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Fasten your garter belts!

BERGENFIELD, NJ – Think it’s annoying when someone forgets to turn off his or her cell phone during a movie? How about those obnoxious people that insist on conversing during the major plot twists and action scenes? Don’t you just want to hurl your fifty-pound popcorn in their laps?

What if I told you that there was a movie that not only condoned this behavior, but encouraged it? To the left of you, someone is swearing at the main characters that appear on screen, and behind you someone is throwing toast and rice over your head.

They call it “audience participation lines,” “a.p. lines,” to the veterans – and it’s all part of the cult classic *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, still appearing on hundreds of screens across the world, including three screens in Northern New Jersey. Screenings are every Saturday night at Clearview’s Bergenfield Cinema 5, the last Friday of each month at Clearview Headquarters 10 in Morristown, and the first Friday of every month at Clearview’s Upper Montclair’s Bellevue Cinema.

At around 10:00 PM on show night, the sidewalk outside of the theater starts to fill with fans. From those decked out in fishnets, feather boa’s, and six-inch heels; to the soccer moms reliving a part of their wild youth. On occasion, you’ll find more liberal parents with their very young children dressed up as characters from the movie.

Cast members and fans mingle in the lobby before the show as if it’s a house party. If you’re lucky, you may end up there on a night when “Rocky Mom” attends - giving out baked goods, hot cocoa, and making phallic shaped balloon animals. All of the regular audience members know her, and she even makes a special (inappropriate) cake just for the cast to use as a prop during the show.

The night progresses and the masses are ushered into the theater where they are given props to throw like rice, toilet paper, and toast. The cast and crew grab audience members to dance with as everyone sings along to their favorite punk cover songs.

As the lights dim; the audience regulars who know what’s about to happen let out a cheer. The lights come up on the stage as our emcee welcomes us to the show. He invites those who have never seen the show down to the stage for an initiation to the show that they call “De-virginization.” A ritual performed by all of those who haven’t yet experienced the cult phenomenon live. Whether it’s trying to repeat audience participation lines with a mouth full of marshmallows, or eating a donut out of your friends lap, the “de-virginization” ritual is an integral part of the Rocky experience.

After singing the Transylvanian anthem, and taking the pledge, we all chant “R-O-C-K-Y!” and the movie begins. This is not your average movie.

Of course the film is being played on a giant screen, like any other movie. The difference is the cast of actors that perform in front of the screen for the duration of the movie, adding to, and shadowing the action. Although their performance mimics the movie, they add so much more with their performance. Players flood the audience during “The Time Warp” and pull people up out of their seats to participate, and the lead character literally performs one of his scenes in an audience members lap.

The troupe that performs, or “shadows” the movie while it was playing is called “The Home of Happiness,” named after a prop in the movie itself. Currently, “The Home of Happiness” is performing at all three of North Jersey’s *Rocky Horror* screenings. The troupe has been performing in movie theatres around the state since its debut in 1998.

“*The Rocky Horror Picture Show*” makes you a part of the show. It’s a show that everyone needs to see once to understand, and once more to be completely addicted – because although the movie stays the same, the show changes every single week.