

The Majestic Cinema

The Majestic on Wiltshire Road cost £35,000 and took just 18 weeks to build which was claimed to be a record at the time. It was designed in Art Deco style by Derby architect L. Frederick Smith. The



main architectural feature was a 70 foot tall fin-tower located to the left hand side of the facade. The cinema's name was on top of the tower in chrome letters inlaid with red neon lighting which could be seen for miles when lit at night. A large curved bay frontage had windows that let light into the circle foyer. There was seating for 1,332 and an air conditioning system.

Inside the auditorium the lighting was from a series of four stepped covers in the ceiling and concealed lighting at the sides of the proscenium opening. There were some decorative grilles on the splay walls which were backlit.

The Majestic was opened by Carroll Levis, a talent show host, on 14 April 1938. The first film to be shown was "Looking on the Bright Side" with Gracie Fields. It was the first of three cinemas to open in Derby in 1938 (the others being the Regal on East Street in the town centre and the nearby Gloria).

The programmes changed on Monday and Tuesday; there was a Saturday matinee for children and Sunday shows.

In 1954 the cinema was acquired by the Star Cinema Circuit.

A stir was caused on 26 April 1959 when Terry Dene, the idol of the pop world, was a guest star for the Dickie Valentine show at the Majestic. Dene was making his first appearance before a live audience since his medical discharge from National Service. A long queue formed around the building and there was a full house.

Dickie Valentine, who was the top of the bill, was listened to without any interruptions. When Terry Dene came on stage the chant of "left, right, left, right" started and continued throughout his act, drowning out his singing. The young men – mostly wearing Edwardian dress - who barracked him shouted "Get back in the Army", "When's your leave up brother?" and "Drop Dead." Fifteen managers were brought in from other cinemas on the circuit from all over the north of England. The police came accompanied by a jeep load of military police.

The advent of television killed off many of Derby's cinemas, including the Majestic. On 28 April 1962, 138 patrons watched the final show, "Fanny", starring Leslie Caron, Horst Buchholz, Maurice Chevalier and Charles Boyer.

The building still stands in much-modified form with multiple occupiers, the largest being Michael's supermarket.

Sources:

A Classic Look at Cinemas by Tony Bowler, Derby Express, 1994

Chaddesden Historical Group Newsletter 16

The Gloria Cinema

The Gloria on Nottingham Road was built in 1938, with a 60 foot tower with neon lights. The cinema had an attractive interior with fine plasterwork, metallic grilles and good lighting effects. It is remembered for occasional flooding of the front stalls from the nearby Chaddesden Brook.



The cinema was opened on 21 November 1938, by film star Polly Ward who said, "People in the film industry take great interest in luxury cinemas such as this because we know that when our pictures are shown in such surroundings they are 100 per cent more interesting. In the studios we are glad that British pictures are becoming more and more popular all over the British Isles. There is a motto in our studio that good pictures make more pictures and more pictures make more work - and that influences a lot more people than just those you see on the screen,"

Miss Ward was accompanied by Garry Marsh, who played one of the leading roles in the opening film, George Formby's "I See Ice". A programme of varied dance music and comedy numbers was provided by Billy Merrin and his Commanders, with Rita Williams, before the showing of the picture.

A gale in 1939 damaged the top side of the tower but it was repaired later. At the outbreak of the war the Gloria was closed for two weeks. Because it was outside the Derby

borough boundary it was reopened before Chaddesden's other cinema the Majestic, which was inside the boundary.

The Gloria was used for light entertainment during the 1940s, with band concerts, and also for charity concerts arranged by Arthur Barlow, the master of raising funds for all. There was a children's matinee on Saturday afternoons at 2pm.

In November 1951, the Gloria was taken over by Essoldo Cinemas Limited and was renamed the Essoldo and refurbished. In 1955 a new cinemascope screen was installed. The first film run was "The Robe". The last film shown at the Essoldo was "Guess Who's Coming To Dinner" starring Spencer Tracey and Sidney Poitier. This was its final programme before closure on 14 September 1968.

In November 1968 it was taken over by Messrs Arbiter and Weston who converted it to Lucky Seven Bingo. Bingo was played in the stalls area with balcony split into two auditoria with screens one and two. Falling attendances again caused closure.

It was opened again on 4 February 1978, as the Ladbroke Film Centre, by Hughie Green of Opportunity Knocks. Dwindling attendances led to closure on 31 December 1982. The last film shown was "Herbie Goes Bananas" on screen two.

It was then taken over by the Rank Organisation and became the Cascade Bingo, which was well attended until it closed on Sunday 15 October 2000.

During its later years a planning application was put in for a supermarket conversion but was refused on grounds of access. A second planning application was successful, the cinema was demolished in 2001 and an Aldi supermarket now stands on the site.

Sources:

The Gloria Cinema, Nottingham Road by Tony Bowler previously published on this web site Derby Evening Telegraph, 22 November 1938

Derby City Council planning application DER/1000/1370: FMR Cascade Bingo Club, Nottingham Road. Demolition of existing buildings and erection of a single storey retail store with associated car parking. Application dated 25 October 2000, approved February 2001.



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