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HEADLINE: Fort Worth to get Spanish-language cinema

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HIGHLIGHT:

An eight-screen theater at Fort Worth Town Center mall is scheduled to open in May.

BODY:

Coming attraction: Cinema Latino.

Moviegoers in Fort Worth will soon have a new viewing option -- a multiplex featuring movies in Spanish at Fort Worth Town Center.

The movies will be a mix of Hollywood films that have been either dubbed or subtitled in Spanish, and movies that originated in Latin America or Spain, with fare such as Spider-Man comprising about 70 percent of the films.

Sonora Entertainment developed the Cinema Latino concept in Denver, where it opened its first theater in November 2001. Sonora marketing director Jose Garcia says the theater was very successful, so Sonora followed it with a theater in Las Vegas and is now working on two in Chicago.

The eight-screen Fort Worth theater is scheduled to open May 2.

Garcia says a key to the success of Cinema Latino is that many of the films it shows are first-run movies screening concurrently in mainstream theaters. "When Harry Potter is showing at the other theaters, it's showing at our theater."

It won't be just the movies at Cinema Latino that have a Spanish flavor. The concessions will offer two popular Mexican brands. Sabritos will supply chips, and Bimbo will supply snacks such as cookies and sugar doughnuts that will be familiar to Hispanic moviegoers.

"We try to give our customers a culturally relevant experience," Garcia says, adding that the staff will be bilingual and even the music in the lobby will be Latin.

For non-Spanish speakers, the theater will offer a chance to catch English-subtitled art-house favorites, such as last year's *Y Tu Mama Tambien* and this year's Oscar-nominated *Talk to Her*. Those types of films are expected to be among the mix of offerings.

Allan Davidov, managing partner for FWIS, the group that owns Fort Worth Town Center, says Cinema Latino melds perfectly with the direction he is trying to take the 31-year-old mall south of downtown off Interstate 35W. Davidov says he said "no" to a dollar theater that expressed interest in the theater space before Cinema Latino.

"We're not competing with Ridgmar, we're not competing with Hulen. Tenants that are coming in are tenants that fit the existing

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demographic here."

The theater space is being renovated, and that work should be completed in early April. "We're completely rehabbing the cinema. We've scrapped all the seats. We're taking it apart to the shell and we're basically rebuilding it. We want to make it a nice place to be," Davidov says.

Cinema Latino is not the first Metroplex theater to offer Spanish-language movies but is the first to do so on a grand scale. Cinemark 17 in Dallas shows Spanish-language movies on Sundays at 2 and 5 p.m.

Prices at Cinema Latino will be \$6.75 for adults, \$3 for children and \$5.50 for matinees.

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1. Photo: STAR-TELEGRAM/RON JENKINS

Cinema Latino is scheduled to open in May at Fort Worth's Town Center mall.

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