

(Download) Drive-In Theaters: A History from Their Inception in 1933

Drive-In Theaters: A History from Their Inception in 1933

Kerry Segrave

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Kerry Segrave : Drive-In Theaters: A History from Their Inception in 1933 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Drive-In Theaters: A History from Their Inception in 1933:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Thorough, informative, dryBy Michael KilgoreKerry Segrave is a researcher. Reading Drive-In Theaters, I can just see him at a UCLA library in 1992, thumbing through old issues of Variety and taking notes on 3x5 index cards. Clearly, he poured weeks of his life into this book, which includes excellent appendices, copious footnotes, and an extensive bibliography. For the sheer volume of information about the history of drive-ins, this book is unmatched.But when the time comes for Segrave to transfer all that information into a narrative, the results are a mixed bag. The chapters detailing the early history and growth of drive-ins often create an interesting story. Other chapters, such as "The Audience" look like a pile of index cards rewritten as one-paragraph summaries, one after another.It gets even drier when statistics are involved. There are no tables in the body of the book; every instance that called for one was instead handled as descriptive sentences. Here's one example: "Picture preference of those questioned in 1949 and 1950 were; comedies 25 percent (33 percent in 1950), 23 percent drama (23), 21 percent musicals (18), 18 percent Westerns (14), 5 percent romance (8), and 15 percent expressed no preference (4)." When he strings a few of these together, I found it hard to keep reading. There are plenty of other, longer non-tables like this, but I wanted to spare you.My favorite part of this book was its Introduction, where Segrave lays out a few themes that he sometimes uses in the body of the work. For example, he explains why drive-ins weren't globally popular the way they were in the US. "(B)efore drive-ins could spring up all over, a country had to be

wealthy; it had to have a good deal of vacant, accessible, relatively cheap land; and the country's inhabitants had to be financially well placed, have automobiles, and enjoy an emotional relationship with their cars."Segrave also points to poor film quality, weak projectors and bad sound as indicators that back then, the success of drive-ins was guaranteed as soon as they opened the gate, a situation with later ramifications. "Drive-ins declined in part because success came too easily at the start. Operators made little effort. When attendance declined, the cavalier way operators treated patrons came back to haunt them. It couldn't be undone."This book is rather gloomy, understandable since it was written during the industry's freefall period. The photo quality is atrocious; I don't know what the hardcover version looked like, but these look like third- or fourth-generation screen prints. It's wrong about the name of the first drive-in film; it was *Wives Beware*, not *Wife Beware*. It's got an uncredited photo on page 164 that looks a lot like *Life* magazine's iconic 1958 Utah drive-in shot.I'm glad I bought this book, and if you're a drive-in fan, I heartily recommend it for your bookshelf. But its flaws and its frequent dry patches prevent me from giving *Drive-In Theaters* a full five stars.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The authoritative book on drive-in theaters
By *Lost in Twilight*
This book is an absolute must - have if you consider yourself a drive-in enthusiast. If you're looking for a book with big, colorful pictures I recommend "*Drive-In Memories*," "*Cinema Under the Stars*," and "*The American Drive-In Movie Theater*". All are equally wonderful books. But if you want to know more, if you want to dig deeper into the history of the drive-in theater, this is your book. It contains far, far more detailed information and background than any other book of its kind -- without ever becoming boring. True, it may seem to be too dated to give an accurate, historic account (the book was first published in 1992), but let's be realistic, is there really anything new to report on the nearly-dead industry, other than there are even fewer drive-ins?
Kerry Segrave has certainly done his homework in researching the drive-in theater. To quote him in his introduction: "Research for this book was conducted at the UCLA libraries. Much of it consisted of reading back files of such magazines as *Variety* and *Motion Picture Herald*. The latter was particularly useful in that its articles contained detail, such as construction costs and so on. Another helpful institution was the Los Angeles Public Library." He has done quite a remarkable job in researching. I commend him wholeheartedly. Had he not done the research and written this book, much of the drive-in's fascinating history would be forever lost and forgotten, because as I've said, no book of its depth has been published before or after.
Segrave sticks to the facts throughout the book, and points to natural conclusions from evidence (however, he does make a foolishly bold, personal statement in his closing paragraph regarding the drive-in post-1992: "New ones will never be built". There has in fact been at least one new drive-in built, that I'm aware of). This book contains more than 235 pages of his research findings. It is very, very thorough, leaving no stone unturned, shedding light on much of the drive-in's fascinating history that most people are probably unaware of (I've been to drive-ins, but I was unaware of about 95% of what Segrave presents here). And for those interested in numbers, Segrave has provided them. Oh boy, does he. For those interested in percentages, financial data, comparisons, admission and food prices (even down to the price owners paid for the cream for coffee), census data, etc., and how all these numbers changed throughout the years, it's all here.
But numbers only make up a fraction (no pun intended) of the book's content. Here is a break-down of the chapters:
1. A Backyard Invention
2. Patent Battles
3. A Very Slow Start, 1933-1944
4. Postwar surge, 1945-1948
5. Drive-ins Battle the Industry
6. Communities Battle Drive-ins
7. The Golden Years, 1950s
8. The Golden Years, Showmanship
9. The Golden Years, Selling Food
10. Strange Drive-ins
11. Foreign Drive-Ins
12. Drive-ins Battle the Elements
13. Drive-ins Pray For a Miracle
14. Drive-In Sound
15. The Audience
16. Sex In the Drive-in
17. Sex On the Drive-in
18. Decline and Stagnation, 1960s and 1970s
19. Rapid Descent, 1980s and Beyond
20. Conclusion
Again, the book is very comprehensive and it delivers. My personal favorite chapters are *The Golden Years*, but I love all of them. The only disappointment I had with this book -- and this is only me -- is that nothing was said about any of the drive-ins from my home state of Oregon (only statistics). But this is only me, and it is only a minor flaw.
I've read this book cover to cover about 7 times now. I am so fascinated and intrigued with it, I just can't get enough of it! When I first heard about it, it was available in hardcover only, and to buy a copy would've cost close to \$60 in 2005. I checked out a copy from a library in another town (not without some red tape) and loved it so much I painstakingly made copies of every single page and read it that way until a paperback edition became available. It's still a little expensive, but well worth it, especially if you consider yourself a drive-in enthusiast.
In conclusion, you don't know drive-ins until you've read this book.

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Great, in-depth look at the history of drive-ins.
By *Drive-In Kid*
If you are looking for a book with basic info and lots of pictures then you are better off buying "*The American Drive-In Movie Theater*" or "*Drive-in Movie Memories*" by Don and Susan Sanders. If you are looking for a well-detailed research book, then this is really the only choice. The author discusses the inception of the drive-in concept, the growth years, the difficulties that drive-in owners faced, and the eventual decline, backing it up with good data along the way. There is much more to the story than people realize and it is all in here. For example, the initiative to create a "daytime screen" to extend the hours in which a drive-in could remain open is covered in great detail, the legal issues, the battles with the studios and the distributors and on and on. Highly recommended!

A primarily American institution (though it appeared in other countries such as Japan and Italy), the drive-in theater now sits on the verge of extinction. During its heyday, drive-ins could be found in communities both large and small.

Some of the larger theaters held up to 3,000 cars and were often filled to capacity on weekends. The history of the drive-in from its beginnings in the 1930s through its heyday in the 1940s and 1950s to its gradual demise in modern-day America is thoroughly documented here: the patent battles, community concerns with morality (on-screen and off), technological advances (audio systems, screens, etc.), audiences, and the drive-ins place in the motion picture industry.

From Library Journal Drive-in theaters, a uniquely American institution, prospered in the suburbs of the postwar 1950s, when the whole family could go to the movies in that newfound symbol of independence, the automobile. Subsequent decades saw the number of drive-ins decline, owing to the encroachment of home television and a number of other socioeconomic factors skillfully delineated in this well-researched study. The recollections of drive-in patrons as well as theater owners enrich the narrative, and there are valuable appendixes, including the text of the original patent for the drive-in theater, statistics covering the number of theaters (overall and by state) operating through the years, and revenues of indoor vs. outdoor theaters. Though this is an academic study, it is filled with the nostalgia of tinted windshields and free children's playgrounds. Highly recommended for serious film collections.- Richard W. Grefrath, Univ. of Nevada Lib., Reno Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. "[a] very thorough and straightforward history of the 'ozone' industry.... Recommended" -- Choice "a well-researched study...filled with nostalgia of tinted windshields. Highly recommended" -- Library Journal "everything I wanted to know about drive-in theaters" -- Big Reel About the Author Veteran entertainment-media researcher Kerry Segrave is also the author of such works as *Payola in the Music Industry* (1994), *American Films Abroad* (1997), *American Television Abroad* (1998) and *Movies at Home* (1999). He lives in British Columbia.