

Published July 21st, 2021 Rheem Theatre welcomes excited movie-goers back inside

By Vera Kochan



Ah, the smell of freshly buttered popcorn popping that wasn't made in your home's microwave. Yes, the COVID mandates have loosened further, and movie theatres have opened their doors wide, just in time for the summer blockbuster season.

With safety precautions in place, the Rheem Theatre located at 350 Park Street, Moraga, in the Rheem Valley Shopping Center, has joined the ranks by offering the highly touted new release "Black Widow," along with "The Boss Baby: Family Business" and "Fast and Furious 9 - The Fast Saga." Please note, movie line-ups may have changed. Check the theatre's website for current information.

The Rheem Theatre greets patrons once again Photo Vera Kochan Built in 1957, the independent theatre suffered some lean years before Cinema West purchased it in April 2019, and gave the old gem a much needed face lift. The Rheem's grand reopening took place on Dec. 19, 2019,

only to have COVID shut things down nationally a mere three months later in March.

The theatre's new general manager, Peter Bellomo, commuted from his home in Petaluma to open the place up on July 8 for "Black Widow" previews, with the official opening on July 9 commanding a sizable ticket pre-sale crowd of 100 people for the 6:30 p.m. showing. That's not even mentioning the walk-ins.

Assistant Manager Tiffanie Souza-Cone said, "I had a couple come in last night that wanted to come check out the remodeled theatre. My last customers were from Berkeley. They used to live in town and wanted to see the Rheem again."

"It's very different," stated patron Sara MacKay. "I haven't been here since they remodeled."

The Rheem appears to be attracting out-of-towners who appreciate the ambiance of one of Moraga's historic treasures. "I've never been here before," enthused Sam Bautista of Oakland. "I heard it was the best kept secret of movie theatres." She was joined by a friend from Dublin and another from as far away as Sacramento.

Fifteen minutes before show time, the lobby was packed with patrons lining up at the concessions stand, eager to enjoy their first visit to a movie theatre in over a year, while the parking lot outside was filling up with cars and people all heading in one direction. If you didn't know where the Rheem Theatre was located, all you had to do was follow the scent of buttered popcorn in the air.

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