

Kendall Square Cinema

1 Kendall Square, at Broadway, Cambridge (Information 621 1202 or 494 9800/Tickets 333 3456/www.landmarktheaters.com). Kendall/MIT T. Tickets \$8.50; \$5.50 concessions. Credit AmEx, MC, V. Map p306 E4.

This clean, faux-art deco theatre has six screens, coffee and gourmet pastries for sale and a friendly, artsy staff. On weekends and holidays it's best to buy tickets several hours in advance as queues can be long and seating limited.

Loews Nickelodeon Theater

606 Commonwealth Avenue, at Sherborn Street, Fenway (424 1500/www.enjoytheshow.com). Blandford Street T. Tickets \$8; \$5 concessions. Credit AmEx, Disc, MC, V. Map p306 D5.

In the heart of the Boston University campus, the Nick is home to several scampering rats, and the seats could do with replacing, but it's convenient and has been around for years.

Museum of Fine Arts

465 Huntington Avenue, at Museum Road, Fenway (369 3770/369 3306/www.mfa.org). Museum T. Tickets \$7. Credit AmEx, MC, V. Map p306 D6.

The MFA promotes an intellectually stimulating programme. The focus is on local films, foreign films and documentaries. However, what the venue offers in terms of quality film-making, it lacks in terms of a traditional film-watching atmosphere: it's airy, large and comfortable, but drinks and snacks (even popcorn) are not permitted.

Other screens**Loews Theater Cheri**

50 Dalton Street, opposite the Sheraton Hotel, Back Bay (536 2870/www.enjoytheshow.com) Hynes/ICA T. Tickets \$8; \$5 concessions. Credit AmEx, MC, V. Map p306 E5.

Modern large cinema, well-located in Back Bay, and therefore handy – that's all it's got going for it.

Circle Cinemas

Cleveland Circle, 399 Chestnut Hill, at Beacon Street, Chestnut Hill (566 4040). Cleveland Circle T. Tickets \$5-\$8. Credit Disc, MC, V.

Cleveland Circle is at the nexus of the Boston University/Boston College area as well as the classic enclaves of Brookline and Newton. This first-run cinema has the advantage of comfortable high-backed, deep-cushioned tilting chairs.

Copley Place

100 Huntington Avenue, at Dartmouth Street (266 1300). Copley T. Tickets \$5-\$8. Credit AmEx, MC, V. Map p306 F5.

This honeycomb of tiny auditoriums in the Copley Place shopping mall began as an arthouse complex, but now features big commercial first-runs. The crowds can make it hellish, especially when kids pack the place for animated features, but you can't beat the location.

General Cinema Fenway Theater

Landmark Center, 201 Brookline Avenue, at Beacon Street, Fenway (424 6266/www.generalcinema.com). Fenway T. Tickets \$9; \$6 concessions. Credit AmEx, MC, V. Map p306 D5.

This venue has all the modern conveniences you could ever want – comfy seats, huge screens and great sight lines. On the down side, the line-up is often a highly disappointing mix of blockbuster hits and cheesy Hollywood dramas.

Loews Cineplex Harvard Square

10 Church Street, at Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge (864 4580/www.enjoytheshow.com). Harvard T. Tickets \$8; \$5 concessions. Credit AmEx, MC, V. Map p311 B2.

This four-screener was fashioned out of a former single-screen beauty and has wicker chairs in the first rows of the balcony and a nice repertory programme. The main auditorium has retained its huge screen, though poor conditions for years made it the scourge of first-run fanatics.

Festivals

Though it's still a long way from becoming the home of the next Sundance, Boston does have its share of film festivals. In the autumn, Loews theatres and the *Boston Globe* sponsor the **Boston Film Festival** (for more information visit the website at www.bostonfilmfestival.org or call 266 2533). This two-week event takes place in mid September at the Copley Square Cinema in Boston and the Kendall Square Cinema in Cambridge. It shows a substantial roster of short films, as well as features. There's also the **New England Film Festival**, which offers an extensive programme of independent shorts, features and documentaries. It gives special recognition to film-makers based in New England. Taking place over six days in April, the festival is sponsored by the Boston Film and Video Foundation, and is held at the Coolidge Corner Cinema (for more information visit www.newenglandfilmfestival.com).

The **Nantucket Film Festival**, held every June, is a favourite mid-summer excursion for Boston film lovers. Billed somewhat dramatically as the festival 'Where Screenwriters Inherit the Earth', this five-day event has a strong programme of independent feature films, as well as shorts, documentaries and staged readings of un-produced scripts (for further details call 1-508 325 6274 or try www.nantucketfilmfestival.org).

Film lovers who prefer rare movies will enjoy the **Boston Jewish Film Festival**. Held in November at the Coolidge Corner Cinema and at the Museum of Fine Arts, the JFF screens up to 40 films from 15 different countries, all centred on a Jewish theme (for information call 781 899 3830 or try the website www.bjff.cyways.com).

Location, location, location

Although Boston doesn't have even a fraction of the film and TV studios boasted by its bigger brothers, it is the hot place to shoot right now (or at least to get quaint establishing shots to make it look as if something was filmed here). And for good reason. Hollywood has just discovered that there are plenty of attractions here. Boston is picturesque, with diverse geography that includes an urban warehouse district, a waterfront and university campuses. It's possible to shoot one scene in a tough, urban neighbourhood like East Boston, then drive ten minutes downtown and be on Beacon Hill, where rows of gorgeous brownstones line cobblestone streets.

In large part, it was television producer David E Kelley who spurred the recent Boston craze. He set all three of his popular US programmes – *Ally McBeal* (pictured), *The Practice* and *Boston Public* – in Beantown. While most of the shows are taped elsewhere, the dramatic aerial shots of State Street, the Financial District, Fenway and the Back Bay interspersed in the shows made many in Hollywood give the city a second look. Boston is also the setting of other shows including *Gideon's Crossing* and *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*.

Feature film companies have also jumped on the Boston bandwagon. Several Hollywood features were recently shot in and around the city. MGM's *What's the Worst that Could Happen?*, starring Danny DeVito and Martin Lawrence, was shot in the South End and Back Bay. *Prozac Nation*, featuring Christina Ricci, Anne Heche, Jason Biggs and Jessica Lange, spent several weeks filming in Cambridge and at Wheaton College in Newton, while *Legally Blonde*, with Reese Witherspoon, was shot in Cambridge. Local director Brad Anderson (*Next Stop Wonderland*, *Happy Accidents*) filmed his newest venture, *Session 9*, in and around Boston proper while former film festival sweetheart Khari Streeter and Demane Davis shot their movie *Lift* in Roxbury.

But Boston is more than home to the movies. It's also home to the movie



makers. Robert Gardner, Richard Leacock and Frederick Wiseman, three of the underground leaders of *cinéma-vérité*, are natives of Boston, as are documentary film-makers Laurel Chiten (*The Jew in the Lotus*), Jane Gillooly (*Leona's Sister Gerri*), Ross McElwee (*Sherman's March*) and David Sutherland (*The Farmer's Wife*). One of America's most famous documentarians, Erroll Morris (*The Thin Blue Line*; *Fast, Cheap and Out of Control*), resides in Cambridge.

David Mamet, writer and director of *The Spanish Prisoner*, lives in Newton. He shot his recent hit film, *State and Main*, in Manchester-by-the-Sea. And then there is the Cinderella story – local director Brad Anderson signed a \$6 million deal with Miramax after his tiny, Boston-based, independent, romantic comedy *Next Stop Wonderland* did well at the box office and won raves at Sundance.