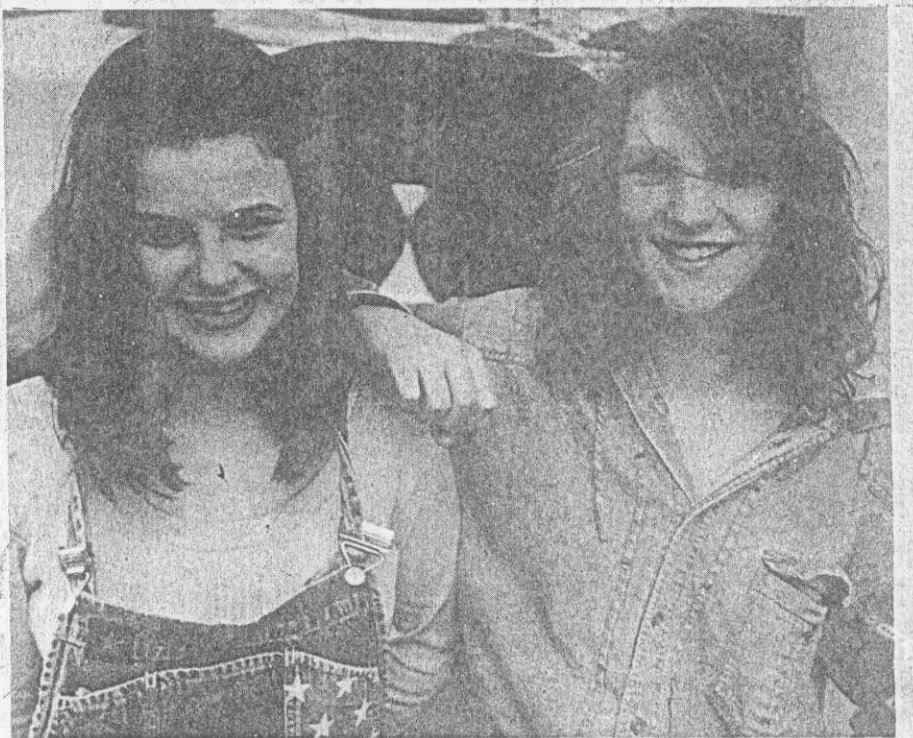


Now Limerick film world catches up with London



Thoroughly modern moviegoers Carmel Flynn and Jacqui Fitzgerald, both of Raheen, at the cineplex. □ Picture: DERMOT LYNCH. (LL)

THE change in cinema habits on Shannonside has been phenomenal.

A few short years ago, Limerick had to be satisfied with four daily performances, two each at the Central and Carlton.

Now there are upwards of 25 performances daily on six screens, reaching 30 at weekends with late night shows. We never had it as good.

Business is great, says Savoy cineplex manager Roy McCormack, delighted that they have now built a regular clientele.

It was as a result of this success story that the directors decided to increase the number of showings per day, with last performances from 9.30 onwards, depending on film length.

In another development, they have introduced noon matinees at weekends, with selected films—proof that Limerick people have relegated video for the wide screen.

There is, after all, nothing to compare with watching a movie in the home for which it was intended—the cinema, with its plush surroundings, big screen and stereophonic sound creating an atmosphere that nothing else can

Special Report by JOHN O'SHAUGHNESSY

equal.

Patrons are more selective than years ago, when three-hour plus double features were the norm. Now it is the main feature only, with trailers and advertisements making up the rest of the playing time. In and out in two hours, that's the way the public want it.

According to Savoy director Tom Anderson, they are anxious to cultivate filmgoing for the entire family, and to introduce the younger set to its entertainment value with suitable material.

At the same time they aim to cater for minority interests. Films have

played Dublin and elsewhere without ever reaching Limerick because it was felt there was not an audience here for them. *Black Robe*, *Delicatessen* and *Barton Fink* are three of the more recent releases which were not given play dates here.

"We want to address that", said Mr Anderson, hinting at a possible film club. "A university city like Limerick should be capable of supporting films which don't have a wide appeal."

There has been much favourable comment about the comforts on offer at the Savoy cineplex.

The cinemas are well designed, have excellent sound reproduction and the projection box, under the capable eye of chief projectionist Ray Griffin, is as modern as will be found in European capitals.

Most important of all, new product opens in Limerick in tandem with London. The older generation will recall that it often took upwards of one year from its London opening, for a movie to hit local screens. The advantage is that prints are now despatched to Limerick from the editing studios.

Uninterfered with in other projection boxes, there are no scratches and audio is perfect. In my younger days, so bad were some copies that I felt the lawnmower had

got at them.

With five cinemas under one roof, and a modernised Central Studio across the road, cinemagoers have it all at their fingertips.

In other words, there is no more rushing around town to see what is playing elsewhere.

The cinemagoing population are highly appreciative. They have given their answer at the box-office.

It has been detected that the bulk of audiences are made up of those in the 18-30 age group.

What is encouraging is that films geared towards the 4-12 age group are among the biggest box-office successes. Take *Beethoven*, for example. It opened in mid July

and is still running.

What must be remembered is that a night out at the flix remains the cheapest form of entertainment.

A couple can spend between two and three hours in the Savoy any evening for £7.

Mr Anderson, who oversees the Limerick operation, told me that they regularly surveyed the local scene, and had even more innovations in mind. The admissions graph to date suggests that the Savoy has won its battle to win back audiences. And they intend to keep ahead of the posse.

It has also spawned a new generation of filmgoers, those who had been reared on a diet of video and TV.

The management's decision from the outset to revert to continuous performances has been applauded.

"We fill a gap for those who have a few hours to fill in the afternoons and early evenings, particularly those waiting for bus and train connections, and those who want a break after shopping, as well as parents who want to treat their children—they are all valuable customers", said Roy McCormack, reminding me that they had a whole world of entertainment to offer, what with bars, a restaurant and bowling alley.

All the latest releases at the Savoy are reviewed in the *Limerick Leader* every Monday.

Future beckons for cinema from the past

THE reopening of the Central provides extra options for the Savoy management.

It has also brings back a host of fond memories for more seasoned filmgoers, who regretted its passing some years ago.

Last week, 200 readers of the *Limerick Leader* were guests for the preview of *In a League of Their Own*, and the reaction was most positive.

The majority were seeing it in its new format for the first time.

New projection equipment and

plush seats have been installed. The wide screen adds a fresh dimension.

It is true to say that the Central has an identity of its own. In an era of multi-screen complexes, it is now one of an ever dwindling number of individual units, with a capacity of 220, left in our major cities.

The Central is the ideal venue for a cinema club, with an emphasis on foreign made product which may not have a wide commercial appeal.

Unfortunately, Limerick does not have the population to sustain week-long runs for such movies, and film connoisseurs are the losers.

A similar club for children is also a possibility, with weekend showings of old and current movies aimed at younger audiences.

Declan McLaughlin and friends are brave enough to keep their film club going at the Belltable but, it will be agreed, they do not possess the same clout as the Ward

Anderson group, who are also distributors.

Yet there will always be a place for the Belltable club where the emphasis is on old classics, as distinct from modern-day productions aimed at selected audiences.

Upwards of 2,000 of our readers have in recent months been treated to a series of special advanced showings at the Savoy, made possible by distributors, film companies and the Savoy management.

This gesture of goodwill is set to continue, with a number of other top attractions lined up.

Streets paved with gold for City Hall

□ SO THE Corporation are "surveying" certain aspects of the Saturday disc parking situation. Doubtless the disc system is providing them with all the money they need to finance such surveys and common sense, which is free, does not need to be used.

Why does the Corporation not accept the words of the vast majority of the traders in this town on the matter?

How is it that officials of the Corporation do not (like the rest of us mere mortals) know country (and suburban) folk who just will not come in past the Crescent or Parkway centres unless it is abso-

lutely unavoidable?

How is that McDonalds can only see possible growth in a suburban location while they leave the city alone?

Why should anybody have to risk a £15.00 fine because the Corporation does not provide convenient off-street parking (in fact it provides less and less as time goes on).

Why should a woman with a bad hip visiting her dentist have to pay £15.00 to the Corporation because the dentist was running a little late and then discovered the lady needed more treatment

than had been thought. (This, I know, is a somewhat "hard" case but any Corporation official must know the effect it has 'a' on the person concerned, and 'b' on other people contemplating attending dentists, doctors, architects, hairdressers, etc., etc.).

Since the disc system has absolutely nothing to do with traffic control (which is in fact effected by the normal traffic regulations) why does the Corporation not admit that it is one great moneypinner and it is only their greed that makes the fine

as much as £15.00 and it was more of their greed that brought about the recent price increase of 50% per parking period.

Reduce the fine to £5.00: open a kiosk (or two) in the central city for payments, payments not made within 72 hours doubled, payments not made within 1 month go to law. The minimum of paperwork, the minimum of fuss, (Oh, do I hear them say "It can't be done because... etc.... do you remember when man could not survive speeds faster than the best efforts

of a horse?").

JOHN S. MITCHELL,
1 The Tontines,
Castleconnell,
Co. Limerick.

Towards a global village

□ NATIONAL territory is a myth and the right to rule comes from delivering justice to the people. The Bible gives a good precedent. The Jews were promised by God the lands of Israel as their

national territory forever.

Yet the Babylonians captured their lands, destroyed their temples, stole their gold and brought the Jews as slaves to Babylon. The promises were conditional on the Jews keeping the covenant which was a code of justice (The Ten Commandments).

They did not keep the covenant and the rule of their leaders was unjust. The people ruled are the best judges of the quality of justice administered and this is what is important and not territory. There is only one father-

land; the whole world and there is only one brotherhood; the universal brotherhood of all men.

The world is becoming more and more a global village where interdependence means we are depend on foreigners as suppliers or as customers. There is a mutual benefit where trade and travel is global to provide universal justice for all; not restricted by borders or race.

If the quality of justice is superior then the number of people who want to become part of that system will grow.

STEPHEN FALLON,

17 Barrington St.,
Limerick.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LIMERICK LEADER, 54 O'CONNELL STREET, LIMERICK