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Retail & Restaurants

Arty movie theater chain could be coming soon in D.C.

Washington Business Journal - March 29, 2002 by [Eleni Chamis](#)

Good news for theater goers looking for a cool, hip place to watch movies, chow down and hang out: Madstone Theaters is scoping out the D.C. area as a potential site for a new arts theater.

The company, which shows independent and foreign films, is studying the top 100 U.S. metropolitan markets.

"D.C. is a market we'd like to be in; there's no question about that," says Dave Anderson, a company spokesman. "The capital area is one where the hunger for independent and foreign films is greater than the supply. And there's a really loyal audience for challenging and interesting filmmaking."

The New York company would be a welcome addition to a market that has lost several beloved arts theaters in recent years such as the Biograph and the Key in Georgetown and most recently, the Cineplex Odeon Foundry.

The company also has separate production and digital businesses, and sees itself hosting private events, concerts, fashion shows and technology demonstrations.

Madstone was co-founded by Chip Seelig and Tom Gruenberg. Seelig was a former partner at Goldman Sachs and Gruenberg is a 25-year veteran executive who has worked at several companies including PolyGram Filmed Entertainment, Embassy Pictures and General Cinemas.

Founded in 1999, the company has one theater open in Cleveland; a second has been announced for a May opening in Denver. Anderson says the company could have 40 to 50 locations within 10 years.

Madstone (<http://www.madstonetheaters.com>) is working with George Galloway of Next Realty in McLean.

... Quiet for a decade, Armand's Chicago Pizzeria is now slowly ramping up for expansion.

The privately owned, Sterling-based company is opening in Bethany Beach, Del., in May, and is in negotiations for a franchised unit in Centreville and a company store in Bethesda. Armand's has three company-owned units and six franchised units.

The company was started as a sub shop chain in 1969 by Lew Newmyer and is now run by his sons, Steve and Ron, and son-in-law, Cal Everett. A pizzeria was added in 1975, and Armand's now has nine area locations.

"This year, if we could get three stores open I'm going to be deliriously happy," says Everett. In 2002, Armand's (<http://www.armandspizza.com>) plans to open four units and is looking at the Route 7 corridor for those additions.

"We don't think of Armand's as a place that can be three miles apart," he says. "We want more exclusivity to our product and our locations."

Armand's owners also are stepping up advertising, in part to make people aware of their concept, and also to put the word out they're looking for franchisees.

Units vary in size; they can be anything from a carryout store to a full-service, sit-down restaurant, depending on the real estate.

Armand's is represented in this market by Jim McGinnis and Joe Spinelli with Restaurant Brokers and Developers in College Park.

... Harris Teeter is opening its fifth Northern Virginia supermarket April 24 at 2425 N. Harrison Street in Arlington. The two-story, 45,315-square-foot store will employ 115 people.

The store will be open 24 hours a day and will offer self-checkout for customers, expanded sushi, wine and Hispanic grocery offerings and a deli area that will seat 30.

Its sixth unit is under construction at The Spectrum at Reston Town Center and will open this fall.

Jessica Graham, a spokeswoman for the Charlotte-based supermarket chain wouldn't comment on future area expansion.

"Northern Virginia is a very successful market for us and where we're putting a lot of energy right now," she says.

Harris Teeter (<http://www.harristeeter.com>), with 140 stores primarily in six Southeastern states, is currently remodeling the space that was formerly an Upton's department store. Lerner owns the Reston center, which also includes a Barnes & Noble, Best Buy and Office Depot.

Its other area stores are: on Glebe Road and in Pentagon Row in Arlington, University Shopping Center in Fairfax and Barcroft Plaza in Falls Church.

The company is owned by Charlotte-based Ruddick (NYSE: RDK), which says it will take a pre-tax charge of \$8 million in the second fiscal quarter ending March 31, which will reduce earnings per share by 11 cents for the quarter.

... Easter is expected to generate \$1.82 billion in candy sales this year. The holiday is second only to Halloween for candy sales.

Other fun facts from the National Retail Federation:

- The Easter/Passover season accounts for 19 percent of all holiday-related flower purchases -- with more than half of consumers choosing lilies.
- Six-hundred-million eggs are sold in stores across the United States every March and April.
- Easter decor and seasonal items generated sales of \$620 million in 1999, a 25 percent increase over the previous year. Easter is the third-largest seasonal decorations category, behind Christmas and Halloween.
- Easter is the fourth-most-popular seasonal card-giving occasion, behind Christmas, Valentine's Day and Mother's Day.

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