

Glasgow Film Theatre has been leading the way in specialised cinema for more than 45 years, playing almost 680 films per year and in 2019 we celebrated 80 years of cinema at Rose Street. Our three screens show 100% specialised titles, first-run world and independent cinema, artists' experimental work, issue-based programmes, thematic seasons, repertory programmes, Scottish produced work, festivals, and a programme of event cinema and live broadcast. As well as being one of the few Scottish cinemas still equipped to project 35 and 70mm film, GFT is at the forefront of new technologies, with all three cinemas fitted with digital projection equipment and Cinema One able to screen films in 3D. We also offer a curated selection of independent films to watch at home on our online platform, Glasgow Film At Home, which launched in 2020. Find out What's On at glasgowfilm.org

HISTORY AND ARCHITECTURE THE EARLY YEARS

GFT's legendary predecessor, the Cosmo, was Scotland's first arts cinema and only the second purpose-built arthouse in Britain, after the Curzon Mayfair in London. Opened on 18 May 1939, it was also the last cinema to be built in Glasgow before the outbreak of the Second World War.

The Cosmo arrived at the close of an important decade for British film culture. With the advent of sound in film, language became a barrier and popular films from the continent quickly disappeared from British screens. In Glasgow, audiences for world cinema were served by the Film Society of Glasgow. Founded in 1929, this was the first cultural film group in Scotland, and its growing membership demonstrated a real appetite for foreign-language film in the city.

In fact, Glaswegians in the period had a healthy appetite for film in general: in 1939 they went to the cinema an average of 51 times a year, compared to 35 times for the rest of Scotland, and 21 times in England. And they were well-served for cinemas - by the close of the decade, the city could boast a staggering 114, with a total seating capacity of more than 175,000. But there was, as yet, no commercial arthouse cinema.

Spotting a gap in the market, in stepped George Singleton, member of one of Glasgow's illustrious cinema chain families. He was joined by Charles Oakley, Chair of the Film Society and Scottish Film Council, and together they created the Cosmo - the name a snappy shortening of 'Cosmopolitan', a small cinema in Cambridge known to Oakley.

Singleton approached renowned local architects James McKissack and WJ Anderson II to work on the new cinema. Their design for the Cosmo's geometric, windowless façade was influenced by the work of Willem Marinus Dudok, a leading Dutch modernist architect. The international theme was continued outside in the choice of cladding materials - a mix of Ayrshire brick finished with faience cornices, set on a base of black Swedish granite - and inside, where a globe was installed over the stalls entrance. In its original layout, there was just a single auditorium, seating 850 people.



The Cosmo, 1960



Cinema One
in the 1970s

QUOTES

'GFT's where I learned French. I watched foreign films over and over again with my hands over the subtitles.'

- A.L. Kennedy, writer

'I am 86 years old and have had a hearing problem for many years. I was able to see and HEAR the film. It was wonderful, best film I've seen in years. I had my grandson with me. Thanks ever so much.'

- Visible Cinema audience member

'I have been wanting to go to the cinema all my life. This autism platform gives me the opportunity and it is uplifting.'

- Access Film Club audience member

'GFT screen really interesting films while retaining a vibrant, accessible atmosphere.'

- audience member

'Your film theatre f***ing rocks!'

Quentin Tarantino

'GFT introduced me to so many filmmakers I wouldn't have had a chance to see elsewhere, all manner of extraordinary movies. It's a place that means a lot to me.'

- David Tennant

FAMOUS FACES

Over the years GFT has played host to many illustrious guests, including:

Richard Attenborough, Elmer Bernstein, John Byrne, Danny Boyle, Simon Callow, Robert Carlyle, Robbie Coltrane, Sean Connery, Willem Dafoe, Carl Davis, Bill Forsyth, Stephen Fry, Richard Gere, Peter Greenaway, David Hayman, Jane Horrocks, Eddie Izzard, Felicity Kendall, Anthony LaPaglia, Paul Laverty, Johnny Lee Miller, Janet Leigh, Mike Leigh, Richard Linklater, Ken Loach, Baz Luhrmann, David Lynch, Kelly Macdonald, Ewan McGregor, Hayley Mills, Peter Mullan, David Niven, Simon Pegg, David Puttnam, Jean-Paul Rappenu, Christopher Reeve, Nicholas Roeg, Mickey Rooney, Paul Schrader, Martin Scorsese, Tilda Swinton, Quentin Tarantino, David Tennant, Giuseppe Tornatore, and Max Von Sydow.

The Cosmo opened on Friday 18 May 1939, with an advertisement in the *Glasgow Herald* the following day promising future audiences a programme of 'continental fiction films, revivals of British and American fiction films, documentary films, cartoons and news reels. There is only one qualification - they must be of first rate quality.'

Opening with a programme that included the French feature *Un Carnet de Bal* (1937) - against *Room Service* (1938) with the Marx Brothers and Lucille Ball, and *Marie Antoinette* (1938) starring Norma Shearer and Tyrone Power in other cinemas - the Cosmo's impact on the cultural life of the city was immediately felt. But it was equally clear from the start that the Cosmo would not be an elitist establishment: one dignitary commented at the opening ceremony, 'this is not simply a highbrow place where it is necessary to have an academic background of a university professor to understand the jokes. It is a place of entertainment, with films of high quality.' The opening also saw the first appearance of Mr Cosmo, a dapper and bowler-hatted cartoon figure based on George Singleton, designed by Charles Oakley. Mr Cosmo figured on posters and adverts for the cinema, and popped up on screen ahead of the main feature in a pose - comic or tragic - appropriate to the release. Over the years, he would become a familiar figure to generations of Glasgow cinema-goers, and his image and influence can be glimpsed around the GFT building to this day.

THE COSMO REBORN

The Cosmo flourished for three decades until economic circumstances dictated that it could not survive in its original form. On 21 April 1973 it was sold to the Scottish Film Council, re-opening the following year as Glasgow Film Theatre (GFT), with the former auditorium subdivided into a 398 seat cinema (now Cinema One) in the former balcony, and a conference/exhibition space in the stalls. Mr Cosmo bowed out at a gala screening of *Fantasia*, announcing he would 'watch with pride and affection this new development of the old tradition.' The new cinema opened on 2 May 1974 with a screening of Fellini's *Roma*.

In its new guise, the cinema would continue to show films beyond the commercial mainstream. The key difference lay in GFT's broader remit. Taking London's National Film Theatre as a model, GFT continued to bring current world cinema releases to the Cosmo's loyal audience, but also advanced newer trends in film culture, collaborating with the Third Eye Arts Centre (now CCA) to show experimental films, screening film seasons, retrospectives and late-night cult classics, and developing educational activities.

In 1986 GFT became a registered charity and embarked on a campaign to raise money for a second cinema to replace the old basement conference room. A seat dedication scheme organised as part of this effort was so enthusiastically taken up by GFT audiences, it was continued over into Cinema One, where funds were used towards the cinema's education programme. One patron, former projectionist Bob Stewart, deserves special mention as sponsor of an amazing 38 seats.

In 1988 the building was B-listed by Historic Scotland.

Cinema Two (with seats for 142), and the downstairs Café Cosmo, opened for business in 1991. Edinburgh-based architect James Doherty returned in 1998 to revamp the foyer; in a nod to the original design, the new foyer included a mosaic globe, designed by American Glasgow-based artist Todd Garner, set into the floor. In November 2013, GFT opened Cinema Three, which seats 60 and allows a greater depth of film programme. The most recent redevelopment work, in summer 2016, centred on the addition of an accessible lift to the main foyer area, along with a new double stairway that reinterprets the Cosmo's original 1930s butterfly staircase.

Since 2005, GFT has been home to Glasgow Film Festival (GFF). Held annually, GFF presents a unique programme



of feature films, special events, and live and interactive experiences at GFT and other cinemas, galleries and unusual venues across the city. GFF was named Outstanding Festival of the Year at The Herald Scottish Culture Awards in 2019; GFF 2020 achieved more than 43,000 admissions; and in 2021, when the festival moved online due to the pandemic lockdown, GFF had a UK-wide audience of more than 41,000.

For more on the history of GFT and Glasgow's glorious 'Cinema City' heritage watch the videos at [youtube.com/glasgowfilmtheatre](https://www.youtube.com/glasgowfilmtheatre)

Further Reading:

One Hundred Years of Glasgow's Amazing Cinemas - Bruce Peter (Polygon 1996)
Picture Past - Scottish Cinemas Remembered - Janet McBain (Moorfoot Publishing, 1985)
Cinema City, Glasgow and the Silver Screen - Neil Symington (2004)

HELP GFT CONTINUE TO PROVIDE CINEMA FOR ALL

Did you know that GFT is a registered charity? Now more than ever we depend on the generosity of our wonderful audiences to help support the work that we do. A pioneer of inclusivity, GFT offers free weekly family screenings, a dementia-friendly film programme, Movie Memories, and was the first cinema in the UK to be awarded the Autism Friendly Award. We believe cinema has the power to transform the lives of thousands of children, young people and cinema-goers of all ages, abilities, interests and backgrounds.

Your donation, big or small, helps support these programmes and can make a real difference. For more information and to donate online please visit: glasgowfilm.org/support-us or make a donation in person using our new contactless device in the foyer or in one of our collection boxes.