

REVIEWS: **NIGHT LIFE**

Les Waller's Good Cinema Guide



Being a not-infrequent visitor to this part of the Midlands, and having already reviewed the 'big orange' Easy box (now Odeon) in the town, the time came today to do this cinema's literal next-door neighbour at the Xscape shopping centre, run by Cineworld, and thus providing the ready-made excuse I needed to see the latest *Rocky* epic on opening day. The Xscape is a huge shopping centre and, at what must be 6-7 years old now, the building's domed exterior, spiral-metallic towers and imposing glazed frontage is still futuristic-looking. Also it is big in the way of 'unmissable'. Paid-for car parking is ample. Contrary to expectation for such a large complex, once inside, the Cineworld is well-sign-posted, and therefore quick to find.

Its wide convex paybox forms the cinema's indoor frontage and when I arrived there was already a long queue. This was disappointing since, of the six potentially-available positions, the staff (plenty present) had seen fit to open just the one till and thus began a long wait. This sped up, however, when a second cashier position opened and activated the call-forward system.

The Cineworld lobby is of shallow envelope with good use made of the cleverly-recessed Café/Pic 'n' Mix areas to the left and right, respectively, giving the impression of well-designed symmetry. I think also the branding at Cineworld is strong – with both subdued and bright reds, yellow neon and unpredictable foyer ambience, you know exactly where you are. In the lobby centre is a brace of two semi-circular backless PVC-covered seating areas, a little battle-scarred through use now, and over

the centre of which hangs a well-positioned, user-friendly, plasma screen rig.

Rocky Balboa was showing in Screen 10 of the symmetrically-divided 16-plex and was a big (maybe even 400-seat) theatre with high screen and great sightlines which, to me, immediately afforded a 'sense of occasion', a modern equivalent, perhaps, of the way larger-built cinemas used to be. The auditorium was about 30% full, the ambience reflecting the pleasantly-sentimental expectation of its audience (and having seen *Rocky's I-IV*, I understood that too, and was why I was there). It goes with the genre, I suppose, but, having picked what I'd hoped would be an isolated seat on the far right of the cinema, it wasn't long before the 'boisterous boys' brigade' made their bee-line for the row immediately behind, my withering glance at the first clumsy seat-kick enough to halt further disturbance. The cinema was clean and



Venue Cineworld Milton Keynes

Film *Rocky Balboa* 

Date Friday, 19.01.07 (4.30 p.m.)

Price £5.30 (\$10)





presentation was pretty much perfect throughout, so no complaints there. The gents toilets were a bit on the diminutive side but nonetheless acceptably clean and at least used doorless entry. I also spotted a cloak-room sign in the foyer's near corner.

After the film the foyer, slightly messy with popcorn now, was filling up; and, despite a palpable 'older couple' contingent, the erratic and vibrant buzz of tonight's experience told that this Cineworld is very much a young persons'/family-orientated venue. Moreover, the announcement that the 7.30 p.m. performance of *Rocky Balboa* was sold out in the standard auditorium confirmed somehow that Cinema here is very much alive and well. **S**

VERDICT

"A capacious and well-located cinema that probably deserves the lion's share of the town's business. Theatre is well-branded, is basically clean and facilities and presentation are good. Service and front-of-house management could be tighter and more personable."

Appearance:	8½/10
Services:	4½/10
Facilities:	8½/10
Presentation:	9¾/10
Ambience:	8¼/10
Value:	8/10
Overall rating:	★★★★☆ (79%)

ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE

A New Star on the Horizon



It's the moment when the lights dim, the music starts and the hundreds in the audience wait with baited breath, staring towards the screen. This is the time stars become stars, when legends are born and those watching become fans. For decades, cinema has been more than just a nice waste of time, it's become a cult.

It's exactly this kind of experience every cinema owner or manager wants whenever he runs a film for his customers. Everything and every detail has to be just perfect. The story line, the picture quality, the music and above all, the lighting. What does he do however when one or more of the lights high up on that ceiling are defective? What to do when that speaker isn't operating normally? These are the annoying moments when the total cinema experience is spoilt. What's the answer?

A scaffolding company can be called in to get up to replace that bulb or speaker but that takes time and the service is expensive. Who knows when the service will be needed again?

Alplift has confronted this problem and come up with a solution for all cinema managers, the revolutionary Movielift PHC 1000S, the new star on the cinema scene. No matter how high the ceiling, the Movielift will get you up there in the blink of an eye.

In just ten minutes, the ceiling can be reached to change that bulb or repair that faulty smoke sensor. Getting a scaffold into position can take up to half a day. That's all down time for the cinema and costs money. Thanks to the Movielift's light aluminium construction, it offers extreme easiness of use and handling. With just two persons, it can be moved to every imaginable position in the cinema e.g. between the rows of seats. The versatile and adjustable outriggers allow the Movielift to be set up where there is a down gradient, normal in most cinemas. It can even be set up right next to a wall. Because of its compactness, the Movielift is also easy to store.

All Movielift components are transported on sack barrows and with the optional stairlifter, can even be transported up and down stairs. Another big advantage is the Movielift operates on the normal domestic power supply of 240 volts. Just plug it into the nearest available socket and you're in business.

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