

Motion Picture Hall of Fame proposed for Palm Springs



Xochitl Pena, The Desert Sun

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(Photo: Provided photo.)

There's a "Hall of Fame" for almost everything: baseball, football, rock n' roll, even burlesque.

There isn't one, though, for motion pictures — yet.

Bob Alexander, president of the Palm Springs Walk of Stars, proposes to build what he says will be the first-ever Motion Picture Hall of Fame in Palm Springs.

"Palm Springs is known as Hollywood East. It has a long history with Hollywood, and it has a great film festival. It's a perfect fit and I'm very excited about it," he said.

This project has been in the works for more than 10 years. A lack of funding or facility is what's held him back until now, he said.

He has worked out a long-term lease to house the new attraction at 296 S. Palm Canyon Drive. And he said he's secured \$10 million for the first phase of the project, which entails renovating the former bank building exterior and creating exhibits for the attraction. The project has yet to be approved by the city of Palm Springs.

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The Motion Picture Hall of Fame will be located at 296 South Palm Canyon Drive in Palm Springs and its projected opening is November 2016. (Photo: Lucas Esposito/The Desert Sun)

While there is an Academy Museum of Motion Picture in the works in Los Angeles, Alexander said the Hall of Fame will differ because each year there will be inductees selected by the public.

"The academy honor the film and stars of each year, and our goal is to honor the greatest films and stars of all time and let the fans vote on who gets inducted," he said.

Each year the plan is to induct two films, two actors, two actresses, one producer, one director and one film score with a televised induction ceremony. Alexander said he is still working on where that two-hour show will be broadcast, but said PBS is an option.

He hopes to open in November of 2016 and has already assembled a team to provide management and help create the exhibits.

George Johnsen, with the Los Angeles-based MammothVision, Inc., will do the buildout and design of all the exhibits while Bob Masterson who used to work for Ripley's Entertainment will provide management of the day-to-day operations.

“It’s going to be very exciting for the city of Palm Springs,” said Johnsen who has worked on numerous attractions, including Disneyland, Universal Studios and the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago.

Now that a building has been secured and the dimensions are known, Johnsen said he can begin to take the exhibits from “conceptual to real.”

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The Motion Picture Hall of Fame will be located at 296 South Palm Canyon Drive in Palm Springs and its projected opening is November 2016. (Photo: Lucas Esposito/The Desert Sun)

“It’s gone through several iterations of complexity. We’re ending up with something that is extremely interactive. Both educational and entertaining,” he said.

He doesn’t like to use the term “museum” for the facility and describes it as an “experience.”

“You get involved with the people and the times,” said Johnsen of the displays.

He said the main lobby will resemble the great hall of the city of Oz with very genre-specific halls such as the “Hall of Romance,” the “Hall of Sci-Fi,” and the “Hall of Horrors” for example.

“You can meet ghosts in the hall of horrors,” said Johnsen. And learn about Boris Karloff and Lon Chaney, added Alexander.

Masterson, who ran Ripley’s until 2009, has been brought on board to put together a team that will manage the facility.

“It’s the right community to put it in. It’s got the right base of visitors to Palm Springs. It’s got the right location,” he said. “You can’t, today, put up an old style hall of fame. It has to be exciting. It’s being designed ... as an attraction and the attractions in Palm Springs do very well.”

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