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# The Last Picture Show?



The man behind the camera at **Pride's Corner Drive-In** is ready for his close-up.

BY MICHAEL SCHOCH

**W**hen I meet up with the owner of **Pride's Corner Drive-in**, 47-year-old Andrew Tevanian, he's dressed as a World War II medic. His blonde hair streams out of an authentic-looking helmet and as he shakes my hand he all but shouts, "Pride's Corner Drive-in needs a heart transplant to stay open."

We meet at Corsetti's in Westbrook, where we sit at a picnic table that Tevanian has spangled in American flags and Veteran's Affairs banners. He is accompanied by a cameraman, with whom he is making a documentary about the fate of the drive-in. In a flurry of what sound like campaign slogans, Tevanian alternately praises the veterans for whom drive-in theaters were originally built to entertain, and makes references to the erratic heartbeat of his family's

establishment—hence his costume.

Tevanian likens the Pride's Corner Drive-in, which his father (himself a WWII vet) opened in 1952, to "a prehistoric animal that's still breathing, but just barely." To stay open, the theater will need to convert from 35mm film projectors to digital. "What we're running up against is technology," he laments. "35mm film is becoming obsolete."

Drive-ins were once ubiquitous throughout America, fostering first loves and family bonding. "If I had a dollar for every baby that was conceived at that theater," Andrew says, "I'd [pay to] have Pink Floyd get back together." Nowadays, there are only six drive-ins in Maine and (according to Tevanian) several of them are struggling with the conversion to digital.

After we head over to Pride's Corner,

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## VANISHING MAINE

Andrew takes me on a tour of the snack bar and projection rooms, pointing to a pile of boxes containing film reels from last year. "This is the film," he says. "They don't even pick it up now. It's more expensive to pick it up [and bring it back to the distributor] than it is to leave it." Without digital projectors, Pride's Corner has no product to sell or service to offer. The theater is such a part of Andrew's life he likens its closure to the illness of a family member, "this is like my dad in the nursing home. At 89 years old; it's \$400 a day to keep him alive, and I need \$80,000 to keep the drive-in alive."

As we pace through the narrow corridors of the unlit snack bar, Andrew mentions his father repeatedly. John Tevanian, a first-generation Armenian-American, opened the theater in 1953 with his brother, Avadis Tevanian. John now resides in an assisted-living home. Tearing up as he holds an empty film reel, Andrew says, "I have sorrowful nights thinking about how this is something my dad put together. Soon he'll leave this earth. And [the drive-in] will either continue or..." he trails off before stating the alternative.

Over in Bridgton, Andrew's brother, John Stephen Tevanian runs another drive-in, the Bridgton Twin, originally bought by their father in 1971. John has made his own sacrifices to update the Bridgton theater, updating his entire snack bar to offset the costs of the projectors. Over the phone, John muses, "A reasonable person would probably have said you're better off doing something else, but I was born in the business." His dedication isn't lost on Andrew, who says, "My brother married the drive-in. The drive-in is essentially his wife."

Cousins Greg, Mike, and Alan Tevanian own both Westport Motor Sports and Westport Bowling. Another cousin, Avie Jr., lives out in Silicon Valley and is currently the managing director of an investment firm. Avie achieved fame from 1997 to 2003 as the Senior Vice President of Software Engineering at Apple, working directly with Steve Jobs to revive the then-failing company and designing the revolutionary OS-8 Mac software system. [Read our interview with Avie: "Pride's Corner," October 1997]

Andrew seems aware that the technology gods have been fickle with the Tevanian family: the same advances in digital technology that helped propel Avie's meteoric career have indirectly lead to the current

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**Red Baraat**  
OCTOBER 6, 2016 • 8 PM

**“Brown Bear, Brown Bear and  
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Carle”**  
OCTOBER 15, 2016 • 11 AM

**BalletX**  
OCTOBER 20, 2016 • 7:30 PM

**Cirque Mechanics: “Pedal Punk”**  
OCTOBER 27, 2016 • 7 PM

**“RENT” 20th Anniversary Tour**  
NOVEMBER 5, 2016 • 2 & 8 PM

**A Far Cry featuring  
David Krakauer**  
NOVEMBER 15, 2016 • 7:30 PM

**Mike Daisey: “Khan and the  
Whale: The Wrath of Moby Dick”**  
NOVEMBER 18, 2016 • 8 PM

**The LeeVeEs**  
DECEMBER 18, 2016 • 3 PM

**The Jones Family Singers**  
JANUARY 20, 2017 • 8 PM

**JCT Trio**  
JANUARY 22, 2017 • 4 PM

**Vocalosity**  
JANUARY 26, 2017 • 7:30 PM

**Yuval Ron Ensemble featuring  
Dervish Aziz**  
FEBRUARY 4, 2017 • 8 PM

**“Once”**  
FEBRUARY 8 & 9, 2017 • 7:30 PM

**Handel & Haydn Society**  
FEBRUARY 11, 2017 • 3 PM

**“Alan Cumming Sings Sappy  
Songs”**  
FEBRUARY 18, 2017 • 8 PM

**Jenny Scheinman:  
“Kannapolis: A Moving Portrait”**  
MARCH 10, 2017 • 8 PM

**BodyTraffic**  
MARCH 18, 2017 • 8 PM

**Philharmonia Quartett Berlin**  
MARCH 19, 2017 • 3 PM

**Ms. Lisa Fischer & Grand Baton**  
MARCH 25, 2017 • 8 PM

**“Saturday Night Fever”**  
MARCH 31, 2017 • 8 PM

**Golden Dragon Acrobats**  
APRIL 6, 2017 • 7 PM

**Ragamala Dance Company:  
“Sacred Earth”**  
APRIL 13, 2017 • 7:30 PM

**Emanuel Ax**  
APRIL 15, 2017 • 3 PM

**The Gloaming**  
APRIL 20, 2017 • 8 PM

**“Annie”**  
APRIL 27, 2017 • 6 PM

**Elephant & Piggie’s  
“We Are in a Play!”**  
MAY 7, 2017 • 1 PM

**“Pippin”**  
MAY 13, 2017 • 2 & 8 PM

## VANISHING MAINE



Avadis "Avie" Tevania, the former Chief Software Technology Officer at Apple, has made his fortune in digital development. Tevania features as a key character in the 2015 biopic, *Steve Jobs*. To read the screenplay visit: <http://bit.ly/1raoZSt>

struggles of Pride's Corner. Yet regarding his cousin's success, Andrew is unwaveringly supportive. "He's made quite a life for himself out there with hard work and determination." Avie occasionally visits the drive-in during summers, but Andrew has never considered approaching him—or any of his family members for that matter—for financial support. "They have their own lives and their own businesses," he says.

To raise money, Andrew started a GoFundMe campaign last year, but it's now "dead in the water." Tevania hopes to start an IndieGoGo fund soon. In the meantime, those who would like to help can try messaging Andrew on Facebook, or visiting the Pride's Corner website. I ask Andrew if he knows when, if at all, he will open the drive-in this year. He shrugs his shoulders. "Basically I'm flying by the seat of my pants." In lieu of films to play, he's considering introducing, "some sort of music festival... maybe an outdoor stage with music and performances." Times are lean for the local landmark. Patting his stomach, the helmeted theater owner explains, "I feel pressure in a lot of ways. I'm not like this normally. I'm not thin—but I'm eating cereal and soy milk every day. I'm not eating lobster rolls."

Ever passionate and somewhat erratic, Andrew closed out our discussion by posing as the Statue of Liberty, one hand clutching an invisible torch and the other cradling his elderly terrier: "I pledge to America—like the Statue of Liberty that holds her torch high in the air—to keep this drive-in alive, just like she keeps the harbors of New York alive... This is what makes us the best country in the world. God bless." ■

You can donate to Pride's Corner at: <http://bit.ly/PridesCorner>



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