



Is The End Of Cinemas Near?

When I was younger, I used to love going to the cinema. I didn't go very often so it was such a thrilling experience when I managed to visit. I used to run to the pick n' mix section and buy an unnecessarily large quantity of sweets, I used to get my slush puppy, (which never fails to give you head freeze) and then buy the tickets for the full cinematic experience.

Now, I'm not much of a cinema fan, but my partner is a comic lover and entertainment fanatic, so whenever there's a new release, particularly in the comic world, we're always the first ones there! Having lived in Austria, Germany, Spain and the UK, I've certainly seen my fair share of cinemas, none of which have changed my opinion towards the cinema. So when COVID-19 hit at the beginning of 2020, I wasn't particularly upset that I would be losing the cinematic experience. For all those cinema-goers, like my partner, it was devastating.

In March 2020, cases of COVID-19 were increasing dramatically in the UK and we soon went into lockdown. All cinemas were closed in the space of a day and life as we knew it changed over night.

After a few months in lockdown, cinemas were allowed to reopen at the beginning of July, but "coronaphobia" has taken hold of the British population and the cinema industry is suffering the consequences.

It's true that cinemas have all the necessary safety precautions in place- perspex screens at the till, one-way systems in the cinemas and socially-distanced seating, but sitting in an enclosed space with strangers doesn't seem to be appealing in the midst of a pandemic.

In a time before coronavirus, the UK was one of the leading film industries in the world (behind Bollywood and Hollywood). We have produced some of the most successful films worldwide, including Harry Potter and James Bond. In 2019, box office revenue was £1.3 billion and UK-made films generated around 16% of global box office sales. Cinema admissions were holding steady despite the boom of online streaming and even the number of cinema sites was increasing. Huge hits such as “Avengers End Game”, “Joker” and “The Lion King” made the cinema a social event at weekends and with tempting offers such as “buy one get one free” or “half price on Mondays”, it was irresistible.

The three leading cinema companies in the UK are Cineworld, Odeon and Vue, the largest being Cineworld with around 24% market share. So when the news came earlier this week that Cineworld was closing for good, resulting in 5,500 UK job losses, the impact of COVID-19 on the cinema industry hit home. Cineworld announced all 127 of their cinemas in the UK will be closing with thousands of job losses.

Although I’m no health expert, the fact of the matter is that cinemas are perfectly safe places with all the safety procedures in place, certainly no more dangerous than going to the shops or the pub with friends, but British people are scared and with a second wave of COVID on it’s way, going to the cinema is the last thing on our minds.

Cinemas were banking on the success of big names, such as the new Bond film to increase sales, but with release dates being pushed back again and again, it appears there is no comeback for the cinema world yet.

With the biggest cinema provider in the UK now closed and talks that Vue and Odeon may follow, where does that leave us? Will the cinema ever make a comeback? Have we adapted all too well to watching films on our home screens? What is the future of the entertainment industry?