

Brands Beneath the Stars: Marketers Help to Reinvent the Drive-In

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At the first patented drive-in theater in America, which opened in 1933 near Camden, N.J., guests paid \$1 per carload for a lo-fi affair with speakers mounted to a 50-foot screen and an ad campaign that said, "The whole family is welcome, regardless of how noisy the children are."

How times have changed, with the entertainment concept evolving from its bare-bones early days into a trendy—and thoroughly bougie—way for movie lovers to spend an evening.

After decades of falling out of favor, with the rise of real estate prices and the advent of multiplexes and VCRs, outdoor theaters had a resurgence during the 2020 pandemic.

That popularity has grown as the drive-in events themselves have become more elaborate, with on-site amenities from craft cocktails and artisanal food to fireworks displays, live music, laser shows and celebrity appearances.

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