



# The hotel cinema: A boutique destination

**IF EVER THERE WAS A** demonstration of how the exhibition, hospitality and catering industries are blending, then it would be the arrival of cinemas in hotels. Examples, such as Curzons, Everymans and boutique cinemas, are often situated in town and city centres which have a different footfall dynamic to the out of town multiplex.

A cinema with full professional projection, sound and audio visual facilities is an asset for any well-located hotel. It can raise income for the hotel in business meeting, events, conference and private hire income streams and is an added attraction for residents, driving up income from guests staying and dining in. Hotel cinema also provides the prospect of income from non-residents who use the bar and restaurant facilities. Many hotels offer a meal, a drink and a movie in an attractively priced package. In an era when the consumer is interested in spending on experiences rather than things, a visit to a smart hotel with a luxurious cinema is undoubtedly an intriguing option.

## International growth in hotel cinemas

Patrick von Sychowski investigates the trend on p38, but there are two hotel groups in particular that have pioneered this shift, Courthouse Hotels and Firmdale Hotels. Madeleine Phillips, at the Firmdale Group, told me that the group does not have a centralised policy for programming, pricing and promotion of its cinema activities. The hospitality teams in each hotel has complete autonomy in how they program, price and promote. Effectively each hotel runs its own independent boutique cinema – which does not follow the more centralised approach of many chains.

As the name suggest, Courthouse has converted two

old court houses into hotels – one in London’s West End, Marlborough Street, the other in Old Street, Shoreditch. Both have superb cinemas, with Old Street Courthouse Hotel having one of the biggest private cinemas in London. The screening room has stadium seating for an audience of 196 and is equipped with professional 35mm and video/digital projection systems. It can accommodate recorded formats ranging from almost all video formats to current or pre-release 35mm. Dolby 7.1 incorporating JBL surround speakers and high-powered Crown stage units provide the sound system, with full “surround EX” capability. Reception facilities are in place for live or recorded events, and obviously there is video conferencing available.

Across the Atlantic, Firmdale’s New York hotel, the Whitby, similarly has a professional-grade cinema that seats 130 in a 302m<sup>2</sup> space and with a screen size of 9x3.5m. On the vision side it uses a Christie CP4220 DLP 4K DCinema Projector with a Dolby DSS200 digital cinema server and Xpand 3D cinema system. Sound is delivered by a Dolby Atmos cinema processor CP850, QSC audio amplifiers, JBL speakers and JBL subwoofers. Again, additional conferencing facilities involve multi-format video playback, microphone

▼ **The Charlotte Street hotel, one of the Firmdale group’s luxury destinations with a screening room**



In the last issue, **Mark Trompeteler**, asked to what extent parts of cinema exhibition have actually made the move across to being an element of the hospitality and catering industries. In a follow-up, he flips that on its head on uncovers how many hospitality and catering establishments are now installing cinemas of their own with a view to offering the public a night out, and an experience in direct competition with that you can find in the cinema.



sound mixing and video conferencing and live streaming. Many readers will be aware of South London's Future Projections, fully integrated designers, installers, suppliers and service providers who offer a turnkey cinema service. They have project managed and installed facilities for both Courthouse and Firmdale and they provide service support.

### A sense of occasion, but which industry?

Much has been written about event cinema, rooftop cinema, live orchestrated cinema and so on. All are connected to the fundamental concept of boutique cinema and fine food, mass chain luxury cinema and hotel cinema. What do they all strive to do? They all drive at one goal – to give the guest a sense of occasion beyond the run-of-the mill. When all their resources are biased very significantly towards the components of the night out rather than the presentation of the film itself, then surely we can say that parts of exhibition are moving definitely to the hospitality and catering sectors. **CT**

## A good night's sleep?

Many regenerated urban areas make the appeal of a cinema in a centrally located hotel attractive. Hotel cinemas are almost always open to residents and non-residents alike. Such hotel cinemas offer an excellent auditorium but with levels of dining and service that exceed the majority of cinemas. A hotel offers a good night's sleep too – even the most comfortable of recliners and sympathetic of cinema managers can't match that!

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