

Frantic finish worth it for Rocket opening

By **Todd Welvaert,**

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ROCK ISLAND -- The paint was still drying on downtown Rock Island's newest draw, but there was nothing but praise for the Rocket Cinema's inaugural audience.

Brew and View theater owner Devin Hansen ran a remodeling marathon in the last couple of weeks to transform the former Capri Theater, 224 19th St., into the Rocket Cinema. It was a race that didn't finish until about 10 minutes before Thursday's midnight showing of "Star Wars: Episode III -- Revenge of the Sith."

"It was pretty incredible," a tired Mr. Hansen said Thursday while selling tickets to an afternoon showing. "It went better than I had hoped. We sold out, actually we over sold, but the vibe was great. People were cheering at the beginning and at the end of the movie. It felt good."

Mr. Hansen had expected opening later in the summer, but had to push forward when he learned his venue was picked for the potential blockbuster. The theater's been a flurry of activity since.

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"I didn't get the speakers wired up until about 6 p.m.," Mr. Hansen said of opening night. "We got the liquor license at about 2 p.m. that day and we were still stocking the bar up to about 10 minutes before opening. I had a lot of good people around helping me, we had a lot of good people helping out."

He said there's still a lot of work to do on the old theater.

"We are going to be buying a better sound system, probably this week," Mr. Hansen said. "This is an old building -- the ceiling, it reverberates a little more than we would like. There's some other things that I would still like to see done."

He said he couldn't have picked a better movie to open the Rocket. Mr. Hansen said getting the Star Wars saga-ender all but assured a full house.

"Movie-wise it was great, it was more like an event," Mr. Hansen said. "It wasn't like a multiplex, where the people were sitting quietly watching the advertisements. People were mingling, talking, it was an event. Going to the movies is something special again."

William and Pam Trotter, Rock Island, caught the movie Thursday afternoon at the new theater.

"It's nice to have independent theater in Rock Island," Mr. Trotter said. "It's very comfortable compared to 53rd Street," meaning the Showcase 53 multiplex in Davenport.

"It was a real treat," Scott Magelssen, Rock Island, said. "Devin's a great guy who brought another great draw to downtown Rock Island."

The Rocket Theater was built 61 years ago. Large, multi-screen theaters made it obsolete and it closed in 1989. It saw a brief life in 1996 as a home to dance clubs and live music, before closing again in 1997.

Mr. Hansen and the Development Association of Rock Island entered into a three-year agreement to turn the theater into a second outlet to accompany Mr. Hansen's original theater, the Brew and View, at 1611 2nd Ave., Rock Island.