

# THE NEXT GREAT ERA OF CINEMA

A SPECIAL REPORT



## The exhibition industry sits on the verge of a renaissance – The Next Great Era of Cinema.

Every single day, exhibitors around the world strive to find creative ways to elevate the moviegoing experience. This report spotlights three different approaches Cinema United members are taking to achieve that goal: **Reinvesting in Our Communities**, **Technological Innovation** and **More than a Movie**. Some of the exhibitors included in this report have been around for more than 100 years, while others are much newer, yet they are all united by a common goal: ensuring, through continued innovation, that the communal experience of watching a movie on the big screen is here to stay.

Exhibition is not a Hollywood industry; it is a Main Street industry. Theatres are the cornerstones of small towns, rural communities, and major cities all around the world. Going to the movies is ingrained in our social fabric, and movie fans of all ages continue to flock to theatres of all sizes to see movies on the big screen. The public knows that going to a cinema remains the premier entertainment option. This report highlights the many ways in which theatres are reinvesting to keep it that way.





# REINVESTING IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Movie theatres are gathering places for communities around the world. They are essential to the cultural tapestry. In this section, we highlight some of the ways in which theatres of all sizes are reinvesting in their communities to create the next great generation of moviegoers.







# BELCOURT THEATRE

NASHVILLE, TN

The Belcourt Theatre is a prime example of how arthouses can connect with their community through creative programming and events.

Whether it's bringing in major stars—Ethan Hawke, Joan Baez, Jack White, and Nicole Kidman have all appeared at the theatre for screenings—or selling out auditoriums for exciting film series—their Francis Ford Coppola series in 2024 was a massive success—the Belcourt is constantly innovating and finding new ways to build a culture of moviegoing.

“I think the future of exhibition is bright,” says Stephanie Silverman, Executive Director of Belcourt Theatre. “We are seeing eager audiences for films both new and old but most importantly those audiences span the age range, are very diverse and are eager for the shared experience of watching great stories on screen.”



# THE STATE THEATRE

WASHINGTON, IA

The State Theatre has been investing in the next generation of moviegoers for more than 120 years.

Since 1897, Iowa residents have shared a communal experience at the State Theatre, and it remains an irreplaceable part of the community.

While the history behind The State Theatre is incredible, the team that runs the day-to-day operations—Fridley Theatres, an Iowa-based chain with 97 screens and 17 locations— isn't relying solely on its history as the main draw. The theatre regularly partners with the Chamber of Commerce for events: this past fall, they collaborated on a Halloween movie and theatre ghost tour. Every April, the State Theatre participates in Washington's annual Farm to Film Fest, hosting opening ceremonies for the festival and screenings of local films.

“In an age of megaplexes, the State Theatre is an anomaly in the movie industry,” says Adam Nihart, Director of Theatre Operations for Fridley Theatres. “It isn't lost on us that the perfect combination of historical significance, community support, and caring management makes it a success.”



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-Adam Nihart, Director of Theatre Operations



# ALAMO DRAFTHOUSE

361 SCREENS AT 42 LOCATIONS IN 14 STATES

Movie theatres take on the identities of the communities in which they operate. In the case of Alamo Drafthouse, a Texas-based chain, they tailor new builds specifically to what their locations are most known for.

Take two recent builds in Washington, D.C., and Indianapolis. The D.C. location boasts posters from political films and pays tribute to presidents in film history; most notably it includes a statue of Bill Pullman from his role as President Thomas J. Whitmore in *Independence Day*. As for Indianapolis, Alamo went with a racing theme to fit with the iconic racetrack in Indiana's capital city.

Alamo's work in each new city is comprehensive: from engaging with the community before the design work starts to finding the local muralists and artisans that know the community and commissioning their work. Once a location is ready, then it's a matter of making sure that general managers, bartenders, servers, and line cooks are also film lovers and know the stories behind the design so they can spread the word.

"Every Alamo Drafthouse is an integral part of its local community, building a network of film lovers and cultivating passion for cinema," says Heather Morgan, Alamo's Chief Content Officer. "We follow the same guiding principles in every venue, highlighting what is local and unique in each new market to celebrate the broader landscape of film."





# SOUTHAMPTON PLAYHOUSE

SOUTHAMPTON, NY

Investing in reopening a movie theatre provides enormous value to a community.

The Southampton Playhouse reopened in 2025 with four screens including a state-of-the-art IMAX theatre, 35mm projection, and a flexible space for parties and performance arts, while a lounge area and bookstore provide additional opportunities to enjoy a unique cultural environment. These innovations help position the theatre for future success.

The Playhouse embodies the resilience of the theatrical experience and its ability to inspire audiences for generations. The programming is designed to appeal to all sensibilities, blending the latest blockbusters with new and exciting discoveries from around the world, alongside eclectic repertory programs that probe the depths of film history. The Southampton Playhouse offers resources for audiences in many forms, from post-screening Q&As to workshops, lectures, and other bespoke experiences. In their weekly newsletter, *The Playhouse Post*, the theatre's artistic director, Eric Kohn, blends cultural journalism with film history and industry insights to contextualize its program.

“Generations of moviegoers have been inspired by the Southampton Playhouse. Its rebirth as a nonprofit this year has generated widespread enthusiasm among our neighbors,” says Maria Ruiz Botsacos, Executive Director.





# SILVER MOON DRIVE-IN

LAKELAND, FL

This Florida drive-in dating back to 1948 continues to innovate: they added laser projection three years ago, ensuring that customers are getting the brightest, clearest picture on its outdoor screen. The theatre seamlessly blends innovation with a sense of nostalgia that people crave. That's also how they approach their decisions as to what's playing on the big screen, and even new concessions in the snack bar.

Silver Moon Drive-In also hosts swap shops every Saturday and Sunday morning before showtimes begin. The theatre has become a popular destination for a wide range of visitors across central Florida: young moviegoers seeking a unique experience with high-quality visuals, nostalgia seekers enjoying the retro neon signage and classic films, and individuals looking to find their latest treasure at the swap shop.







*...we believe a movie theater  
should be more than just a  
place to watch films...*

-Tami Treutlein, CEO

# SPOTLIGHT THEATER

WARSAW, NY

Spotlight Theater creates a direct relationship with the next generation of moviegoers through innovative community outreach.

The theatre started as a community service project, restoring a movie theatre in Warsaw, NY. By creating a welcoming environment for their “Free To Be Me” Matinee Movie Experience, dedicated to sensory friendly screenings for families with special needs, Spotlight has built up considerable consumer loyalty and appreciation by serving the neighborhood’s needs.

“At Spotlight Theater, we believe a movie theatre should be more than just a place to watch films—it should be a gathering space that strengthens the community,” says Tami Treutlein, CEO of Spotlight Theater. “We actively collaborate with local organizations, schools, and leaders to create programs that address local needs, raise awareness, and provide meaningful experiences.”



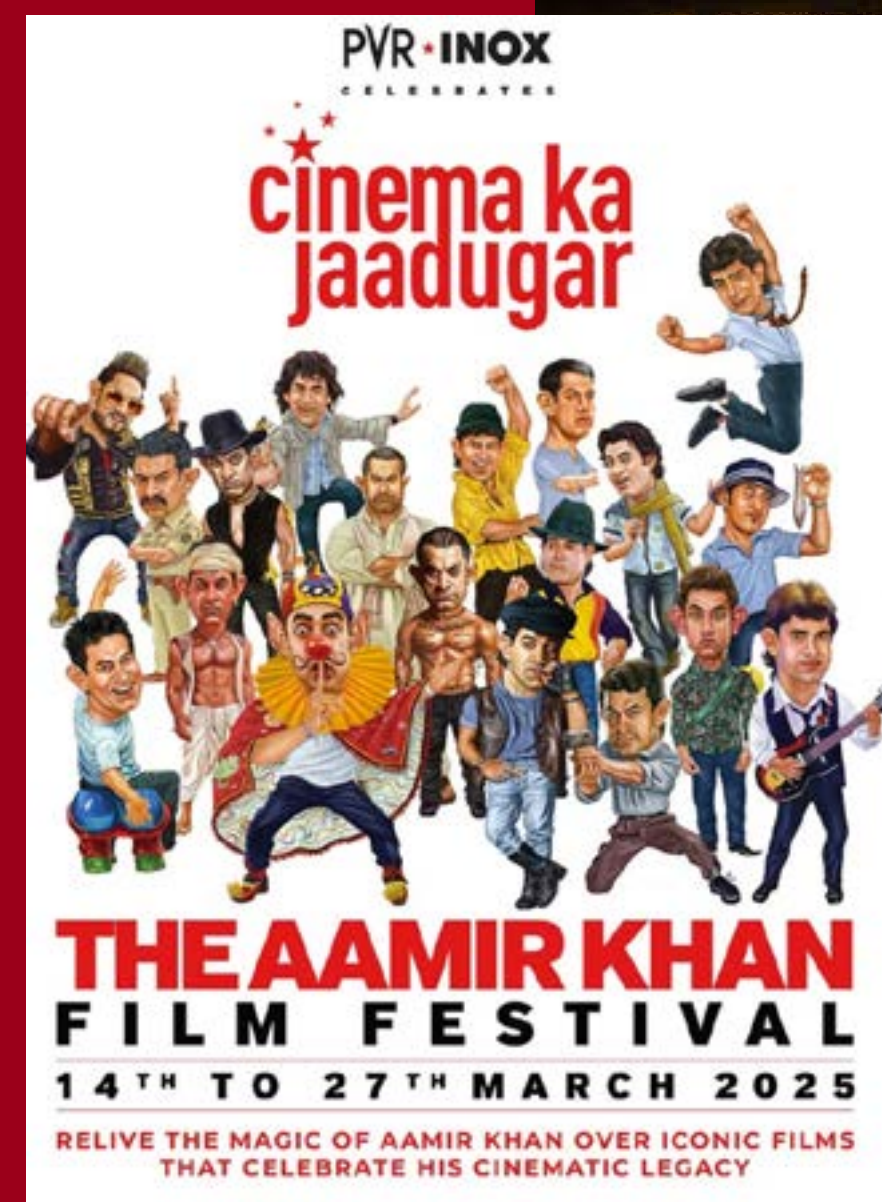
# PVR INOX

1,749 SCREENS AT 355 LOCATIONS  
IN INDIA AND SRI LANKA

With hundreds of millions of movie tickets sold every year, India's importance to global cinemas is undeniable.

A key part of that importance comes from fostering the love of cinema by creating major events at beautiful cinemas across the country.

The team at PVR INOX has created screening series tied to major stars of Indian cinema—such as Aamir Khan—in order to build a love of moviegoing and a sense of camaraderie among movie fans. These series also show how creative marketing is on display every day at cinemas around the world.







# MARCUS THEATRES

985 SCREENS AT 78 LOCATIONS IN 17 STATES

Through a solid game plan that included three flashy, star-studded premieres, Marcus Theatres helped a pair of underdog sports movies and the real-life story of a Marcus associate score big.

The September 2024 premiere of *Just a Bit Outside*, a rollicking documentary about the 1982 Milwaukee Brewers' run to the World Series, drew an enthusiastic crowd to the Marcus Majestic Cinema of Brookfield in Wisconsin, with several of the players in attendance.

In January 2025, the theatre also hosted a star-studded premiere for *Green and Gold*, a heartfelt drama about a struggling farm family set amid the 1993 Green Bay Packers season.

For *The Unbreakable Boy*, Marcus associate Austin LeRette, whose family's story is told in the film, brought stars Zachary Levi and Peter Facinelli to Marcus Twin Creek in Nebraska, where he works.

"Our guests are passionate about the movies, and this is a unique way we can work with our studio partners to connect moviegoers more deeply with the story," said Mark Gramz, President, Marcus Theatres. "Given the success of all three events—each sold out within days—more early screening events with the stars, as well as Marcus exclusive trailers with CEO Greg Marcus, are in the works."







# TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION

Movie theatres provide a premium experience, and owners around the world continue to innovate with larger screens, dynamic projection, and immersive sound. In this section, we highlight some of the incredible technological developments happening in the cinema space.





# AMC THEATRES

9,798 SCREENS AT 871 LOCATIONS IN 11 COUNTRIES

In November 2024, AMC announced XL at AMC, a new “XLF” initiative that boosts existing “extra-large” screens with stunning 4K laser projection.

The XL concept was piloted in Europe at the company’s ODEON Cinemas locations, and after encouraging customer feedback it will expand to 50-100 locations in the United States in 2025. The XL at AMC experience is a major addition to AMC’s suite of offerings that also includes IMAX, Dolby Cinema, PRIME at AMC, and RealD auditoriums.

Laser projection also plays a big role in AMC’s future. At the end of 2024, the company had 2,562 auditoriums in the United States that featured laser projection. AMC expects to double or triple that count over the next seven years.

All of this innovation is part of AMC’s Go Plan, an ambitious investment in the future of moviegoing. AMC expects to invest between \$1 billion and \$1.5 billion over the next four to seven years, enhancing its locations in the United States and Europe.

“It’s our view that this continued investment in premium auditoriums is an ambitious step forward that meets the needs of AMC guests,” says Dan Ellis, EVP, Chief Operations & Development Officer, AMC Theatres. “Through their words and actions, AMC moviegoers and our studio partners regularly demonstrate that they recognize and seek out the unparalleled experiences and creative opportunities these screens offer.”



# REGAL

5,664 SCREENS AT 420 LOCATIONS IN 41 STATES  
(ALONG WITH WASHINGTON, D.C. & GUAM)

In 2024, Regal opened the largest 4DX auditorium in the world at their Regal Times Square location in the epicenter of New York City. The cutting-edge 4DX premium format utilizes over 21 unique motion and environmental effects like vibration, water, wind, lightning, and scents to enhance the moviegoing experience. Regal currently operates over 50 4DX auditoriums throughout the United States.

“Regal is devoted to delivering new ways to eventize the moviegoing experience. With dynamic, immersive, and multisensory experiences like 4DX, and with the largest 4DX screen in the world in New York City, we are ensuring that our guests are enjoying a totally unique experience at the theatre. We provide the top technologies at all of our venues and to make sure fans are getting the premium experiences they deserve,” stated Eduardo Acuna, Regal Cineworld CEO.

The 4DX experience is one of the many premium offerings at Regal including IMAX, ScreenX, HDR by Barco, and the Regal Premium Experience (RPX). Along with the investment in premium formats, Regal also announced a partnership with Barco, bringing laser projection to 4,000 screens across the Regal Cineworld portfolio of theatres by 2030.

Last year, Regal also completed a \$250 million capital raise that is being used to update existing Regal theatres including investments in luxury recliners and additional improvements to the moviegoing experience through upgrades to Regal’s digital channels including the website and app.







# B&B THEATRES

550 SCREENS AT 57 LOCATIONS IN 16 STATES

B&B Theatres—a family-run, Missouri-based company—boasts the largest ScreenX screen in North America at their Dallas Red Oak location: the screen measures seven stories wide and four stories tall. Red Oak also offers customers seven other different ways to watch a movie: Grand Screen, a standard auditorium, HDR by Barco, screenPLAY!, Max Relax, The Lyric, and 4DX.

Since opening in March 2024, the ScreenX auditorium has continued to build consumer enthusiasm and is currently the top-performing auditorium at this location. There are over 430 ScreenX auditoriums worldwide in 43 countries, and 2025 will see the release of several major blockbusters in the format including *Jurassic World: Rebirth* and *Superman*.

“B&B’s mission is to create magical entertainment experiences, and the multi-projection platform offered by ScreenX creates a presentation that is exclusive, immersive, exciting, and yes ... magical,” says Paul Farnsworth, Executive Director of Communications and Content, B&B Theatres. “We have found that guests are seeking out not only our PLF Grand Screens, but ScreenX when they want the biggest, best, and most captivating experience possible.”







# HARKINS THEATRES

466 SCREENS AT 32 LOCATIONS IN 4 STATES

For more than 90 years, Harkins has been committed to providing the Ultimate Moviegoing experience to movie lovers in their communities. In return, Harkins guests have rewarded the iconic brand with extraordinary loyalty and visitation.

Harkins is passionate about the moviegoing experience. “Guest service and each detail of our guests’ experience will always be our top priorities,” says Mike Bowers, CEO of Harkins Theatres. “Whether it’s for an exciting blockbuster spectacle, or a thought-provoking hidden gem, we are committed to ensuring that we deliver a superior moviegoing experience every time.”

Harkins has demonstrated this commitment with significant investments toward providing a premium moviegoing environment in every auditorium. This includes best-in-class image and sound technology, Harkins proprietary Ultimate Lounger luxury seating, and precise auditorium design criteria including solid concrete walls between auditoriums for a truly immersive experience. This is in addition to the continued expansion of Harkins CINÉXL premium large-format screens. Harkins has also continued to expand their in-lobby CINÉBAR lounges and immersive digital lobby takeover displays.

From their beloved annual Loyalty Cup to their member-based loyalty program, Harkins rewards their loyal guests with engaging programs that are fun while still providing value-based options for moviegoing.



# EMAGINE

330 SCREENS AT 27 LOCATIONS IN 5 STATES

Emagine—a Michigan-based company—built the state’s largest movie screen at their Canton location in December 2019. Construction of the screen required a 15,000 square foot addition to the complex, and was completed in a breakneck pace of only 104 days. Measuring roughly the size of a regulation NBA basketball court, it offers an incredible immersive experience and is always the first screen to sell out.

The screen is part of Emagine’s Super EMX branding. The chain offers three Super EMX screens—which are the largest CinemaScope screens in the Midwest—with the other two located in Novi, MI and Batavia, MI. All three auditoriums are also equipped with Dolby Atmos sound systems and laser projection.

“We have seen these investments in the future of moviegoing pay off in a big way,” says Paul Glantz, CEO of Emagine. “The enthusiasm that our customers show is undeniable.”



*We have seen investments  
in the future of moviegoing  
pay off in a big way.*

-Paul Glantz, CEO



AS FEATURED IN

**Behind  
the  
Screens:**  
The Faces of Exhibition

PRESENTED BY



# MUSIC BOX THEATRE

CHICAGO, IL

Music Box Theatre has found the sweet spot of innovation: where technology meets community.

The historic Chicago movie palace showcases multiple formats (DCP, 35MM, 70MM) along with a dynamic slate of programming, to create a one-of-a-kind experience for guests. A combined emphasis on presentation and engagement helps cultivate a cinematic community.

Music Box was one of 10 theatres in the United States that were chosen to play *The Brutalist* in 70MM. The theatre filled their 700-person auditorium for the first showing with a wide range of moviegoers—including plenty of Gen Z patrons—and by doing so they shattered expectations of who would show up for an “arthouse” film.

MUSIC BOX

*When you walk into the Music Box,  
you automatically are disarmed  
of that expectation of a standard  
movie theatre experience.*

- Ryan Oestreich, General Manager





# MORE THAN A MOVIE

The experience of what it means to go to the movies is changing all the time. As the industry continues to add more amenities and change how their spaces are used, consumers are reacting with great enthusiasm. In this section, we highlight some of the ways in which going to the movies looks different than it has before.





# SANTIKOS

377 SCREENS AT 27 LOCATIONS IN 8 STATES

Santikos is a leader in the family entertainment center model.

Their location in Cibolo, Texas, offers 12 luxury-recliner movie theatre auditoriums, 16 bowling lanes, a two-story laser tag arena, immersive Gamebox cubes, a cutting-edge virtual reality experience, and expansive arcade, all under one roof. Guests can also enjoy a full-service bar and an extended food menu featuring personal pizzas, nachos, burgers, and self-serve popcorn.



*We are always thinking about what the future of moviegoing will look like. It guides every decision we make.*

-Blake Hastings, CEO



# CINERGY

84 SCREENS AT 9 LOCATIONS IN 4 STATES

In October 2018, Cinergy Cinemas—a Texas-based chain—opened their Amarillo, Texas, location in true “Everything’s bigger in Texas” fashion.

The Amarillo location includes ten state-of-the-art auditoriums featuring zero-gravity, heated luxury recliners and laser projection, bowling, Cinegy EPIC (the company’s branded large-format option), virtual reality, escape rooms, a full-service bar, and other activities.

“We believe Amarillo deserves more than just great films; it deserves a dynamic space where families and friends can come together for unforgettable experiences,” says Jeff Benson, Founder and CEO at Cinergy Entertainment Group, Inc. “Transforming a movie theatre into a true family entertainment center isn’t easy—it takes vision, dedication, and a deep commitment to the community.”







# CMX

299 SCREENS AT 27 LOCATIONS IN 8 STATES

A great movie theatre lobby builds a better communal experience.

CMX creates unique lobby environments—like Miami’s CMX Cinemas at Brickell City Centre that are draws unto themselves and are significant revenue generators. CMX creates spaces for community and connection, designed to be a gathering space where fans can talk about movies, celebrate their favorite sports teams, or bring a first date. The lobbies have clean lines, low-profile tables and furniture, and expansive windows that flood the space with natural light. Open floor plans allow each lobby to serve multiple purposes beyond the traditional moviegoing experience, and allows them to pivot as venues for special events, like product launches for top brands, or even a fashion show.

*“Our goal is to enhance the social value of a trip to the movies in any way possible. We innovate with that in mind.”*

-Rafael Muñoz, CEO





# ACX CINEMAS

54 SCREENS AT 7 LOCATIONS IN 5 STATES

ACX Cinemas—a family-run, Nebraska-based chain—approaches the food and beverage side of their business with the same creativity they bring to the moviegoing side. They launched a branded restaurant concept called Backlot Pizza + Kitchen that’s available at four of their locations.

“When we developed Backlot Pizza we knew that the business had to be reflective of who we are and the story we seek to tell,” says Mike Barstow, Executive Vice President of ACX Cinemas. “Our calling card is Detroit Style Pizza, which is very personal to us since that is where our family is from. We grew up on this style of pizza, and we had a responsibility to do it the right way. By having this story to tell, it became clear to guests that we weren’t just another pizza place.”

The addition of a restaurant with a unique identity has helped the Barstows grow their overall business.

“Backlot Pizza allows us to connect with our guests more frequently,” says Barstow. “If, on average, a moviegoer goes to five movies per year, by adding the restaurant we may be able to see that guest upwar ds of 15 times per year.”





# THE LOT

30 SCREENS AT 4 LOCATIONS IN CALIFORNIA

With a wide range of food choices at their restaurants, bars and cafes, California's THE LOT chain helps to defy what moviegoers expect out of the food and beverage experience when going to a movie. With four luxury dine-in venues throughout Southern California, THE LOT takes advantage of the balmy weather by offering a wide variety of dishes and beverages outdoors, in the lobby or inside the movie theatres. Additionally, every year THE LOT hosts 600 public events and 400 private events.

"It's important to make every part of the moviegoing experience memorable," says Daniel Fastlicht, Food and Beverage Manager for THE LOT. "We want our customers to feel like they've experienced something unique and exciting."







# CINÉPOLIS

5,379 SCREENS AT 667 LOCATIONS  
IN 18 COUNTRIES

When kids fall in love with cinema early,  
they become movie fans for life.

With their Cinépolis Junior model, the  
global chain creates an immersive  
moviegoing environment where families  
can bond and children can experience the  
magic of the movies in a space designed  
just for them. With colorful play areas  
and age-appropriate content and food &  
beverage offerings, their immersive kid-  
friendly auditoriums have been received  
positively by a wide range of moviegoers.  
Kids feel at ease, parents can enjoy quality  
time, and every visit creates cherished  
memories.

*There's nothing that can replicate  
the amazement and wonder when a  
child experiences moviegoing for the  
first time. It's a magical moment that  
stays with them forever.*

-Luis Olloqui, CEO - USA



# EVENT CINEMAS

985 SCREENS AT 123 LOCATIONS IN 3 COUNTRIES

A uniquely designed auditorium creates a lot of buzz.

EVT drew on the rich heritage of their State Theatre in Sydney, Australia, and their iconic and quirky QT Hotels, to deliver a theatrical, bespoke, design-led, premium experience in their Event Boutique cinemas.

Unconventional food and beverage offerings, custom-made designer recliners, an exclusive waiter-service-to-seat experience, state-of-the-art sound, bigger screens and world-class pure laser projection, all confirm that design-led customer experiences are in EVT's DNA.



Event Boutique is Australia's first Instagrammable cinema. Inspired by the Andy Warhol quote, "In the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15-minutes," Event Boutique's "Paparazzi" auditorium at their flagship George St. Sydney location celebrates the glamour of the red carpet and the idea that anyone can make it to the big screen. While "The Library" pays homage to the art of storytelling and is inspired by the millions of stories around the world coming to life on the big screen, "The Gallery" is the latest Boutique offer and celebrates local artists with customers immersed in an art gallery.

"Our motto is to offer our customers a variety of cinema experiences within the same complex. We provide original cinemas, 'Boutique' cinemas, 'Gold Class' premium F&B cinemas, 'Event Junior' kid-friendly cinemas, and our own PLF 'VMAX' with a range of seating options from daybeds to luxury original seating in the same auditorium. Introducing Daybeds to the Australian market has transformed the front of the cinema from a less-preferred seating area to a premium location. We also include global premium formats like IMAX, 4DX, or ScreenX. Our customers love the variety and are willing to pay for a more premium experience. Even our most premium range is perceived as a good value entertainment experience," says Jane Hastings, CEO of EVT.





# CONCLUSION

The experience of going to a movie doesn't just start when the lights go down and the movie begins. It starts as soon as you step out of your car or enter the lobby. It's about the concessions you eat or the experiences available to you, from family-friendly entertainment to immersive environments. Everything matters. Going to the movies remains one of the most affordable forms of entertainment for people around the world, and our commitment to movie fans is ongoing. We stand united in our mission to keep innovating and experimenting, to create one-of-a-kind moviegoing experiences, and to remain steadfast as we build toward The Next Great Era of Cinema.







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