

ONE OF LONDON'S MOST BELOVED ATTRACTIONS, THE **Cinema Museum**, PAYS TRIBUTE TO A GOLDEN ERA



# The days of the picture palace

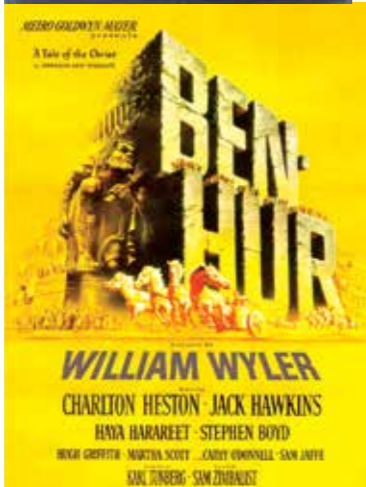
**T**here was a time when going to the cinema was far more than just catching up with the latest movie release; it was an event.

Cinemas were majestic buildings, often referred to as picture palaces, as they were lavish, ornate and grand in scale. They were especially designed that way to make the experience within the building as exciting as what was being played on the silver screen.

Red velvet curtains, thick plush carpets, sweeping marble staircases, carefully carved statues, along with the latest in Technicolor posters and glamorous star pictures in the imposing foyers, set the scene.

The whole experience was intended to transport the moviegoer away from the reality of life as they knew it outside. Inside a cinema, a different world existed.

It's this very experience that the Cinema Museum in the southern London district of Lambeth celebrates with



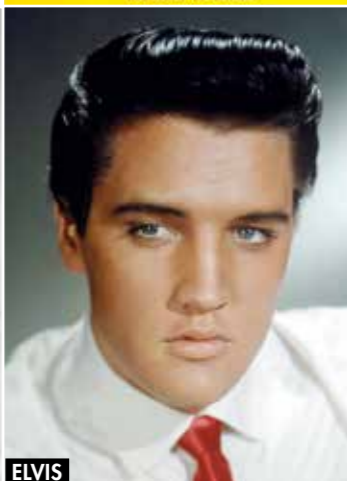
MARILYN



JOAN



ROCK



ELVIS

a wonderfully romantic step back in time to when attending the cinema was a true occasion. It was the period between the 1920s and 1960s, before television changed movie-going patterns and before the grand old cinemas were often bulldozed away, especially in the 1970s.

The Museum's unique collection is the result of a lifelong fascination with

cinema — according to its co-founder, **RONALD GRANT**.



NOSTALGIC Old cinema items can bring back memories.

Ronald began collecting memorabilia as a child, and at the age of 15 began as an apprentice projectionist in Scotland. He moved to London in the 1960s to work in some of the greatest cinemas across the British capital.

But it was when many old cinemas began to meet their fate with the wrecking ball that Ronald stepped in and saved thousands of significant artefacts and items from certain destruction.

His collection became so large, it became the Cinema Museum and opened its doors in 1986. It's been welcoming movie lovers of all ages ever since.

Over the past 30 years, the Cinema Museum has offered one of London's quirkier stops for a step back in time to when "going to the pictures" meant far more than a catch-up with the latest in any of the Marvel action hero franchises that fill multiplexes today.

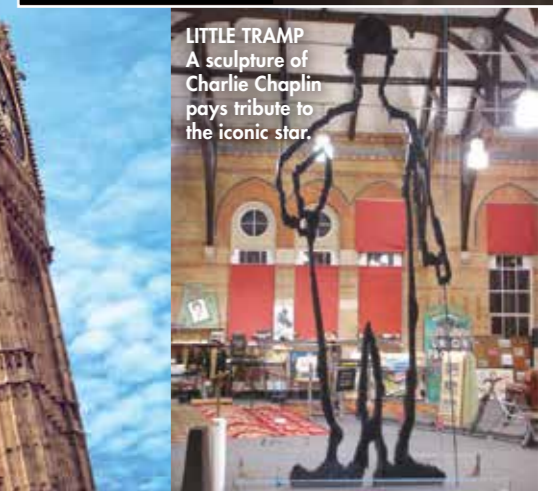
The Cinema Museum has a collection of more than a million photographic images, including pictures of cinemas and cinema-going, as well as collections of posters and original artwork.

Among the galaxy of images are posters for *Gone with the Wind*, *Ben-Hur* and *Mutiny on the Bounty*, alongside glamorous portraits of such stars of the time as **MARILYN MONROE**, **ROCK HUDSON**, **JOAN CRAWFORD**, **ELVIS PRESLEY** and **MARLON BRANDO**. There are also fixtures and fittings like cinema seating and marquee signage, and a film library of some of the screen's greatest treasures.

Rather than just being a nod to times gone by, the museum also has its own cinema, with regular retrospective screenings of the most acclaimed movies of the past, as well as film festivals of the latest in British and world cinema. A festival of the best James Bond movies recently was a sell-out success.



DANIEL CRAIG AS BOND



LITTLE TRAMP A sculpture of Charlie Chaplin pays tribute to the iconic star.

What firmly roots the museum with cinema history is the very building that houses it. The historic Lambeth Workhouse, dating from 1871, was a place where the destitute would come seeking accommodation, food and any kind of work.

It was here that silent screen legend **CHARLIE CHAPLIN** was sent to work as a boy at age seven, due to the hard times that his family had fallen upon. In the very hall where the museum's cinema now operates was the room where a young Charlie was forced to work, in order to save himself from starving on the streets.

Chaplin, of course, went on to pioneer a new way of performing in front of the cameras in the silent era, and is today acclaimed as one of the most important figures in the history of cinema. His image of the Tramp — the dusty man with the funny walk, complete with bowler hat and cane — remains iconic to this day.

It's that very image in sculpture form that dominates the entry to the museum's cinema. The Tramp sculpture pays tribute to the enduring impact Chaplin had on cinema, in the very place that would have been the very worst times of his life.

The poignancy of the gesture can't help but bring a smile to the face of any visitor to the Cinema Museum. **SW**