



Drive-In St. Louis Concerts & Graduations Return In 2021

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HAZELWOOD - After being named one of the Top Five Drive-ins in America in 2020 by Forbes Magazine, Drive-In St. Louis is coming back even bigger and better in 2021.

The 12-acre parking lot at POWERplex will undergo a transformation in the coming weeks, as huge screens and a giant performance stage will be rolling in to create 25 weeks of concerts, movies, graduations, galas and special events from May 6 through Halloween.

In 2020, POWERplex was among the first major Drive-Ins to pop-up in the United States in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. Drive-In St. Louis hosted more than 25 events, including 13 high school graduations where more than 3,500 seniors crossed the

stage. In all, nearly 60,000 people attended the commencements, concerts and movie nights, which included the largest 4th of July celebration in the St. Louis region.

“If we could bring that many people together during the height of the pandemic, we know that thousands more will be ready to get out with family and friends and enjoy an entire season of great shows this year,” said Dan Buck, the Managing Partner of Big Sports Properties.

New in 2021 will be a better diversity of food options with multiple food trucks each night to serve the thousands of concert goers. Visitors will enjoy a new, outdoor hospitality tent where groups can socially distance while enjoying pre-show festivities and post-show music and cocktails until midnight after the concerts and movies.

The city of Hazelwood provided safety and support to all 25 events in 2020 and is excited to see Drive-In St. Louis return in 2021, beginning with the “Casting Crowns” concert on May 6.

“We love to see so many people come into our community and enjoy great local bands with their family and friends,” said Hazelwood City Manager Matt Zimmerman. “We’re excited to hear that our own Hazelwood School District is among the many area school districts that will get a rock star-like graduation ceremony,” added Zimmerman.

All three Hazelwood District High Schools, East, Central and West, will be graduating at Drive-In St. Louis along with all four Parkway Schools, Clayton High, Incarnate Word and North County Tech along with many other schools from across the region. Some schools are still pending final board approval and will be announced in the coming weeks. The organizers encourage any college or high schools wishing to have an in-person, live, Covid-safe graduation without having to limit attendance of family and friends, to consider this turnkey, unique Drive-In experience.

“Our Drive-In Graduations are not a Covid compromise. We truly think we put on the best and most enjoyable graduation ceremony any college or high school could ever want,” said Bob Hebrank the Director of Special Projects for the POWERplex.

“Everyone gets to be outdoors and relaxed. You’re not elbow to elbow in a cramped arena or theatre for several hours. Usually families are limited to 2 or 3 people due to lack of space. Here they get 2 or 3 car loads of family and can have a picnic on the parking lot while they wait for the ceremony. Graduates and families love this format,” said Hebrank.

In addition to more family and friends being able to attend the ceremony, the production elements for the commencement are more like a rock concert than a graduation. Everyone gets to see tight shot images of the diploma presentations on the state-of-the-

art, crystal clear jumbotrons. “The kids love the open air, the giant stage and lights. They get showered by confetti and sparklers go off when they turn their tassels. Families stay socially-distanced but they are allowed to be social and cheer for their son or daughter for their achievement,” said Hebrank who was a former school administrator before joining POWERplex and thinks this might be the future of how people want their graduations to be.

The concert and movie series in 2021 will launch in early May with the Christian contemporary band, “Casting Crowns,” presented by Joy-FM on Thursday, May 6. The rest of the concert schedule through the 4th of July weekend will be announced on March 30, with tickets going on sale at 12 p.m. on April 1. The line-up will include a very diverse group of local talent and bands, from Motown, to Classic Rock, to Country to great Tribute Bands as well as a few legendary headliners. Shows will sell-out quickly with only 700 cars and 36 private party pads available each night.

The promoters are also planning to host the Cinema of Horrors from September 24 through Halloween, where creatures and ghouls will haunt the drive-in and scare movie goers during a 6-week series of horror and suspense movies with a special creepy concert.

Go to DriveinSTL.com for more details and to get registered for concert and movie schedule updates and ticket details as they are released.

Schools wishing to inquire about hosting graduations at Drive-In St. Louis should contact the POWERplexstl.com website.