

The Virgin Islands Consortium

New Caribbean Cinemas On St. Croix Opens Next Friday

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ST. CROIX -- Take a walk through the halls of the newly built Caribbean Cinemas theater in the Sunny Isle Annex adjacent to the WAPA offices, and something immediately stands out: It's big.

Really big.

And come next Friday, movie lovers on St. Croix, and those who simply enjoy new experiences, will set foot inside the vast facility, which boasts eight screens, one of which is called CXC, or Caribbean Cinemas Extreme.

The Consortium on Wednesday was given a tour of the building, where construction is still ongoing, giving the publication a good idea of the experience St. Croix residents can expect come next Friday.

The CXC room comes feature-packed with a 3-D experience that includes over 50 speakers encompassing the entire room and ceiling from Dolby Atmos immersive surround sound, as well as an ultra bright screen -- all aimed at amplifying the experience of moviegoers. There's also a game room, and a party room for children ages 12 and under, which comes with what the company is calling a birthday package that costs between \$12-\$15 per person, a minimum of 15 kids, and includes a soda, popcorn (the premium buy comes with a pizza or hot dog) and a movie ticket. The cinema also has a restaurant where a variety of eats will be offered.

The eight theater rooms are about the same size, according to Jay Lee, one of the facility's project managers, with a combined total seating of 1,400. All current theater employees will be moved to the new location, and the company has been hiring more staff in preparation for the grand opening.

According to Caribbean Cinemas President Lorraine Carrady, construction of the new cinema would not have been possible without the large construction team from the territory headed by Jimmy Breunlin of Breunlin construction. Other V.I. subcontractors and suppliers included Eleven Construction and Spartan Concrete, PG Electric, Quality Electric, OTL Mechanical, General Plumbing, Alarmco, Rooftops, Glass 2000, and Energy Wise Solutions.

Ms. Carrady said that the vision for the new cinema was made by the company's architect, Tracy Roberts and her team at Springline Architects in St. Thomas. Additionally, Ms. Carrady said that the Government of the Virgin Islands recognized the need for a new cinema for St. Croix, and without the G.V.I.'s help, or that of the Economic Development Authority, a project of this size would not have been possible.

Caribbean Cinemas, based in Puerto Rico, has a Caribbean-wide operation, with theaters in many of the islands, including Guadeloupe, Aruba, Guyana, Panama, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, St. Martin, Trinidad, Antigua and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The company has 31 cinemas in Puerto Rico, and 16 in the Dominican Republic.

According to Noelia Alsina, sales and marketing coordinator for the Eastern Caribbean, Aruba and Guyana, the company's USVI cinema business has been a profitable venture, which prompted investment. She said the facility on St. Thomas will soon be renovated, easing concerns of St. Thomians who felt neglected in light of the new St. Croix facility.

The biggest new development, however, is the ability to buy tickets online. Ms. Alsina said the service will be available "a few weeks" after the grand opening, as the system needs to be installed and programmed. "You purchase the ticket online, and you come here to our cinema express booth and put in a code, and your ticket will be produced," she said.

And about opening next Friday, the task seemed impossible, and there was still a lot of work to be completed. But Ms. Alsina said there's no doubt that the project will be finished before the grand opening.

"I have seen worse, believe me. I always come for the opening week, and you go to the theater and you're like, 'nah, there's no way this is going to be ready.' But believe me, there's a 24-hour work rotation, and once the date approaches, magic."

As for cost of ticket, final prices are still pending, but Ms. Alsina said tickets for the CXC room will cost more.

Feature Image: Caribbean Cinemas as of Wednesday, March 1. (Credit: Ernice Gilbert, VIC)

Correction: March 2, 2016

A previous version of this story stated that the party room's maximum capacity was 15 children. However, in a follow up conversation, Ms. Alsina said 15 children was the minimum amount of people that comes with either the regular or premium package. She also clarified that one, not two screens as stated on Wednesday, included CXC features. The story has been updated to reflect the correct information.