
Case Study: Ultimate Picture Palace, Oxford

Setting up a Kino Kids Cinema Club

About the venue:

The [Ultimate Picture Palace](#), Oxford is a community-owned one screen cinema that primarily programmes off-date independent and international films for student and mature cinephile audiences.

Approach to Children & Family Programming:

Previously, the cinema offered a small number of family films that had varying success but programming for this audience had dropped off. As a community-owned cinema based in an area with a significant family demographic they recognised a need to fill a gap in their programming. In October 2024, with the aid of Film Exhibition Funding from Film Hub South East, they launched their [Kino Kids Cinema Club](#) programme.

The process:

To create a programme that fully met the needs of their community they designed a survey focussed on Children and families programming that was distributed via their newsletter and on local Whatsapp groups via their staff and volunteer networks. The survey results guided them on screening days and times, age-ranges of the children attending the cinema, film selections and desired concessions.

In addition, they consulted with the [FAN Young Audience Champion, Kirsten Geekie](#), who advised on safeguarding, how to create a child-friendly environment and film titles that aligned with the cinema's wider curatorial approach. She also advised on enhanced activities such as providing colouring-in sheets and ensuring there is always a welcoming introduction to a film.



Age-range:

Aimed at families and children aged 5 - 11 years. Over the course of the project they discovered the programme appealed most to families with children aged 4 - 8 years.

Ticket Prices:

£6 Adult, £4 Child these prices were based on feedback from audience members in the survey.

Screenings:

A fortnightly strand hosted on a Sunday at 12.30pm with additional screenings during school holidays.

Film titles:

The programming team referred to the [FAN Families & Young Audiences Film List](#) to put their programme together. The final programme was a mix of popular British, European, International titles and family-friendly classics tying in with Halloween, Christmas and half-term holidays.

Titles included Coraline, Ernest & Celestine, Studio Ghibli, Song of the Sea, Where the Wild Things Are and Robot Dreams.

Most popular titles:

The Muppets Christmas Carol saw outstanding attendance and screenings of Wallace & Gromit Double-Bill, Song of the Sea and Where The Wild Things Are also proved popular.

While well-known titles performed better, the cinema was pleased to see a solid turnout for riskier programming choices, such as Azur & Asmar and A Cat in Paris, demonstrating an appetite for diverse film offerings.

Additional Activity:

Their most successful event was a double-screening of Miniscule: Valley of the Lost Ants which they tied in with Oxford Green Week. For this screening they established a partnership with the local Museum of Natural History who provided a make your own mask craft sheet for audience members.



Family-friendly enhancements:

Blow-up booster seats were provided at every screening and the lights turned up and sound down low. Every screening also had an introduction from a member of the team and a wave to projection to start the film. Fruit juices were introduced to the bar as an option for children.

Marketing and Outreach:

The cinema commissioned a local designer to create a season identity including posters and flyers for on-site, city-wide and social media promotion.

Instagram was used for advertising and Facebook was used to target specific local family activity groups or general 'What's on' listing. They identified key community hubs such as a Young Person focussed theatre (Pegasus Theatre) and a local Community Centre to distribute materials and promote screenings.

The cinema believes the most successful mode of outreach was in fact word of mouth with the same families returning each week with friends.

Main Challenges:

The increase in event coordination, audience outreach and front-of-house operations required to run the programme stretched the capacity of the small team of staff and volunteers. Going forward the cinema is looking to recruit volunteers from within the local family community to help run the programme.

Biggest Success:

The cinema's ability to reach new audiences with a diverse and ambitious programme that included international and independent films, as well as animated features that might not otherwise be shown in other local cinemas. Many attendees had not previously visited the cinema, and some children experienced cinema for the first time through the screenings.

Contact:

For more information about the Ultimate Picture Palace contact Programmer Tom Jowett tom@uppcinema.com

