

Celebrating 127 years of cinema in South Africa

For many, cinema is drenched in the nostalgia of magical moments and meaningful milestones. The memory of that very first movie you watched on the big screen. Shyly bumping hands while sharing popcorn on that first date. A family tradition of Friday movie nights. Kicking up conversation about the latest blockbuster. Escaping reality to live vicariously through someone else, somewhere else...



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Over the last century, cinema's obituary has been written many times, but the industry has proven to be central to popular culture (and several other industries), which is why cinema now celebrates 127 years in South Africa.

What is the magic behind the formidable staying power of cinema? Despite our fixation with our hand-held screens and home entertainment systems, the biggest and oldest screen certainly cannot be overlooked.

With a larger-than-life screen, surround sound, luxurious seating, iconic snacks and highly anticipated blockbusters, cinemas provide an unrivalled immersive, multi-sensory entertainment experience.

While the magical escapism of cinema is timeless, movie-going is also a classic activity for creating human connections.

Now more than ever, people are craving a sense of community and social connections, and cinema still plays its role in bringing people together for a shared experience of louder laughs, bigger scares, greater thrills, and grander

entertainment.

Great moments at their greatest

“When it comes to any highly anticipated blockbuster, very few can dispute that it really is better on the big screen, says Ster-Kinekor’s acting CEO, Motheo Matsau.

“And much to avid cinema-goers delight, 2022 is bringing countless thrilling titles to Ster-Kinekor’s screens , including *The Minions: Rise of Gru*, *Jurassic World: Dominion*, *Top Gun: Maverick* and *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness*.”

“It’s truly testament to the ‘staying power’ of cinema that the movie industry has been part of South African history for over a century, and that Ster-Kinekor has been giving our guests ‘Great Moments at their Greatest’ for over 100 years of those (from the days of Ster and Kinekor cinemas) – and many more to come,” says Matsau.

The staying power of cinema

Ster-Kinekor has come a long way since the first movies were shown in South Africa, 127 years back. The first Kinetoscopes in South Africa were opened to the public on 19 April 1895 in Herwoods Arcade on Pritchard and President Streets in Johannesburg, and in 1896, at the Empire Palace of Varieties in Commissioner Street, Johannesburg.

By 1910, the first dedicated bioscope was opened in Durban.

After a colourful history of theatre launches, mergers and sales, in 1970, Ster and Kinekor theatres were merged to form Ster-Kinekor, after decades of operating as separate theatres. It was also during this time, nearly a decade after the first cinema, that television arrived in South Africa.

2008 was the start of Ster-Kinekor’s pioneering digitalisation, including 3D cinema – which gave rise to the multi-box-office-record-breaking and one of the highest-grossing movies of all time, *Avatar*, in 2009.

This was followed by the launch of the award-winning, multi-million downloaded app and Cine Prestige in 2012, and a huge roll-out of digital projection and sound technology over 2013.

Today, Ster-Kinekor has stood the test of time (and the trials of lockdown), with 395 screens, 57 155 seats, 860 staff, 650 tonnes of popcorn and a loyalty base of over a million across South Africa.

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