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On St. Croix, Theater Reopens But Residents Stay Away

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A moviegoer makes his way to a theater room on Thursday. He was one of a handful of individuals who showed up on the first day of reopening following the March lockdown. By. ERNICE GILBERT FOR VI CONSORTIUM

ST. CROIX — The Caribbean Cinemas theater in St. Croix opened on Thursday for the first time after closing in March along with a host of other nonessential businesses as part of the local government's response to the coronavirus pandemic. The theater chain's St. Thomas branch also opened Thursday.

But while the theaters reopened with strict protocols — including the checking of temperature before entering the facility and asking coronavirus-related questions — the theater on St. Croix

saw measly turnout, with only a handful of individuals attending the most popular showing time between 6:30-7:30 p.m.

At least when residents are ready to return to the theater, they will be greeted by some of the strictest Covid-19 protocols on the island: mandatory masks, temperature check and questionnaire.

It remains to be seen how attendance will be on the weekend, which will give good insight on consumer behavior relative to the speed in which they restart pre-pandemic consumption of leisure activities.

Yet even if Virgin Islanders are ready to go back to the theaters, they will meet a thin lineup of releases as many big-budget movies have been pushed back to later into the year or 2021. The highly anticipated *Black Widow*, for example — which was scheduled to show on May 11 — was delayed to November 6. And *F9*, originally set for May 22, has been delayed to April 2, 2021 (see full list of delays [here](#)).

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the movie theater business last year generated roughly \$52 billion in global revenues, including sales of tickets, food and beverages, about \$15 billion of which was in the U.S. The rise in Covid-19 cases nationally has choked off revenues to the theater industry as cities and states closed movie theaters to contain the spread of the coronavirus.