

THE CINEMA MUSEUM

in association with
The Ronald Grant Archive

It wasn't intended that there should be such a gap between newsletters, but it is difficult for the two of us to produce a regular bulletin alongside all the other work of the Archive.



One of the problems now is that more than two thirds of our present large premises are used for storage of historical cinema items that generate no income. This is a very heavy financial burden and in order to provide a future for this accumulation of history, to make it publicly accessible and to widen the scope of our activities we have formed The Cinema Museum—a non-profit making company limited by guarantee. An application for charitable status was made in December 1984 and we're hoping registration will be approved soon.



There is a nine-strong management committee to oversee the finding and funding of permanent premises as well as organising the administration of the new museum. The management committee are: Tony Fletcher, a civil servant and film-maker—one of his three films 'Au Revoir Renee' about the silent film actress Renee Adoree, was made at the Archive and is currently distributed by ourselves and the London Film-makers Co-op; Ronald Grant who has worked in the cinema industry since 1952 and been collecting film history for even longer. From the age of 21 he operated his own rural cinema circuit in N E Scotland later moving to London to work at the British Film Institute; Martin Humphries, a poet and writer involved with community arts and theatre who has worked in tandem with Ronald for the last three years; Chris Knowles, a location manager on such films as 'Quest for

Fire', 'Pink Floyd—The Wall', 'Greystoke, Tarzan of the Apes' and the new John Landis film 'Spies Like Us'; Linda Polan, an established performer in theatre, film and television, who has worked with Fellini and is currently with the Royal Shakespeare Company; Ros Price, a community arts worker in Kennington, South London; Erika Stevenson, a freelance cinematographer who has shot films for many television companies and for the cinema, her work ranges from documentary film to drama and video; Edith Head, a retired teacher and widow of the late Graham Head a film historian and collector; and Malcolm Billingsley a teacher with a long standing interest in the cinema, especially the early talkie period and in film preservation.



We have been given a grant by the GLC to commission a feasibility study to explore and examine ideas for the museum. This will be carried out by URBED and completed by the end of the summer.



Our current priorities are to identify potential buildings for housing the museum and fundraising to cover the costs of the company and for the museum itself. One form of fundraising and support is the creation of 'Friends of the Cinema Museum'. Friends are entitled to come to occasional events held at the Archive and will receive copies of the newsletter. Many people have expressed interest in our aim to establish a museum and we felt this was a way in which people could offer practical support and keep in touch with our progress.



We have continued our regular film shows, started in 1983 and held monthly with a few extra shows during the winter. Due to limitations of the premises and restricted seating these shows are free but meantime by invitation only.



An unfortunate side effect of this is that we are not able to invite all of our large circle of interested supporters. Since they began the twenty seven shows have been enjoyed by nearly 400 people who have seen films featuring such diverse performers as Joan Crawford, George Formby, Vivien Leigh, Gracie Fields and her sister Betty, Mary Pickford, Flanagan and Allen, Maria Montez, Laurence Olivier and many others including the first screen appearances of Marilyn Monroe, Peter Finch and Ida Lupino.



Recently there appears to have been a substantial increase in the number of cinema buildings being destroyed. Although we have increased the amount of photographic fieldwork and have recorded the last moments of various London cinemas, with our modest resources we have found it difficult to respond quickly enough, as there seems to be daily news of yet another building going. These photographic records are important as during demolition unrecorded alterations, colour schemes and long concealed architectural details are often revealed.

Powers
CINEPHONE
The Voice of the Movies
Sound on Film and Disc



Photo courtesy Architectural Association

A good example of 1930s stylish cinema architecture is the Towchester Cinema which was built by Lord Hesketh in 1937 as a present for his wife and for the townspeople. These horrific pictures of the cinema's last days symbolise the decline and lack of general interest in these often unique buildings. Despite a campaign organised by the Thirties Society involving local residents the cinema remained neglected, was vandalised and finally demolished in 1983. We feel it is important to extend our photographic records of cinemas past and present. Over the last twelve months we have added almost 2,000 photographs of cinema architecture to our files. Paul Francis, who in his spare time has compiled a comprehensive photographic record of cinemas today has been very helpful in this and we would like to find a way of obtaining funds to help him continue this work.



PRICES OF ADMISSION

STALLS 6d., 9d., 1/- CIRCLE 1/6, 2/-
 Up to 4.0 p.m. (Saturday 3 p.m.): STALLS 6d. and 9d.; CIRCLE 1/- (excepting Bank Holidays). Reduced prices for children under 12, excepting Saturday and Sunday evenings. (Children in arms not admitted).



Photo courtesy Paul Francis



Photo courtesy Architectural Association



EMERGENCY CALLS

Patrons anticipating an urgent telephone message or call are requested to notify the Cashier, who will give immediate attention in the event of a message being received.



LOST ARTICLES

Every effort will be made to restore articles left in the theatre, but it will be appreciated that the Management cannot be held responsible for the safe return of such articles.



Photo courtesy Paul Francis



In November 1984 during the Dance Brolly season held at Nettlefold Hall, West Norwood, Lambeth Amenity Services gave us a small grant with which we put on a modest exhibition about the films in the season and our plans for the museum.



Contact was made last year with Patrick Cook who founded and runs the Bakelite Museum Society. Ronald visited the museum's temporary home—a flat in an art-deco block in Dulwich Road—and greatly enjoyed seeing the many fascinating 1930s artifacts which include a paybox from the Granada Bristol. They also exchanged horror stories of bureaucratic indifference and delays. Ronald later visited The Musical Museum situated in an old church at Brentford, established and run by Frank Holland with the help of his Trustees. One of whom, Richard Cole, was duty guide that day and gave a fascinating talk about all the instruments on display. Of special interest was the Fotoplayer for accompanying silent films and the Wurlitzer from the Regal Cinema, Kingston.



**PERFECT
PICTURES
NO
SHADOWS**

We were stunned to hear of the death of Ray Mander. Martin and Ronald had spent a delightful afternoon visiting Ray Mander and Joe Mitchenson and their unique theatre collection in 1983. Various efforts have since been made to initiate the exchange of duplicate material but through Joe's ill health and the pressure of work on Colin Maberley, the Curator, due to moving the collection to its new home, no progress has been made.

GRANADA



The Service-with-a-Smile Theatres

We are interested in being able to work with groups who have similar interests. Several informal approaches have been made to officers of the Projected Picture Trust, a group concerned with the preservation of cinema equipment, with a view to them visiting here. To date no progress has been made. Perhaps this is due to our geographical location as one officer asked if he needed a passport! An informal approach was made to the Cinema Theatre Association, of which Ronald is a member, with a view to discussing the possibility of housing their archive material. They declined because they were unhappy at the material being deposited in the Brixton area. However through referrals from Richard Gray, the CTA Secretary, three students from the Television and Video course at Goldsmiths College visited and subsequently shot footage here for their end of year examination video, and a group of students from the International Film School shot footage



here during June for their film 'A Garden of Dreams'. Two students—one from Farnham, the other from Harrow College of Higher Education—involved in shooting a dramatised film called 'Death of a Father: A Conspiracy of Silence' at the Mayfair Tooting, came for advice and props. Ronald declined their offer to play a cinema manager through a combination of his natural modesty and a busy work schedule! Although he had time to appear for a few seconds as a ballet school judge in Newsreel's feature film 'Unstable Elements (Atomic Stories 1939-1985)', shown on Channel 4 recently.

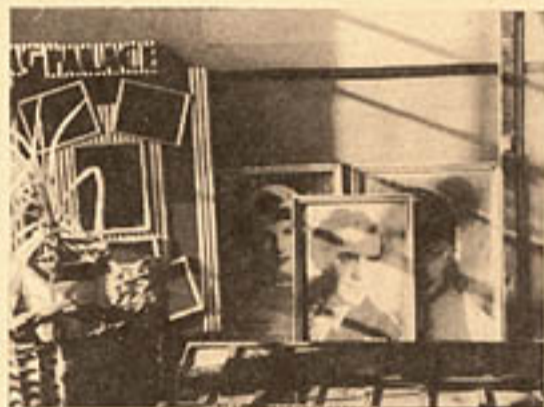
**Western Electric
MIRROPHONIC
SOUND SYSTEM**

Ronald has also been interviewed on tape by another student from Harrow doing work on cinema history and a visit is planned by post-graduate students from Birmingham who are investigating images of masculinity in films of the 1950s and 60s. Last year Ronald was interviewed by journalist Kris Kirk for an article which appeared in Him magazine and recently did a rerun of the interview on camera for a TV programme about Kris, which is to be shown on Channel 4 in the Six of Hearts series later this year.

The stills library continues to be busy with requests to loan stills and other related materials. Enquiries from this country and overseas are principally from the mainstream media wishing to illustrate news and magazine articles or TV programmes about film personalities or films. Ironically film companies having thrown out their old stills and posters ask our help when preparing their video publicity. Pictures from the collection have been seen in such periodicals as Radio Times, TV Times, Woman, Woman's Realm, The Economist, Cosmopolitan and very many others.



In February this year we started a visitors book and to date have had 238 visitors including the designer of the commemorative stamps for British Film Year who has used images from here to decorate the First Day Cover pack, researchers from the GLC, various publishing houses and the media, cinema lovers from this country, Germany, the USA and Malaysia.



Some time ago at a sale held at the closure of the Savoy, Petersfield we attempted to rescue an art-deco paybox but with our limited funds were unable to buy this fine cash desk with original ticket machine and pre-decimal change dispenser. However, we managed to secure very cheaply some other items including a 1929 Western Electric non-synch twin turntable, a complete 1930s Western Electric Mirrophonic amplification system, some miscellaneous pieces of equipment and some items of decor.

CLASSIC
The Golden Key to Entertainment
ORIGINAL CLASSIC CINEMAS



Over the last eighteen months several thousand film stills, colour transparencies and posters were added to the photo library. A large quantity of film-fan magazines, some miscellaneous pieces of equipment including an early Kalee projector are also recent additions. A number of decorative items and various 1920s and 1930s projectors were acquired in 1984 following the sudden death of film collector Norman Kirk, who'd been paralysed for a year following a tragic motor accident.

DONATIONS

These have been mainly objects rather than money, except for a donation from Linda Polan and friends which has paid for this newsletter. There is no room to detail all the donations but especial thanks to: Chris Knowles for hundreds of film star portraits, a fine collection of 1930s B-Western coloured



lobby cards, fifty film annuals and a collection of film books; Tony Fletcher for a print of his film 'Au Revoir Renee', over 50 pre 1939 film stills and two books—'Film Style & Technology: History and Analysis' by Barry Salt and 'Dream Palaces—Hollywood at Home'; Peter Lowy, organiser of the New York Gay Film Festival for a quantity of film stills and synopsis; Chris McCabe for many hours of his time, an early RCA soundhead and a pair of Delrama mirror anamorphs; Francis Howard-Gwynne for several prints of Humphrey Jennings films and signed portraits; David Gillespie for a large quantity of Kinematograph Weeklys and London cinema programmes; the late Eddie Smith of Bristol for over 100 stills, lobby cards and posters, a Kalee 5 projector, a Mills pull-through soundhead and amplifier, an anamorphic lens and a quantity of Kinematograph Weeklys; Ronald V Singleton of Singleton Holdings, Glasgow for a large tea chest of film documentation, Glasgow cinema programmes, various Kinematograph Weekly Yearbooks and a bronzed RCA Photophone Sound System foyer plate from the Savoy Cambuslang.



Recently, following the closure of the Eros Cinema Piccadilly Circus, Ian Henderson a director of Land Securities, the owners of the building, kindly allowed several items to be removed to the museum before the Eros was gutted—notably the original interior doors and a metal stair bannister inset with decora-



tive cameraman motifs. We were pleased to learn that some other items from the Eros have found a home with the Museum of London. Thanks to Ian Henderson, Donald Mackin—Land Securities (Management) Ltd, Bill Yuille—Sir John Burnet Tait and Partners, and on site Joe Leonard, Chris Hayden—John Lelliott Ltd, Vic Hayward—site worker; Sue Tracy and Dave Smith for transportation.



This month Martin Ayres, the owner of the Astonia Cinema Baldock a very interesting and stylish 1930s super-cinema soon to be demolished, donated via Paul Francis the complete set of 4 Kalee projectors, the RCA/British Acoustic sound systems, the Automatticket machine and various other items including decorative fittings to the museum. We also managed to acquire some of the original pre-war furniture from the cinema restaurant. We



are grateful to Martin and Ann Ayres for their most generous donation and would also like to thank Geoff Springham the Astonia manager for his assistance, the former projectionist Ron Keech for his help and the volunteers who helped with the loading and unloading.



Our thanks to the following for items donated: Penny Ashbrook; Roger Baker; Norma Beange—Glen Cinemas, Aberdeen; Malcolm Billingsley; Arthur Buchanan—Aberdeen; Arnold M Burns—Glen Cinemas, Aberdeen; Malcolm Campbell; Len Cardwell; Richard Cole; Ken Collinson—Stahl Pyramid Films; Andrew Czewowski & Susan Carrington—The Fridge Club, Brixton; Gilles Dagneau—Paris; Richard M Donald—JF Donald (Aberdeen Cinemas) Ltd; Mark Finch; Pat Foster—The Ritzy Cinema, Brixton; Paul Francis—Ware; Front-room Productions; Andy Garner; Chris George; Noel Greig; Jim Kearley; David Long; John Montgomery—Brighton; Nigel Moyce—Savoy Petersfield; Richard Napper; Liam O'Leary—Irish Film Archive—Dublin; Oval House; Franco Pensa—Pizzeria Franco, Brixton; Audie Philip—Southend; George Rait; Theo Simons; Sally Stamp; Bill Thorneycroft and Michael Williams.

MICKEY+MOUSE+CLUB

We are very grateful for help and facilities extended by Pat Foster—Ritzy Cinema Brixton; Mike Perrott—Lambeth Borough Valuers Dept; Nigel Hawker, Alan Clark & Katy Venner—Lambeth Amenity Services; Steve Conner—Lambeth Planning Dept; Ros Price—Oval House Arts and Community Centre; Steve Hankin—Tower Demolition; G.A.G. Brooke, Press Officer—Racal-Decca Ltd, New Malden; New Malden Fire Station officers; Shirley Hind Librarian—Architectural Association; Peter King, Chief Operator Savoy Petersfield, Paul Crane, Fred Hopper, Hannah Collins, Paul Francis, Ken Sephton, Billy Bell, Okon Jones, and Bob Gumbley of Brixton Sounds for help in improving our photographic equipment.

With especial thanks to David Gillespie, Edith Head, Richard Napper, Audrey Kirk, Chris McCabe and Malcolm Billingsley. Apologies to anyone overlooked.

Towcester information from THE PICTURE HOUSE an occasional publication of The Cinema Theatre Association.

Martin Humphries
Ronald Grant

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GLC
funded