

# Why has this Ipswich cinema changed its name?

One of the greatest ways to spend an afternoon or evening is to head to the cinema. There are few things better than the smell of freshly-popped popcorn, the murmurings as you settle into your seat and watch the trailers, and the excitement when the lights finally dim as the film starts.

Unfortunately, lingering pandemic-related hesitancy has meant some people still aren't as eager to go to the cinema as they were pre-2020.

One man hoping to get bums back into seats is Daniel Champion. Managing director of Ipswich's King Street Cinema, you could argue he's one of Suffolk's biggest champions of independent cinema.

King Street Cinema, which opened in November 2021, is based in the premises formerly occupied by the Ipswich Film Theatre.

"The cinema was created in 1975 by chief executive of Ipswich Borough Council Robert Cross, and Ipswich schoolteacher Neil Salmon, who both wanted a film-centric venue for the town that would be able to show a wider array of international film," explains Daniel.

"From the beginning, the Ipswich Film Theatre had close ties to the BFI and this continues to this day."

The town centre film house has long carried this on, and rebrand aside, still prides itself on showing the best new studio releases, independent and foreign films, and re-releases of classic and cult films.

"We also felt that the film exhibition market had changed

Cinemas are still recovering from the impact of Covid closures. But King Street Cinema's managing director, Daniel Champion, explains how he plans to help save it in the town and the appeal of independent venues

dramatically over the last few years, and that the name represented a confusion of sorts to our changing audience who were increasingly unfamiliar with the term 'film theatre'.

"In looking for a name that would include the word 'cinema', we felt King Street represented our hopes and dreams for the cinema in one fell swoop. It's also an important part of our ambition for the 'royal quarter' of the town centre with King Street, Queen Street and Princes Street and how we can bring together the independent businesses in the quarter. So it's very forward thinking in building out a cultural axis in the centre of Ipswich."

But what is it that Daniel loves so much about the independent and more niche side of cinema? "I think it's the opportunities that it affords to be part of something that's unique, that's not branded around the globe, and that's local," he says.

Explaining what sets King Street apart from chains, Daniel adds: "There are the obvious answers like our programming, and that's a vital aspect of what any indie cinema does, but I think it's equally about the feeling our customers have when they walk into the cinema. It's a family – and not just our team, but our

customers as well. If there's anybody reading this who remembers the TV series Cheers, then that's the closest analogy I can think of – where everyone knows your name. I admit I might not know everybody's name yet, but I'm getting there!"

For any film buffs who fancy checking out King Street, there's a whole host of exciting showings scheduled over the coming weeks – which Daniel hopes will entice people to delve into the more independent side of film.

"I'm really looking forward to our Dr Who double bill on Sunday July 10 – I remember watching both films at this very cinema when I was a child so it's a delight to bring them back for a new generation.

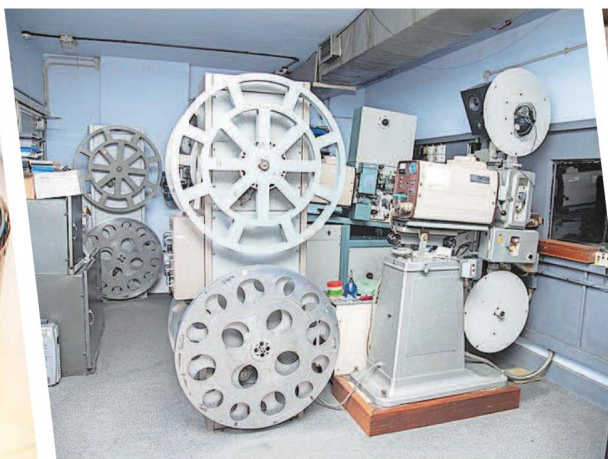
"I'm also looking forward to our re-issue screenings of Get Carter in June, The Railway Children in July, and some fantastic new films including Alex Garland's Men, and Mia Hansen-Love's Bergman Island. We will



Daniel Champion of Ipswich's King Street Cinema. Left, Steve in the projection room

also have a director Q&A with Charlie Shackleton following a rare 35mm screening of his film

The Afterlight, and a retrospective of Wim Wenders' films in July in collaboration with Curzon."



Left, 35mm film. Middle, inside the projection room. Right, the King Street Cinema in Ipswich



Pictures: CHARLOTTE BOND

The cinema will also show a number of cult classics throughout the year, including Tron, Fast Times at Ridgemont High, and The Thing.

"This type of independent cinema is hard to find outside of London, so we're excited to be able to present this type of programming to Suffolk audiences. We love all types of cinema, so look out for more exciting and varied films in the months ahead," Daniel adds.

"We've seen audiences return in respectable numbers but those numbers are currently half the amount we need to survive, so we're absolutely putting the call out here for many more people to return if they can. It's easier to a degree for the larger cinemas – even the independents who show much more mainstream films than we do – because they have the weight of international

marketing campaigns behind them.

"We're in a different position where we are the very definition of independent, the films we show can be small and we need to work very hard to get the message out to audiences.

"It's easy to see how people's habits changed during the last two-three years, but culture is a great thing and to lose an independent cinema almost 50 years old, in the heart of a town centre, would be a tragedy for the cultural scene here in Ipswich. I absolutely love this venue and will fight tooth and nail to see it survive and grow, but the team here needs the help of that cultural audience in Ipswich. If you're reading this – we need you!"

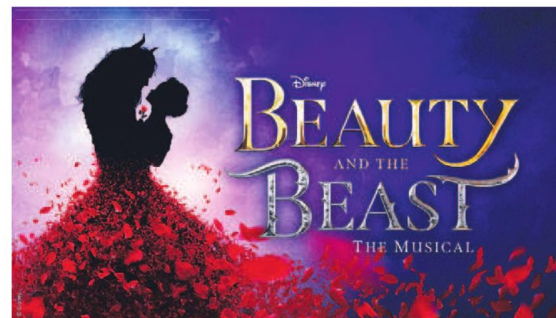
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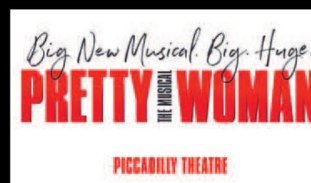
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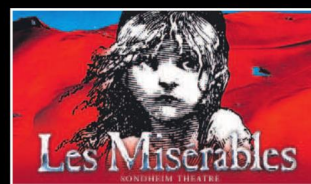
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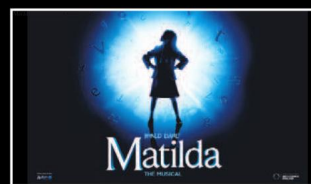
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