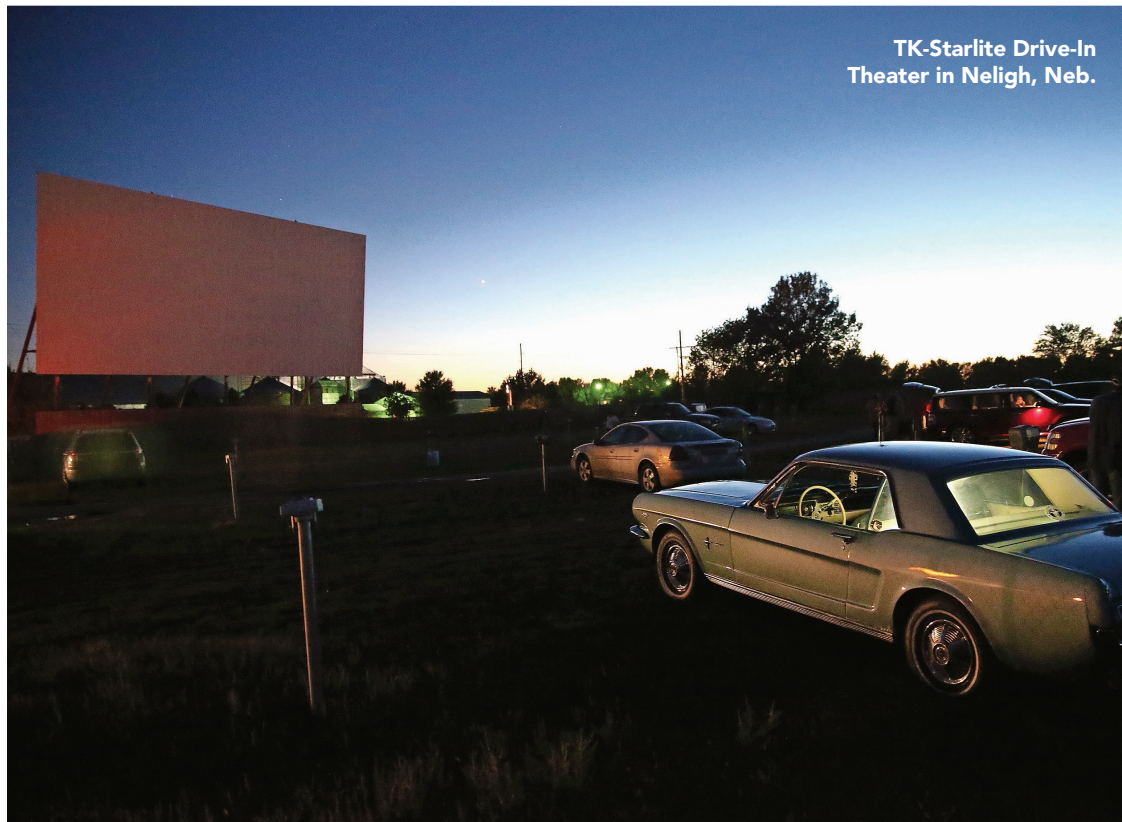
2830 U.S. Highway 160 W., Monte Vista, Colo.; 719-852-2613

Best Western Movie Manor Motel

2830 U.S. Highway 160 W., Monte Vista, Colo.; 719-852-5921; bestwesterncolorado.com/hotels/best-western-movie-manor

PROVIDED BY STAR DRIVE IN; MELANIE D.G. KAPLAN; GETTY IMAGES

Moviegoers who long for nostalgia and low-cost fun are in luck. A few hundred drive-ins still exist, and we've highlighted a few of our favorites.





Hull's Drive-In Theatre

The country's first nonprofit, community-owned drive-in, Hull's was purchased in 2000 by a group called Hull's Angels after the historic theater couldn't afford to stay open. Today, the 67-year-old pet-friendly drive-in, located 5 miles from historic Lexington, Va., presents double and triple features of current movies. Hull's claims to have the best popcorn in town (large, \$5.25). But the real draw — because they're completely awesome — may be the funnel cake fries (\$3).

ADMISSION: Adults, \$7 • Kids 5-11, \$3 • Under 4, free • Cash/check only at box office. Open weekends, mid-March through October.

► 2367 N. Lee Hwy., Lexington, Va.; 540-463-2621; hullsdrivein.com

Cars will line up! Get there early to reserve your spot!

Wellfleet Drive-In Theatre

Summer drive-in fun on Cape Cod begins weekend mornings at the 200-vendor flea market, and ends with first-run double features on a 100-foot screen. Built in 1957, the theater's snack bar menu includes drive-in staples, and the **Wellfleet Dairy Bar and Grill** serves burgers, pizza, soft-serve ice cream and beer/wine. Grown-ups: Stop by the beer garden. Kids: Check out the playground.

ADMISSION: Adults, \$11 • Seniors 62 and older and kids 4-11, \$8 • Under 3, free • Cash only at box office. Open nightly May through mid-September.

► 51 State Highway Route 6, Wellfleet, Mass.; 508-349-7176; wellfleetcinemas.com/drive-in-theatre



HULL'S DRIVE-IN claims to have the best popcorn in town! See for yourself!

Bengies Drive-In Theatre

Nostalgic Bengies claims to have the largest movie theater screen in the nation, at 120 by 52 feet. The 61-year-old drive-in shows triple features, with classic cartoons, vintage trailers and clips during intermission. Drivers with registered historic vehicles get free admission on Sundays. Bengies has perhaps the most extensive menu of any drive-in, from the pulled pork sandwich (\$6.75) and fried breaded mushrooms (\$5.25) to caramel apples (\$4.95) and fresh-baked cookies (\$1.99).

ADMISSION: Adults, \$5-\$10 • Kids 4-10, \$5 • Under 4, free • Cash only at box office.

► 3417 Eastern Blvd., Baltimore; 410-687-5627; bengies.com

MICHAEL COLE (2); GETTY IMAGES

**Silver Moon Drive-In Theatre
concession stand**



Silver Moon Drive-In Theatre

One of the few year-round drive-ins, Silver Moon first opened in 1948 in Lakeland, Fla. At that time, tickets were 35 cents, and vendors sold cigarettes along with popcorn. Today, each of the theater's two screens has a double feature seven nights a week. The snack bar sells homemade pizza, hot dogs, corn dogs, nachos, soft pretzels, popcorn, beer and large dill pickles — a Silver Moon fave. On Saturdays and Sundays, the grounds are transformed into the Swap Shop flea market.

ADMISSION: Adults, \$5 • Kids 4-9, \$1 • Under 3, free.

► 4100 New Tampa Hwy., Lakeland, Fla.; 863-682-0849; silvermoondrivein.com

Cumberland Drive-In

Celebrate weekends in Newville, Pa., with a triple feature at the Cumberland. If you're driving from a distance, you can reserve a vehicle space. Movies are family-friendly, and a playground keeps kids entertained until the first feature begins. Stock up on eats at the snack bar: slushies, burgers, barbecue, hot sausage and jumbo dogs. If you choose to sit outside (or don't trust your car battery), rent a portable radio for \$2.

ADMISSION: Adults, \$8 • Kids 3-12, \$4 • Under 3, free.

► 715 Centerville Rd., Newville, Pa.; 717-776-5212; http://81fun.com/drivein_home/



DRIVE-IN CHECK LIST

Be prepared for a great experience.



Check to see what payment methods are accepted — some venues only accept cash.



Make sure to look at the forecast before heading out.



Remember to turn off your headlights if entering around showtime.



Arrive well before sunset to get a good parking spot.



Bring extra seating so you can leave your car and stretch your legs during the movie.