

## Rocket failed, but owner succeeded

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**W**oody Allen, a guy who knows a thing or two about filmmaking, once said, "Eighty percent of success in life is just showing up."

Devin Hansen did more than just show up. And although his business, the Rocket Theater in Rock Island, is closing this weekend after Saturday's Buckwheat Zydeco show, you can't say he hasn't been a success.

In the four years Devin has operated the Rocket and its predecessor, the Brew & View, he's hosted dozens of events for charitable organizations and helped raise thousands of dollars for good causes in the Quad-Cities area. He's provided jobs for a handful of people. And he's given the area its first taste of several influential, entertaining and innovative films.

However, the most admirable thing about Devin's effort was the initial endeavor itself.

This wasn't a guy who had a business degree, or who came from a rich family, or who was working with someone else's checkbook. This was a guy who quit his day job, threw himself into massive debt, and worked 70-to-80-hour weeks while he and his wife also were tending to a baby -- all for an idea he thought could pay off.

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That's pretty huge for a guy who'd never run a business before and whose personality is more bohemian than banker.

I'd been wanting an independent-film theater to open here since, well, since I moved here. I wanted to be able to see a greater range of movies, and I knew there were other people who felt the same way. Whenever a gigantic lottery prize came around, I'd say if I won the millions of dollars, one of the first things I'd do would be to open a theater at the then-abandoned Capri Theater in Rock Island. I'm sure I'm not the only person who entertained those thoughts.

But unlike those of us wishing on the sidelines, Devin didn't wait to win the jackpot. He was a lot more courageous. He jumped in full force, putting his money and time on the line to make it work.

It didn't.

However, the effort made a difference, and Devin and his wife, his family and everyone else who worked to launch the Rocket should feel good about what they accomplished.

Of course, Devin is the last guy who would take any credit for anything. That's just the way he is.

"I don't really think in terms of 'Wow, I did this' or 'Look at me!' There's just a market there, and I tried to fill it," he said Monday, the day he announced the theater was shutting down. "I don't think it had anything specific to do with me or my talents."

Maybe not. But there had been a lot of talk about the idea and no action before he took the leap.

Undoubtedly, someone who has deeper pockets than Devin does will be able to swoop in later this year and make it work. There's an audience there for the films, as witnessed by the crowds that packed the Brew & View for "Sideways" and "Fahrenheit 9/11," and the people jamming into Showcase 53 and Great Escape for movies like "Brokeback Mountain," "Capote" and "March of the Penguins."

New owners with more cash will be able to ride out the tough times in the economy and the down periods for films. They'll likely continue what Devin was doing in turning the Rocket into a multipurpose venue, and I really hope they succeed. It's a great idea; the local arts scene needs it; and I'd like to see it work.

When it does, I hope Devin Hansen is proud. Because he was the one who broke the ground. He was the one who "showed up" first. He was the one who started it.

"Failure is a lot easier to live with than regret," he said. "We tried. It was a good four years; I had a lot of fun and met a lot of good people. It was a great experience in my life."

One that started with him just showing up.

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