

Skyline Drive-In has new ticket booth

BY CLEVIS JEFFRIES
STAFF WRITER

While driving along Highway 61 one can see a change being made at the Skyline Drive-In Theatre located in Summersville. A new ticket booth under construction is near completion.

"The existing ticket booth had a lot of wear and tear. Plus, we have had a great response from our customers since we went digital. We now have two good lanes for customers on heavy nights, so wait times to get in the gate should be minimal," said current manager Mike Goodrum.

The local theatre has been in operation since around 1954 when a group of prominent local businessmen started the county's first outdoor drive-in theater, namely, Gabe Taylor, Frank Cantrell, Bob Edwards, Colby Cowherd, Paul Calhoun, Herman Hagan, and A.L. Miller.

"The first manager of the local drive-in was Clem Pruitt and since 2016, Mike and Christy Goodrum, of Glasgow, have managed the local drive-in," said Trent Ford.

Over the years, the concession area has been an important feature of the drive-in experience.

At one time there was an equipped playground area, which included a Merry-Go-Round, swings, seesaws and a red slide with a clown's picture on it.

"The playground remained in existence until the late 1970's," Ford said.

It was the goal of the drive-in to show the latest released movies.

Around 1970, his dad, the late Doug Ford, purchased the drive-in property.

Prior to his purchase of the property, the elder Ford served as the drive-in's manager.

Current ownership of the property, he said, still remains with the Ford family.

"In 1984, the cost of admission was \$2.50 for adults and children under 12 got in free," Ford said.

Regarding the cost of admission this upcoming season, Goodrum said, "This year we will still have the same prices as last year. We are really trying to hold off on raising prices at the gate. We want this to be a place everyone can afford to come to and enjoy."

He noted the cost of admission will remain \$7 for adults and \$4 for children with each night featuring two first-run movies.

Ford mentioned with the death of his dad in 1981, changing family interests, and the decline of drive-ins nationwide, his mom decided, in 1984, to close the drive-in.

It reopened in 2002 when it was leased by Jerry Cox of Nashville, he said.

Ford acknowledged the changes that have occurred over the years at the drive-in, including sound projected from speakers placed on glass windows of vehicles to digital radio sound.

In the late 1970's, AM radio sound was available along with speaker sound and in



Photo by Clevis Jeffries

Trent Ford stands next to the nearly completed ticket booth Jan. 7 at the Skyline Drive-In Theatre in Summersville. Ford has in his possession movie brochures from 1956 found inside the old booth's cinder blocks. Floyd Skaggs and Sam Anderson are responsible for the construction of the new ticket booth.

2002, FM radio sound was introduced exclusively.

Concessions in the past were popular among movie goers, with favorite foods being popcorn, pickle dog with crackers, and a Chilly Dilly, which consisted of a big dill pickle, Ford said.

He noted occasionally his dad would put a free season movie pass in the popcorn bought by customers at the concession stand.

Ford talked about the destruction that occurred in 1957 at the local drive-in when an "unconfirmed" tornado did extensive damage to the movie screen, the projection booth, and the concession and equipped playground areas.

He said, "One came through and just about wiped out the drive-in. The concession stand took a good hit."

In 2016, his older brother, Tim, pur-

chased the movie and concession equipment and took the drive-in back over with a state-of-the-art projection system.

The drive-in also welcomed new management, Ford said.

According to Dave Spencer of WBKR, as of July 2018, there were only a few operating drive-in theaters left in Kentucky and DriveInMovie.com indicated in the 1950's there existed approximately 120 drive-ins in the state.

Commenting on



Photo courtesy of Trent Ford

The old ticket booth of the Skyline Drive-In.

the upcoming season, manager Goodrum said, "It's hard to get an exact date on when we will open at this point. Weather plays a big role and even though we like to open in March, sometimes we have to wait until April for warm-

er temps. We keep people up-to-date with Facebook and our website at www.skylinedrivein.com."

According to Trent Ford, his dad would often say, "Showtime's at dark and we'll see you at the movies."

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Photo courtesy of Trent Ford

Drive-In employee, the late Peggy Pruitt Heath, stands inside the heavily damaged concessions building caused by the June 13, 1957 "unconfirmed" tornado.



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