

Eastern Federal Theatres History

Since the early 1940s, Eastern Federal Corp., a privately owned theater company, has been one of the most respected names in the entertainment business in the South.

Based in Charlotte and operated by the Meiselman family, the company started modestly with the opening of a small, single-screen theater and has expanded to include more than 115 screens throughout North Carolina, South Carolina and Florida.

In addition, Eastern Federal has played a significant role in the development and construction of several shopping centers, spurring growth in cities and suburban areas across the Southeast.

Now in its second generation of ownership, the company has begun another era of expansion, adding installations at the rate of about one theater every 12 to 18 months.

Along with ensuring that its newest theaters are equipped with the latest, most advanced technology, Eastern Federal also has a firm commitment to upgrading and modernizing its older theaters both on the inside and the outside. One of its projects last year was the renovation of The Plaza Theatres at Village Plaza in Chapel Hill.

"We're constantly trying to keep the theaters as updated and as attractive as we can," said Cecil Allen, a vice president of Eastern Federal. "In addition, there are a lot of things that

go on backstage that nobody ever sees, with improved projection and sound equipment."

As the most recently built theater, Movies at Timberlyne is the most impressive location yet, and Eastern Federal is pleased and excited to announce its opening. Allen said the company had seen a genuine need for another theater and more movie screens in the Chapel Hill area.

"In many cases there are good, solid films that open and play in places like New York and Chicago that never reach Chapel Hill. There's not room for them," he said.

"We can broaden, and there's enough mainstream product to do it."

With a wide range of audiences to cater to, Eastern Federal will offer quality commercial movies that will appeal to all kinds of movie aficionados. From Walt Disney classics to action films to hip comedies, the company anticipates that Movies at Timberlyne will deliver a variety of films.

"We've got a lot of specialty houses that specialize in the art film or the offbeat," Allen said. "We will try to show some of the best mainstream films."

Eastern Federal hopes that the opening of the new theater will generate an

ardent interest in movies. Carl Johnson, manager of Movies at Timberlyne and former manager of The Plaza Theatres, said he was thrilled to be able to show films as soon as they have been released.

"Aladdin" didn't make it to Chapel Hill until two months after it was released," he said. "With the opening of Timberlyne, people won't have to drive out of town to find the movie they want to see. It will create more awareness of movies in the area."

Besides offering more films, the opening of Movies at Timberlyne will bring more than 30 jobs to Chapel Hill in the areas of concessions, ushering, management and janitorial services. Eastern Federal has a reputation for treating its employees as one of its most important assets.

"It's a very good company to work for," Johnson said.

The company also is known for its good relations with other members of the industry. Although all theaters must compete for business, Allen said it was an amicable rivalry.

"It's a friendly competitiveness, and that's the way it should be," he said. "Anytime there's something new it attracts attention and increases everybody's business."

Allen said he was delighted that Eastern Federal had the opportunity to bring Movies at Timberlyne to Chapel Hill.

"We hope a lot of people come out to see what we look like and act like and what we're all about."



EASTERN FEDERAL THEATRES

Visit these Eastern Federal Corporation theaters:

- Charlotte, N.C.**
 - Delta 6
 - Park 51
- Movies at Sardis**
 - Regency 4
 - Manor
- Movies at The Lake**
- Winston-Salem, N.C.**
 - North Point 5
- Chapel Hill, N.C.**
 - Plaza
- Movies at Timberlyne**
- Lumberton, N.C.**
 - Town & Country 4
- Columbia, S.C.**
 - Movies at Polo
- Panama City, FL**
 - Regency 6
- Jacksonville, FL**
 - Royal Palm
 - Cedar Hills
- Orlando, FL**
 - Northgate 4
 - Conway 2
- Orange Blossom 2**
- Gainesville, FL**
- Royal Park Cinema 4**
- Ft. Myers, FL**
 - South Pointe
- Ft. Walton, FL**
 - Sun Plaza 4
- Port Orange, FL**
 - Port Orange 6
- Port St. Lucie, FL**
 - Village Green 6
- Tallahassee, FL**
 - Miracle 5
 - Oak Lake 6

High-tech theater equipment

Movies at Timberlyne has been equipped with state-of-the-art technology and contemporary surroundings to provide viewers with the most complete and intensive way to watch films. Every effort has been made to enrich the movie experience through sound, sight and atmosphere.

"At each new theater, we try to put in the thing of the moment," said Cecil Allen, a vice president of Eastern Federal Corp.

One of the advanced methods that will be featured at Movies at Timberlyne is digital sound, the latest development in theater technology. The theater will be the only one in Chapel Hill or Durham to utilize this new technique, which will augment previously used techniques of Dolby Stereo, Smart Stereo and Surround Stereo.

"The digital sound will sharpen and crisp up every sound," Allen said.

"Then you have the surround speakers which put you in the middle of the sound in stereo. It enhances the entire

movie experience."

Movies at Timberlyne also uses Strong projectors, the same equipment endorsed and used by leaders in the theater industry. Another feature that has been added to magnify and improve the quality of the film picture is the movie screen itself.

"We have the widest screen possible, which actually goes from one edge of the wall all the way to the other edge of the wall," said Carl Johnson, manager of Movies at Timberlyne.

"It's a silver high-gain screen which allows better depth, focus and color temperature, so you have the best picture you possibly can, instead of cropping your screen down. It's huge."

A surplus benefit of this type of screen is that it gives audience members a flawless image from any area of the theater, from the front row, center to the back row, aisle seats.

With high-gain screens, the days of being restricted to sitting in a certain area to get the best picture are over, Allen said. "With these, technically, you should get the same reproduction of the

film from any angle in the theater."

One engaging aspect of the theater is the interior motif, which is carried from the lobby into the auditorium. The colors are custom-designed, with red curtains lining each movie house to bring back the feeling of old-style cinemas. The theater offers plenty of spacious, ebony seating with a generous amount of leg room.

"We tried to maintain the special theater feeling, but we also tried to make it as contemporary as we could," Allen said.

The most spectacular display of all, however, may be on the walls of Movies at Timberlyne. Eastern Federal commissioned local artist Kasey Jones to design and paint a mural that covers four walls in the lobby. The artwork depicts some University and city buildings, several sports figures and a few theatrical figures.

"We went through a lot of preliminary drawings.... When you do something like that, you want to choose lasting images," Allen said. "We wanted it to be a special surprise."

Although its current technology and design makes Movies at Timberlyne the premiere place in the area to watch recently released films, Eastern Federal will continue working to maintain its high standards as the industry changes and develops, Allen said.

"Competitively, you've got to keep up with everything. It's a constant, ongoing process."

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