UC Santa Barbara

UC Santa Barbara Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Cinema Circuits: Domestic Theater Chains, Global Exhibition Practice, and Industrial Standards in Formation, 1992 to 2019

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/55m3k7j6

Author

Orzel, Charlotte H

Publication Date

2024

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara

Cinema Circuits: Domestic Theater Chains, Global Exhibition Practice, and Industrial Standards in Formation, 1992 to 2019

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Film and Media Studies

by

Charlotte Hillary Orzel

Committee in charge:

Professor Michael Curtin, Co-Chair

Professor Ross Melnick, Co-Chair

Professor Cristina Venegas

Professor Jennifer Holt

Professor Charles Acland, Concordia University

June 2024

The dissertation of Charlotte Hillary Orzel is approved.

Charles Acland

Jennifer Holt

Cristina Venegas

Ross Melnick, Committee Co-Chair

Michael Curtin, Committee Co-Chair

May 2024

Cinema Circuits: Domestic Theater Chains, Global Exhibition Practice, and Industrial Standards in Formation, 1992 to 2019

Copyright © 2024

by

Charlotte Hillary Orzel

VITA OF CHARLOTTE ORZEL
May 2024

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts in Film and Media, Queen's University, May 2015

Master of Arts in Media Studies, Concordia University, May 2017

Doctor of Philosophy in Film and Media Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara, June 2024 (expected)

PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT

2015–2017: Research Assistant, Department of Communication Studies, Concordia University

2016: Teaching Assistant, Department of Film Studies, Concordia University

2017–2018: Research Assistant, Department of Film and Media Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

2018–2023: Teaching Assistant, Department of Film and Media Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

2019–2020: Editorial Assistant, *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies*, Department of Film and Media Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

2019–2022: Graduate Research Fellow, Orfalea Center for Global and International Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

2020, 2021, 2023: Teaching Associate, Department of Film and Media Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

2020–2021: Lead Teaching Assistant, Department of Film and Media Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

2022: Teaching Associate, Summer Research Academies, University of California, Santa Barbara

2023–2025: Visiting Assistant Professor, Communication Department, Tulane University

PUBLICATIONS

"Coming Soon, Thinking Back: Cineplex Entertainment and Exhibition Practice in Transition," unpublished thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Media Studies, Concordia University, 2015, 164 pp.

Co-edited with Mary Michael, *Media Fields: Critical Explorations of Media and Space* no. 17 (2022): "Modularity/Modification," special issue.

"'See The Big Picture': Cineplex Entertainment and Branded Cinemagoing," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 32, no. 1 (2023): 31–60.

Co-edited with Rafael de Luna and Ross Melnick, "Film Exhibition in Crisis" *Aniki: Portuguese Journal of the Moving Image* 10, no. 2 (2023), special section.

With Ross Melnick, "Looking Out the Window(s): How US Film Exhibitors Survived the Early Years of the COVID-19 Pandemic," interview with Jackie Brenneman and Bryan Braunlich, *Aniki* 10, no. 2 (2023): 172–94.

"Fraught Gathering: Studio-Exhibitor Reckoning at CinemaCon 2021," in *Media Industries in Crisis: What COVID Unmasked*, ed. Vicki Mayer, Noa Lavie, and Miranda Banks (New York: Routledge, 2024), 160–69.

SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS

Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship: Master's, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2015–2016

Special Entrance Award, Concordia University, 2015–2016

Out-of-Province Tuition Remission, Concordia University, 2015–2016

Department of Communication Scholarship, Concordia University, 2015–2017

Chancellor's Fellowship, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2017–2022

Department of Film and Media Research Travel Grant, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2019–2020

Doctoral Fellowship, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2020–2022

Department of Film and Media Research Travel Grant, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2022

Graduate Division Dissertation Fellowship, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2022

Academic Senate Doctoral Student Travel Grant, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2023

Media Industries Scholarly Interest Group Graduate Student Writing Award, Society for Cinema and Media Studies, for the essay "Global Tools, Local Partners: IMAX Expansion in the Contemporary Chinese Exhibition Market," 2023

FIELDS OF STUDY

Film Exhibition

Media Industry Studies

ABSTRACT

Cinema Circuits: Domestic Theater Chains, Global Exhibition Practice, and Industrial Standards in Formation, 1992 to 2019

by

Charlotte Hillary Orzel

Since the early 2000s, major domestic theater chains in the United States and Canada have responded to economic pressures and the existential threat of home and mobile entertainment options by dramatically reshaping the industry: pursuing aggressive consolidation of chains, introducing new technologies and services as premium screening options, and diversifying their holdings in areas parallel to and outside the exhibition sector. Simultaneously, these theaters have become outlets for global technology providers, like IMAX, RealD, Dolby, and CJ 4DPLEX, and assets in the exhibition empires of international companies including China's Dalian Wanda and the UK's Cineworld. Driving these parallel currents of change is a historical transformation of the cultural status of theater chains, negotiated, maintained, and mediated by the industrial activity of film exhibitors. Focusing on the activities of the top four exhibitors in the US-Canada market—AMC Theatres, Cinemark Theatres, Regal Cinemas, and Cineplex Entertainment—my dissertation seeks to examine how the twin positions these "exhibition giants" occupy as powerful actors in the domestic exhibition industry and one member of globally dispersed exhibition circuits and

distribution flows makes them crucial nodes mediating between the levels of global industry, domestic market, and local cultural experience in this transformed context.

Examining this emerging cultural-industrial landscape, my research asks: How have major US and Canadian exhibitors reconfigured the cultural value of movie theaters through shifts in their industrial practices and discourses since the early 1990s? How have structural transformations within the exhibition sector enabled and influenced these changes? What investments has this transition prompted from global technology brands and exhibition empires and how have these actors redefined the activities of domestic exhibitors within their own projects?

Drawing from research on media industry studies, my dissertation challenges these divisions to offer an account of film exhibition as a globalized industry, in part by focusing on major exhibitors whose size makes them crucial industrial influences and assets, situates them in and across localities, and implicates them in highly heterogenous practices. With this understanding, I examine emerging exhibitor activities using methodologies of textual and economic analysis within media industry studies. I analyze information from industrial sources including trade and popular periodicals, press releases, and financial reports. Through these materials, I establish historical trajectories of emerging exhibition practices and assess the common-sense ideas exhibitors deploy as they legitimate these activities among themselves, with partners and owners, and to the public. This analysis also involves tracing the way these economic and cultural activities create cultural distinction between and through audience members through the dynamics of taste within consumer culture. Finally, I will examine the way these intertwined aspects of economy and culture are shaped and

constrained as they move across the registers of the local, national, and global, and how they in turn contribute to the construction of these spatial dimensions.

I argue that the development of a domestic oligopoly in the US-Canada market, developing out of the overlapping interests of private equity investors and large corporate theater chains in the 1990s and 2000s, set the stage not only for the restructuring of the exhibition industry, but for the most transformative developments in 2000s and 2010s exhibition practice. Domestic exhibition giants established dominant national circuits and used their scale, power, and capital to establish new revenue streams, facilitate the transition to digital cinema, standardize new premium screening options, and attract affluent cinemagoers, using each step to further cement their control of the domestic exhibition industry. Their effectiveness in this aim, during a period of retraction from international expansion by US exhibitors, made them the acquisition targets of foreign exhibition companies Wanda and Cineworld, ushering in a new stage of international connectivity in the exhibition industry and completing the integration of domestic film exhibition into the networks of global media and capital.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction *1*

Film Exhibition Today 7

Historical Change in US and Canadian Film Exhibition 10

Film Exhibition as a Media Industry 20

Contemporary Exhibition Giants 25

Project Outline 34

Chapter 1: Crisis, Recovery, and the Making of Domestic Exhibition Giants *39*

Origins of Crisis in the Exhibition Industry 43

Vulture Capital and the Megaplex Crash 62

Recovery and Adjustment in Exhibition 73

Conclusion 88

Chapter 2: Beyond the Box Office *91*

Diversification Through Collaboration: US Exhibition Giants and National CineMedia 93

Monopoly-Led Diversification: Cineplex Entertainment in the Canadian Market 129

Conclusion 151

Chapter 3: Digital Expansion(s) *154*

Digital Transitions 156

Exhibition Giants Buy into Premium Cinema 171

From Immersive Technology to Premium Cinema 192

Conclusion 204

Chapter 4: Global Chains and Exhibition Empires *206*

Cinemark's Latin American Expansion.....210

AMC Falters Overseas.....233

International Contraction, Domestic Dominance 241

From Beijing to Hollywood, Through Kansas City: The Wanda-AMC Acquisition 244

The British Are Coming: Cineworld Marches on Knoxville and Toronto....258

Conclusion 262

Conclusion *265*

Pandemic-Era Exhibition Empires 265

Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Exhibition Industry.....270

Project Findings and Conclusions 274

Notes *281*

Bibliography *328*

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Exhibition Giants' Share of US Movie Theater Screens, 2002 to 2017 44

Figure 2: US Movie Theater Screens, 1987 to 2017 48

Figure 3: Annual Movie Theater Box Office, US-Canada, 1987 to 2017.....72

Figure 4: Annual Movie Theater Admissions, US-Canada, 1987 to 2019.....197

Figure 5: Movie Theater Screens; Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina; 1993 to 2001.....215

Figure 6: Annual Movie Theater Admissions; Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina; 1990 to 2000 216

Figure 7: Annual Movie Theater Box Office; Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina; 1995 to 2001 217

Figure 8: Cinemark Movie Theater Screens; Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina; 2004 to 2019 230

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Private Equity Investors in US-Canada Film Exhibition, 1992 to 1998 55

Table 2: Private Equity Investors in US-Canada Film Exhibition, 2000 to 2003 67

Table 3: Private Equity Investors in US-Canada Film Exhibition, 2004 77

Table 4: Exhibition Mergers and Acquisitions Involving US-Canada Exhibition Giants, 2002 to 2006 82

Table 5: Top Twenty US-Canada Exhibitors by Number of Screens, 1997 83

Table 6: Top Twenty US-Canada Exhibitors by Number of Screens, 2007 84

Table 7: Top Twenty US-Canada Exhibitors by Number of Screens, 2017 85

Table 8: Selected US-Canada Exhibition Mergers and Acquisitions, 2007 to 2017...86

Table 9: Cinema Advertising Council (CAC) Annual Member Revenues, 2002 to 2019 104

Table 10: National CineMedia (NCM) Annual Advertising Revenues, 2006 to 2019 105

Table 11: Fathom Events Annual Revenues, Operating Costs, and Net Profits, 2007 to 2013 116

Table 12: Cineplex Galaxy/Cineplex Entertainment Annual Revenue Mix, 2003 to 2019 135

Table 13: AMC Theatres 3D Movie Screens, US and International Theaters, 2010 to 2019 173

Table 14: Regal Entertainment Group 3D Movie Screens, 2007 to 2012 174

Table 15: Cinemark Theatres 3D Movie Screens, US Theaters, 2010 to 2016.....175

Table 16: Cineplex Entertainment 3D Movie Screens, 2008 to 2019 176

Table 17: AMC Theatres Premium Offerings (excluding 3D), US and International Theaters, 2010 to 2019 179
Table 18: Regal Cinemas Premium Offerings (excluding 3D), 2007 to 2016 180
Table 19: Cinemark Theatres Premium Offerings (excluding 3D), US and International Theaters, 2009 to 2019 181
Table 20: Cineplex Entertainment Premium Offerings (excluding 3D), 2008 to 2018 182
Table 21: Latin American Multiplexes, March 1998 223
Table 22: Cinemark Theater Circuit; Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina; 2004 to 2019 231
Table 23: Cinemark Theater Circuit; Colombia, Central America, and Chile; 2004 to 2019 234
Table 24: Cinemark Theater Circuit; Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Paraguay; 2004 to 2019 235

Introduction

In 1982, the US exhibition industry was radically different than it would become by the 2000s. This was the year that Carl Patrick Sr. and his son, Michael, took over Martin Theaters from Atlanta-based conglomerate Fuqua Industries. The Patricks renamed their new circuit Carmike Cinemas.[1] Carl Sr. had been an executive at Martin Theaters before and after the Martin family had sold the circuit to Fuqua in 1969 and he had been instrumental in the chain's expansion to 265 screens by the early 1980s.[2] After buying Carmike, the Patricks moved to expand further, focusing in particular on small, rural markets where their chain could dominate, moving in by either purchasing and renovating an existing theater or constructing new multiplexes. The company used this strategy to avoid competition over major markets and keep costs low. By using these tactics and making several acquisitions during the 1980s, it built a sizeable chain with a significant presence in the Southeast, Southwest, and Midwest.[3] Its acquisition activity accelerated after a 1994 IPO and, in 1995, the 2,375-screen Carmike Cinemas became the United States' largest exhibitor. By this point, the company held significant power as a major exhibitor with a regionally concentrated circuit, control of many of its markets, and a companywide focus on operational efficiencies that largely restrained its involvement with the expensive new megaplex theaters becoming popular with other large exhibitors.[4] But strikingly, while it was a large, publicly traded company by the mid-1990s, it maintained the approach of an entrepreneurial family business which prided itself on doing things differently than the competition.

Carmike was soon eclipsed in size by acquisition-hungry competitors. Other chains moved in on its markets as theater construction boomed across the country, forcing Carmike

to spend more on upscale cinemas to compete. As exhibitors overextended themselves buying and building expensive new megaplexes, exhibition stocks, including Carmike's, took a hit.[5] The domestic exhibition industry was in the throes of a sector-wide crisis by 2000, as multiple exhibitors reorganized with bankruptcies or otherwise found themselves in financial difficulty. In 2001, Carmike filed for bankruptcy and reorganized, with Michael Patrick remaining in place as CEO.[6] But as the crisis tapered off, the chain stagnated under Patrick's leadership when compared with the aggressive consolidation of other large chains during the 2000s. Patrick was eventually removed by the board of directors in 2009.[7]

The company initially tried to pivot strategically after it passed out of family hands. Patrick's successor, S. David Passman III, led a significant acquisition campaign, expanding the circuit from 2,236 screens at the end of 2010 to 2,938 screens by 2015.[8] But coming so late to scaling up, the company ultimately couldn't compete with the US's three largest theater chains, which each controlled between four and seven thousand screens and together participated in key joint ventures in cinema advertising, event cinema, and digital cinema administration during the 2000s and 2010s. Facing significant debts from its acquisition spree, Carmike sold to AMC Theatres in 2016. The sale brought AMC's circuit to over eight thousand screens and linked the former Carmike chain to Australia's Hoyts Cinemas and China's Wanda Cinema Line in the global exhibition network assembled by AMC's parent company, Chinese conglomerate Dalian Wanda.[9] Once a regional exhibitor that rose to prominence by moving against dominant chains' approach to the exhibition business, Carmike's old territories had now been folded into its former competitor's extensive international circuit. Its acquisition punctuated the long-running decay of the kind of regionally powerful, entrepreneurially operated exhibitors that could rise to a prominent

position within the industry given the right strategy. Instead, power had solidified among a group of large exhibitors that has maintained dominance over the domestic industry since the mid-2000s, in part by establishing increasingly tight links with the broader global exhibition market.

This project examines this transition and the role the largest domestic exhibitors in the US-Canada market have played in the major industrial transformations of the last thirty years. From the early 1990s to the end of the 2010s, major domestic theater chains responded to the economic forces of megaplexing, the resulting economic crisis in exhibition, and ongoing threats from home entertainment options by dramatically reshaping the industry. They have aggressively consolidated their theater chains, diversified their holdings in areas parallel to and outside the exhibition sector, rolled out digital projection technology, introduced new premium screening options, and made efforts to expand abroad in Asia, Europe, and Latin America. Simultaneously, these theaters have become outlets for global technology providers, like IMAX and RealD, and assets in the exhibition empires of international companies including China's Dalian Wanda and the United Kingdom's Cineworld. Profound shifts in the cultural dynamics of the exhibition industry have underpinned these transformations, and large corporate exhibitors have been instrumental in driving, negotiating, and mediating this change. Focusing on the top four exhibitors in the US-Canada market—AMC Theatres, Cinemark Theatres, Regal Cinemas, and Cineplex Entertainment—my dissertation analyzes how the dual positions these major chains occupy as both powerful actors in the domestic exhibition industry and as globally influential forces in film distribution and exhibition make them crucial mediators between the global industry, domestic markets, and local cultural experience.

Analyzing these exhibitors and their activities, my research asks: How have major US and Canadian exhibitors reconfigured the cultural value of movie theaters through shifts in their industrial practices and discourses since the early 1990s? How have corporate exhibitors cultivated and leveraged audiences through emerging practices to support new industrial visions of cinemagoing? How have structural transformations within the exhibition sector enabled and influenced these changes? What investments has this transition prompted from global technology brands and exhibition empires? How have these actors redefined the activities of domestic exhibitors within their own projects? What does an understanding of corporate exhibition activity in this period tell us about the place of exhibition in the face of proliferating sites of film consumption and the structure of the film industry in general? What are the consequences of these shifts for the cultural function of movie theaters in everyday life?

This project examines the period between 1992 and 2019, which has marked a time of significant change for the exhibition industry as domestic exhibitors first touched off and then adapted to the long-term impacts of a brief but dramatic debt crisis across the sector. I argue that consolidation of chains and the formation of large national exhibitors has been a foundational element in the other transformations of this thirty-year span. Instrumental in these patterns of concentration was the arrival of private equity investment in the exhibition industry beginning in the early 1990s. Early entrants fueled both consolidation and the coming crisis, while later investors used their capital to merge chains, return them to financial stability, and restructure their operations along more corporate lines as they sought profitable exits from their investments. Under the influence of their new owners, the largest exhibitors continued to grow after the crisis. AMC, Regal, and Cinemark grew their

combined share of US screens from 31 to 48 percent between 2004 and 2018 while, in Canada, Cineplex Entertainment became a virtual monopoly with a 75 percent share of the country's box office in 2018.[10] Unlike the consolidation patterns of the previous few decades, which saw screens spread across more exhibitors and dramatic reversals in the positions of top circuits, this group became remarkably stable by the mid-2000s and remained that way for the next decade.

As they became the dominant exhibitors in the domestic market, these large corporate exhibitors were marked by both the lessons of the megaplex debt crisis and the influence of their new private equity owners. The shifts in industrial practice they exercised in the 2000s and 2010s were united by their deviation from the logics of exhibition expansion dominant from the mid-1980s to the late 1990s: rather than seeking ways to dramatically raise attendance levels, large exhibitors have centered their initiatives on increasing the revenues they can command from the existing cinemagoing audience. This approach has characterized corporate exhibitors' pursuit of economies of scale through horizontal integration, as well as movements towards diversifying the exhibition business in new areas and investing in new premium screening options. Extending their reach outside traditional revenue streams of box office and concessions, these exhibitors have developed holdings in parallel areas to the traditional exhibition business, like cinema advertising, event cinema, and digital cinema administration. Others have gone further, pursuing ventures in gaming, amusements, out-of-home advertising, and adjacent leisure spaces that fall outside the cinema business altogether. As such changes take place behind the scenes at theater chains, large exhibitors have also expanded their offerings to include a range of technologically enhanced screening experiences including 3D, IMAX and other large

formats, motion seating, and multisensory effects as well as expanded services and amenities such as reserved seating, alcoholic beverages, and in-theater dining. Both initiatives, while ostensibly open to the mass public, have intensified exhibitors' pursuit of the upper-class audiences who are capable of paying for premium experiences, desirable to new business partners in advertising and event cinema, and socially primed to seek out particular forms of upscale entertainment.

Finally, as domestic corporate exhibitors have consolidated their theater chains, forged new paths for growth, reshaped their cinema offerings, and recruited desirable audiences, they have attracted the attention of international exhibition interests and been integrated into newly global movie theater chains. Internationalization efforts on the part of large US exhibitors in the 1990s, defined by the aim to control foreign markets by building US-style multiplex chains abroad, had receded by the 2000s, with few such holdings remaining in domestic hands and the global exhibition business largely contained within national and regional borders. The 2010s saw an inversion of these patterns on two fronts: foreign exhibition companies like Dalian Wanda and Cineworld moved into the US and aimed to acquire US exhibitors, not compete with them through large-scale theater construction. Instrumental in this shift was the rising power of domestic exhibition interests into a stable oligopoly which, for a buyer with sufficient capital, could be networked with similar chains abroad to build world-spanning exhibition empires within only a few years. Such circuits, now digitally enabled, outfitted with a range of premium screening options, and dominant over their national competitors through both size and control of new revenue streams, have redefined a domestic exhibition industry in which it had once been possible for a small family-owned chain like Carmike Cinemas to rise to the top of the industry.

Film Exhibition Today

This project joins ongoing scholarly conversations, expanding over the last thirty years, that have revealed histories of film exhibition and cinemagoing and their impact on the circulation of film, the experiences of audiences, and the development of cultural life. Studying exhibition contexts within and outside the United States, this research has decentered traditional examinations of the aesthetics, social influences, and production histories surrounding film texts, instead illuminating new insights by examining the history of cinema as that of an evolving set of sociocultural institutions and practices.[11] Attesting to the inextricability of this mode of study from understandings of the medium itself, these scholars have above all aimed to answer the question of what cinema *does* as it circulates in public and what people who distribute, exhibit, and encounter it *do with* it in these settings.

One significant stream of this scholarly activity is the work of "new cinema history," outlined and championed by Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst, and Phillippe Meers in a pair of edited collections and further developed by researchers in the Histories of Moviegoing, Exhibition and Reception scholarly network.[12] Describing his and his coeditors' choice of nomenclature, Maltby argues against the deeply embedded textual focus he sees in much of "film history," which he argues tends towards symptomatic reading, thematic grouping, and production histories of particular films.[13] Countering these tendencies, he posits an alternative approach to "cinema history" rooted in the empirical investigation of cinema as a social institution experienced by historically specific audiences.[14] Maltby somewhat exaggerates the qualities of traditional film history and the state of scholarship on film exhibition, and even he acknowledges that "the focus of the new cinema history represents an application to cinema of questions already familiar to the

broader field of media studies."[15] However, new cinema history rightly identifies an ongoing imbalance in film studies towards film texts, production processes, and theories of reception evident in both the volume of research produced on these topics and their place in film studies curricula compared to scholarly approaches that investigate exhibition, circulation, and reception. Research on film exhibition within and adjacent to the work of new cinema history demonstrates that the dynamics of exhibition and cinemagoing practice raise questions and deepen understandings critical to the development of the field of film and media studies at large.

Film scholars agree that theatrical exhibition is an essential part of the medium's history, but this project also contends that movie theaters are influential and, to this point, indispensable components of the contemporary media industries. Most exhibition scholarship focuses on theatrical and alternative exhibition contexts predating the 1980s, when the movie theater, though not the sole site of film consumption was certainly still the privileged one. This pattern of scholarly attention reflects, perhaps unconsciously, the commonsense idea that the theatrical exhibition business and the practice of cinemagoing have been in a state of permanent decline since the mid-twentieth century and are now on the verge of extinction. Often, this narrative attributes the decline of theaters to the popularization of whichever at-home distribution channel that has emerged most recently: broadcast television, cable, video and DVD, and, in the present day, streaming. Given the collective cultural fixation on the new and vital, the implication of these stories is generally that cinemas are no longer worthy of sustained attention. However, the understanding of exhibition's long and inevitable decline is, in the first place, one that is generally extrapolated from the world's most saturated cinema markets in the United States and

Europe. It tends to ignore the dramatic fluctuations in attendance, box office, and cinema infrastructure that emerging markets in Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East have experienced in the last fifty years and the fact that film exhibition is again a growing business in some of these regions. But even in the US, where attendance has been closer to flat than falling, box office has remained strong, even accounting for inflation. As of 2019, the domestic cinema market had yearly profits of $11 billion dollars. Domestic theaters have maintained these strong figures due to exhibitors' adaptability to changing historical and industrial conditions. This is especially true of those large exhibitors who maintain significant advantages over many independent theaters in the current industrial climate.

Aside from the specifics of their profitability, exhibitors have maintained a privileged role in the film industry's release patterns and in the popular life of cinema. Movie theaters act as the showcase window for the long, winding lifecycles of film product, creating the experiential grandeur and spatiotemporal limitations that focalize promotional campaigns, critical response, and audience attention. In this way, the theatrical window generates popular knowledge about cinema that circulates alongside films long after their theatrical run ends, affecting their prospects in future windows.[16] Cinemas sustain the economics of the film industry, but they also feed its mythology. Movie theaters materialize film culture as an experience: at cinemas, the film industry can control the conditions of film presentation as well as the cultural environments where the glamour and allure of movies are encountered, and, indeed, produced. The theme park offers the intensified, exceptional form of such experiences, separated by design from the everyday, but the movie theater is where these atmospheres are made quotidian and habitual.[17] This role of cinemas in the industry's mythos is arguably more vital than ever as audiences' contact with movies becomes more

private, domestic, virtual, and intangible. Considering these powerful functions, film exhibition and its history have a great deal to tell us about the structure, activities, and status of the film industry more broadly. Furthermore, the sea change in the structures and practices of domestic exhibitors over the last thirty years demands special attention and investigation if we are to understand cinema today.

Historical Change in US and Canadian Film Exhibition

To explain the significance of the transformations in film exhibition during this project's period of study, bookended by the years 1992 and 2019, I first must contextualize it within a brief history of the exhibition industry. In particular, the account below focuses on the evolution of patterns of ownership, power, and control within exhibition.

Early film exhibition in the United States, beginning in the mid-1880s, was characterized by a variety of viewing contexts, devices, and exhibitors. The first movie shows projected by the Lumière Brothers' Cinématographe device in Europe established film screenings as a public event, in which moviegoers viewed films together. This practice was quickly reinforced by Cinématographe screenings in the US and Thomas Edison's introduction of the Vitascope projector, replacing his previous peep show machine, the Kinetoscope.[18] Most early public screenings were characterized by the same itinerant exhibition through which other novelties of the period reached their audiences, with films screening irregularly in amusement parks, vaudeville theaters, and in a variety of venues visited by travelling exhibitors.[19] In 1905, exhibitors in New York and Pittsburgh popularized permanent cinemas, establishing a new standard exhibition site for movies: the nickelodeon.[20] These cheaply constructed storefront theaters kept operating costs low for

new exhibitors and back-to-back, morning-to-night screenings of short programs meant they could charge only a nickel or, later, a dime, but turn significant profits by attracting audiences throughout the day.[21] The promise of low start-up costs and the potentially life-changing profits of operating a successful nickelodeon drew in entrepreneurs of all backgrounds and ignited a nationwide boom in motion picture theater openings. Many of those who would become foundational members of the Hollywood studio system began their motion picture careers as nickelodeon owners, including Carl Laemmle, William Fox, Adolph Zukor, Louis B. Mayer, Marcus Loew, Sam Katz, and Harry, Albert, and Sam Warner.[22]

Both before and during the nickelodeon period, control over exhibition, though partial, derived from control over patents on projection devices and restrictions on exhibitor access to film prints. Control over production equipment and raw film stock established similar domination over the industry's production branch. The Motion Picture Patents Company (MPCC), a patent pool initially formed by the major film companies of the day in 1908, continued the process put in place by Edison's preceding patent lawsuits, exercising monopoly power in all three branches of the film industry. In exhibition, the transition to rentals over sales of film prints, licensing agreements with film exchanges, and projector patents enabled the MPCC to tightly control exhibitors' access and screening of films, even though the MPCC and its members did not own a significant number of theaters themselves.[23]

As the popularity of nickelodeons persisted throughout the 1900s and early 1910s, enterprising exhibitors looking to strengthen cinemas' attraction for the middle class began to turn away from storefront sites and towards purpose-built theaters. Initially, these

exhibitors consistently brought film programming to vaudeville and legitimate theaters towards the end of the 1910s.[24] Early "deluxe" theaters, including Samuel "Roxy" Rothafel's celebrated Strand Theater in New York City, opened in 1914, soon popularized a new theater style called the movie palace.[25] Centrally located in downtown shopping districts across the country, movie palaces were sumptuously decorated, expansive cinema halls with seating for thousands, integrated programs of filmed and live entertainment, large theater staffs, and air conditioning. Taking the lead of other retail chains, large regional theater chains like Loew's, the Stanley Company, and Balaban & Katz grew and took control of some of the largest and most lucrative US markets, developing important industrial strategies for selling movies as mass entertainment including building economies of scale, employing scientific management strategies, and leveraging their monopsony buying power.[26] Horizontal integration enabled these chains to fund their upscale amenities, plan the chain's development, and distribute their resources with greater efficiency.

Meanwhile, the MPCC's power over the film industry grew and independent distributors launched countermeasures to resist them, ultimately resulting in a reversal in the industry's power structure, with consequences for exhibition. Independent studios created distribution alliances that purchased and distributed members' films to exhibitors unlicensed by the MPCC, defended themselves against patent suits, and lobbied the government to implement antitrust legislation against patent pools.[27] During this period, the feature films that supported emerging movie palaces grew into the prevailing standard, fueled by the independent film producers and distributors that formed new distribution alliances which aimed to capitalize on the new format.[28] By contrast, the MPCC hesitated to act decisively on the trend, pushing some of its members to belatedly pursue distribution with their own

distribution firms rather than the MPCC's General Film distribution monopoly.[29] Further, while the MPCC operated on its profits alone, independent studios accepted financing from Wall Street, taking on debt to lure stars from MPCC companies and draw audiences to their films.[30] The MPCC was also hit much harder by the loss of revenue from export markets in Europe during World War I than the independents, whose business was still concentrated in the US market.[31] These factors had already eroded the MPCC's power by 1916, when the district court ruled the MPCC an illegal combination and ordered it to dissolve. While the MPCC delayed dissolution by filing an appeal, its members soon abandoned the combine.[32] The independent studios that took the MPCC's place reestablished an oligopoly in the film industry through more permanent and legally sanctioned methods of combination: horizontal and vertical mergers.[33]

The emerging major studios took control of large regional theater chains to vertically integrate their business, using direct control over exhibition to cement their power over the film industry as a whole. In the mid-1920s, Balaban & Katz merged with Paramount, adding its five hundred theaters to substantial theater holdings the studio had acquired since the early part of the decade; Loew's acquired first Metro Pictures and then Goldwyn Pictures, becoming Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM); and the First National Exhibitors' Company moved into film production after earlier involvement in distribution. Warner Bros. joined them by acquiring First National and then several smaller theater chains in 1928. These three companies, with the help of their expansive exhibition holdings, would remain the three largest and most prominent studios throughout the golden age of the studio system.[34] By the end of the 1920s, Fox and RKO had acquired their own national theater chains as well.[35] Together, the Majors established the system of runs, zones, and clearances, and made sure

that their theaters, the largest and grandest movie palaces, centrally located in major markets across the US and Canada, had access to their members' films during the first run, when they could command the highest ticket prices and use their publicity departments to turn out audiences.[36] Through this system, studios maintained control of competing exhibitors' access to films and ensured they kept the majority of exhibition profits in the 1930s and 40s, which they reinvested in their production and distribution businesses. Beginning in the 1920s, the Majors also built "shop window" cinemas in major cities overseas as a means of marketing and localizing not only their studios' films, but the norms and appeals of Hollywood film consumption.[37] Control of exhibition profits at home and standard-setting cinemas abroad were essential to maintaining a steady flow of profits to fuel production and distribution and maintain the Majors' primacy in the domestic and international film business.

Following early prosecutions of exhibition monopolies in Los Angeles and Chicago, the Department of Justice (DOJ) acted against the studio oligopoly over the film business by filing an antitrust suit against the Majors in 1938. The DOJ argued that the studios conspired to restrain competition within the film industry through illegal trade practices such as block booking, blind bidding, and discrimination in licensing terms.[38] A 1940 consent decree placed restrictions on studios' distribution practices but left their exhibition holdings untouched.[39] In 1944, the government reopened its case against the studios, resulting in an initial trial in 1945 and several appeals.[40] The case culminated in a 1948 verdict from the Supreme Court that directed the district court to consider divorcement of studio-owned theaters as a potential solution to studios' monopoly power.[41] The district court decided in

favor of divorcement, issuing consent decrees to all eight defendants by 1952 that laid out the terms of the process.[42] The last studio-owned US theater circuit was spun off in 1959.[43]

Despite the significant structural shift brought on by studios' divorcement of their theater chains, the Paramount Decrees alone did not shift the balance of power in exhibition. Spun-off studio chains maintained significant holdings in major markets as well as strong relationships with their former parent companies. In addition to divorcement, the DOJ had ordered spun-off chains to divest half the theaters they owned in 1945, but newly separated circuits took until 1957 to complete this process, giving them time to determine which sites would be most profitable for them to retain.[44] However, social and demographic changes dramatically altered the exhibition landscape as postwar patterns of suburbanization drew audiences out of cities and created new opportunities for exhibitors, first with drive-in theaters and then with multiplexing and shopping mall cinemas. Concurrently, television entered US homes, offering competing at-home entertainment that complemented the emerging lifestyles of suburbanites. As a result of these changes, theater admissions fell precipitously in the 1950s and early 60s while studios cut back on film supply, leaving exhibitors struggling and enabling a retrenchment of power with film distributors.[45]

Spun-off chains were unable to effectively respond to the changes of the period, stymied by new restrictions they faced under the decrees. In particular, they needed to convince the district court that new acquisitions would not restrain competition before these transactions were allowed to proceed. It was only in 1974 that the court agreed to exempt new theaters constructed by the spun-off chains from this requirement. Michael Conant observes that no clear standard was established in the acquisition cases, but the mere fact that each attempt at expansion required significant legal fees and uncertain outcomes meant

that formerly studio-owned chains were considerably less flexible than their competitors following the decrees. These legal restrictions slowed their progress in moving into the new mall spaces where the industry was growing during the critical period immediately following divorcement.[46]

As a result, by the late 1970s, independent exhibitors like General Cinemas, United Artists Theater Circuit, Plitt Theaters, and American Multi-Cinema (AMC) became the United States' largest theater chains and had absorbed the declining circuits spun-off from the studios.[47] The Paramount Decrees had meant a shift in identity for the theatrical business; according to Gary Edgerton, exhibition again became a "distinct tier" with its own interests, aims and tactics and a more adversarial relationship with production and distribution.[48] This transformation created space for entrepreneurs like General Cinema's Richard Smith and AMC's Stanley Durwood to "steady and rebuild the tier's oligopolistic structure."[49] These entrepreneurs were able to capitalize on the changing dynamics of the industry and use innovations like multiplexing to grow their circuits quickly. Edgerton argues they soon established an exhibition hierarchy like the one the studios left behind, wherein a small number of chains controlled most of the industry's revenues by owning a significant portion of first-run theaters.[50] In 1980, the four largest chains ranged from 605 to 1,000 screens (the next-largest circuit comprised 350 screens) and controlled 16 percent of the total screens in the domestic market.[51]

However, the rankings of chains, the size of the largest circuits, and their share of US and Canadian screens changed rapidly as the industry evolved over the next two decades. The top chains would be reshuffled and displaced as the industry consolidated anew and new exhibitors gained prominence and scaled up. These new exhibitors included Carmike

Cinemas as well as Cineplex Odeon, Regal Cinemas, and Cinemark Theatres, whose founding and early expansion I will discuss later in this introduction. In other words, the theatrical market was already demonstrating oligopolistic tendencies, but had not yet settled into a stable oligopoly. While the rebuilding of the film industry and the exhibition sector in the wake of the Paramount Decrees was well underway, no single group of exhibitors was yet able to continually control the path of the industry's development. Furthermore, at this stage the theatrical business was a more competitive landscape than most other branches of the media industries, which were not only strongly integrated horizontally but were on the verge of a process of conglomeration that would intensify vertical integration as well as connections across the formerly separate film, broadcast, cable, and telecommunications industries.[52]

Despite the exhibition's lag in integrating with other branches of the industry and corresponding networks of global capital, by the 1990s, optimism about the future of film exhibition was soaring. The size of cinema circuits ballooned as large operators invested heavily in building elaborate new megaplex theaters and acquired their leading competitors, supported by the influx of private equity firms in the sector. Other US exhibition companies rode this wave of enthusiasm and aimed to expand US-style multiplexes to international cinema markets in Europe, Asia, and Latin America. Soon, this expansionist mindset came crashing to earth, as major US markets were overbuilt and debt-laden exhibitors were abruptly reassessed by the financial industry. This reassessment triggered a sector-wide crisis that drove multiple exhibitors into bankruptcy court, financial instability, and the hands of a new wave of private equity investors. Nearly a decade of rapid consolidation followed, resulting in the dominance of a handful of chains—AMC Theatres, Regal

Cinemas, Cinemark Theatres, and Cineplex Entertainment—over the domestic cinema market.

Other major shifts followed in the 2000s. Chief among them was the long-anticipated transition to digital projection technology, which financially benefitted the studios but also created new flexibilities and opportunities for exhibitors. Due to the affordances of digital distribution and the industry's shift away from major construction projects, large corporate exhibitors expanded their business beyond selling movie tickets and concessions, incorporating cinema advertising and a wide variety of event cinema offerings including opera, ballet, concerts, museum tours, and other nontraditional large-screen content. Digitization also made new premium screening technologies including 3D, IMAX and other widescreen formats, motion seating, and multisensory effects standard features of multiplexes nationwide as the 2000s became the 2010s. Finally, major acquisitions of US cinema chains by China's Dalian Wanda and the UK's Cineworld established new patterns of global connectivity in the domestic marketplace. Yet despite the dramatic nature of the transformations in exhibition in the 2000s and 2010s, they have received little attention in the scholarly literature. This project not only gives these developments the belated examination they are due, but also seeks to explore how they developed in parallel with one another by analyzing how the exhibition sector operates as an industry.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought another wave of historical change to the exhibition industry, one whose consequences are still unfolding. As the virus spread to the United States in early 2020, theaters shut their doors, stalling and then redirecting the film supply chain as some titles moved to streaming, while others held out, in some cases for years, for a theatrical release. Domestic exhibitors lobbied for and won pandemic relief from their

governments, and eventually began the uneven process of reopening and recovery. They negotiated, sometimes bitterly, with the studios over the theatrical window and the controversial practice of releasing new films simultaneously in theaters and on streaming platforms, called day-and-date release. As of this writing, the industry is still settling on its new normal. Studios abandoned day-and-date releases in late 2021 but have continued to send films that formerly would find themselves in theaters directly to their streaming platforms. Exhibitors have agreed to a shortened theatrical window and are now contending with lower levels of theatrical film product than the pre-pandemic norm.[53]

This project focuses on the pre-pandemic period, ending the analysis contained in its main chapters in 2019. It assesses the trajectory of the industry in the twenty-five years before 2020, reflecting on the foundations from which exhibitors would confront the pandemic and the industrial conditions that it would, in the short- or long-term, transform. In part, this periodization reflects an era with significant continuities across the areas of exhibitor activity I cover in this analysis; in part, it reflects the constraints of space in this project to cover the nuances of the reversals faced by exhibitors, the film industry, and the wider world; and in part, it reflects my feeling that an accounting of the impacts of the pandemic on film exhibition will require more historical distance. I do, however, devote a section in the conclusion to assessing the impacts of the pandemic on the domestic film industry, especially those relevant to the exhibition companies I focus on elsewhere. This section will also offer some initial thoughts on how the pandemic affects my view of the research I present in the rest of this project.

Film Exhibition as a Media Industry

Despite the valuable insights film exhibition scholarship offers on the role of cinemas and alternative exhibition sites in film history, much of this research has also fragmented analysis of the activities performed by exhibitors. This may mean emphasizing a single mode of activity (such as screening technology or spatial design), restricting research to a specific locality or the practices of one exhibitor, or using digital humanities methods to engage large datasets on a topic of interest (such as geographic distribution of cinemas or analysis of showtimes).[54] While narrowing one's scope of analysis is necessary in any research project, the predominance of these tendencies in exhibition research has also limited insights into the way exhibitors engage in multiple, co-constituted forms of activity. Exhibition practices develop alongside one another and are informed by interactions with other exhibitors and other actors in the cultural field. Further, restricting attention to local conditions limits our understanding of how exhibitors formally and informally connect with one another across larger areas and construct their programming, amenities, and other aspects of their business with an eye to regional, national, and global dynamics. By concentrating on the activities of major corporate exhibitors whose size imbricates them in multiple forms of practice and situates them in and across localities, this project analyzes the film exhibition sector as a multifaceted site of activity and tracks modes of supralocal influence as well as the localization of these influences within the domestic market.

Crucial to my approach is the analysis of film exhibition as an *industry*, drawing on scholarship in critical media industry studies. This subfield is marked by its attention to the way that media is produced and influenced by industrial structures, cultures, and modes of activity. Outlining this approach, Timothy Havens, Amanda Lotz, and Serra Tinic

distinguish critical media industry studies from previous forms of industrial analysis in two primary ways. First, they place the subfield at the intersection of Marxist political economy, which prioritizes the influence of structural economic factors, and cultural studies, which attends to the "micropolitics of everyday meaning making" and the way that media texts, workers, and institutions create, alter, and circulate these meanings.[55] Second, they stress the importance of midlevel fieldwork that enables researchers to move productively between these registers while holding them in tension and bringing their contradictions to light.[56] The scholarship that has developed under this umbrella emerges from a number of historical precedents in industrial analysis, and engages with a range of objects and methods of study. However, by responding to the core questions of its originating approaches with a new synthesis, scholars working in media industry studies take seriously the interdependent structural and cultural questions raised by media's industrial face.

This project analyzes a period of profound structural change in the film exhibition industry from the 1990s onward. Through the involvement of private equity in exhibition, a period of intensive horizontal integration, and the entry of global companies in the sector, domestic film exhibitors consolidated national chains, formed an oligopoly, and became enfolded in global circuits of film exhibition and capital. A central goal of this project is to trace how exhibitors became the final branch of the US film and media industries to fully integrate into the corporatized, financialized, and globalized world of today's capitalist media powers. However, my analysis also stresses the cultural dimensions involved in this transformation. Exhibitors' ability to manage this shift has depended on developing discourses that have the emergence of new theater types, the transition to digital cinema, the diversification of their business, and the standardization of premium cinema, among other

developments. I also address how those actions we tend to reduce to economics such as debt crises, the entry of new investors, and mergers and acquisitions are inextricable from the cultural discourses that explain, justify, and support them. Building on previous scholarship in critical media industry studies, my research attends closely to discursive and economic drivers of change in the exhibition industry, analyzing the many areas where the two overlap.

A particular stream of emphasis in this research is the constructions of scale at work in exhibitors' transformation during the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s. Here, I draw from the work of scholars of global media who have examined how media practices are shaped by geographical constraints and opportunities across space and themselves reconfigure the boundaries and points of connection between localities, nations, regions, and concepts of the global. In considering the role of space and scale in exhibition practice, I seek especially to engage Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's concept of "scale-making." Tsing uses this term to explain how the projects and practices of global actors function by constructing the concepts of localism, nationalism, regionalism, and globalism necessary to their context.[57] "Scale is the spatial dimensionality necessary for a particular kind of view," she writes, "whether up close or from a distance, microscopic or planetary. I argue that scale is not just a neutral frame for viewing the world; scale must be brought into being: proposed, practiced, and evaded, as well as taken for granted."[58] Such scales, then, are not natural, but contested and held together by their contingent articulations with other scales.[59] I see the work of large domestic exhibitors during my period of study as participation in multiple scale-making projects that construct national cinema circuits, concepts of the domestic and international cinema markets, and connections to concepts of a global exhibition and film industry.

Understanding film exhibition as an industry, then, is in part a matter of assessing how its activities constitute the multiple scales along which that industry operates in this period.

To engage these forms of analysis, my dissertation draws from methodological frameworks informed by film historiography, cultural studies, and media industry studies and combines methods including textual analysis and cultural geography. Developing a historical account of the exhibition industry's transformation since 2000, these methods will allow me to interrogate how modes of exhibitor discourse and cinemagoing knowledge manifest in the cultural texts surrounding the industry and track the logics and trajectories of historical change that have reciprocally shaped these developments. A significant component of this project will involve reconstructing the past thirty years of exhibition practice by forming an archive of historical materials that will include trade and popular journalism, financial reports, press releases, and marketing materials. A major contribution of this project will be my assembly of an account of this historical period, the influences it crystallizes, and its impact on understandings of broader trajectories within the film industry and consumer culture. Many of the trends I discuss—consolidation, diversification, technological change, and global expansion—are not unique in exhibition history and will benefit from being placed in dialogue with their earlier precedents. Nonetheless, my project intends to argue for the importance of the particular constellation of these recent shifts in the history of film exhibition and the broader film industry.

In writing this history, I will investigate my corpus of materials not solely as an archive of historical events but as evidence of the circulation of industrial knowledge and discourse on cinemagoing that itself shapes and mediates forces of historical change. This approach draws from John Caldwell's analysis of the "self-ethnographic accounts" of

industrial actors which he calls "critical industrial practices." This term refers to "trade methods and conventions involving interpretive schemes (the 'critical' dimension) that are deployed within specific institutional contexts and relationships (the 'industrial' environment) when such activities are manifest during technical production tasks or professional interactions (labor and 'practice')."[60] Less sociologically oriented than Caldwell's discussion of the work worlds of film and television production, my approach extends the framework of critical industrial practice to center the way exhibitors represent themselves, both within industrial circles (as in trade publications, financial reports, and industry gatherings) and to the public (through marketing, popular press, and cinema sites and amenities). Nonetheless, my adoption of this approach holds to his idea that "film industrial practices, technologies, discourses, and interactions also involve critical analysis, theoretical elaboration, and aesthetic sense making," and further argues that these interpretations form a crucial component of how exhibitors have understood and acted within their historical circumstances.[61] I align my approach more closely with what Charles Acland has called the "industry common sense" that prevails amongst exhibitors, which he stresses shapes industrial decision-making and reproduces forms of knowledge and habit that travel beyond cultural products to frame the spaces and practices of everyday life.[62] Mapping the contours and trajectories of these modes of common sense over time, therefore, is a central aspect of this project's historical approach.

Attending to the influence of industrial common sense also means remaining alert to the potential for spin, misrepresentation, self-promotion, and mythologization. While such tendencies may themselves be generative sources of knowledge, I intend to hold in tension the importance of exhibitor discourses to the development of industrial practices while

investigating the contradictions and interruptions these discourses encounter. Such an approach will help me avoid merely reproducing industrial accounts as transparent and reliable. Caldwell's process of "cross-checking" industrial materials across multiple sources and registers is useful here, and, following this method, I intend to place my sources in dialogue with one another to avoid privileging a singular account of events. This involves synthesizing textual analysis of multiple types of industrial materials as well as engaging economic/industrial analysis. I proceed from the understanding that neither the film nor the exhibition industry is univocal, and that across different sources and historical moments conflicts and reversals appear and coexist. Further, wrestling critically with such nakedly promotional sources such as corporate press releases and annual shareholder reports will enable me to more readily identify the modes in which such promotional goals are figured. It will also prime me to grasp the ways these discourses filter into other realms of industrial reporting and popular understanding.

Contemporary Exhibition Giants

In narrowing the focus of my analysis to the four largest exhibitors in the domestic market, I put forward an analysis of a type of film exhibitor that I term *exhibition giants*. I define exhibition giants as corporate theater chains which participate in an oligopoly with the largest chains in their national or regional markets (or act as a monopoly within those same markets). As my brief account of domestic exhibition history shows, these dominant exhibitors are not bound to maintain their positions and have not been the sole source of transformation in the exhibition industry. Studio-owned chains and the initial group of large independent chains that gained power in the late 1970s and early 1980s each found

themselves displaced, in part due to changing economic and social conditions and in part due to innovations from exhibitors operating outside the then-dominant group. Nonetheless, their influence on exhibition practice and the film industry in their period of dominance was profound. Such assessments have been absent from contemporary accounts, and this project aims to reintroduce an analysis of the relative power of theater owners to studies of the exhibition industry. Scholars like Gary Edgerton and Ben Birkinbine, borrowing from terminology used to refer to golden age Hollywood film studios, have discussed similar US theater chains as the Big Four (for the independents of the 1970s and early 80s) or Big Three (for AMC, Regal, and Cinemark in the 2000s and 2010s).[63] However, exhibition oligopolies are not perfectly analogous to the Hollywood studio system. Though I also focus on US (and Canadian) exhibitors, I intentionally choose the more portable term *exhibition giants* to refer to the members of contemporary exhibition oligopolies. Despite the temporal and regional specificity of my analysis, I aim to underline that the formation and stabilization of exhibition oligopolies are international phenomena. As I will discuss in chapter 4, recognizing the international growth of these oligopolies is especially important in the exhibition landscape of the 2000s and 2010s. In this period, international trends towards consolidation of cinema chains, fueled by private equity investors, has set the stage for a new phase of global connectivity in film exhibition.

In the United States, these trends have created the first stable domestic exhibition oligopoly since the Paramount Decrees. The remainder of this section will outline brief histories of the US and Canadian theater chains that have become today's domestic exhibition giants: AMC Theatres, Cinemark Theatres, Regal Cinemas, and Cineplex

Entertainment. These accounts will discuss the origins of each company and outline the broad strokes of their evolution during this project's period of study.

AMC Theatres

The company that would become AMC Theatres began in 1920, when Maurice, Edward, and Barney Dubinsky, a trio of brothers and travelling theatrical performers, settled in Kansas City and bought the Regent Theater. By 1932, the brothers owned forty theaters in Missouri and Kansas. Edward, who changed his surname to Durwood, took over the business in 1936, and the company became Durwood Theaters.[64] In the 1950s, a successful antitrust suit allowed the company to play first-run films at its Roxy theater in downtown Kansas City. The company soon acquired all the city's downtown cinemas.[65] Edward's son, Stanley, who joined the business in 1945, succeeded his father as the head of Durwood Theatres upon Edward's death in 1960. [66] Durwood began to look towards the suburban market with the announcement of a planned interstate highway near Kansas City.[67] Finding structural issues with a local mall site that prevented the construction of a standard single-screen theater, Durwood opted to build two side-by-side cinemas. These theaters opened in 1963 as the Parkway Twin, the first US multiplex theater. Only later did Durwood opt to play a different film on each screen.[68] Durwood Theatres built more multiplexes throughout the 1960s, and in 1968 re-incorporated as American Multi-Cinema. It was then a local chain of 12 theaters with 22 screens. As the company expanded again in the 1970s, it popularized the multiplex concept. The multiplex appealed to exhibitors primarily because the new theater type expanded the potential for variety in programming and offered operating efficiencies over the standard single-screen theater.[69]

American Multi-Cinema was renamed AMC Entertainment in 1983, when the company launched an initial public offering to fund an extensive construction and acquisition campaign throughout the 1980s—one that nearly left it bankrupt.[70] After selling off assets, including some foreign screens, AMC turned to theater upgrades in the 1990s, opening what was heralded as the first megaplex, the twenty-four-screen Dallas Grand, in 1995, featuring stadium seating, curved screens, and three-way sound. Its hallmark theaters in this period averaged twenty-two screens, and it built new sites furiously. Durwood, still AMC's CEO, died in 1999, just as the industry was entering an economic crisis precipitated by the debt accumulated during megaplex construction boom. In the wake of the devaluation of exhibition companies during this period, private equity company Apollo Management purchased a majority share of AMC in 2001, bringing it under private ownership.[71] A second sale in 2004 put AMC under the ownership of a consortium of private equity firms, a group that expanded after a merger with the private-equity-owned Loews Cineplex. These firms went on to sell the company to Chinese conglomerate the Dalian Wanda Group—itself the owner of China's largest theater chain—in 2012, connecting AMC to a global exhibition circuit and again taking the company public.[72] Under Wanda's ownership, AMC acquired Carmike Cinemas in 2016, becoming the US's largest theater chain.[73] It also purchased a pair of major European circuits, Odeon & UCI Cinemas and the Nordic Cinema Group, in 2016 and 2017, broadening the reach of Wanda's global cinema network and making AMC the world's largest exhibition company.[74]

Cinemark Theatres

Cinemark Theatres was founded by Lee Roy Mitchell and his wife Tandy Mitchell in 1985. Lee Roy had a long-running career owning and operating theaters before Cinemark's founding. His father operated three theaters in Texas, and convinced Lee Roy, then a car salesman, to invest in a drive-in in Ennis, Texas in 1960.[75] Other theater purchases in small Texas markets followed. Lee Roy sold his holdings to Interstate Theaters in 1966 but continued to acquire and develop cinemas following this initial sale. He built a first iteration of Cinemark up to a hundred screens across the Southwest, again selling a significant portion of his theater portfolio in 1979, this time to Plitt Theatres. Initially, Lee Roy retained around 20 screens in Dallas and Houston but sold the remaining sites to Plitt in 1984. In 1985, Lee Roy and Tandy purchased a trio of screens in Salt Lake City and accepted an investment for a new cinema chain from a longtime friend, regional mall developer Paul Broadhead, who had recently sold his development company. The Mitchells and Broadhead split ownership of the new Cinemark, basing operations in Dallas and acquiring theaters in California, Oregon, Utah, and Texas. The company soon developed an especially strong presence in the Sun Belt.[76]

Some of these theaters were developed as discount theaters, sites that Lee Roy saw as filling a void for lower-income families in the wake of drive-in closures in the 1970s and early 80s. Other theaters became part of a new first-run chain, which soon eclipsed Cinemark's discount business.[77] By 1992, the company had theaters in twenty states.[78] The same year, Cinemark expanded to Latin America, beginning in Chile and Mexico but soon building up a multiplex chain that spanned countries across the region (as of 2023, Cinemark remains the largest film exhibitor in Argentina and Brazil).[79] It also attracted an investment

from private equity firm the Cypress Group in 1996, which fueled the chain's expansion at home and abroad as both markets saw major construction activity.[80] Cinemark weathered the early 2000s crisis in exhibition, and the Mitchells and the Cypress Group sold most of their shares of the company to a new private equity owner, Madison Dearborn Partners, in 2004.[81] Under Madison Dearborn's ownership, Cinemark purchased Century Theaters, making it the United States' third-largest theater chain.[82] After going public in 2007, the company cemented this position through further acquisitions and continued building out its circuit in Latin America.[83]

Regal Cinemas

Regal Cinemas was established in 1989 by Mike Campbell and a business partner in Knoxville, and soon began a dramatic expansion campaign that spanned the next decade. Campbell had begun his career in the supermarket business and, like Mitchell, had started an earlier theater chain, Premiere Theaters, in 1982.[84] Campbell sold the chain, which had reached 150 screens, to Cinemark in 1989 and used the sale to fund his new Regal Cinemas chain. Six weeks later, the company had its first theater in Florida, and used acquisitions (notably, of Cobb Theatres in 1997) and construction to build up the chain. The company funded a dramatic expansion with a 1993 IPO and subsequent common stock offerings, growing to 2,134 screens at 242 locations across 22 states in only eight years from Regal's founding.[85] In 1998, the company was jointly acquired by the private equity firms Kohlberg, Kravis, Roberts and Hicks, Muse, Tate & Furst, taken private, and merged with Act III Cinemas, becoming the US's largest cinema chain.[86] The new owners fueled Regal's expansion with aggressive theater construction projects, exacerbating the sector-wide crisis

in exhibition, which soon hit Regal hard.[87] In 2001, US billionaire Phillip Anschutz and his partner, Oaktree Capital, purchased Regal's debts at a significant discount and used their control of this debt to take over the company, restructure it in bankruptcy court, and merge it with United Artists and Edwards Theaters, which the pair had acquired in a similar fashion.[88] The merged theater chain, the Regal Entertainment Group, went public in 2002 as a circuit twice as large as its nearest competitor.[89] Regal remained the largest US exhibitor until 2016, when AMC surpassed it with its purchase of Carmike Cinemas. Regal was acquired by UK-based exhibition company the Cineworld Group in 2017, connecting it with Cineworld's Europe-spanning circuit; with the purchase, Cineworld became the number-two exhibition company in the world, behind Wanda.[90]

Cineplex Entertainment

Cineplex Entertainment was founded as simply Cineplex by Garth Drabinsky and Nat Taylor when the two men partnered to build a new eighteen-screen theater, then the world's largest multiplex, in the basement of Toronto's Eaton Center shopping mall. Taylor had worked as an influential film buyer and operated the seventeen-screen Twentieth Century Theaters chain in Ontario, which he affiliated with Famous Players in 1941. He eventually built Famous Players into a sixty-five-screen circuit. In the process he pioneered early multiplexes in Canada, building his first in 1957. He sold his interest in the theaters to Famous Players in 1969. [91] Slowly, Taylor began developing the idea for larger multiplex complexes of over a dozen screens. Drabinsky, a brash young entertainment lawyer, partnered with Taylor on such a theater when the pair started Cineplex, opening the Eaton Center location in 1979 to great initial success, thanks to a sizable investment from Taylor.[92]

Cineplex soon built on its initial vision, and had 23 multiplexes with 146 screens, including two sites in the US. The speedy expansion left the chain with significant debts, worsened by soaring interest rates.[93] Early struggles also included difficulty accessing first-run films, until Drabinsky fought his way to a 1982 settlement with the studios. Due to Drabinsky's lobbying and the action of the Canadian government's Combines Investigation Branch, all Canadian exhibitors would now be permitted to bid on first-run films.[94] The company launched a rocky IPO in 1982, but it was an investment from Canada's wealthy Bronfman family that stabilized the chain financially in 1983.[95] Cineplex set to work furthering its expansion through an acquisition spree that stretched from 1985 to 1987, finding further funding for these acquisitions by selling half of the company to MCA/Universal in 1986.[96] Cineplex bought Canadian Odeon Theatres, which made the merged chain the second-largest exhibitor in Canada; the chain was renamed Cineplex Odeon.[97] In the US, Cineplex's largest purchase was Plitt Theaters, although it bought several other circuits as well, and soon became the largest exhibitor in the US-Canada market through these acquisitions and an ambitious building program.[98] As it grew, Cineplex became known for its upscale theaters. The company invested in technological upgrades, expanded concessions, theater architecture and décor; made higher standards of customer service the norm; and charged significantly more than its competitors.[99] However, spending on atmosphere, acquisitions, and other entertainment ventures saddled the company with $500 million in debt by 1989, a fact that was initially obscured in the company's accounting; as a result, Drabinsky was ousted after a battle with MCA.[100]

Cineplex Odeon took a step back, refocusing on exhibition, selling assets, cutting costs, and eventually investing in a modest expansion of multi- and megaplexes.[101] In 1997,

the company merged with Sony's Loews Theatre Group, changing its name to Loews Cineplex and returning briefly to its previous position as the largest domestic exhibitor.[102] In 2001, Canadian private equity firm Onex partnered with Oaktree Capital to buy the chain and usher it through bankruptcy court.[103] In 2003, Onex merged Cineplex's Canadian assets with another of its exhibition holdings, Galaxy Cinemas; spun the new company, Cineplex Galaxy (later Cineplex Entertainment), off from the chain's US branch; and took it public. The sale largely disaggregated exhibition operations in Canada and the United States.[104] The US assets of Loews Cineplex were purchased by a group of private equity firms who merged it with AMC in 2005.[105] The same year, Cineplex Galaxy bought its longtime rival, Famous Players, becoming Canada's monopoly exhibitor.[106] Since then, it has been the fourth-largest exhibitor in the US-Canada market, with further acquisitions strengthening its position. In the 2000s and 2010s, Cineplex launched new initiatives and sought out acquisitions in parallel sectors into out-of-home advertising and digital signage, gaming and amusements, and new leisure spaces, significantly expanding the scope of its business. In 2019, Cineplex agreed to sell to the Cineworld Group, which would have meant a merger with Regal.[107] Cineworld terminated the purchase in June 2020, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, triggering a major lawsuit from Cineplex.[108]

Together, these four exhibition giants would define thirty years of domestic exhibition history. They became the four largest circuits in the US-Canada market in the mid-2000s and continued to hold this place in the industry's hierarchy for fifteen years. But size was not their sole contribution to the transformations of the period. Instead, these domestic giants were instrumental actors in trends towards diversification, digitization,

premium cinema, and internationalization that defined exhibition practice in the world's leading cinema market.

Project Outline

This project presents four overlapping histories of domestic exhibition giants' industrial activities between 1992 and 2019, structured around specific modes of practice: the consolidation of these theater chains during and after the sector-wide crisis of the early 2000s; the diversification of their business in ventures within and outside of exhibition; the proliferation of digitally enabled premium cinema across their circuits and the US market; and, finally, the distinct approaches to internationalization that occurred during domestic giants' attempts at global expansions in the 1990s and their acquisitions by foreign exhibition empires in the 2010s. Each chapter provides a semi-chronological account that traces these areas of giants' activities, with close consideration of their underlying logics and justifying discourses. In developing these historical narratives, I put forward an interpretation of their consequences on the structures of the exhibition industry in the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s, and outline their points of articulation with areas of exhibitor practice I discuss in surrounding chapters.

Chapter 1 outlines the development of today's domestic exhibition giants during a period of intense consolidation of theater chains during the 1990s and early 2000s. Across this period, I track the intertwined interests of large corporate exhibitors, especially those who invested heavily in megaplexing, and the private equity firms who entered the exhibition industry beginning in the 1990s. This relationship was marked by three successive phases, each resulting in a fresh wave of consolidation for exhibitors. In the first

wave, large theater chains and private equity investors in exhibition fueled the sector-wide construction of expensive megaplex theaters. These initial partnerships contributed to the overbuilding of the domestic market, rising exhibitor debts, and the sector-wide crisis these conditions triggered. In the second wave, a new round of investors capitalized on the losses of their predecessors in the megaplex crash. These investors picked up theater chains and combined them rapidly with an eye towards using consolidation to sell their new assets at substantial profits once the industry recovered. Finally, the third wave of investors enabled preceding buyers to cash out on their investments and sought continued growth. This group spurred another round of consolidation and solidified the position of the large exhibitors that emerged from the crisis at the top of the domestic industry. Despite the peril their actions caused for the exhibition industry, it was the theater chains that participated most actively in megaplexing and other investments in cinema infrastructure during this period who were the primary targets for private equity investment, enabling them to become contemporary exhibition giants. This chapter investigates the birth of exhibition giants in this period and explains how the consolidation of theater chains created the conditions of possibility for the transformations discussed across the next three chapters. It also introduces the lingering influence of the crisis in exhibition and the private equity ownership that has continued to shape exhibition giants during the 2000s and 2010s.

Chapter 2 investigates the concerted efforts of exhibition giants to diversify their business beyond box office and concessions, beginning in the mid-2000s. As domestic exhibition giants recovered from the megaplex crash and solidified their positions at the top of the industry through horizontal integration, they began to branch out into new ventures within and outside the exhibition industry. The chapter is divided into two main parts. In the

first part, I investigate patterns of US diversification, which manifested as a series of collaborative efforts between US exhibition giants in cinema advertising, digital cinema technology, and event cinema. These efforts brought in new revenue streams that helped US exhibition giants demonstrate growth beyond the metrics of theater attendance. But they also enabled giants to exert a parallel avenue of control over competitor chains by acting as the service providers that controlled competitors' access to new revenue streams. In the second part of the chapter, I examine the more comprehensive diversification efforts of Canadian giant Cineplex Entertainment. Cineplex's position as a monopoly exhibitor in the Canadian market allowed the company to fund acquisitions and new ventures that took it far outside the traditional exhibition business. Like US giants, Cineplex participated in cinema advertising and event cinema, but the company also developed ventures including retail rewards programs, out-of-home media and digital signage, amusements, and new leisure sites. I argue that the Cineplex case suggests one potential avenue for domestic and international exhibition giants to continue to grow in mature markets by leveraging their power in their home markets towards new, but complementary ventures.

Chapter 3 explores exhibition giants' transition to digital cinema; their adoption of new screening technologies including 3D, IMAX and other large formats, motion seating, and multisensory experiences; and their development and marketing of the emerging category of premium cinema. I begin by tracing domestic giants' role in the rollout of digital cinema in the US through their jointly owned digital cinema integrator, Digital Cinema Implementation Partners, and the uneven path they took to complete their conversion to digital projection. Then, I discuss the role of new screening technologies 3D and IMAX in motivating exhibitors and studios to finalize their digital cinema agreements, arguing that

the potential of premium cinema more broadly, and not 3D alone, encouraged them to take the leap. Next, I turn to the expansion of new screening technologies to assess how different premium cinema formats, including exhibitors' in-house brands, managed the rollout of their formats and worked with giants to ensure their technology effectively penetrated the domestic market. Finally, I explore the way that premium cinema's technology- and service-based options have transformed relationships between exhibitors and audiences, making affluent groups increasingly central to domestic giants' business as they aim to increase their profits without relying on dramatic leaps in attendance. Overall, this chapter characterizes domestic giants' investments in digital cinema and premium experiences as a major component of their present power in the market and a characteristic that indicates their contemporary relationship with cinemagoers.

Chapter 4 analyzes domestic exhibition giants' participation in international patterns in cinema ownership, contrasting two periods of internationalization in the global cinema business: domestic giants' moves towards overseas expansion in the 1990s and their acquisition by global exhibition empires in the 2010s. In the first part of the chapter, I discuss how the US exhibition companies that would become domestic giants in the early 2000s aimed to build new multiplex circuits abroad from the ground up during the 1990s. Cinemark Theatres was able to achieve this successfully in the Latin American market, while both Cinemark and AMC faltered while attempting to use this strategy to expand in Europe and Asia. While Cinemark demonstrated a successful, if partial, achievement of future giants' goals in this period, AMC demonstrated how the challenges of this approach were exacerbated by exhibitors' overconfidence abroad as well as at home. In the second part, I look to the return of US exhibitors to international cinema networks after a period of

retraction during the 2000s, when exhibition giants generally focused on domestic concerns. In a reversal of previous patterns and methods of internationalization, global exhibition companies Dalian Wanda and Cineworld, led by emerging circuits that began their business in developing cinema markets, began targeting domestic exhibition giants. Their interest in US exhibitors, as well as their ability to quickly establish a strong presence in the domestic cinema market, was made possible by domestic giants' activities throughout the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s described in the previous three chapters. International trends towards consolidation in mature cinema markets, driven by private equity investment, enabled these emerging exhibition empires to scale up quickly and network US and international giants. In sum, this chapter argues that the exhibition industry's present phase of globalization has been defined by the development of a domestic exhibition oligopoly and its subordination into global networks.

These chapters demonstrate how distinct strands of exhibitor activity developed over this transformative thirty-year period, but also analyze the way that they have built on and influenced each other, constituted common industrial logics, and affected the role domestic exhibitors play in the global film industry. Taken together, they provide a picture of the domestic exhibition industry, and the most powerful exhibitors within it, reestablishing their economic and cultural positions in a global cinema business that has undergone a period of rapid and startling change.

Chapter 1: Crisis, Recovery, and the Making of Domestic Exhibition Giants

The two first decades of the twenty-first century have seen a sea change in the scale, power, and stability of the largest film exhibitors unseen since the 1948 Paramount Decrees. By the mid-1990s, the exhibition sector stood apart as a branch of the media industries that was unusually fragmented in comparison other domestic media industries. Film production and distribution and broadcast television had spent the last four decades vertically and horizontally integrating their businesses. Cable soon joined them. As the US policy environment shifted towards deregulation, the 1980s and early 90s were defined by the intertwining of these parallel industries under the umbrellas of national media conglomerates.[1] But while exhibition had several large chains with strong regional presences in early 1997, the sector boasted many midsize and small competitors that had flourished in the decades following the Paramount Decrees of 1948. And though some exhibitors were owned by media conglomerates, including Famous Players and National Amusements (Viacom), Loews Theaters (Sony), and Cineplex Odeon (MCA/Universal), most large chains were independently owned. Just ten years later, three theater chains—AMC Theatres, Regal Cinemas, and Cinemark Theatres—had become the largest theater chains in the US-Canada market. All were independent of major US media conglomerates. The three chains would increasingly dwarf their nearest competition in the next decade. By 2017, AMC, Regal, and Cinemark controlled 50 percent of US movie screens (see figure 1). In Canada, the situation was similar: Cineplex Entertainment became the country's monopoly exhibitor in 2005, with the acquisition of Famous Players, its biggest rival. By 2018, Cineplex received a staggering 75 percent of Canada's box office receipts.

In this chapter, I outline the first comprehensive account of how these four major theater chains rose to dominance amid a dramatic reorganization of the domestic exhibition industry in the late 1990s and 2000s. Over a ten-year period from 1997 to 2007, these exhibitors not only owned a handful of successful large theater circuits but laid the groundwork necessary to reorganize the domestic exhibition industry around their interests as no independent theater circuits had before. This is not to say consolidation in the exhibition industry is a new phenomenon. The mergers and acquisitions of the late 90s, 2000s, and 2010s built upon previous periods of consolidation in the 1980s and early 90s that Charles Acland has outlined.[2] Jennifer Holt has also highlighted the limited return of vertical integration of film distribution and exhibition in the late 80s in the context of the broader conglomeration of the film, broadcast, cable, and telecommunications industries.[3] However, the horizontal integration visible between the late 1990s and the 2010s is distinct from these movements for two reasons. First, it resulted in an exhibition oligopoly in which the largest exhibitors held an unprecedented share of domestic screens. This dominant share made them extraordinarily influential in the market and created a gap between them and their nearest competitors' that widened dramatically during the 2000s and 2010s. Second, it created it a stable configuration of powerful exhibitors; compared to the frequent reversals of exhibitor power observable in the 1980s and 90s, from 2007 on, the four largest exhibitors saw continuous growth in their power and scale within (and, in some cases, outside) the US-Canada cinema market. In other words, a core characteristic of the post-1997 domestic exhibition industry has been the construction, ascendance, and dominance of the theater chains I will call *exhibition giants*. I define exhibition giants as corporate theater chains which participate in an oligopoly with the largest chains in their national or regional

markets (or act as a monopoly within those same markets). In contemporary US and Canadian markets, this has meant chains with a national presence and holdings of at least 1,000 screens.[4]

Looking to the period between 1997 and 2007 will mean reassessing the most visible signs of these structural shifts in exhibition: the standardization of the megaplex theater beginning in 1996; the four-year construction boom that followed; and the economic crisis that brought a period of pervasive financial instability to theater chains in the early 2000s. Acland has put forward a compelling account of this period that attributes the rise of the megaplex and related developments in exhibition to a growing "industry common sense" that identified the utilitarian mall multiplexes of the 1980s and early 90s as targets for improvement. Investments in the resulting industrial standard, the megaplex, and the scale and pace of the building spree it triggered pushed exhibitor debts to their limits, bringing building to a screeching halt throwing the sector into economic turmoil. While Acland keenly documents how exhibition built consensus (and saw it harshly corrected) and gives due credit to industrial consolidation's role in these events, his work and contemporaneous and retrospective trade accounts tend to discuss this history as one in which exhibitors acted as an isolated, more or less unified group that succumbed en masse to overenthusiasm about new theaters that turned dangerous for the sector. Considering the industry's structural shifts in the 2000s, this chapter revisits this history to investigate the uneven participation of future exhibition giants in the megaplex boom, their ability to benefit from the crisis after the crash, and the intimate involvement of private equity investment in these developments.

This chapter argues that these two groups—the large exhibitors that would dominate the industry and the private equity firms that invested in exhibition before and after the

2000s crisis—exerted undue pressure to build megaplexes quickly and expensively, supercharged consolidation before and after the crash and, ultimately, gathered industrial power around the handful of exhibitors that would dominate the exhibition industry for the next fifteen years. Private equity firms, attracted by rising proceeds from blockbusters and exhibitor-led improvements in theatrical spaces, identified the crowded exhibition market as a space where they could drive consolidation, expand chains, and achieve sizable short-term returns. Here, their interests overlapped with large national chains seeking capital to invest heavily in exhibition infrastructure and buy up competitors in the hopes of growing their business as theatrical spaces transformed over the course of the 1990s. After the crash in the early 2000s, the urgency of private equity involvement was felt more sharply on both sides, as a new round of investors sought to profit from underpriced chains and left exhibitors desperate for economic rescue. Here, I further recent calls by media scholars to investigate the influence of private equity and financialization in the media industries by examining one of its most rapid and dramatic impacts.[5] In tracing the overlapping interests of future giants and successive rounds of private equity investors, I also account for the seemingly irrational outcome of the crisis: that the theater chains that invested most heavily in exhibition's construction spree, precipitating the crisis across the sector, became the dominant powers in the restructured cinema market after the crash.

I trace the intertwined history of megaplexing, the economic crisis in exhibition, and its recovery and the development of exhibition giants during this crisis through three successive waves of private equity involvement in the exhibition industry. The financial industry grasped this disorganization, and, lured in by rising box office in the 1990s and exhibitors' attempts to improve cinemas, a first wave of private equity firms invested large

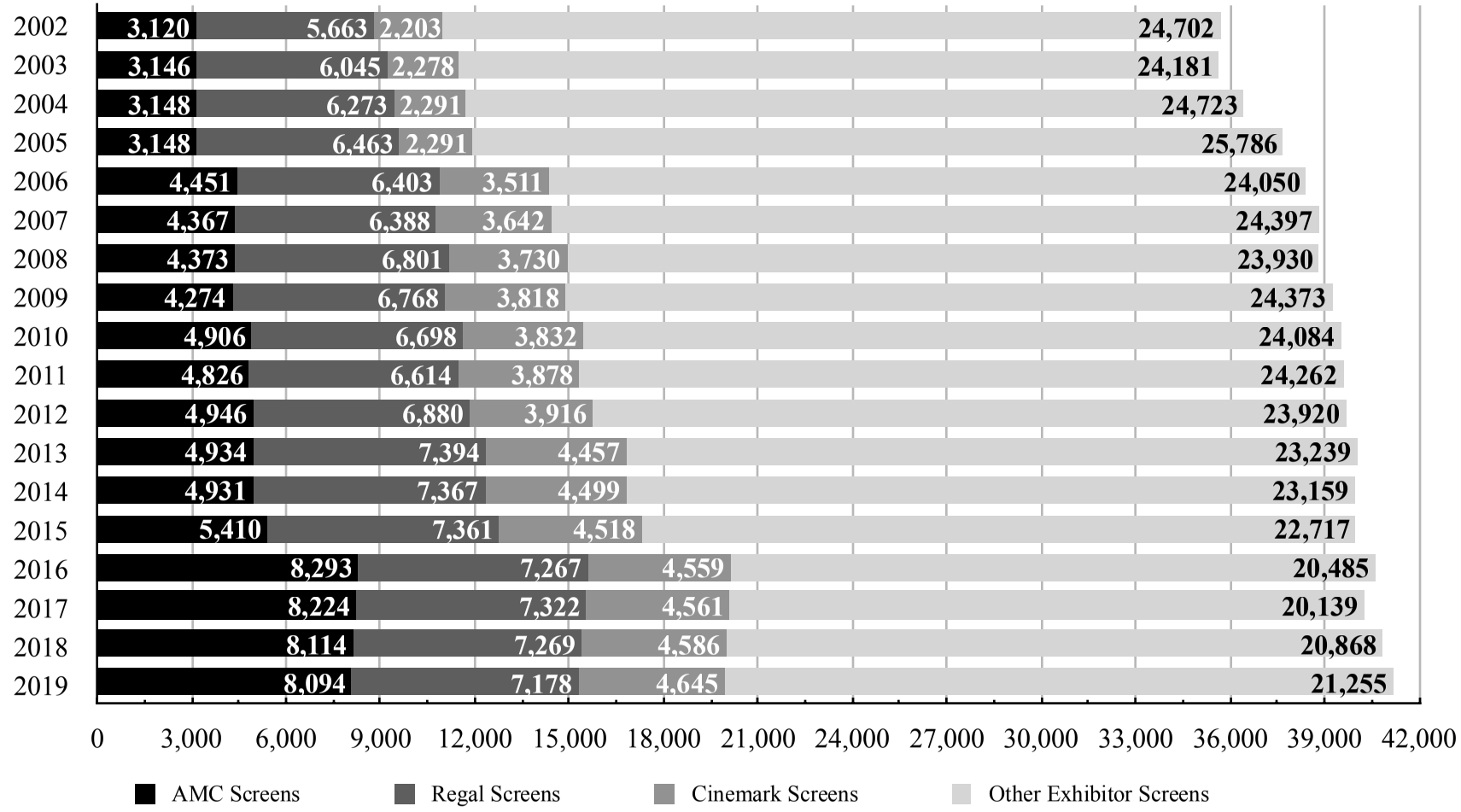
sums in theater chains, driving a building boom that would lead to a crash in exhibition within a decade. They partnered with and funded large domestic chains that were primary leaders of the megaplex boom. With the crash, a second round of firms came into the industry, seeking an opportunity to benefit from theater chains as underpriced assets, shepherding them into economic stability. Looking to chains whose infrastructure had been aggressively developed in the 1990s, these companies jumped at the opportunity to buy premium cinema infrastructure at bargain basement prices. A third round of companies picked up the torch once the initial recovery was complete, seeking further rationalizations and efficiencies and eventually taking companies public. While the context shifted with each successive wave, all three groups of firms pursued intense consolidation. Within just over a decade, the domestic exhibition industry had contracted sharply and the gulf between major exhibitors and their next largest competitors widened considerably, opening the way for the new exhibition giants to wield their influence over the transformed industry.

Origins of Crisis in the Exhibition Industry

Megaplex Rising

2000 was a bad year for theater owners. Bankruptcy court became a revolving door for troubled cinema circuits; six chains in the US-Canada market filed that year alone. Those that did not go bankrupt were frantically streamlining operations, closing theaters, and raising new funds to stabilize their finances. Theater owners' balance sheets were piled with debt from five years of intensive theater construction. Exhibitors had competed heavily during the 90s to build large cinema complexes with upscale design and top-of-the line amenities. The construction frenzy not only involved significant spending but quickly left

Figure 1: Exhibition Giants' Share of US Movie Theater Screens, 2002 to 2017



Source: Data from National Association of Theatre Owners ("Number of U.S. Movie Screens"), and exhibitor annual reports, including AMC Theaters (2005, 7; 2006, 7; 2007, 9; 2008, 9; 2009, 9; 2010, 6; 2011, 5; 2012, 5; 2013, 6; 2014, 6; 2015, 6; 2016, 5; 2017, 7; 2018, 7; 2019, 6), Regal Cinemas (2005, 9-10; 2006, 9; 2007, 9; 2008, 9; 2009, 9; 2010, 9; 2011, 9; 2012, 10; 2013, 9; 2014, 9; 2015, 9; 2016, 9; 2017, 9), Cineworld (2018, 7; 2019, 3), and Cinemark Theatres (2005, 8; 2006, 8; 2007, 8; 2008, 6; 2009, 6; 2010, 7; 2011, 7; 2012, 7; 2013, 8; 2014, 8; 2015, 8; 2016, 8; 2017, 8; 2018, 7; 2019, 7).

chains locked into long leases for newly outdated theaters, some that predated the new complexes by only a few years. Suddenly outclassed by the new complexes, these cinemas saw their revenues shrinking by the month. Under these conditions, the exhibition industry was barreling towards a full-scale crisis. The origins of this stemmed from several forces: long-simmering discourses about improving cinema standards; rapid and intense spending on new complexes; careless building patterns; and, as the trend continued, competitive pressures to grow circuits beyond what attendance levels could support. It was from the crisis that resulted that the new exhibition giants would be born.

The construction boom that drove exhibitors into crisis emerged from a pattern of exhibitor discourse that stretched back to the mid-1980s. At that time, exhibitors and distributors increasingly discussed improving the physical space of theaters and the experience of cinemagoing. These aims were constructed as a shared project, critical to the prosperity of the industry as a whole. Plain, serviceable mall multiplexes had enabled theater owners to cut staffing and maintenance costs while increasing the flexibility of their programming. But as Acland explains, exhibitors were now refiguring these sites as drab and substandard. Initiatives emerged to market not only individual films, but the cultural experience of going to the movies. Individual exhibitors and the industry at large invested heavily in new configurations of theater design, screening technology, and customer service.[6]

Nearly a decade of exhibitor deliberation culminated in 1996 with the emergence of a new industrial standard: the megaplex theater. Coined in the pages of *Variety*, the term *megaplex* designated theaters that had twelve, fourteen, twenty, and sometimes as many as thirty screens. Megaplexes were also destination cinemas, designed to match the height of

exhibitor ambitions for improved standards, with features including stadium seating, large, curved screens, cutting-edge screening technology, upscale concessions, arcades, and enhanced customer service.[7] Such features returned theaters to the cultural cachet of past decades, reaffirming a commitment to the idea of cinemagoing as a special event.[8] These features were expensive to include in existing theaters or new constructions, but exhibitors appeared nearly unanimous in the belief that the investment was worth it. Booming financial markets for borrowers and optimism about the potential of these sites to draw new audiences led to a wave of theater construction. Megaplexes became a nearly industry-wide phenomenon.

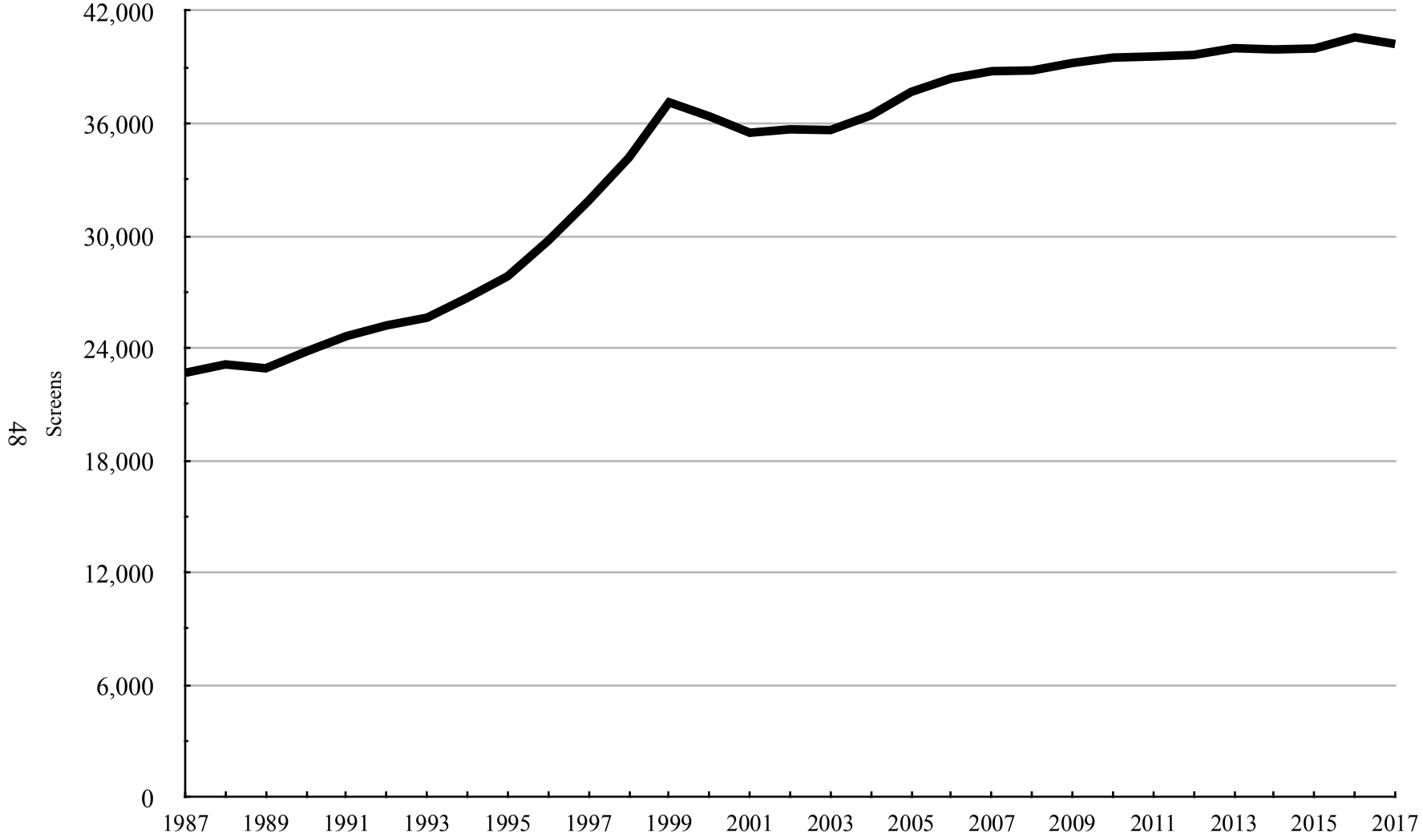
In only a few years, the number of megaplex theaters in the country ballooned, pushing the total number of screens in the US to dizzying new highs. Soon, the trend led to a phenomenon known as *overscreening*. The US market, especially in major cities, was already densely screened by the 1990s, due to a recent wave of building during the 1980s. As exhibitors built new, cutting-edge theaters, they drew audiences away from older theaters. This created immense pressure to construct new cinemas, either to counter the effects of competitors' screens or to beat them to building a site in a particular location. This practice could also lead to theater chains cannibalizing their own profits, as new megaplexes drew audiences away from older theaters within a companies' own circuits. Overscreening became a hot button issue for exhibitors, as they feared the number of theaters would exceed audience demand, increasing the cost of running their theater chains without a proportionate increase in revenues. But even as warnings about the financial risks of so much building began to circulate, exhibitors feared being left behind if they failed to keep up with the construction spree. Few refrained from opening new cinemas. The US screen count rose

vertiginously, from 23,814 screens in 1990, to 27,843 screens by 1995, to a peak of 37,131 screens in 1999 (see figure 2). Exhibitor spending (and debt) followed suit, as exhibitors collectively invested billions in new sites.

The result was an industry that, by the end of the decade, was characterized by swings between euphoria and dread. Regal CEO Mike Campbell's state of the industry address at ShoWest 1999, exhibitors' annual trade convention, exemplified the prevailing mood. "It is the best of times in theater exhibition: megaplexing, consolidation, stadium seating, state-of-the-art technology, availability of capital, box office revenue growth, film production strength, and rising consumer spending on leisure-time activities," he told the crowd assembled in the Caesar's Palace Colosseum for the convention. "It is the worst of times in theater exhibition: megaplexing, consolidation, stadium seating, state-of-the-art technology, availability of capital, box office revenue growth, film production strength, and rising consumer spending on leisure-time activities."[9] Campbell went on to describe the chaotic new environment. Megaplexing, he said, had created profound instability for exhibitors whose industrial landscape was changing beneath their feet. But he also framed new complexes as signs of progress and possibility that were improving the cinema experience and drawing large audiences back to the movies. He ended his address with an assurance that the "magic of free enterprise" and the forces of the market would restore balance and make things "the best of times in exhibition" again, though he predicted exhibitors would "experience a little pain as we run the gauntlet."[10]

Campbell's prediction was vague enough to be accurate; exhibitors experienced a period of chaos and struggle that eventually returned to relative stability, in part due to the structures and incentives of the market. But the gauntlet exhibitors ran became a major

Figure 2: US Movie Theater Screens, 1987 to 2017



Source: Data from National Association of Theatre Owners ("Number of US Movie Screens").

economic crunch. The equilibrium that eventually returned was fundamentally different from the one it left behind. The industry was restructured, and its power balance shifted in favor of a small group of large exhibitors. This outcome was the result of two factors. First, private equity firms entered exhibition in the 1990s and remained decisively involved into the 2000s, injecting capital that drove the building boom but also shaped the rhythms of the recovery. Second, large corporate chains that had built most heavily in the megaplex years, driving patterns of overscreening and competitive pressure on other exhibitors, became prized acquisition targets after the crisis as private equity launched a campaign to consolidate the industry. These targeted chains would eventually become the exhibition giants whose decisions would influence the trajectory of the industry in decades to come.

Private Equity Enters Film Exhibition

Several private equity firms targeted the exhibition industry for investment during the 1990s, especially as the theater construction boom intensified. But private equity was not merely responding to a set of market conditions surrounding the exhibition industry. Instead, the firms involved partially created those conditions, profoundly reshaping the market itself. The financial industry's investments and incentives complicate trade and scholarly narratives that attribute the crisis to exhibitors' actions alone, requiring a more nuanced understanding of how capital and industrial power were distributed in exhibition during the 1990s.

Exhibitors first attracted private equity attention as their general program of improving cinema sites began to bear fruit in the early 1990s. Interested private equity companies, still called leveraged buyout (LBO) firms at the time, saw significant value in

investing in exhibition for three primary reasons. First, rising box office since the mid-1980s, buoyed by a cycle of modern blockbusters, prompted financial interest in the film industry more generally throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. The most lucrative film production and distribution entities, including the major studios, had been folded into the activities of large conglomerates whose fortunes were tied to other media industries including television, publishing, and telecommunications.[11] Exhibition returns tracked the health of the film industry closely and major investments were significantly cheaper than investments in the production or distribution sectors. Second, as exhibitors lured moviegoers with upgraded cinema environments and state-of-the-art flagship sites, the financial industry took note of rising attendance figures. Investors were drawn in by an opportunity to push the value of the theatrical business to new heights. Third, and most importantly, film exhibition was an unusually crowded branch of the media industries, due to the legacy of the 1948 Paramount Decrees that reorganized the sector into a more geographically dispersed and competitive ensemble of medium- and small-sized theater chains. Exhibitors then consolidated in the 1980s and early 1990s, aided by the government's weakened appetite for antitrust regulation.[12] By the 2000s, many more national and regional operators held a significant share of the market than in other branches of the media industries. LBO firms noticed this competitive landscape, and consistently remarked on the profit potential of consolidating exhibition in the 1990s and 2000s.

Private equity's support of exhibitor-led projects to upgrade cinemas and build new, state-of-the-art sites accelerated the industry's efforts to expand the size and grandeur of their circuits. From 1992 to 1996, private equity firms like Merrill Lynch and the Cypress Group purchased the United Artists Theatre Company, Hoyts Cinemas, and Cinemark

Theatres in whole or in part. On the heels of the acquisitions, these theater chains announced major construction projects that added hundreds of new screens to their circuits.[13] The infusion of capital into the exhibition industry and new investors' appetites for quick growth fueled the dizzying scale of the megaplex construction boom. Of these deals, the largest and most illustrative was the proposed merger of Regal Cinemas, Act III Cinemas, and United Artists by the LBO firms Kohlberg, Kravis, Roberts (KKR) and Hicks, Muse, Tate & Furst in the late 1990s. This deal combined the impulses towards consolidation and expansion that governed private equity investors in exhibition during the 90s. But even as it illustrated the desires that drove patterns of private equity investment in the sector, the Regal-Act III-United Artists merger also revealed the instability these new investors had brought to an industry already in flux.

The merger began with the concurrent sales of Act III Cinemas and the United Artists chain in the fall of 1997, which attracted significant LBO interest from the outset. LBO firms hoped to seize the moment to acquire both chains and consolidate them into a single circuit, increasing the combined value of the assets for a future sale. This aspiration drove bidding wars for both chains; AMC and Regal Cinemas dropped out of the bidding for Act III early as the price climbed, leaving the LBO firms to jockey amongst themselves.[14] KKR won out in the fight for Act III, paying $660 million for the circuit. Industry commentators considered the price unusually high.[15] After losing out on its own bid for Act III, KKR's rival, Hicks Muse, acquired United Artists (then the second-largest chain in the US) for $850 million. Again, analysts fretted about an inflated purchase price. The cost of the United Artists deal was especially concerning given that much of the circuit was considered outdated and in need of expensive renovations.[16]

A few months after these acquisitions, KKR and Hicks Muse joined forces, planning to combine their assets and reach even further into the exhibition sector. The two firms announced plans to jointly purchase Regal Cinemas for $1.2 billion, take the company private, and merge it with their existing theater holdings.[17] The deal was poised to be a historic shift in the balance of power in exhibition. A merger of Act III, United Artists, and Regal would have formed a "megacircuit" of more than 5,000 screens, nearly twice the size of then-leader Carmike Cinemas' 2,700-screen chain.[18] The deal marked KKR and Hicks Muse's first joint ventures with another LBO firm, and their $600 million contributions to the venture also made it one of the largest commitments for either firm in a single industry.[19] The size of these investments in exhibition suggests the heights of KKR and Hicks Muse's aspirations; as expensive as the acquisitions were, the willingness of these firms to cut these deals was contingent on their expectation that they would be able to manage, expand, or acquire their way to even higher profits.

The deal would also allow an acquired Regal Cinemas to respond to pressures initiated and exacerbated by private equity involvement in exhibition. Regal, an upstart chain that had acquired its first theater in 1990, had grown rapidly during its short life, largely through acquisitions. The circuit's CEO, Mike Campbell, told *Daily Variety* that acquisition costs were increasing as LBO firms bid competitively on chains coming up for sale, raising issues for this strategy.[20] He also acknowledged that the costs of megaplex construction and rising competition for prime locations to build new sites had been a growing concern for the company.[21] Regal was motivated to sell, said Campbell, by the need to increase its financial muscle to compete with the LBO firms driving up costs across the industry; in other words, Regal couldn't beat private equity, so it would join them. These

observations indicated a vicious cycle that all but necessitated the further involvement of private equity investment or other deep-pocketed investors in exhibition to keep large exhibitors like Regal growing. But few outside private equity were willing to spend equivalent sums on exhibition.

Before KKR and Hicks Muse could finalize the assembly of their exhibition monolith, their plan collapsed. In February 1998, a month after the merger was announced, United Artists reported it had fallen $5 million short of its 1997 projections. When Hicks Muse attempted to lower the acquisition price, its deal for the chain fell through.[22] The Regal-Act III merger went forward, forming a circuit that still led Cinemark by five hundred screens. But the failed United Artists deal substantially reduced the scale of horizontal integration that KKR and Hicks Muse had originally planned.[23]

This early complication suggested that a large-scale transformation of exhibition would not go as smoothly as investors envisioned. When initial plans for the three-way merger was announced, industry commentators had expressed concerns that the three acquisitions were overvalued and could not generate sufficient economies of scale to justify the price.[24] With this latest development, the possibility of major savings from the combination became even more remote. The dissolution of the deal also likely prompted concern from the smaller private equity firms Brentwood Associates and Warburg Pincus, which had rushed into exhibition behind KKR and Hicks Muse in late 1997, buying Landmark Cinemas and Mann Theatres with their own plans to build theaters and acquire competing exhibitors.[25] Despite the setback, KKR and Hicks Muse persisted in their ambitions. Under the firms' ownership, Regal would build new cinemas more aggressively

in the next several years than any other theater chain, as I will discuss below. The frenzied construction compounded the risks of the companies' initial investments.[26]

Lured by the promise of a rising box office and dreams of surging theater attendance, private equity firms sought out exhibition investments throughout the 1990s, driving up circuit sale prices and fueling the upgrading and expansion of theatrical sites. Firms like KKR and Hicks Muse led bidding wars for prime circuits, pushing prices for desirable and questionable chains alike to new heights and increasingly crowding exhibition interests out of acquisitions. With the capital of these investors behind them, large and medium chains acquired by private equity (including Cinemark, Hoyts, and Regal) were empowered to upgrade and expand their circuits, adding hundreds of new sites over only a few years, and taking on significant debt in the process. Smaller private equity firms like Brentwood Associates and Warburg Pincus took on the strategies of larger firms as a template, acquiring less promising chains and pouring money into planned expansions (see table 1). For many private equity investors, the effects of their involvement paved the way for bankruptcies at their new acquisitions; by 2001, in some cases as little as two years from their initial investments, Regal, United Artists, Landmark Cinemas, and Mann Theatres would all file for bankruptcy.

The influence of private equity investment in exhibition was felt beyond the theater chains these firms acquired. The financial industry exacerbated the highly competitive atmosphere that permeated exhibition in the 1990s and culminated in the industry-wide crisis of the early 2000s. The capital that flowed into the industry from private equity meant that competing chains, especially larger players hoping to hold onto their positions in the market, were encouraged to increase their spending on renovating and expanding their

Table 1: Private Equity Investors in US-Canada Film Exhibition, 1992 to 1998

Investor	Theatre Chain	Year	Number of Screens
Merill Lynch	United Artists Theatre Company	1992	2,409
Hellman and Friedman	Hoyts Cinemas	1994	491
The Cypress Group	Cinemark Theatres	1996	1,403
Kohlberg Kravis Roberts	Act III Cinemas	1997	758
Brentwood Associates	Landmark Cinemas	1997	138
Warburg Pincus	Mann Theatres	1997	86
Kohlberg Kravis Roberts Hicks, Muse, Tate, & Furst	Regal Cinemas	1998	2,350

Source: Data from *New York Times* (Fabrikant, "Cable Giant to Sell Chain of Theaters"; "Company News: Kohlberg Kravis in $660 Million Deal for Act III Cinemas"), *Daily Variety* (Groves, "Hoyts Adding Screens"; Peers, "Cinemark Gets Cash Infusion"; Klady, "Silver Inks Landmark Purchase"; Hindes, "Viacom, TW Complete Cinamerica Theater Sale"), and *Wall Street Journal* (Lipin and Orwall, "KKR, Hicks Muse to Buy Regal Cinemas").

circuits. This spending led to the overscreening and deep debt loads that would push the industry over the edge. By pursuing rapid consolidation and theater construction to overtake their competitors within short investment windows, private equity firms catalyzed the overextension of exhibitors and contributed to widespread economic instability in the exhibition industry.

Major Corporate Chains and the Megaplex Boom

Trade and scholarly narratives of the crisis in exhibition tend to attribute the cause of the 1990s theater construction boom to exhibitors as an undifferentiated group which acted rashly, overspent, and drove their own industry into crisis. I contend that while most exhibitors participated in building megaplexes and renovating theaters to align with the new standards, this participation was uneven. Some chains added major features to the megaplex model, spent more heavily on sites, and built much more quickly and intensively than others. These were generally large corporate chains with significant financial backing. For some, like Regal, financing came from private equity firms willing to pour money into the industry. In others, economic support derived from public investment and parent companies with deep pockets which wanted their subsidiaries to remain competitive in the exhibition sector. For both groups of exhibitors, these investments led to painful short-term losses for themselves and virtually the entire industry. But large corporate chains also created the conditions that would help them to cement oligopolistic power over their competitors in the years following the crisis. Growing partnerships between these chains and private equity interests became foundational to the formation of the exhibition giants of the 2000s and 2010s. These strands of activity began to overlap in the 90s. Tracing the trajectories of each

set of actors before 2000 is key to understanding how the crisis took shape and how their interests coalesced in the next decade.

In 1995, AMC was one of the primary exhibitors leading the megaplex trend across the industry and pushing the expense of this new theater model to greater heights. AMC lacked the private equity support enjoyed by other major chains like Cinemark and Regal. But as a public company and the third-largest US chain, the circuit had more access to capital than many other exhibitors, which it used freely to upgrade theatrical sites.[27] The chain's twenty-four-screen Grand theater in Dallas, opened in 1995, was heralded as the first megaplex in the United States, and was then the country's largest theater as well.[28] As it built the Grand, AMC was in the middle of a construction spree; between 1994 and 1998, the chain opened thirty-eight new megaplexes comprising 800 of the circuit's approximately 2,300 screens.[29] Its activities were characteristic of the largest US and Canadian exhibitors at the time in this regard: theater operators including Regal, Cinemark, Cineplex Odeon, and Famous Players had the capital to invest in megaplex constructions from their equity investors (Regal/Hicks-Muse, Cinemark/The Cypress Group) and parent companies (Cineplex/MCA-Universal, Famous Players/Viacom). Their size positioned them well to access these funds and expand in areas where they already had a strong presence.

Even as its megaplex sites were heralded as the future of moviegoing, AMC was criticized within the industry for contributing to overscreening and inflating the cost of building new theaters. Critics were concerned about the number of theaters the chain was building in such a short time frame. But the chain provoked the most backlash for two elements of its megaplex strategy: the size of its theaters and the introduction of stadium seating. Of the fifty-three new megaplexes that AMC opened after the Grand, the average

size was twenty-two screens, with many theaters boasting twenty-four or even thirty screens.[30] Theaters of this size did not become the industry standard, but they did raise concerns that such sites encouraged overspending on construction. These cinemas were also considered too large to be supported by audiences where their sites were located. As the construction boom continued and other exhibitors sought to distance themselves from the frenzy, twenty-four- and thirtyplexes were frequently cited as symbols of the industry's excesses.[31]

Stadium seating became another area of contention. Seen as an improvement on sloped auditorium floors, stadium seating promised unobstructed sightlines that would create a superior viewing experience for the audience. AMC introduced stadium seating when it unveiled the Grand and, through the height of the megaplex wave in the late 1990s, all of the chain's new constructions boasted this layout.[32] In introducing stadium seating and encouraging its adoption as an industry standard, AMC made one of the costlier additions to the megaplex template: stadium seating pushed the per-screen expense of new theater construction from $200,000 less than ten years previously to as much as $1 million.[33] As other major exhibitors like Regal adopted stadium seating in their own megaplex designs, theaters that lacked this feature looked instantly outdated, even if exhibitors had built them only a few years earlier. These concerns heightened pressure for theaters across the industry to adopt this feature, driving up building costs.[34] While stadium seating was the most consequential addition AMC made to the megaplex template, other extras pioneered at the Grand like curved screens and three-way sound also followed this pattern, becoming standardized at new AMC sites and quickly being added to the designs of its competitors as well.[35]

Backed by KKR and Hicks Muse, Regal Cinemas also drove the building spree and later came under fire from the rest of the industry for compounding the crisis. Like AMC, Regal adopted expensive new features in its complexes. Especially contentious, however, were allegations that Regal used predatory building tactics and built new cinemas excessively. On the former count, competitors and commentators accused Regal's new, amenity-laden megaplexes of pulling audiences away from other facilities.[36] On the latter count, Regal's building throughout the 1990s outpaced any other chain, even as the cracks in prevailing strategies began to appear. When KKR and Hicks Muse acquired the chain in 1997, Regal was already in the middle of an "aggressive" construction plan to open 1,300 screens in two and a half years and close about 10 percent of its 2,100 screens to shed older and underperforming sites.[37] The acquisition offered the capital to fuel this project, and the chain continued to expand its theater construction program well into 2000, even as other chains entered bankruptcy court and the industry's woes were splashed across the trade press. In February 1999, the chain announced plans to add an astounding 1,600 screens over the next two years at an estimated cost of $550 million, aiming to open sixty sites totaling one thousand screens in 1999 alone.[38] Keith Thompson, Regal's vice president for real estate, insisted that these theaters would largely be built in areas that were still underscreened, but acknowledged that competitive pressures in the industry (and, presumably, the scale of the planned expansion) would potentially involve building new theaters near older ones to stay ahead of other exhibitors.[39] Even for the 80 percent of theaters that Regal planned to build in "noncompetitive areas" the expansion risked backfiring; *Variety* reported in 2000 that many of the chain's new theaters were seeing

"mediocre initial grosses," likely because there was little profitable territory left underscreened after the industry's construction binge.[40]

As in the United States, Canada's megaplex construction was driven by its two major national circuits, Cineplex Odeon and Famous Players, then operating as a virtual duopoly in the market (Cineplex had also operated in the US since 1982).[41] Neither chain had major private equity investors at this stage, but in addition to the position they enjoyed as the largest exhibitors in Canada, both had powerful corporate parents which could help them fund expansions. MCA/Universal owned Cineplex Odeon, while Famous Players was a subsidiary of Viacom.[42] Both exhibitors had participated actively in a late-80s expansion, leading to concerns about overscreening, and Cineplex was still dealing with substantial debt from its enthusiasm for construction and acquisitions north and south of the border.[43] But 1995 catalyzed another round of building, with each chain announcing an ambitious, multiyear series of construction projects totaling hundreds of new screens at home.[44]

When AMC announced plans in August 1996 to build thirty new megaplexes in the Canadian market, the Canadian duopoly was spurred on by fear of competition from the US giant.[45] By April 1998, AMC had scaled down its plans to only five new sites, and had yet to break ground on a single cinema; two years later, the US chain remained limited to these locations, with 122 screens between them.[46] In contrast, between 1996 and 2000, Cineplex went from 621 to 828 Canadian screens, while Famous Players expanded from 475 to 804 screens. Like their US counterparts, these theaters were constructed in the megaplex style with plentiful screens as well as comforts and amenities including plush stadium seating, upscale concessions, arcades, cutting-edge sound and image technology, and elevated customer service standards.[47] And, just as in the US, aggressive building and new amenities

spearheaded by leading chains also pushed smaller regional theater circuits like Quebec's Guzzo Cinemas and Atlantic Canada's Empire Theatres to invest in upgrading their facilities to keep up with their competitors.[48] In 1998, Cineplex also merged with another major chain, Loews Theaters, adding 900 screens to its circuit. With the merger, the company significantly expanded its circuit in the US, strengthened its balance sheet, and changed its name to Loews Cineplex. Loews, too, had been actively engaged in theater renovations and construction as the megaplex trend took off and its upgraded theaters bolstered Cineplex's profile in the US.[49] Commentators suggested the financial stability the merger brought Cineplex would enable the company to further upgrade its cinemas.[50]

While both large and midsize exhibitors participated in the industrial discourses around cinema improvement and the widespread theater construction they precipitated, it was the largest corporate exhibitors with the greatest access to capital for major projects that led the movement that would soon roil the industry. Aided by private equity investors, parent companies, and the greater access to capital that came along with their status as major exhibitors, AMC, Regal, Cinemark, Cineplex Odeon/Loews Cineplex, and Famous Players each built hundreds of new screens, invested in expensive design features, and intensified the cutthroat competition amongst exhibitors to build big or risk having their audiences eroded by competitors' megaplexes. Acknowledging the role of these corporate chains in generating the conditions for crisis is especially important when their activities are read in light of the major shifts in exhibitor power that followed in the decades after the meltdown. Though these chains played the most significant role in overbuilding circuits, overscreening key markets, and overburdening exhibitor balance sheets, their investments in exhibition infrastructure made them valuable targets for a new round of private equity investors

seeking to capitalize on the industry's woes. These circuits—and, especially, their investors and parent companies—would not escape unscathed. But with the help of new investors, exhibitors like Regal, AMC, and Loews Cineplex would be able to recover from the crisis well-positioned to dominate the market. Meanwhile, many unlucky large and midsize exhibitors who had tried to compete or held back on construction were swallowed up by the majors in bankruptcy court or in the waves of consolidation that followed.

Vulture Capital and the Megaplex Crash

Major Chains in Crisis

By 1999, the construction boom had reached its height and theater chains' overinvestment in new screens was starting to catch up with them. As exhibitors and their investors had hoped, both box office and theater attendance were swinging upward that year, bolstered by exhibitors' investments in cinema infrastructure and a string of successful blockbusters in the previous three years, including *Men in Black* (1997), *Titanic* (1997), and *Star Wars, Episode I: The Phantom Menace* (1999). By December 1999, the six largest exhibitors had collectively spent $2.8 billion since 1996, primarily on constructing new megaplex cinemas.[51] But as the extent of theater chains' debts became obvious to those outside exhibition, the stocks of publicly traded exhibitors (Loews Cineplex, AMC, and Carmike) began to reflect the broader market's concerns about the state of the companies' balance sheets. That chains carried large debts relative to their cash flows when box office was rising to all-time highs and the stock market was booming only brought these issues into starker relief. In 1999, exhibition stock prices dipped as much as 50 percent.[52] LBO firms had invested in theater chains due to their optimism about the potential of growing blockbuster

revenues and new megaplexes to reignite the cinema business in the mid-1990s and had succeeded in their goal. Recent increases in box office were widely attributed to theater upgrades, the expanded screen count that facilitated saturation releases, and the marketing of new cinema facilities. Paradoxically, the speed and degree of investment in theater construction had undermined this progress. Theater chains and their partners in the financial industry had far outstripped the growth in their revenues with the costs of the sites. Overscreening exacerbated the issue, as newer screens siphoned business from older ones, cannibalizing exhibitor revenues and making older screens a drag on circuits. Exhibitors also voiced concerns that saturation releases enabled by the ballooning screen count meant that audiences for new releases burned off much more quickly, reducing exhibitors' share of ticket revenues, which traditionally increase the longer a film runs.[53]

As exhibitors' fortunes continued to worsen throughout 1999, theater chains could no longer ignore the issue. Exhibitors pulled back on building and hastened the closure of underperforming screens. In a major signal of the shifting common sense around megaplex building, AMC, in the wake of announcing a $13 million loss for the fiscal year, announced its retreat from its hallmark megaplex strategy and committed to cap new theaters at twenty screens.[54] Late that year, the industry saw its first bankruptcy: Mann Theatres, purchased by Warburg Pincus only two years earlier, filed in November 1999.[55] In 2000, six more theater chains announced bankruptcy filings.[56] Of these chains, three—Carmike, United Artists, and General Cinema—were in the top ten domestic theater circuits at the beginning of the year.[57]

While a troubling sign for the industry and a major blow for investors, bankruptcy also brought relief to exhibitors by allowing them to restructure their debts and reorganize their operations. One of the core benefits of Chapter 11, given the context of the crisis, was

that it generally allowed exhibitors to break leases for underperforming theaters, speeding closures for older screens. Through 2000 and 2001, some exhibitors filed for bankruptcy only out of necessity, while others entered the process voluntarily, negotiating with creditors themselves or with the help of prospective buyers.[58]

These buyers were part of a new wave of private equity firms to enter exhibition. Like their predecessors in the 1990s, these investors explicitly discussed their aspirations to consolidate circuits and build their value in investor calls and to trade reporters. But their interest did not come from the sense of exhibition as an industry poised for astronomic growth. Instead, they saw the business's present difficulties as an opportunity: theater chains were understood to be poised for a turnaround, and if investors could restructure debt, close older theaters, rein in excesses, and merge underpriced chains, they could make a tidy profit. This second wave of investors, then, understood their involvement in exhibition as investments with a lifespan of two or three years. These timespans were even shorter than those of first-wave investors whose plans to rebuild theater circuits with state-of-the-art facilities—and the dizzying speed with which they put this plan into effect—had plunged the industry into distress.

The desired profits of second-wave investors came on the back of the losses of these predecessors, who lost as much as $15 billion on exhibition between 1999 and 2001.[59] In the wake of the crash, new investors saw the cinema infrastructure these investments had built become available at rock-bottom prices and jumped at the potential for profit. In some cases, these firms stabilized companies before they needed to file for bankruptcy. This was the case for Apollo Management, which bought $250 million in preferred stock from AMC in April 2001, allowing the exhibitor to reduce debt and strengthen its finances. The deal, which gave

Apollo a minority stake in the company, allowed AMC to become one of the bargain-hunters seeking out struggling chains, rather than leaving them to endure the industry's hardships alongside their competitors.[60] In other cases, prearranged bankruptcy filings facilitated the transition of struggling chains into the hands of new owners, such as when Canadian investment manager Onex and its partner, private equity firm Oaktree Capital, announced plans to take control of Loews Cineplex as the chain filed for bankruptcy reorganization in February 2001. The pair ultimately converted $250 million in acquired Loews debt into a 100 percent equity stake and took the company private (see table 2).[61]

The earliest and largest investors of this new wave were US billionaire Phillip Anschutz and his partner, Oaktree Capital. Anschutz had built his fortune in oil, railroads, and telecommunications and had a history of investments in distressed companies. Oaktree Capital, which had partnered with Onex on the Loews deal, was a private equity firm specializing in distressed debt.[62] Together, Anschutz and Oaktree would draft the template that other bargain-hunters in the financial industry followed as they sought to profit from the movie theaters' misfortunes.

Anschutz entered the exhibition industry in early 2000 by buying the discounted debt of a struggling United Artists Theatre Company at a rate of 70 cents on the dollar, soon becoming the chain's largest lender.[63] In September 2000, the chain filed for bankruptcy under a debt restructuring plan proposed by the billionaire. Since bankruptcy reorganizations pay banks and lenders before equity holders, Anschutz was able to bypass the chain's owners, Merrill Lynch, and transform $92 million in debt (bought at $65 million) into a 55 percent equity stake.[64] By the time United Artists was exiting bankruptcy in February, Anschutz had partnered with Oaktree to buy the debts of Edwards Theatres, which was then

in bankruptcy court.[65] In August, Anschutz and Oaktree were able to swap $56 million in acquired debt for a 51 percent stake in the company.[66]

The partners pulled from the same playbook in pursuit of their largest prize: Regal Cinemas. The theater chain, seriously overextended after its building binge, had been hovering on the edge of bankruptcy for months. By May 2001, Anschutz and Oaktree owned a significant portion of the chain's debts. This put the investors in a strong position to seize Regal from KKR and Hicks Muse, which were desperately clinging to control, since Anschutz and Oaktree now owned enough debt to block any restructuring proposal from the chain's current owners.[67] Regal's management approved Anschutz and Oaktree's proposal in September 2001, and the chain filed for Chapter 11 the next month.[68] KKR and Hicks Muse were left in the cold and lost $500 million each on their investment in Regal Cinemas.[69]

Regal exited bankruptcy court in January 2002 and, shortly thereafter, Anschutz unveiled the endgame of his buying spree: he planned to consolidate the three circuits under the banner of the Regal Entertainment Group and launch an initial public offering (IPO). The merged chains formed a behemoth circuit of nearly six thousand screens. With 17 percent of all screens in the United States, Regal Entertainment was now the largest theater chain in the country.[70] In May, Regal stocks became available to the public, trading as high as 17 percent higher than the launch price on their first day. Regal raised $180 million with the IPO, which was allocated to paying down its debts.[71] Anschutz and Oaktree had not only taken charge of three struggling firms and reorganized them into an industry-leading enterprise, they had also dramatically transformed the competitive logic and industrial discourse of the exhibition sector. While this was the first major consolidation of the post-crisis years, it would not be the last. In the coming years, other financial firms would jockey

Table 2: Private Equity Investors in US-Canada Film Exhibition, 2000 to 2003

Investor	Theatre Chain	Year	Number of Screens
Phillip Anschutz	United Artists Theatre Company	2000	2,036
Phillip Anschutz Oaktree Capital	Edwards Theatres	2001	850
Phillip Anschutz Oaktree Capital	Regal Cinemas	2001	4,472
Onex Oaktree Capital	Loews Cineplex	2001	3,010
Apollo Management	AMC	2001	2,790

Source: Data from *Daily Variety* (DiOrio, "UA Raising Curtain After Bankruptcy," "Edwards Creditors OK Anschutz Buyout Plan," "Anschutz Leads Regal Out of Court," "Loews Down, Out") and *Wall Street Journal* ("Apollo Management Buys $250 Million of Preferred").

to expand the reach of major theater circuits while the value of cinema chains was still depressed by the turmoil across the industry.

Crisis Investors Look for the Exits

Phillip Anschutz and Oaktree Capital's successful play with their joint investment in exhibition became the benchmark for other financiers who hoped to profit from the exhibition industry's disarray. Anschutz and Oaktree had bought chains cheap at the peak of the crisis, consolidated them into the United States' largest cinema chain, and reaped the financial rewards in short order with a successful IPO. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the deal was the speed with which the partners were able to execute this plan. The launch of the Regal Entertainment Group's $180 million IPO took place just over two years from Anschutz's initial purchase of United Artists's distressed debts. Onex (which had also partnered with Oaktree) and Apollo Management, the other private equity firms then active in exhibition, also strived to assemble leading circuits by acquiring distressed chains, hopeful about the possibilities of cashing out once the value of movie theaters rebounded. However, while they shared Anschutz and Oaktree's overall strategy, the results of their efforts were uneven and their timelines more prolonged.

In the early phase of the crisis, both Onex and AMC (partially owned by Apollo) sought to pick up struggling chains to bolster the size of their circuits. One of the largest of these deals played out in a competition between the two companies in bankruptcy court for the assets of the General Cinema Corporation, then the eighth-largest chain in the United States with more than 1,200 screens.[72] Initially, Onex and Oaktree appeared to be the winners, announcing a deal with the chain's creditors in June 2001.[73] But AMC, bolstered by

Apollo's investment, moved in unexpectedly to outbid the partners the following month.[74] "We are basically in the game—that is the point to be made here," said AMC CEO and chairman Peter Brown, discussing the deal. "We really view that we are a very serious and credible player when it comes to looking at consolidation activity in this industry."[75] His statement suggests a sense across the industry, in the wake of Anschutz's deal-making, that acquisitions would be essential for those major corporate chains that had survived the initial wave of the crisis to preserve their dominance in the business. AMC emerged victorious in the auction for General Cinema that December.[76]

Onex remained eager to extend its reach in exhibition, pursuing several deals in the next few years and reinforcing the emerging consensus that scaling up was essential to remaining competitive with Regal's circuit. Shortly after its initial filing to take over Loews Cineplex, Onex announced plans to use $1.3 billion from a recent sale of assets to buy and merge theater chains. "There's such disarray in the industry we think there's a real consolidation opportunity worldwide in the exhibition business," Onex president and CEO Gerald Schwartz told Onex shareholders shortly after the acquisition.[77] Ultimately, the partnership failed to assemble assets on the scale of General Cinema that it could use to expand the chain. Since 1999, before its acquisition of Loews, Onex had been the majority owner of Galaxy Entertainment, an emerging Canadian exhibitor that focused on building smaller, megaplex-style facilities in midsize Canadian cities that had been neglected during the building boom.[78] But despite its involvement in other prospective deals, it struggled to expand beyond Loews Cineplex. In addition to General Cinema, between 2001 and 2003 Onex mulled mergers with Cinemark and AMC and planned an acquisition of Landmark Theatres, all of which eventually fizzled.[79] Domestically, its only completed acquisition was

the assumption of full control of a pre-existing joint venture with the small Michigan circuit Star Theatres.[80] It did have some modest success building out Loews Cineplex's international exhibition portfolio, expanding its stake in a joint venture with South Korea's Megabox Theaters and acquiring a 42 percent stake in Groupo Cinemex, an emerging Mexican exhibitor.[81] However, Onex was generally unable to achieve the height of their consolidation ambitions during their years as owners of Loews Cineplex. Their shortcomings are indicative of the highly speculative strategies that had overtaken the industry, ones that relied on audacious purchase agreements, financial sleight of hand, and well-timed exit strategies. Prior commitments to communities, employees, and customers had taken a back seat to highwire hedge fund performances of Anschutz and his peers. Although it may have appeared that the industry was awash with buying opportunities, the number of firms that could take advantage of these opportunities was rapidly diminishing.

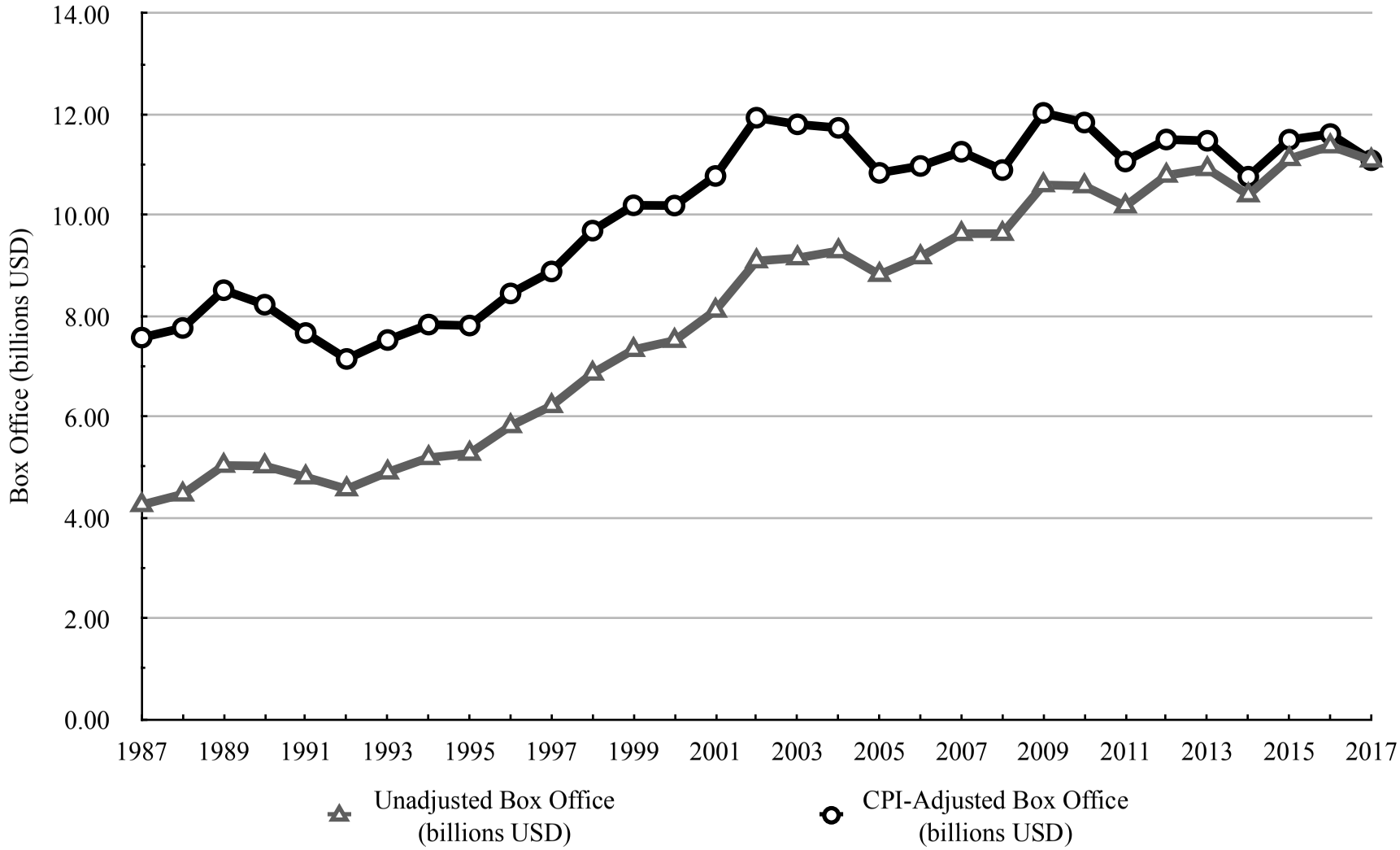
While investors and exhibitors were still considering consolidation plans, the success of Regal Entertainment's May 2002 IPO lifted hopes that theater chain owners would be able to cash out quickly on their own investments through public offerings. Regal, AMC, and Carmike saw their stocks rebound throughout the early summer of 2002 in the wake of box office highs spurred by the releases of *Spider-Man* and *Star Wars, Episode II: Attack of the Clones* that May.[82] *Variety* suggested that theater chains represented the best chance for investors to benefit from booming box office, since major film studios were owned by conglomerates with assets in many sectors whose fortunes could dilute the gains from blockbuster releases.[83] Both Cinemark and Loews Cineplex filed paperwork for IPOs that summer, hoping to capitalize on the enthusiasm, only to pull their plans as exhibition stocks dipped alongside the rest of the market in the aftermath of the dot com bubble.[84] This

momentary optimism demonstrated that private equity prioritized timing their entry and exit from the market above operational improvements to theater chains or adherence to a single profit-maximizing strategy like consolidation, taking an opportunistic approach as they sought to profit on their investments. For Cinemark's minority shareholder, the Cypress Group, this had meant enduring the crisis until its 1996 investment could rebound, a process that took years. Onex, which had only brought Loews Cineplex out of bankruptcy in March 2002, was already discussing the possibility of an IPO in May after a little over a year of looking for acquisitions.[85] This decision suggested that consolidation was only one element of their plan to maximize their profits in an eventual sale, and that they were willing to pursue others as opportunities arose.

As Onex, Apollo Management, and the Cypress Group sought to emulate Anschutz and Oaktree's strategies in the aftermath of the crisis, they experienced some successes but ultimately continued to falter through the early crisis years as they sought exit strategies from their investments. Through their activities in this period, we can observe the solidifying logic of this second wave of private equity involvement. Theater construction, still a major piece of the private equity strategy in the 1990s had fallen away by 2000 as the financial crunch for theater chains set in and backlash against overbuilding sharpened. Underpricing of theater chains escalated a push for consolidation as the financial incentives of this strategy intensified for private equity companies, already primed to value short-term investments and opportunities to time the market.

While this new round of investors profited from the losses incurred by their predecessors during the construction boom, the exhibitors who had invested most heavily in cinema infrastructure were able to solidify their power under new ownership. In a moment

Figure 3: Annual Movie Theater Box Office, US-Canada, 1987 to 2017



Source: Data from National Association of Theatre Owners ("Annual US/Canada Box Office Grosses") and United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

when the costs of rebuilding theater circuits to cutting-edge standards had been made clearer than any time in recent memory, those chains like Regal, AMC, and Loews Cineplex that had already adapted most of their cinemas to the new standard became prime acquisition targets. As the industry weathered the crisis and began to recover, these chains became the crown jewels of expanding circuits and the brands that would anchor new acquisitions.

Recovery and Adjustment in Exhibition

Betting on Growth

By 2004, the question of profiting from their investments loomed for Onex, Apollo Management, and the Cypress Group, even as the exhibition industry was returning to financial health and stability. With risk for new investors attenuating, these chains began to look towards sales to other private equity firms (called *secondary buyouts*) to exit their investment. This third wave of investment would mark the end of the immediate crisis and the beginning of the industry's long-term recovery. This latest group of investors were not looking to capitalize on the same kinds of pricing fluctuations that had drawn Onex, Apollo Management, Phillip Anschutz, and Oaktree Capital into exhibition. They were, however, attracted by a similar logic, hoping to consolidate and grow their investment over a few years to turn a profit through a public offering or private sale. As the decade continued, the emphasis on acquisition by these players would result in a major shift in the balance of power between exhibitors. By 2006, the number of exhibitors at the top level of the industry had already contracted sharply: just four US exhibitors had more than two thousand screens and three hundred multiplex theaters in their circuits.[86] From this point forward, a gulf

opened between a handful of powerful corporate exhibitors with nationwide circuits and the smaller regional chains that endured the post-crisis period.

When Cinemark announced that it was pursuing a sale of the company in January 2004, a year and a half after a failed IPO, its strategy and that of its prospective buyers was distinct from the tumult in bankruptcy court that had marked the early years of the crisis in exhibition. [87] Market conditions for exhibitors had rebounded, as they closed theaters, streamlined operations, and regained financial stability. Private equity investors like the Cypress Group now saw the opportunity to capitalize on their investments. A sale was especially pressing for the Cypress Group, whose 1996 investment in Cinemark had far exceeded the three- to five-year timeline of typical private equity investments due to the prolonged crisis. When the chain went up for sale, private equity firms—Bain Capital, the Carlyle Group, and Madison Dearborn Partners—not cinema chains, were the main buyers competing for its assets.[88] Madison Dearborn paid $1.5 billion for a 100 percent stake, inclusive of $500 million in debt, buying out the Cypress Group and the chain's founder, owner and long-time CEO, Lee Roy Mitchell.[89]

Onex became the next private equity player to capitalize on its investment. After their own failed IPO attempt, Onex and Oaktree Capital pursued diverging strategies for their Canadian exhibition assets and US holdings. In October 2003, Onex filed a prospectus to spin off the Canadian branch of its exhibition holdings, Cineplex Odeon and Galaxy Entertainment, into a publicly traded income trust it called Cineplex Galaxy.[90] As it proceeded with its exit from Loews Cineplex, the company claimed it had retained its stake in Cineplex Galaxy because it saw greater potential for growth in midsize Canadian cities than the crowded US marketplace, an approach that echoed the central strategy of Galaxy's

upstart chain. However, there had also been concerns in January 2001—at the height of the crisis and before its purchase by Onex—that Cineplex Odeon, which encompassed Loews Cineplex's Canadian holdings, had been a financial drag on the circuit.[91] These earlier concerns may also suggest that Onex was also seeking to further build the value of Cineplex Galaxy before cashing out on its investment. After toying with a merger with AMC at the end of 2003, Onex and Oaktree Capital put Loews Cineplex (now comprising the chain's US, South Korean, Mexican, and Spanish exhibition assets) up for sale in March 2004.[92] That June, a consortium of private equity firms including Bain Capital, the Carlyle Group, and Spectrum equity purchased the chain for $1.1 billion and the assumption of $400 million in debt.[93] This deal marked a huge payout for Onex. They had invested an estimated $300 million in Loews Cineplex and received $650 million from the sale, resulting in $350 million in profit while retaining the sizable assets of Cineplex Galaxy, which was believed to be well-positioned for further growth in the Canadian market.[94]

Emerging from the aborted Loews-AMC merger, Apollo Management began to seek its own exit from the investment it had made in the early days of the crisis. In the fall of 2004, Apollo Management partnered with JP Morgan on the joint venture Marquee Holdings. Marquee, whose sole asset would be AMC, announced an agreement to buy all outstanding shares of AMC at 37 percent above its trading price and take the company private. Under the deal, JP Morgan became a controlling shareholder with 50.1 percent of the company, and Apollo retained a 49.9 percent stake after reinvesting a portion of its holdings back into AMC. The value of the deal was more than $2 billion.[95] Through this arrangement, Apollo was able to partially cash out on its investment, freeing up funds for other investments while still retaining the ability to profit from any continued growth. In

taking the company private, Apollo and JP Morgan were able to avoid market fluctuations, reporting requirements, and quarterly earnings expectations as they restructured, made acquisitions, and built the value of the company in anticipation of a future IPO or private sale (see table 3).

This wave of sales in 2004 marked the end of the immediate crisis in exhibition. Theater chains had emerged from bankruptcy and seen successive improvements in their financial indicators in the years since 2000. Most consequentially, the investors who had rushed into the industry in 2000 and 2001 with the hope of capitalizing on underpriced exhibition assets had collectively judged that the moment had arrived to make their exit and collect their profits. The third wave of private equity companies that entered exhibition in 2004 understood their role differently than their predecessors but employed similar tactics and sought similar goals. Exhibition was no longer in the throes of acute crisis, and so market fluctuation no longer played so decisive a role in attracting the financial industry. However, compared with the rest of the entertainment industry, exhibition was still an unusually competitive industry, one in which new investors saw significant opportunities to continue consolidating theater chains. From this point forward, consolidation emerged as the central strategy for private equity investors. It was during this third wave of investment that this trend would solidify into a stable power structure in exhibition that would persist for at least the next decade.

Consolidation After the Crisis

Each of the major chains that had been involved in crisis-era consolidation were involved in a new wave of acquisitions. Much of this consolidation activity came from those chains that

Table 3: Private Equity Investors in US-Canada Film Exhibition, 2004

Investor	Theatre Chain	Year	Number of Screens
Madison Dearborn Partners	Cinemark Theatres	2004	3,097
Bain Capital Spectrum Equity The Carlyle Group	Loews-Cineplex Theatres	2004	2,200
JP Morgan Apollo Management	AMC	2004	3,515

Source: Data from *Daily Variety* (DiOrio, "Deal's on the Mark"; Goldsmith, "Buyers High on Loews"; Snyder, "AMC, Loews Toast Merger Completion").

had changed ownership in 2004 as the crisis in exhibition tapered off. One of the earliest of these deals was a renewed —and successful — effort, in June 2005, to merge AMC and Loews.[96] With the deal, AMC (which kept its name in the merger) gained approximately 2,200 screens across 200 sites, bringing them close to Regal's scale within three years of Anschutz's IPO.[97] The private holding companies led by Bain-Carlyle-Spectrum (Loews Cineplex) and JP Morgan-Apollo Management (Marquee Holdings/AMC) also merged, with AMC's original investors controlling 60 percent of the new company through Marquee Holdings.[98] This division of the assets roughly reflected the size of the chains that each group brought to the merged circuit. The decision to merge, so soon after the Bain-Carlyle-Spectrum group had bought Loews Cineplex, pointed to the ascendant logic that consolidation would secure the best returns for this latest round of buyers. Each partner in the transaction, then, seems to have understood that all parties stood to benefit from joining forces to expand AMC and secure its dominance in exhibition.[99] They reasoned that in light of the recurring waves of capital investment since the 1990s and absent the threat of anti-trust enforcement by the US Justice Department since the 1980s, the trend towards consolidation would continue into the 2000s until only a few firms prevailed. Once that happened, it would be time to cash out.

Under Madison Dearborn Partners, Cinemark also pursued new acquisitions in the years directly following its change in ownership. Like AMC's investors, this was a strategy aimed at building the value of the chain as it looked towards another attempt to take the company public. In August 2006, the company purchased Century Theatres, a chain with 1,005 screens across 83 theaters, concentrated in the Western United States.[100] Filling in regional gaps in Cinemark's holdings, the Century acquisition enabled Cinemark to extend

its circuit's reach nationwide. Most importantly, the merged circuit would comprise 3,463 screens, making Cinemark the number-three theater chain in the United States, behind only AMC and Regal (see table 4).

By early 2007, as private equity firms continued to play out their strategies for their theater chains, a handful of circuits rose to a dominant position in the US exhibition industry. These chains had invested in megaplex construction, been shepherded into financial stability by crisis-era investors and acquired thousands of screens from competitors. Now, they oversaw massive circuits and exerted significant influence over the standards and practices of the domestic industry; in other words, they had become exhibition giants. In January of that year, Regal, AMC, and Cinemark were the top three circuits in the US. Regal sat at the top of the US market, maintaining its dominance due to the initial scale of the circuit Anschutz has assembled as well as the handful of small and midsize chains it had acquired from 2003 to 2005 that added more than a thousand additional screens to its circuits.[101] At this time, Regal operated 540 theaters (6,409 screens), all in the US market. At the same juncture, AMC had 312 US sites (4,468 screens) and 99 theaters (1,167 screens) in international markets. Cinemark had 282 US theaters (3,538 screens) as well as 116 international sites (978 screens), mostly in Latin America.[102]

Regal, AMC, and Cinemark had also widened what would be an enduring gap between the scale of their circuits and those of their competitors. The next largest exhibitor in January 2007, Carmike Cinemas, a regionally concentrated chain based in the Southeastern US, was still somewhat competitive but lacked a nationally and internationally competitive presence. It operated approximately a thousand fewer US screens than Cinemark but twenty-five more theater sites (although with Cinemark's sizable international

circuits, mostly based in Latin America, Cinemark still led Carmike by more than two thousand screens in worldwide holdings). But aside from Carmike and Canadian exhibitor Cineplex Entertainment (formerly Cineplex Galaxy), only National Amusements had more than seven hundred screens or one hundred theater sites (see table 6). In comparison, in *Boxoffice*'s 1998 annual report on the top fifty US and Canadian circuits, no exhibitor had more than three thousand screens, eleven exhibitors had more than seven hundred screens, and thirteen had more than one hundred theaters (see table 5). From 2007 forward, Regal, Cinemark, and AMC would continue to pull ahead of other exhibitors and would face little competition on the national scale as they continued to consolidate, absorbing competitor chains or reducing them to relatively inconsequential regional players.

Direct competition between US and Canadian exhibitors abated almost entirely with the spinoff of Cineplex Galaxy from Loews Cineplex. However, the Canadian exhibition industry followed similar patterns to the US industry in the years following the crisis. After its modest success in launching as an income trust, Cineplex Galaxy, still partially owned by Onex, was granted an opportunity that reshaped the Canadian exhibition industry. In March 2005, Viacom, experiencing painful losses (including a $1.5 billion hit from the spinoff of Blockbuster Video), announced plans to sell Famous Players, Cineplex Galaxy's chief Canadian rival.[103] When Cineplex Galaxy struck a deal to acquire Famous Players that June, it was in line to own a functional monopoly in Canadian exhibition. The Canadian Competition Bureau did enforce a divestment of 34 theaters in markets where Cineplex Galaxy and Famous Players had competed directly, but this did little to curb Cineplex's power.[104] Empire Theatres, the number-two exhibitor in Canada after the absorption of Famous Players, doubled their size by acquiring 27 of these theaters, resulting in a chain

with 379 screens across 55 sites.[105] But Empire was dwarfed by the post-acquisition Cineplex Galaxy: after the divestments, the chain had 1,278 screens across 32 sites and controlled a staggering 60 percent share of the Canadian exhibition market.[106] Cineplex would maintain its dominance unchallenged throughout the 2000s and 2010s.

In both Canada and the US, exhibitors would continue to consolidate over the next decade. However, this recovery phase in the mid-2000s, when Regal, AMC, and Cinemark rose to the top of the US market and Cineplex Galaxy became Canada's monopoly exhibitor, was also the moment when the results of the structural shifts of the 1990s and 2000s stabilized. Consolidation slowed somewhat as the crisis receded, but it nonetheless became an enduring piece of the growth strategy for chains, which sought to maintain power, and owners, who strived to boost the future profits to be made on their assets in an IPO or secondary buyout. These subsequent acquisitions did not fundamentally change the balance of power in exhibition. Instead, they solidified the position of national exhibition giants and widened the gap between the scale of their operations and those of smaller regional players (see table 7). Each of the four top corporate exhibitors made key acquisitions in this period, between them acquiring six of the top fifteen chains in the US-Canada market (see table 8). These developments affirmed the kinds of consolidation that had manifested in the previous waves of investment as an ongoing strategy and cemented the emerging oligopoly structure of the industry.

Later IPOs and Current Financial Structure

By 2004, two of the top four corporate chains in North America, the Regal Entertainment Group and Cineplex Galaxy, were publicly traded. Regal had been the first to go public in

Table 4: Exhibition Mergers and Acquisitions Involving US-Canada Exhibition Giants, 2002 to 2006

Theatre Chain	Private Equity Investor	Target	Type	Date
AMC	Apollo Management	Gulf States Theatres	acquisition	January 2002
AMC	Apollo Management	General Cinema Corporation	acquisition	March 2002
Loews Cineplex	Onex Oaktree Capital	Star Theatres	acquisition	April 2002
Regal Entertainment Group	publicly traded	Hoyts Cinemas US	acquisition	February 2003
Regal Entertainment Group	publicly traded	Signature Theatres	acquisition	April 2004
Regal Entertainment Group	publicly traded	R/C Theatres	acquisition	March 2005
Regal Entertainment Group	publicly traded	Eastern Federal	acquisition	April 2005
Cineplex Galaxy	publicly traded/Onex	Famous Players	acquisition	July 2005
AMC	JP Morgan Apollo Management Bain Capital The Carlyle Group Spectrum Equity	Loews Cineplex	merger	January 2006
Cinemark Theatres	Madison Dearborn Partners	Century Theatres	acquisition	August 2006

Source: Data from *Daily Variety* (DiOrio, "Exhib AMC to Buy Gulf States Loop," "General Cinemas Goes to AMC via Auction," "Regal's Pumped After Hoyt's Haul, Profit Rise"; Learmonth, "Signature Signs Up with Exhib Regal"; Snyder, "AMC, Loews Toast Merger Completion," "Cinemark USA Buys Century"), *Globe and Mail* ("Onex and Oaktree to Buy Rest of Star Theatres"; Blackwell, "Cineplex Road to Viacom Ran Through Ottawa"), *Charlotte Business Journal* ("Regal to Buy Eastern Federal for $127.6M"), and *Baltimore Sun* (Torres, ""R/C Theatres to Sell 7 Movie Houses to Chain").

Table 5: Top Twenty US-Canada Exhibitors by Number of Screens, 1997

Rank	Chain	Screens	Sites
1	**Carmike Cinemas**	2,780	536
2	**Regal Cinemas**	2,350	156
3	**United Artists Theatre Circuit**	2,275	357
4	**AMC**	2,248	228
5	**Cinemark USA**	1,821	195
6	**Cineplex Odeon**	1,740	327
7	**National Amusements**	1,177	122
8	**General Cinema Theatres**	1,166	185
9	**Loews/Sony Theatres**	938	140
10	**Hoyts Cinemas**	925	127
11	**Act III Theatres**	836	133
12	**Edwards Cinemas**	596	86
13	**Famous Players**	555	108
14	**Hollywood Theaters**	505	86
15	**Century Theaters**	500	57
16	**Kerasotes Theatres**	476	100
17	**Mann Theatres**	405	66
18	**Pacific Theatres**	320	60
19	**Marcus Theatres**	300	40
20	**GKC Theatres**	260	40

Source: “The Fabulous Fifty,” *Boxoffice*, January 1998, 28.

Table 6: Top Twenty US-Canada Exhibitors by Number of Screens, 2007

Rank	Chain	Screens	Sites
1	**Regal Entertainment Group**	6,386	539
2	**AMC Entertainment**	5,128	358
3	**Cinemark USA**	4,596	392
4	**Carmike Cinemas**	2,469	289
5	**National Amusements**	1,507	121
6	**Cineplex Entertainment**	1,319	133
7	**Kerasotes Showplace Theatres**	867	95
8	**Marcus Theatres Corporation**	608	50
9	**Hollywood Theaters**	512	52
10	**Rave Motion Picture Theatres**	445	28
11	**Consolidated Theatres**	421	30
12	**Empire Theatres Limited**	377	51
13	**Carribean Cinemas/Regency Caribbean Enterprises**	368	43
14	**Pacific Theatres Exhibition**	362	24
15	**Harkins Theatres**	344	26
16	**Dickinson Theatres**	337	36
17	**Malco Theatres**	330	33
18	**Goodrich Quality Theatres**	285	32
19	**Georgia Theatre Company**	272	28
20	**Clearview Cinemas**	258	52

Source: “The 2008 Giants of Exhibition,” *Boxoffice*, February 2008, 23–34.

Table 7: Top Twenty US-Canada Exhibitors by Number of Screens, 2017

Rank	Chain	Screens	Sites
1	**AMC Entertainment**	8,289	660
2	**Regal Entertainment Group**	7,315	561
3	**Cinemark USA**	4,562	339
4	**Cineplex Entertainment**	1,676	163
5	**Marcus Theaters**	895	69
6	**Harkins Theaters**	502	33
7	**Southern Theaters**	474	42
8	**National Amusements**	392	29
9	**B&B Theatres**	391	49
10	**Malco Theaters**	349	32
11	**CMX Cinemas**	342	30
12	**Studio Movie Grill**	314	30
13	**Landmark Cinemas of Canada (Kinepolis)**	303	44
14	**Goodrich Quality Theaters**	288	31
15	**Premiere Cinema Corp.**	286	26
16	**Carribean Cinemas**	285	34
17	**Landmark Theatres**	260	54
18	**Bow Tie Cinemas**	257	40
19	**Georgia Theater Company**	254	24
20	**Reading**	249	27

Source: Data from “The 2018 Giants of Exhibition,” *Boxoffice*, February 2018, 43–59.

Table 8: Selected US-Canada Exhibition Mergers and Acquisitions, 2007 to 2017

Theatre Chain	Ownership	Target	Type	Date
Regal Entertainment Group	publicly traded	Consolidated Theaters	acquisition	2008
AMC Theatres	publicly traded	Kerasotes Showplace Theatres	acquisition	2010
Cinemark Theatres	publicly traded	Rave Cinemas	acquisition	2012
Cineplex Entertainment	publicly traded	AMC Canada	acquisition	2012
Regal Entertainment Group	publicly traded	Great Escape Theaters	acquisition	2013
Regal Entertainment Group	publicly traded	Hollywood Theaters	acquisition	2013
Cineplex Entertainment	publicly traded	Empire Theatres	acquisition	2013
AMC Theatres	publicly traded	Starplex Cinemas	acquisition	2015
AMC Theatres	publicly traded	Carmike Cinemas	merger	2016

Source: Data from Regal Entertainment Group ("Regal Entertainment Group Completes Acquisition of Consolidated Theaters"), Cineplex Inc. ("Cineplex Completes Acquisition of Four AMC Theatres in Canada," "Cineplex Completes Acquisition of 24 Empire Theatres in Atlantic Canada"), AMC Entertainment Holdings, Inc. ("AMC Entertainment Holdings, Inc. Completes Acquisition of Starplex Cinemas," "AMC Entertainment Holdings, Inc. Completes Acquisition of Carmike Cinemas, Inc."), *Daily Variety* (McClintock, "Exhib AMC Brings Kerasotes Into Loop"; Stewart, "Rave Deals Fuel Exhib Pact Pace," "Regal Goes Hollywood for Plexes"), *Boxoffice* ("Regal Plots Escape").

2001 as part of Phillip Anschutz and Oaktree Capital's exit strategies for their investment.[107] Onex had followed suit in 2003, selling off its US assets and spinning off Cineplex Galaxy in a publicly traded income trust, though the private equity firm still held a significant minority share in the company.[108] New investors had taken ownership of the two other top chains, Cinemark Theatres and AMC Theatres, in 2004 and within a few years were actively looking for opportunities to profitably exit from their investments. Over the course of the next ten years, these two remaining exhibition giants would become publicly traded companies.

At this point, both Madison Dearborn Partners and the firms that made up Marquee Holdings were still in the early stages of finding an exit strategy for their investments. For Madison Dearborn Partners and Cinemark, this exit began with a somewhat disappointing 2007 IPO. The company received $532 million for the sale in April 2007, near the top of their expected range, but the stock price changed little in the months following opening day, and ultimately was seen as lackluster by analysts. Cinemark used its net proceeds from the sale to pay down its debt. Madison Dearborn retained a 47 percent stake in the company following the IPO.[109] Starting in January 2010, Madison Dearborn was then able to steadily decrease its stake in the company through secondary offerings, finally selling the last of its shares in November 2011.[110] AMC and Marquee Holdings took a rockier road to an IPO. The company made several attempts at a filing that were eventually retracted, including in 2006 and 2011.[111] Then, in 2012, the chain was sold outright in a highly publicized sale to China's Dalian Wanda.[112] Under its new ownership, the company was finally taken public in a 2013 IPO, in which Wanda retained an 80 percent stake.[113]

In each case, second and third round investors were able to profit on their initial investments, even when the timelines for these investments had stretched considerably longer than the two or three years typical for private equity. For exhibitors, the effect of these rounds of investments had brought them to the scale where such IPOs would be profitable for the chains themselves, allowing them to pay down debts to maintain their financial health, fund further acquisitions, and expand their business through construction, parallel ventures, and technology upgrades. Going public also made accessing credit and favorable terms necessary for such expansion easier and avoided the revolving door of ownership that chains had seen in the 1990s and early 2000s. However, such moves also made exhibitors vulnerable to the variabilities of the stock market, creating additional pressures for the chains to demonstrate growth, a difficulty for a mature industry where overbuilding had so recently led to the pains of the megaplex crash. This had the effect of further incentivizing consolidation for exhibition giants, who could use this approach to expand the reach of their circuits without the risks associated with large scale construction projects.

Conclusion

In the mid-1990s, private equity entered a relatively stable exhibition industry that was nonetheless on the verge of substantial changes to their core standards and practices as well as their self-perception. Exhibitors and investors alike brimmed with optimism about the potential of new exhibition sites and rising box office figures, which seemed to promise a cinemagoing renaissance. Heady with the possibilities, new investors funded major expansions and sought out acquisitions they could consolidate, hoping to build up new

exhibition empires they could sell at a profit. As the industry overextended itself and fell into crisis, new waves of financial players arrived, seeing theater chains as undervalued assets headed for a rebound and a subsequent period of sustained growth. These investors also pursued consolidation with fervor, especially those who arrived by mid-decade and could no longer rely on major market fluctuations for their profits. Through the influence of the financial industry, exhibition, which had been considered a relatively competitive industry in the 1980s and early 90s, especially compared to other entertainment sectors, saw the rise of exhibition giants which would continue to build the size of the circuits and their concentration of power into the 2010s.

For their part, future exhibition giants saw partnerships with private equity as a welcome means of funding desired acquisitions and theater construction in the 1990s, using the influx of capital to fund major building projects that would give them an edge in the arms race to rescreen the domestic market. While the construction boom led directly to the 2000 crisis across the sector, those chains which had participated most fervently, with or without private equity support, became the prime targets of the post-crisis wave of investment, since their cinema infrastructure would not require additional investment by new owners. In the wake of the crisis, private equity offered exhibitors a way out of their financial crunch, but for future exhibition giants, they also offered the opportunity to ascend to dominance within the industry. Anchoring growing circuits, it was these chains that would increasingly swallow up their competitors over the next few decades. And, as I will discuss in chapter 4, each of these chains would use their large national platforms as a jumping off point for strengthened relations and new links to international exhibition markets during the late 2000s and the 2010s.

As the crisis receded, new exhibition giants not only benefitted from the economies of scale and negotiating power that their size allowed, but began to capitalize on their possession of large, national cinema circuits to take on new industry-wide initiatives. As I will discuss in the next chapter, the degree of centralization and coordination afforded to consolidated theater chains was a major factor enabling a long-awaited industry dream: the widespread implementation of digital projection technology. With this technology in place, exhibition giants also began to implement cinema advertising and alternative content, not merely as sources of negligible local revenues or as short-term experiments, but as a robust source of auxiliary revenues they would sell to the industry at large. As these initiatives developed, exhibition giants, recognizing their shared position in the industry, came together to collaborate on the rollout of digital technology and on the implementation of major diversification projects, including advertising and alternative content. Such shifts brought into focus the giants' new approach in the wake of the failures of the megaplex boom: rather than turning to theater construction to meaningfully expand their audience, major chains would instead turn to exploring means for growing revenues despite flat attendance figures. As these efforts developed, more extensive experiments in diversification followed, pointing the way to one potential pathway for contemporary exhibition giants: as purveyors of a wider range of out-of-home media and entertainment.

Chapter 2: Beyond the Box Office

As US and Canadian cinema chains emerged from the sectoral crisis of the early 2000s and recovered, rebuilt, and consolidated, they and their new private equity owners started to seek new avenues for growth. With the debt crisis in exhibition and the transition of exhibition giants into the hands of private equity concluded, exhibitors reconsidered past practices and dramatically reworked their growth strategies, turning away from risky attempts to increase the size of the moviegoing audience through major theater construction projects. But in addition to the consequences the overbuilding in the megaplex era had for theater owners, this new cinema standard had experimented with the potential of theater sites as a public space for broader forms of entertainment and promotion. As the crisis of the early 2000s receded and they explored alternative tactics, exhibition giants and their owners aimed to further the profit potential of this shift in the new financial environment. With diversification initiatives in cinema advertising, event cinema, and digital cinema administration, as well as more dramatic expansions beyond previous exhibition practice, giants pursued the shifting business goals of the recovery period and sought out new areas that could mitigate the fluctuations built into the traditional exhibition business.

These initiatives were affected by many of the same forces driving exhibitors to consolidate in the early 2000s. In some cases, private equity owners exerted direct influence, pushing exhibitors to explore diversification strategies and collaborate with other giants despite giants' ongoing competitive relationships with one another. In other instances, these pressures were more indirect, extending the tactics of outright consolidation of theater chains by opening new avenues for exhibition giants to increase their power by becoming service providers for their competitors. This element of diversification activity enabled

giants to secure larger shares of exhibition revenues into the future as these growth areas developed. Through their diversification strategies, exhibition giants centralized control of new revenue streams including cinema advertising and event cinema and gained influence over the standards being set during the transition to digital cinema projection across the domestic market. These efforts enabled giants to block or neutralize third party involvement in these areas and manage the opportunities enabled by the industry's economic and technological transitions from an early stage. Finally, exhibitors turned to diversification for growth as they approached ceilings for consolidation opportunities in their home markets and faced pressure to continue to expand their business with diversification efforts further afield from established exhibition practice.

This chapter analyzes giants' diversification projects through their development in the US and Canadian exhibition markets. The first section examines the growth of National CineMedia, a joint initiative of US giants Regal Cinemas, AMC Theatres, and Cinemark Theatres. Beginning as a cinema advertising company, National CineMedia quickly became the incubator for two other major initiatives with the same shared ownership: Fathom Events, an event cinema distributor, and Digital Cinema Implementation Partners, a digital cinema integrator. I will identify the conditions of possibility for these collaborations, common features across the initiatives, and the consequences of giants' strategies for competing exhibitors in the US market. I argue that collaborating on diversification strategies gave US exhibition giants the necessary scale to capitalize on the potential of new digital distribution technologies. Simultaneously, their joint participation in this endeavor illustrated their shift not only towards consolidated circuits, but the oligopolistic behavior characteristic of a corporatized industrial culture.

The second section turns to the Canadian context, where Cineplex Entertainment, operating as a national exhibition monopoly, first followed, and then dramatically expanded on the diversification efforts of its US counterparts. I trace the rhythms of this expansion into out-of-home media, amusements, gaming, and alternative public leisure spaces, exploring how monopoly control of Canadian exhibition and strategic acquisitions enabled the exhibitor to make diversification a key component of its corporate strategy. Befitting its monopoly status and smaller national market, Cineplex has embraced more experimental tactics than its US counterparts, pushing the envelope on the boundaries of domestic exhibition activity. Ultimately, I read Cineplex's activities as an indicator of potential directions for the future growth of domestic and international exhibition giants in highly consolidated markets.

Diversification Through Collaboration: US Exhibition Giants and National CineMedia

Collectively, contemporary exhibition giants began to look beyond the traditional exhibition business in 2005, turning their attention to an existing but uneven area of the business: cinema advertising. That year, the three US exhibition giants—Regal Cinemas, AMC Theatres, and Cinemark Theatres—formed a jointly owned company, National CineMedia (NCM) dedicated to developing a business to distribute advertising across their theater chains.

National cinema advertising had been present in the US since the 1970s. NCM distinguished itself from these earlier efforts in two primary ways. First, it changed the existing model of rolling stock and slide program cinema ads, pioneering digital distribution and targeting of cinema advertising in a "preshow" format. The preshow interwove

advertising messages with behind-the-scenes and other entertainment content, themselves a more subtle manner of advertising. This format expanded within NCM's growing advertising circuit and soon became the standard cinema advertising format across the domestic industry, contributing to the ubiquity of cinema advertising in the market. Second, NCM initiated a concerted push among US giants to diversify their business beyond box office and concession sales through a series of joint ventures. Cinema advertising set the template for two parallel initiatives incubated by NCM: Fathom Events, which acquires, produces, and distributes what the exhibition industry terms "alternative content" or "event cinema," including opera, ballet, theater, concerts, sports, and other special screenings to theaters; and Digital Cinema Implementation Partners, which funded, installed, and managed digital infrastructure for giants and other theater chains in the wake of the digital cinema transition. NCM, then, not only produced a new, more profitable format for cinema advertising, but engendered a broader shift in how domestic exhibition giants conceived the scope of their business and managed these diversification efforts going forward.

Screenvision Comes Stateside: The Rise of National Cinema Advertising in the United States

Exhibition giants were not the first to explore cinema advertising; cinema ads had already been present, if uneven, in the United States for several decades when exhibitors developed their own in-house advertising business. Cinema advertising initially took off in the US in the late 1970s, following earlier efforts in the 1950s that waned as television ascended as the country's dominant medium for national advertising.[1] The practice was revived in 1977, when French cinema advertising company MediaVision brought its business to the US under the name Screenvision. MediaVision had thirty-five years of experience in cinema

advertising in the European market, where, contrary to the situation in the US, advertising had been a regular feature of the cinema experience since the 1950s.[2] In contrast to local and regional advertising partnerships, which were then prevalent if spotty in the US, Screenvision worked from the outset to distribute rolling stock advertising campaigns designed for national exposure to a large network of exhibitor affiliates.[3] One of the company's first campaigns was a 1977 ad for Seiko watches that played on 1,800 screens.[4] Campaigns for Macintosh, Pepsi, and Atari followed as Screenvision grew throughout the 1980s.[5] Theater chains' consolidation during the 80s helped the company construct its national screen network. With fewer separate exhibitors to sign to advertising agreements and large circuits that could bring the company's ads to hundreds of screens at the stroke of a pen, Screenvision could more easily stitch together its affiliate network.[6]

By 1996, the company controlled advertising on 7,800 US screens and accounted for 90 percent of the rolling stock cinema advertising in the United States.[7] However, cinema advertising was not yet a standard practice in the US market. Over 20,000 screens did not carry national advertising, including major chains like United Artists, General Cinema, AMC, and Loews Cineplex.[8] In addition to continued controversy around the practice on the part of exhibitors and audience members, many of these holdout chains likely wanted to avoid running afoul of studios like Disney and Warner Bros., which had banned advertising ahead of their titles in 1990.[9] But though cinema advertising was criticized throughout the decade, Screenvision benefitted from continued consolidation in exhibition, the expansion of cinema circuits during the 90s theater construction boom, and the atmosphere of cross-promotion that flourished at new megaplex theaters.[10] Screenvision grew throughout the 90s, winning contracts with major chains including Carmike, Regal, and Hoyts US, eventually

reaching over 10,000 screens. It was by far the dominant cinema advertising company in the United States when the decade ended.[11]

Exhibitors Enter Cinema Advertising: Regal CineMedia and AMC's National Cinema Network

In the early 2000s, exhibition giants had emerged from the megaplex frenzy and began to look towards different growth opportunities for the industry. Some theater chains had stabilized their finances when the debt crisis in exhibition started to recede in 2002. AMC, which received a cash infusion from the Cypress Group in April 2001, and the newly formed Regal Entertainment Group, whose IPO took place in May 2002, were the first large chains to emerge from the crunch.[12] As exhibitors reassessed the growth strategies that had led to the megaplex boom, which centered on theater construction and dramatic increases in cinema attendance, Regal and AMC looked to cinema advertising as a lower risk method for boosting revenues.

The chains soon began to develop advertising programs for their circuits. In 2002, Regal became the first exhibitor to launch an in-house advertising division. Calling the initiative Regal CineMedia, the company took the innovative step of linking its advertising plan to an early digital cinema program. Investing $67 million, Regal rolled out digital distribution and projection systems to two thirds of its 550 theaters, enabling them to screen advertisements and occasional live events.[13] By February 2003, the company had launched its new "preshow" program, the 2wenty, which integrated advertising material with entertainment content supplied by industry partners including Sony, Universal, TBS, and NBC.[14] Around this time, AMC launched its own advertising subsidiary, the National

Cinema Network, retooling an existing program for slide ads and music promotions to screen rolling stock ads. By late 2004, AMC had emulated Regal's preshow format in its own preshow, called the Movie Watcher Network, and installed digital infrastructure to support it. By the end of the year, US cinema advertising was worth more than $350 million, a 37 percent increase from the previous year, according to the newly formed Cinema Advertising Council (CAC).[15] Regal CineMedia's president of marketing and sales, Cliff Marks, explicitly linked new exhibitor-led cinema advertising programs to the recent crisis. "I dispute anybody who might argue that this is some kind of fluke," Marks told *Daily Variety*. "Three years ago, many of us were in Chapter 11. The revenue we provide is important to all of our financial well-being."[16]

The expansion of digital cinema infrastructure Regal and AMC initiated was a crucial aspect of new preshow advertising programs. By the early 2000s, exhibitors and distributors had been debating a conversion to digital projection for years, but the exhibition industry's recent economic crunch had derailed negotiations. Even so, there appeared to be broad consensus that digital projection was an inevitability; lingering questions remained about whether exhibitors or studios should fund the conversion and how technical specifications would be standardized. Kurt Hall, Regal's co-CEO, framed his chain's advertising initiatives as a key step in that longer process: "This is a steppingstone along the way toward the day when we have a total digital presentation from start to finish," he told *Daily Variety*. "We've done it in a way that allows for the standards work to fall into place."[17] Regal CineMedia and AMC's National Cinema Network, then, doubled as advertising revenue streams and experiments in setting up and distributing content using new digital infrastructure.

Digital systems became the linchpin of giants' success with their advertising programs. The digital systems used for preshows were below cinema-grade, making them much less expensive to implement, with costs of approximately $7,000 to $15,000 per auditorium. Since exhibitors would be contracting directly with the advertising clients that provided content, there was also less immediate need to negotiate with other exhibitors to arrive at a technical standard for the new systems. Digital cinema advertising also simplified distribution, lowered costs, and introduced greater flexibility for the cinema advertising business. With digital distribution, preshow programs could be easily recut and distributed en masse without the more onerous and expensive process of creating a new film print.[18] Relatively affordable advertising-grade systems also meant that the cost of the initial technological investments would quickly pay for themselves. Digital prints could also be sent much more easily to specific geographic regions and to auditoria showing specific films. This flexibility contrasted with the status quo for rolling stock ads, which required expensive film prints that made targeting specific areas or feature film titles cost-prohibitive; clients were required to buy access to the entire advertising network to show their spots.[19] As Regal and AMC finetuned their digital ad networks, Screenvision still exclusively operated slide programs and rolling stock ads distributed on film; the company only began its own digital initiative in 2005.[20] Exhibitors were much better positioned than third parties like Screenvision to initiate an experimental digital rollout, since they could unilaterally make decisions about technical standards and installation funding for digital advertising equipment, rather than negotiating the same issues that they were already struggling to address with the studios with advertising companies like Screenvision as well. Digital technologies not only made it feasible for exhibitors to experiment with cinema advertising,

but it also became essential for its expansion as circuit-specific programs evolved into a more collective solution.

Building National CineMedia: Exhibition Giants Come Together

The importance of direct control over advertising infrastructure, content, and revenues seems to have been apparent to US exhibition giants from the early years of their advertising ventures. Soon, they recognized that to maintain this control, they would need to work together to expand the reach of their networks. By March 2005, within three years of the launch of Regal CineMedia, AMC and Regal announced that they would merge their advertising divisions under a new joint venture, called National CineMedia (NCM). Since Regal and AMC were the number-one and -two chains in the United States, NCM would serve national advertising to 11,200 screens.[21] In July, Cinemark, about to become the third-largest theater chain in the US, joined the venture as an owner and founding member. NCM now represented a network of 13,000 screens.[22] The exhibition giants planned to launch a jointly designed preshow, First Look (later Noovie), in 2006.[23]

Regal, AMC, and Cinemark's collaboration was initially driven by their private equity owners. As outlined in chapter 1, Phillip Anschutz and Oaktree Capital had consolidated three circuits to form the Regal Entertainment Group, making it largest cinema chain in the United States, twice the size of AMC. They had also brought the company to an IPO by May 2002, far ahead of other private equity-owned cinema chains, clearing the way for the exhibitor to develop a digitally enabled national cinema advertising network and, as I discuss later, experiment with event cinema initiatives through Regal CineMedia. AMC, then partially owned by Apollo Management, had emulated Regal's efforts by reworking its

National Cinema Network to incorporate digital cinema advertising and reproduce Regal's preshow format. As these projects rolled out, the private equity companies involved with each chain began to discuss collaborating around these emerging initiatives. While Regal, at more than six thousand screens, could claim to offer a truly national network, AMC's (and, later, Cinemark's) circuit still had distinct regional patterns and lacked Regal's reach. Working together would give all three companies the scale to compete with Screenvision and offer the reach to appeal to advertisers.[24]

Exhibitors, only a few years out from the bitter turf wars of the megaplex years that brought the industry to the brink, were accustomed to seeing themselves as rivals and initially balked at the idea of working together. Unlike the financial industry and other entertainment industries, film exhibition had long had a much more entrepreneurial culture, even as some exhibitors grew and became publicly traded companies.[25] Joint ventures with other exhibitors were a rarity in the US, if not virtually unheard of.[26] In addition to preserving a competitive marketplace, the Paramount Decrees also left US exhibitors with a lingering reticence about appearing to engage in collusive activity for fear of a crackdown. Private equity companies, by contrast, were intimately familiar with the oscillation between competition and collaboration that characterizes more corporate business cultures and were open to exploring the shared benefits of such an initiative.[27] The financial industry won out. NCM was born, with Cinemark, then owned by the Cypress Group, able to come to the table on similar terms to Regal and AMC with the encouragement of its private equity investor.[28]

Rising consolidation activity also made it possible for Regal, AMC, and Cinemark to develop NCM into an immediate force in US cinema advertising. The viability of Regal and AMC's advertising ventures rested on their ability to independently contract with national

advertisers to serve ads to the thousands of screens in their circuits. Further, that only three exhibitors could come together to create a rival to Screenvision's decades-old company points to the way consolidation had intensified the power of the largest corporate exhibitors to rapidly change industrial practice, particularly when they could coordinate those changes amongst themselves. This size and coordination were the legacy of the private equity ownership that followed the economic crisis in exhibition. Exhibitors did not fail to remark on the influence of private equity's consolidation activity on the new initiatives. In 2008, Marks, now the president of NCM, acknowledged that Regal's role in pioneering the digital preshow concept shortly after becoming the US's largest-ever cinema circuit was no coincidence: "It was a completely unproven concept at that point," Marks told *Daily Variety*. "But when Phil Anschutz put together Regal, United Artists, and Edwards, suddenly he controlled seven thousand screens and you said, 'Now we have scale.'"[29] Exhibitors and their investors understood that quickly combining the force of their consolidated circuits was the only way to achieve the scale that would allow them to compete with Screenvision for major advertisers, without risking being buried by their larger competitor as they tried to build the business.

NCM's history demonstrates that, at key moments, private equity owners directly intervened in managing exhibition companies beyond consolidating chains and instituting operational efficiencies. Through NCM, private equity initiated exhibitors' exploration of growth opportunities beyond theater renovations and construction. Joint ventures between the United States' top exhibitors lasted for the next fifteen years at NCM and through the event cinema and digital conversion operations incubated within the company. Private equity therefore left an enduring mark on the exhibition industry's diversification practices

that overlaps with their acceleration of consolidation activity, outlined in chapter 1. And much like private equity's impact on consolidation, collaborative ventures initially encouraged by investors were folded into exhibition giants' long-term business models after the crisis in exhibition abated and private equity exited its investments in the industry.

NCM Reconfigures US Cinema Advertising

As Screenvision had built its US business, cinema advertising continually faced backlash from audiences, exhibitors, and film studios, who feared selling ad time on the big screen would cheapen the cinema experience with the hard sells that overwhelmed television. After NCM appeared on the scene, cinema advertising began to gain acceptance from the industry and the public alike. When Screenvision was the sole national cinema advertiser, several major exhibitors offered no national advertising on their screens. But top exhibitors' entrance to the business through NCM made cinema advertising the rule across the United States, not the exception. To some degree, acceptance of cinema advertising was linked to its new ubiquity. But the preshow format, blending entertainment content with traditional ads, also allayed fears that cinema advertising would replicate the promotional chaos of television's advertising environment. Like Regal CineMedia before it, NCM had deals in place with Sony, Universal, Twentieth Century Fox, TBS, and NBC, among others, to provide entertainment content including interviews, sneak peaks, and behind-the-scenes footage (themselves subtle forms of promotion) to be blended with traditional ads in its First Look preshow packages.[30] For NCM, these partnerships meant not only additional revenues from their advertising programs, but access to the premium forms of backstage content that would encourage audiences to view the preshow as an integrated, entertaining piece of the

cinemagoing experience. For film and television partners, inclusion in the preshow meant additional opportunities to build their brands, market upcoming film titles, and advertise related branches of the conglomerate, like home video, music, and, later, streaming. Unlike earlier rolling stock ads, it also gave these industry partners a stake, however small, in cinema advertising's success. With the preshow format, studio campaigns against cinema ads, like those observed in the 1990s, largely disappeared.[31] Screenvision adopted the preshow format in 2005; from this point forward, blending direct advertising with entertainment became a central aspect of cinema advertising's business model.[32]

With content partnerships in place, a robust network of screens, and rising acceptance of cinema advertising by exhibitors, film studios, and audiences, NCM soon made plans for an IPO. The company began trading shares in February 2007. The IPO raised $798 million, exceeding projections by 18 percent in a major success for NCM.[33] "This wasn't simply cinema going to Wall Street," Paul Kagan, a financial analyst in the film and television industries, explained in the pages of *Boxoffice*. "This was Wall Street treating cinema like a dot com." For Kagan, the new possibilities of digital cinema, especially the demographic targeting of cinema advertising, the creation of theatrical events such as concert films, and the promise of digital 3D accounted for NCM's buoyant reception.[34] Funds from the IPO bolstered NCM's competitive advantage against Screenvision, though both companies grew as the cinema advertising market expanded throughout the decade (see table 9 and 10).

A recurring feature of the discourses surrounding cinema advertising is the idea that the comparatively small size of cinema advertising networks, measured against the larger reach of television, out-of-home, and online advertising, can be offset by the quality of the

Table 9: Cinema Advertising Council (CAC) Annual Member Revenues, 2002 to 2019

Year	**Revenues** (millions)	**Percent Change**
2002	$185.80	-
2003	$273.00	46.9%
2004	$367.46	34.6%
2005	$394.83	7.4%
2006	$455.66	15.4%
2007	$539.95	18.5%
2008	$571.42	5.8%
2009	$584.07	2.2%
2010	$658.26	12.7%
2011	$644.29	-2.1%
2012	$636.40	-1.2%
2013	$677.96	6.5%
2014	$631.90	-6.8%
2015	$716.44	13.4%
2016	$758.32	5.8%
2017	$750.66	-1.0%
2018	$781.19	4.1%
2019	$809.75	3.7%

Source: Data from CAC, “Cinema Advertising Revenue: Historical Data,” “Cinema Advertising Council Reports 18.5% Increase in Cinema Advertising Spending for 2007,” “Cinema Advertising Spending Up 5.8 Percent in 2008,” “National and Regional Cinema Advertising Posts 5.4% Gain for 2009,” “Cinema Advertising Continues Strong Growth,” “128 New Brands Embrace Cinema Advertising in 2011, “Cinema Advertising Spending Tops $600 Million for Third Straight Year,” “Cinema Advertising Council Reports Record Spending in 2013,” “Cinema Advertising Spending Tops $600 Million for the Fifth Consecutive Year,” “Cinema Advertising Has Blockbuster 2015,” “Cinema Advertising Closes Out Record Year,” “Cinema Advertising Closes Out 2017 With Revenue Topping $750 Million for the Second Year Running,” “Cinema Advertising Announces 2018 Revenue Exceeding $740 Million for the Third Year in a Row,” “Cinema Advertising Reports 2019 Revenue Pushes Past $800 Million”

Table 10: National CineMedia (NCM) Annual Advertising Revenues, 2006 to 2019

Year	**Revenues** (millions)	**Percent Change**
2006	$188.2	-
2007	$303.3	61.2%
2008	$330.3	8.9%
2009	$335.1	1.5%
2010	$379.4	13.2%
2011	$386.1	1.8%
2012	$409.5	6.1%
2013	$426.3	4.1%
2014	$394.0	-7.6%
2015	$446.5	13.3%
2016	$447.6	0.2%
2017	$426.1	-4.8%
2018	$441.4	3.6%
2019	$444.8	0.8%

Source: Data from NCM annual reports (2006, 32; 2007, 41; 2008, 35; 2009, 42; 2010, 45; 2011, 43; 2012, 39; 2013, 38; 2014, 43; 2015, 38; 2016, 30; 2017, 36; 2018, 32; 2019, 37)

advertising environment. According to cinema advertising companies, the superior viewing environment of cinemas, with their darkened auditoriums and cutting-edge projection and sound, allow advertising clients to create longer showpiece ads with higher production values that cannot be shown anywhere else. This idea connects to another major point of emphasis: the lack of distraction and, indeed, control of audiences in the cinema environment. Unlike in other areas of advertising, viewers cannot merely change the channel, leave the room, or click away from advertising messages. In turn, the ostensibly immersive qualities of cinemas are often linked to market research surveys that tout improved attentiveness and recall from cinema audiences compared to those who see ads in other mediums. As in other promotional discourses around film exhibition, there is consistent slippage between clarity of image and sound, the immersive potential of cinema technology, and the grandeur and prestige of moviegoing. These implications are also sometimes made explicit when cinema advertisers tout the proximity of cinema ads to "high quality" Hollywood entertainment as a feature of their business.[35] Cinema advertising companies frame these elements, taken together, as evidence that cinemas are the ideal environment for cultivating audience receptivity and positive associations with advertisers' products.

However, cinema advertising companies often pair these claims about the quality environment they can provide advertisers with claims about the quality audiences they are able to offer them. These desirable demographics, the argument goes, can counterbalance the smaller size of cinema audiences compared with those for other advertising mediums. Since its first annual report, NCM has cited the affluence, education levels, and youth of its audiences as competitive advantages that makes its network appealing for advertising

clients.[36] In the 2019 version of this statement, the company boasted that 45 percent of the network's moviegoers had a household income of over $100,000 (compared to 34 percent of the general population), with a median household income of $92,100, and that 42 percent of this audience had received a bachelor's degree or higher (compared to 31 percent of the general population). The company also specified that 53 percent of its network audience was between ages 12 and 34, meaning it could offer advertisers access to large numbers of Millennial and Gen Z moviegoers.[37]

NCM's use of these figures does not only represent an attempt to assert its place in the advertising industry despite the disadvantages it faces due to its smaller audience pool. It also reveals exhibitors' structural incentives to recruit and cater to specific audience segments, especially the affluent, over others. Such an approach indicates a fundamental shift in how exhibitors do business. While cinema chains' core business still rests on selling tickets and concessions to a mass audience, the growing cinema advertising business means exhibitors are also selling their audiences to advertisers. This dynamic incentivizes exhibitors to draw in those demographics that of advertisers perceive to be the most lucrative. Growing these audience segments has other advantages for exhibitors as well, interlocking with ongoing trends towards upscaling theatrical environments and the proliferation of premium screening options, both of which enable exhibitors to increase revenues by offering new services to existing cinemagoers at higher prices, instead of significantly expanding their customer base. I will analyze these dynamics further in chapter 3. Diversification initiatives and premium cinema alike have emerged in a post-megaplex exhibition industry in which exhibitors have explored growth opportunities that rest on elements other than raising attendance levels by building new theaters. Within that context,

exhibitors have targeted affluent audiences with new initiatives, like cinema advertising, that, in turn, require exhibitors to shape the theatrical environment around these audiences' tastes and desires.

NCM Seeks Scale; the DOJ Pushes Back

While the attraction and retention of "quality" audiences remained central to the cinema advertising business throughout the 2000s and 2010s, building network scale continued to rule the competition between cinema advertising companies after NCM's IPO. Founding members' circuits gave NCM instant scale, but to continue growing, it needed to compete with Screenvision to build up the network of affiliate chains for whom it sourced, managed, and distributed advertising.[38] From 2008 onward, these affiliates have consistently accounted for between 15 and 20 percent of NCM's total network, even as competing exhibitors continued to be folded into the founders' circuits throughout the 2000s and 2010s, as discussed in chapter 1. As Regal CineMedia initially built its business, its representatives consistently highlighted the importance of advertising network size through repeated comparisons to television. Hall, likening the service to establishing broadcast affiliates, claimed the company was, in effect, creating a "new national network."[39] Marks took the metaphor further: "We are a network broadcasting to the living room, only in our living room we have a forty-foot screen."[40] Even as NCM has scaled up and cinema advertising has become a commonplace part of the exhibition business, the dynamics surrounding network size have remained central to the sector.

Hall and Marks's statements were more than metaphors; they also contributed to the project of shifting the prevailing image of cinemagoers as locally, or, at most, regionally

connected groups to the imagination of a national cinemagoing audience. This reimagination of cinemagoers as a networked audience was a central component of making cinema advertising into a viable business that could attract national advertisers. Cinema advertising companies also claimed that larger networks would enable them to compete with the wider reach of established national advertising platforms like television and the internet.[41] Here, affiliate contracts and other means of increasing network scale (like founding members' acquisitions of competing chains) became essential for NCM to gain a competitive edge not only against Screenvision, but against other advertising mediums. This argument was often used to justify the lack of competition in the cinema advertising market. Viewed in the context of the consolidation activity detailed in chapter 1, affiliate relationships also reveal themselves as a parallel avenue for US exhibition giants to exert control over the domestic exhibition industry. Even if they cannot acquire each competing exhibitor, AMC, Regal, and Cinemark have been able to use their size and leverage to skim a sizable cut of the profits many of their competitors earn from advertising revenues through their operation of NCM.

These trends and the discourses that accompanied them came to a head in 2014, when NCM and Screenvision announced plans for a $375-million merger that would give the combined company control of cinema advertising on 88 percent of US screens.[42] The origin of the merger dates back to 2010, when Screenvision, just acquired by private equity firm Shamrock Capital Advisors, adopted an aggressive new strategy that reduced prices for advertisers by 50 percent.[43] Fearing a "pricing death spiral," NCM opted to acquire its competitor to neutralize the threat.[44] Before the deal could be finalized, the Department of Justice (DOJ) sued to block the transaction. Assistant Attorney General Bill Baer argued that an NCM-Screenvision merger was "exactly the kind of transaction the antitrust laws were

designed to prohibit." The DOJ argued that allowing the deal to go forward would mean risking significant price increases for consumers and revenue-sharing agreements for exhibitors that skewed unfairly in NCM's favor.[45] As it made its case, the DOJ borrowed the script that NCM used with clients and investors, arguing that cinema advertising was not merely a minor player hoping to compete in the broader advertising industry, but a specific, noninterchangeable form of advertising, distinguished by cinema's immersive qualities, longer spot lengths, a lack of audience control over the conditions of viewing, and its ability to reach a weekend audience and light television viewers. By taking this perspective on NCM's business, the DOJ argued that allowing the company to hold a monopoly in the cinema advertising market would unfairly limit the choices of exhibitors, advertisers, and audiences.[46] In response, NCM contended that the broader reach and geographic coverage enabled by the deal would enhance audience targeting, lower costs for advertising clients, and generate more revenues for theater partners, including affiliate chains. The company also stressed the importance of the merger to help NCM compete in the "increasingly competitive video advertising marketplace."[47] However, NCM ultimately abandoned the transaction, citing the cost and "distraction" of challenging the DOJ in court.[48] The incident represented the strength of the impetus towards consolidation and greater industry control on the part of exhibition giants but, for now, set an upper limit to the most dramatic of these moves.[49]

Fathom Events: Scaling Up Event Cinema

While NCM was building its advertising platform and a corresponding digital infrastructure, it also experimented with using this new digital network to bring content beyond traditional

feature films to exhibitors' screens. NCM's Fathom Events division was conceived to create, distribute, and market live and pre-recorded events, relying on the same digital distribution and projection technology that had made its cinema advertising business feasible. These event screenings included opera, theater, music, sports, repertory films, and other special screenings, generally scheduled on slower Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday nights when exhibitors were looking for alternative means to lure audiences to the cinema. Initially, these screenings were referred to as *alternative content*, a term which denoted that much of the early activity in this area rested on showing filmed content that was less familiar in the cinema space like opera, theater, ballet, sports, and concerts. In recent years, *event cinema* has become the more popular term, highlighting the short duration of distribution windows as well as the increasing inclusion of films such as repertory screenings, documentaries and faith-based content in distributors' programming lineups. Shortly after its founding, Fathom Events became the largest event cinema operator in the US. Though event cinema so far brings in lower revenues for exhibition giants than cinema advertising, it is perhaps the diversification effort that, in the US, has done the most to expand the use of cinema spaces for different kinds of screen experiences and niche audiences. Exhibition giants' involvement in the domestic development of event cinema and continuing dominance in this emergent area is therefore consequential to understanding the way event cinema initiatives have evolved across the industry and been integrated with giants' broader diversification strategies.

NCM carried several key features from its cinema advertising business forward to its Fathom Events and Digital Cinema Implementation Partners ventures, setting the template for how these businesses would develop even after they were spun off from the company.

Each of these ventures would be controlled by the same trio of exhibition giants and use the reach collaboration enabled to distribute and manage technology and content on a national scale. Each would recruit affiliate theater chains who would contract the companies' services and bolster its network scales. And each would rely on digital cinema infrastructure, first as a parallel system to traditional projection technology and, later, one that was integrated with the same systems that brought feature films to the screen.

Like its cinema advertising business, NCM's event cinema division originated before the company's formation. Event cinema was a point of discussion as the Regal Entertainment Group began to develop its early digital network through its Regal CineMedia division in the early 2000s. The company's 2003 annual report stated that Regal's digital advertising network, which the company had invested a substantial sum to install, would also distribute "music, education, sports, entertainment, and other forms of digital content to paying customers as well as for educational and promotional purposes."[50] Live concert events featuring Bon Jovi, David Bowie, and Prince were among Regal's early successes.[51] This early emphasis on music events was supported by partnerships with Live Nation and AEG Live, a corporate sibling of Regal also owned by Phillip Anschutz.[52] It was the AEG partnership that led to Regal's first cinema-casted music event, Britney Spears's 2002 *Dream Within a Dream* tour. The deal to manage Spears's tour was an important win for Anschutz Entertainment Group's (AEG) newly acquired concert management and promotion division. AEG Live secured the act in part due to AEG's ability to leverage Regal's new digital-enabled circuit to market the tour and Spears's upcoming film *Crossroads* (2002).[53] While overt synergies between Regal and Anschutz's other holdings soon fell off, Spears's tour and the early emphasis on music events suggest that, just as

private equity had encouraged exhibition giants to come together on advertising, Anschutz used his influence over Regal to advocate for specific uses of the new event cinema initiatives, and perhaps spurred their creation as well.

When NCM formed in 2005, the joint venture took over Regal's events division, integrating it into NCM alongside Regal CineMedia's advertising business. The division was renamed NCM Fathom in 2007.[54] Like the rest of NCM's business, Fathom relied on the development and expansion of a digital cinema infrastructure that enabled fast, flexible, and cost-effective distribution of content, in this case both live performances and pre-recorded material. And, as with its cinema advertising business, events were distributed to founding chains Regal, AMC, and Cinemark and to the company's growing network of affiliates. Initially, in 2006, NCM could distribute pre-recorded events to all 11,493 digital screens in the NCM network and live events to 173 of its founders' and affiliates' 1,113 theaters.[55] This network capacity continued to grow; in 2013, the last year Fathom was owned by NCM, the company could send pre-recorded content to 18,491 screens in its network and live content to 1,089 of those screens.[56] But unlike advertising packages, which could differ but went out in some form to every chain in NCM's network, cinemas varied significantly in the number of event screenings they licensed.

Event cinema was also an important component of rationalizing and capitalizing on chains' investments in digital technology. As with advertising, event cinema also enabled exhibitors to find new pockets for profit within the framework of their existing business before the show or on quiet weeknight evenings. And unlike studios' traditional film content, founding exhibitors held more power over the terms of distribution for event

cinema, allowing them to tailor the business to their needs and influence their competitors' participation in these diversification efforts.

While NCM was still in its experimental phase, it began to explore bringing specific high culture programs to screens, developing a category that soon became its most important programming area. Shortly after being folded into NCM, Fathom struck what would become the most lucrative deal in the company's history: a partnership with New York's Metropolitan Opera that would bring live satellite transmissions of a six-title series of Met performances to cinema audiences in the United States through the newly created The Met: Live in HD program.[57] With the Met partnership, NCM benefitted from regular, high quality, multi-event content and a loyal customer base that had already been established not only through the Met's live performances, but radio and television broadcasts dating back to the 1930s.[58] By 2017, Fathom's partnership with the Met accounted for 20 percent of its revenues.[59] In general, cultural events like theater and ballet have been mainstays of Fathom's business; the company has ongoing series partnerships with Moscow's Bolshoi Ballet and London's National Theatre to broadcast several live performances to cinemas each season.[60] In 2012, the division launched another event series in the cultural space by signing a deal with Turner Classic Movies to bring twelve classic films a year to cinema screens; today, Fathom's TCM Big Screen Classics is one of the company's most successful programs.[61] While NCM has experimented with other areas over the years including music, sports, and inspirational and spiritual content, cultural event screenings remain the profit center for Fathom's business and the event cinema sector more generally.

As NCM built out its event cinema programming and continued to expand its network by developing digital cinema infrastructure and affiliate relationships, Fathom's

revenues grew. Between 2003 and 2013, the income Fathom generated grew from $7 million to $36.5 million. Net profits, however, tended to fluctuate after Fathom's initial expansion, ranging between $10 and $16.5 million from 2007 to 2013, likely due in part to the fluctuating costs of producing programming or licensing it from partners (see table 11). In 2013, NCM announced it would be spinning off the Fathom division, into a separate, privately traded company to be called Fathom Events. While now a standalone company, Fathom Events would still be owned by NCM's founding chains. According to NCM chairman and CEO Kurt Hall, "NCM was always meant to be a launching pad for the Fathom Events business" and the spinoff would allow Fathom to align its business more closely with the needs of its exhibition partners and the cinema business at large.[62] Taking Fathom private also likely had the effect of separating the more unstable profits of the business from NCM's more predictable patterns of costs and revenues. This sheltered NCM from risk while allowing its founders to continue to experiment with and profit from the event cinema business.

A 2018 recap of Fathom's programming demonstrates the range of the company's content and indicates the distribution of its financial results across titles. The company distributed 164 titles in 277 event dates across its network, with 23 grossing $1 million or more at the box office. These high-grossing events included eleven performances from The Met: Live in HD program; *Grease* (1978) and *The Dark Crystal* (1982) in the TCM Big Screen Classics series; four anime titles; *Made for More* (2018), a documentary featuring social media influencer and author Rachel Hollis; a fiftieth anniversary rerelease of Elvis Presley's 1968 comeback special; religious programming *An Interview with God* (2018) and filmed stage production *Sight and Sound Theatres Presents: Moses* (2018); *Bandstand: The*

Table 11: Fathom Events Annual Revenues, Operating Costs, and Net Profits, 2007 to 2013

Year	**Revenues** (millions)	**Operating Costs** (millions)	**Net Profits** (millions)
2007	$28.3	$16.8	$11.5
2008	$38.9	$25.1	$13.8
2009	$45.5	$29.1	$16.4
2010	$48.0	$21.7	$26.3
2011	$49.2	$34.1	$15.1
2012	$39.3	$29.0	$10.3
2013	$36.5	$25.5	$11.0

Source: Data from NCM annual reports (2006, 32; 2007, 41; 2008, 35; 2009, 42; 2010, 45; 2011, 43; 2012, 39; 2013, 38; 2014, 43; 2015, 38; 2016, 30; 2017, 36; 2018, 32; 2019, 37)

Broadway Musical (2018); and Peter Jackson's World War I documentary *They Shall Not Grow Old* (2018), which became the highest-grossing US event cinema release of all time when its run ended in 2019.[63] This slate reflects Fathom's general programming philosophy: strong representation of cultural events such as the Metropolitan Opera, a musical, and classic films, as well as niche anime, documentary, and religious and inspirational content. In addition to programming successes in its own network, the company also acted as a distributor for titles across 2,100 screens in 44 countries in 2019, indicating its influential status as a distributor beyond its own network of affiliated screens.[64]

If Fathom's early years were marked by experimentation, deal-making, and improved infrastructure, over the course of this post-NCM period, the company has begun to transition to increasing efficiency and performance. In addition to being the world's largest event cinema company, by 2018 Fathom had also become to the thirteenth largest film distributor in the United States.[65] After Ray Nutt took over as Fathom Events' CEO in 2017, he emphasized his goal of moving event cinema from a developmental area of the exhibition business to one that is providing significant, consistent profits.[66] Other interviews with Nutt point to the programming philosophy derived from the company's broader strategy: a shift from more events to higher quality, higher revenue events. By the company's peak earning year in 2019, Nutt reflected, "The top lesson we learned in 2019 was discipline. We have figured out the right number of titles, event nights, and showtimes that work for each category and how best to utilize auditoriums and screen time. Less is more for event cinema, because we want to ensure full theaters and an exceptional fan experience. Moving forward, our focus is on bigger titles rather than more of them."[67] Evidently, Fathom has reached a stage of maturity in which it has largely cemented a template for its programming and is

seeking to make this template more profitable while branching out more tentatively into new areas.

Though Fathom Events appears to have exited its initial phase of experimentation, the company's recent activities have indicated areas of growth potential. Fathom has made significant investments in expanding live event capacity across its network with technological upgrades that have extended this capability to 2,000 screens by the end of 2019.[68] It has continued to make distribution agreements with international event cinema companies, such as a 2019 deal with United Kingdom-based CinEvents to provide twelve titles per year for distribution to Europe and countries in the Middle East and North Africa.[69] It has also shown renewed interest in music events and sport and adventure content through strategic development and distribution deals in these areas.[70] Perhaps most interestingly, in 2019 Fathom made a significant investment in faith-based content distribution by launching the Fathom Affinity Network (FAN). The FAN was a partnership with Faith Content Network, a company that organizes film screenings for churches and other religious organizations, that planned to bring faith-related and inspirational content to a network of eight hundred churches across the United States. Designed to complement Fathom's theatrical faith-based content programming, the churches included in the FAN would be located in markets outside those covered by existing exhibition partners.[71] The hope, according to Nutt, was that the network would allow Fathom to reach audiences who would not otherwise be able to access religious event cinema at their local theaters, bridging the gap between Fathom, with its access to content, and affiliated churches, with the infrastructure and audiences to support expanded screenings.[72]

Event cinema has so far had a more limited impact on exhibitors' economic success than cinema advertising in US giants' mix of diversification strategies. For instance, in 2013, the last year Fathom's revenues were reported alongside NCM's, Fathom brought in $36.5 million, to the $426.3 million in advertising revenues reported by NCM.[73] In part, this is because event cinema must compete with the traditional box office for space and time on screens and is nearly always in a subordinate position by design; since its inception, event cinema has been design to fill gaps in exhibitors' schedules and make use of underutilized space in their theaters, not maximize its own profit potential (for instance, by scheduling events on weekend nights to boost turnout). Another limitation is the existence of restrictive licensing agreements for potentially lucrative content such as major sporting events, Broadway shows, or high-profile television programs. Finally, the business' aim of assembling a group of niche audiences around a broad array of content from variety of producers means highly variable costs, marketing needs, and audiences for each short-term event, making it difficult to create the same efficiencies as distributors with more standardized product. However, event cinema brings in meaningful revenues that help exhibition giants build out their larger diversification projects. As with cinema advertising, collaboration between founding chains and the building of national network scale are crucial to recouping costs on these otherwise niche events and enabling event cinema to become an area of ongoing industry development. Where cinema advertising is showing signs of maturity as the US network reaches a saturation point and CAC-reported growth begins to slow (see table 9), the wider range of audiences, programming, and uses of cinema space that event cinema is involved in suggests further possibilities for growth in coming years, if NCM and other event cinema companies can capitalize on this potential. Beyond profits,

event cinema's focus on adding up niche audiences and exploring a variety of uses for cinema infrastructure at off-peak times seem especially interesting in assessing areas where the impetus for growth may lead to new forms of exhibition practice.

Despite event cinema's focus on niche programming and audiences, it is important not to overstate the diversity of its offerings, especially in terms of its ability to serve audiences outside the white middle class. A similar slippage between "quality" programming, "quality" audiences, and white, middle-class tastes that appeared in NCM's cinema advertising business is also prevalent in Fathom Events programming choices. While audiences of all classes and races can appreciate classic films, opera, adventure sports documentaries, concert films, or faith-based programming, these events all enjoy significant white fanbases that, for event cinema distributors, means that they are not so niche as to exclude the white middle- or upper-middle-class mainstream as a core audience. Here, the logic appears to run counter to the logic of television, or lately, streaming's approach to niche audiences, which, despite the flaws and limitations of these strategies, has been more flexible in creating and distributing programming targeted toward more racially diverse groups over the last several decades. Such differences in approach betray fundamental assumptions at the heart of how exhibitors conceive of who cinemagoers are, even in a new sector of the business consciously designed to reach beyond traditional audiences and uses of the silver screen. Such failures of imagination limit the possibilities of a more radical experiments in how cinemas can be made useful to the public outside traditional forms of exhibition practice.

Digital Cinema Implementation Partners: Collaborative Investment in Cinema Infrastructure

In keeping with the importance of digital distribution to its cinema advertising and event cinema businesses, the next prong of exhibition giants' diversification efforts was designed to plan, develop, and manage this emerging cinema infrastructure. The new endeavor, which began within NCM and would be spun off as Digital Cinema Implementation Partners, extended the collaboration between domestic exhibition giants to one of their largest and most important challenges: negotiating the industry-wide transition to digital projection technology that had been understood to be inevitable for years. Exhibition giants used the scale of their combined circuits to secure favorable conditions for their own chains' technological development and direct the transition for several other exhibitors as well, using tactics they had drawn on when NCM expanded the US cinema advertising business.

As NCM came together in mid-2006, its founding partners also laid plans for a coordinated initiative that would enable them to finance digital cinema equipment for their theaters.[74] NCM spun off the initiative as an independent entity, Digital Cinema Implementation Partners (DCIP), jointly owned by Regal, AMC, and Cinemark, following the February 2007 IPO.[75] The new organization was designed to respond to a major roadblock in the digital cinema rollout. The main area of contention between studios and exhibitors was who would bear the costs of digital projector installations, given that studios stood to benefit more from cost savings on digital prints, while exhibitors were absorbing the risk of buying and maintaining expensive digital equipment.[76] The terms of these deals would be negotiated between the studio and the exhibitor and brokered through an "integrator" to dispel antitrust scrutiny. Integrators' business worked as so: integrators

would purchase and loan equipment to the exhibitor. Then, for each film booking made by the exhibitor, the distributor would pay a fee, the VPF, to the integrator. Exhibitors were also responsible for paying part of the equipment costs. Once the distributor and exhibitor had jointly paid off the loaned equipment, its ownership would be transferred to the exhibitor.[77]

DCIP aimed to act as an integrator for its founding chains and other affiliated chains.[78] The company hoped to finalize its financing and technology decisions by the end of 2007 and begin installing digital systems in 2008.[79] With this timeline, DCIP was approximately two years behind existing digital cinema integrators Christie/AIX and Technicolor Digital Cinema, who had already signed agreements with studios, secured credit, and begun the installation process at partner chains by the end of 2007.[80]

Despite its time disadvantage, DCIP benefitted significantly from the scale offered by its member chains. Just as with Screenvision, the three largest US chains were able to combine forces to quickly dwarf the efforts of third parties who built their network of affiliates contract by contract with small and medium-sized exhibitors. Christie/AIX and Technicolor had secured contracts to install digital systems for 4,000 and 5,000 screens, respectively, by the end of 2007; DCIP dwarfed both, offering vendors access to more than 15,000 screens at its founding chains alone. This scale, according to DCIP CEO and chairman Travis Reid, would enable the company to cut cost-saving deals with technology providers, as well as streamline the process of standardization by ensuring a large portion of the market would actively coordinate the purchase and installation of their systems. Reid also argued that, since DCIP was controlled by exhibitors, it was in a better position than the third parties to secure favorable conditions for exhibitors and studios, since it had no

intrinsic interest in profiting from technological or other services it could provide during the rollout. DCIP positioned itself as the exhibitor-led solution to the digital problem, touting its intentions to extend partnership offers to affiliate chains beyond the founding members.[81]

However, DCIP faced substantial delays in executing its plans. The first roadblock was coming to agreements with the studios on the details of the rollout, especially the final value of virtual print fees. By late 2008, JP Morgan committed to lend DCIP $525 million and, with the Blackstone Group, to assist the company in raising a total $1 billion to fund their rollout efforts. To access the funding, DCIP needed to strike deals with at least four of the six major studios.[82] Despite major incentives for both sides represented by a wave of digital 3D films in the pipeline (including *Avatar* [2009]) that promised a major boost to box office, negotiations with integrators on the final terms lagged.[83]

The pressure of impending 3D releases and ongoing resistance from film studios sparked significant frustration among exhibitors. John Fithian, president of the National Association of Theatre Owners (NATO), laid out exhibition's case in the July issue of *Boxoffice*. Fithian identified three goals at the core of the digital transition: the creation of digital technology standards, the pursuit of high-quality film presentation, and the establishment of a fair digital business model. He argued that it was the third point where studio recalcitrance was creating costly delays for both parties.[84] The VPF concept, he argued, was developed according to two intertwined philosophies: "First, as the transition develops and digital systems get installed, any studio supplying content to those systems generally does not have to produce a film print. In part, then, the VPF presents a payment made from immediate savings derived. The second complementary philosophy driving the development of the model was that VPFs represent a down payment by the studios on an

integrated digital future where they will save hundreds of millions of dollars every year, forever. Once the initial transition is complete, VPF payments go away, and studio savings begin."[85] Fithian assented that the studios had initially negotiated fair VPFs with Christie/AIX and Technicolor during their first round of digital projector installations.[86] However, he argued, studios now viewed the payments solely as compensation for their immediate savings on film prints. This meant that subsequent negotiations with providers had reduced VPF rates—"substantially so, in some cases"—and stalled the negotiation process. DCIP represented the largest of these outstanding deals. Fithian urged studios to come to the bargaining table in good faith to allow the film industry to succeed together at this "critical juncture."[87]

Despite these issues, by September 2008 DCIP managed to broker satisfactory deals with Disney, Fox, Universal, Paramount, and Lionsgate, meeting the terms of their financial agreement with JP Morgan and Blackstone.[88] Financing, however, proved to be a second, more cumbersome roadblock. By March 2009, the company was still struggling to raise the remaining $500 million of its planned total. Market conditions were difficult: the recession was raging, and several banks had exited entertainment finance.[89] At this stage, only two thousand digital screens had been installed in the United States and Canada.[90] DCIP was only able to raise a reduced total of $660 million in 2010, more than $300 million shy of its initial plans, to install close to fourteen thousand digital screens.[91]

After clearing this hurdle, the company moved quickly with installations, deploying seven thousand digital projection systems in more than one thousand theaters in its first year.[92] As the rollout continued, DCIP also began to initiate long-promised partnerships with other theater chains, including the top Canadian chains, Cineplex Entertainment and Empire

Theatres, and Hoyts Cinemas, Australia's largest chain.[93] By mid-2013, the digital rollout was nearing completion domestically and was well underway globally, though some international markets lagged behind, leaving some further opportunities for firms like DCIP to assist with chains' transitions.[94]

Digital cinema was the cornerstone of exhibition giants' diversification efforts in the United States, and upgrading digital systems multiplied these benefits. As discussed above, the digital preshow format essential to the success of exhibitors' cinema advertising efforts required the ease, flexibility, and low cost of digital distribution to handle the volume of multiple, ever-changing preshow versions and the precise targeting sold to clients. Upgrading digital cinema systems meant exhibitors could roll together the distribution, operation, and maintenance of their advertising and feature film delivery systems rather than continuing to maintain parallel infrastructures. Digital delivery was also a key component of the burgeoning business of alternative content, including live events, concert films, theater, opera, and other offerings increasingly presented on cinema screens during this period. Regal, Cinemark, and AMC took an active role in this programming through Fathom Events. Cinema-grade digital systems increased the image quality and ease of distribution for these presentations, expanding opportunities to screen this programming and increasing its appeal for audiences and content providers.

The expansion of digital cinema also streamlined the process and reduced the costs of administering cinema advertising and alternative content for affiliate theater chains outside the founding membership. Growing pressure for exhibitors to upgrade to digital projection systems meant affiliate chains no longer needed to install supplementary digital systems for ads and digitally distributed event screenings, lowering barriers for contracting

with new client exhibitors. Standardizing digital cinema projection also meant less technological friction for those affiliates NCM and Fathom Events lured away from competitors like Screenvision. DCIP's rollout and administration of digital cinema infrastructure for affiliate chains also became a modest alternate revenue stream for exhibition giants, furthering their diversification efforts.

After the global exhibition industry had finalized its transition to digital projection, DCIP remained active, providing management, administrative, and informational services for its network of installed systems, exhibition, and distribution partners for the ten-year term of VPFs. This allowed founding chains and their affiliates to share the administrative burden of managing digital systems and to coordinate their efforts. One of its most recent efforts has been a partnership with Moving Image Technologies (MIT) on the creation of Cinergy, a set of cloud-based software tools designed to help cinemas "monitor and manage cinema execution, presentation and quality assurance."[95] DCIP and MIT have struck a number of major contracts for the use of their Cinergy software with theater chains including National Amusements and Regal, as well as content providers like Fathom Events.[96] As the studio payments came to an end, DCIP also began to wind down its operations, and sold off the Cinergy software to Christie Digital Systems, a prominent digital projection and exhibition technology company.[97] With VPF payments tapering off, DCIP has become an influential but temporary feature of the 2010s exhibition industry.

If the formation of NCM offered the first instance of exhibition giants banding together to secure control of an emergent revenue stream in the exhibition business, DCIP's creation and activities in the subsequent decade have cemented collaboration as a central strategy for the largest US exhibitors. It also demonstrated the potential stakes for these

collaborations. Here, working together ensured that America's exhibition giants could secure favorable terms for long-term studio agreements and shifts in cinema infrastructure that would affect their business for decades to come. While no chain on its own could command the scale required to budge powerful studio interests, coordinating the rollout for 15,000 screens (then over a third of the screens in the US), gave them considerable leverage. Their leading position in negotiations with studios, alongside their recruitment of affiliate chains, also gave them significant standing to set the standards for the conversion to digital projection across the industry according to their own priorities.

Structures and Patterns of US Diversification Efforts

As the founding company for each of US giants' diversification initiatives outlined above, National CineMedia set a template for the structure and operations of each of its spun-off businesses. Five common characteristics become immediately apparent after studying National CineMedia, Digital Cinema Implementation Partners, and Fathom Events and their patterns of development. First, they are collaboratively controlled by the same trio of exhibition giants. Second, they rely on the national distribution and management of technology and content across their networks. Third, their business involves the recruitment of affiliate theater chains who contract services and bolster network scales without significant input into the direction of the entity's larger business. Fourth, they rely on digital cinema infrastructure. Exhibitor collaboration allowed each business to quickly scale up. The speed of this process helped to forestall the advances of third parties like Screenvision, Christie/AIX, and Technicolor by attracting affiliate chains and allowing giants keep exhibition profits not only within exhibition, but largely with its top exhibitors. Digital

infrastructure, meanwhile, enables lower distribution costs, simultaneous distribution to sites of all sizes across large networks, increased flexibility, and audience targeting that make cinema advertising and event cinema possible in their current incarnations.

Cinema advertising, event cinema, and digital cinema installation and software services have not matched the profits of box office and concessions, but they nonetheless offer important benefits to exhibitors. These areas offer exhibitors more control over certain revenue streams in the face of an industry that subjects them to an uneven relationship with studios that offer the most profitable content as well as to seasonal and year-to-year fluctuations inherent to the film business. Financially, they also provide a growth area that is especially important to exhibitors as attendance levels have flattened. Creating these growth opportunities and expanding them to a national scale was an important aspect of private equity owners' endeavors to make cinemas a profitable investment vehicle for their funds. As exhibition giants have shifted from private equity to public ownership in the late 2000s and 2010s, maintaining these businesses has been important to maintaining their overall market position and demonstrating growth opportunities for shareholders. Their competitors, lacking the capital or scale to create rivals to giants' diversification that can attract comparable advertising or event cinema partners, are in a position of participating in diversification efforts in the subordinate position of "affiliate," under the supervision of their competitors, or not at all.

For US exhibitors, the shift towards collaborative management of new diversification efforts marked a major transition in how these companies do business in the competitive US marketplace. Their efforts set them apart from other US exhibitors and increased their power over their competitors in line with parallel pushes towards consolidation of circuits

happening in this period. However, a comparison with the counterparts also reveals a significant degree of cautiousness and conservatism in their approach. Cinema advertising and event cinema have expanded in the Canadian market over the same period, spearheaded by Canadian exhibition giant, Cineplex Entertainment, which benefitted from similar market forces and affordances of scale. However, Cineplex has also gone much further than its US counterparts in investing in diversification and expanding the scope of what we count as part of the exhibition business.

Monopoly-Led Diversification: Cineplex Entertainment in the Canadian Market

Structure of Cineplex After 2006

Where US diversification efforts have developed in close alignment with the established exhibition business, Cineplex Entertainment has expanded its diversification efforts beyond the boundaries of new features and uses of exhibition spaces to other areas of commercial promotion, entertainment, and leisure in public space. The distinct position of Cineplex in the intensely consolidated Canadian market accounts for this difference in approach. Canada has long faced a significant lack of competition among exhibitors compared with the United States. This feature of Canadian exhibition dates back decades, to Nathan L. Nathanson's establishment of national Famous Players circuit in 1920, which secured monopoly status through an exclusive distribution partnership franchise with the Paramount film studio. When Nathanson, having lost control of his chain to Paramount, formed Odeon Theatres in 1941 from a consortium of previously independent theaters, the Canadian exhibition market became a duopoly.[98] In 1984, four years after its first theater opened in 1979, the Cineplex

Corporation acquired Odeon Theatres, taking over Odeon's position in the duopoly relationship.[99]

Cineplex used the turbulent environment of the early 2000s to expand its reach. The exhibitor and its private equity owners, the Onex Corporation and Oaktree Capital were active participants in the flurry of consolidation activity that followed the crisis in exhibition, as discussed in chapter 1. While Onex and Oaktree made several attempts at major acquisitions that would expand Cineplex, most of these fizzled; the theater chain's most dramatic consolidation instead took place after the private equity companies reduced their stake in the business in 2003. In the process of the spin-off, however, Cineplex's owners made three decisive changes to the exhibitor that would shape the company's future in the two decades to come. First, they spun Cineplex's Canadian circuit off as a separate company, Cineplex Galaxy, focused on the Canadian market alone; Loews Cineplex, comprising the US and international theaters, was sold to a consortium of private equity firms, who in turn merged the company with AMC Theatres. Second, Onex and Oaktree combined Cineplex Canada with the small upstart chain Galaxy Cinemas, that had built its business bringing upgraded theaters to midsize Canadian cities. As part of the merger, they installed Ellis Jacob, Galaxy's CEO and a former Cineplex executive, as the head of the new company; he would remain CEO for the next nineteen years. Third, the owners took the company public rather than selling to another financial interest, reducing their stake and the control of private equity over its direction into the future.

Cineplex purchased Famous Players in 2006 in the context of this Canadian focus, Jacobs's leadership, and the company's public ownership. With this acquisition, the Canadian duopoly again became a monopoly; Cineplex instantly held a 60 percent share of

the Canadian exhibition market.[100] Acquisitions of AMC's Canadian theaters and Atlantic Canada's Empire Theatres chain have since solidified this position. The Empire acquisition in 2012 was particularly important, as it brought Cineplex a near-national reach, with a presence in all ten Canadian provinces (though not the less populated northern territories). By 2019, Cineplex received a staggering 75 percent of Canadian box office grosses.[101] The result of the company's consolidation activity was that, by itself, Cineplex could execute sweeping changes across the entire Canadian market. The company could also experiment with new initiatives and major shifts in business practices without the threat of significant competition from other chains, who lacked the resources to invest in new initiatives on the same scale. This aspect of Cineplex's exhibition monopoly is especially important to an analysis of the company's approach to diversification. These characteristics of the monopoly-led Canadian market allowed Cineplex to adopt a less conservative stance than the US chains and explore a much wider and more dramatic range of diversification initiatives.

Cinema Advertising and Event Cinema at Cineplex Entertainment

Despite the differences between Cineplex Entertainment and US exhibition giants in terms of regional power and market position, Cineplex's early diversification efforts were similar in type and structure to those of US chains in the first years after the crisis in exhibition. As in the United States, Cineplex launched a cinema advertising division that it used to recruit Canadian affiliate chains, experimented with event cinema, and invested in digital infrastructure that supported the rollout of both initiatives. Temporally, these efforts followed those of US chains, likely due to Cineplex's later exit from bankruptcy, the

complexities of the Cineplex Galaxy spinoff and Loews Cineplex sale, and the organizational and financial demands of closing the Famous Players acquisition. By the time the company had turned to its own diversification efforts, successful models were already in place at National CineMedia.

As National CineMedia was preparing to go public, a few years on from US exhibition giants' experiments with a preliminary digital infrastructure and preshow formats, Cineplex Galaxy introduced digital projection technology in its theaters, beginning with a $3.2 million pilot project in the Toronto market to begin in April 2005.[102] In addition to preshow advertising, Cineplex's network was set to expand the possibilities of public cinema events and private theater rentals for corporations as well as educational and community organizations. Cineplex planned to design a twenty-minute program, Reel Entertainment, that would blend behind-the-scenes content and interviews with direct advertising, like Regal Cinema's the 2wenty, AMC's the Movie Watcher Network, and NCM's First Look (later renamed Noovie). The newly installed technology promised increased automation, flexible and reliable delivery, and high-quality images. As with its US counterparts, digitizing the cinema advertising process meant advertising clients could benefit from reduced production and distribution costs, as well as new possibilities for audience targeting and showpiece advertising designed specifically for the big screen.[103]

When Cineplex completed its Famous Players acquisition later that year, it achieved what the US exhibition giants could only manage through collaboration with its competitors: a majority share of advertising space on its nation's cinema screens. Following the Famous Players acquisition, Cineplex quickly purchased the remainder of Famous Players Media.[104] Combining personnel from Famous Players magazine and cinema advertising business with

Cineplex's own advertising team, the company launched the Cineplex Media division. With the new division, the company would manage cinema advertising for Cineplex's expanded 1,278-screen circuit as well as for affiliated chains, including 280 screens that were divested to Empire Theatres and Fortune Cinema's as a condition of the acquisition's approval by the Canadian Competition Bureau.[105] Other affiliates included AMC's Canadian operations, Landmark Cinemas Canada, and Empire Theatres. The company quickly made plans to expand its advertising program across Canada, at an expected cost of $11 to $13 million.[106] By the end of 2006, Cineplex Media claimed it offered advertisers access to 83 percent of Canada's cinemagoing public, exceeding even its then 60-percent share of the Canadian box office.[107] This early effort at diversification therefore enabled Cineplex to extend its reach beyond the limits of antitrust rulings on theater ownership, rulings which were generally intended to prevent single-chain monopolies in particular local markets rather than limit the exhibitors' national power. Its investment in this avenue for controlling the market was especially visible in Cineplex's decision to make cinema advertising contracts as part of its divestment agreements with competitor chains, turning even an antitrust measure into an opportunity to expand its reach by other means. As in the US market, diversification enabled the exhibition giant to solidify its domestic power, actively scaling up its bargaining power through affiliate agreements. In the process, Cineplex boxed out potential third-party competition and set the terms under which its competitors would access emerging revenue streams.

Cineplex also leveraged its investment in digital infrastructure to expand into event cinema. Early announcements about the chain's new digital advertising network promised it would also expand the company's capability to offer alternative content in cinemas,

including concerts and sporting events, such as live World Wrestling Entertainment and National Hockey League matches.[108] Alongside National CineMedia and the UK's Odeon and United Cinemas International chain, the company was one of the first to sign agreements with the immensely popular and profitable The Met: Live in HD program in 2006.[109] These efforts expanded in line with the development of the global event cinema business more generally; today, Cineplex regularly shows classic film and anime series, concerts, stage performances, and opera on its screens, among other event cinema content. Unlike NCM, Cineplex appears not to have taken an active role in developing content, preferring to license from a variety of distributors.

Cineplex's first round of diversification efforts generally aligned with the patterns this activity took among US exhibition giants. But these efforts unfolded within the framework of an exhibition monopoly that did not demand collaboration to achieve the scale necessary to make those efforts a success. Cineplex's monopoly power also enabled it to take on bolder diversification efforts. Some of these efforts were driven by acquisitions of companies that could give Cineplex a foothold in new sectors, made possible by the company's access to capital and dwindling need to tie up funds in consolidation with other theater chains. Others involved investments that expanded out of the company's core business in ambitious ways. Ultimately, these activities added up to a much more substantial aspect of its overall business. In 2003, revenues from Cineplex's media, amusement, and other revenues were just 5.7 percent of the chain's profits. By 2019, these revenues had risen to 28.6 percent, and box office made up less than half of the chain's total profits (see table 12). As Cineplexes diversification initiatives grew over this interval, the company began to

Table 12: Cineplex Galaxy/Cineplex Entertainment Annual Revenue Mix, 2003 to 2019

Year	Total Revenues (millions)	Box Office	Food Service	Media	Amusement	Other	Combined Media, Amusement, and Other
2003	$295.54	67.5%	26.8%	-	-	-	5.7%
2004	$315.79	66.5%	27.0%	-	-	-	6.4%
2005	$490.30	63.0%	28.0%	-	-	-	9.0%
2006	$740.24	62.0%	28.8%	-	-	-	9.2%
2007	$805.02	60.7%	29.2%	7.0%	-	3.1%	10.1%
2008	$849.69	60.1%	29.6%	7.1%	-	3.2%	10.3%
2009	$964.35	60.3%	29.9%	6.9%	-	2.9%	9.8%
2010	$1,006.43	59.4%	29.3%	9.1%	-	2.2%	11.3%
2011	$998.20	57.9%	29.2%	8.7%	-	4.2%	12.9%
2012	$1,092.50	58.5%	30.1%	7.7%	-	3.7%	11.4%
2013	$1,171.27	57.6%	29.9%	9.4%	0.6%	2.5%	11.9%
2014	$1,234.72	55.5%	30.4%	10.9%	0.6%	2.6%	14.1%
2015	$1,370.94	53.3%	30.5%	11.2%	2.2%	2.8%	16.2%
2016	$1,478.33	49.8%	28.8%	11.3%	7.6%	2.5%	21.4%
2017	$1,555.07	46.2%	28.5%	10.8%	11.9%	2.6%	25.3%
2018	$1,612.44	44.9%	29.5%	10.1%	12.8%	2.7%	25.6%
2019	$1,665.15	42.4%	29.0%	11.8%	13.7%	3.1%	28.6%

Notes: As annual reports list figures from previous years, figures from most recent year were used wherever discrepancies occurred.

Source: Data from Cineplex Galaxy Income Fund annual reports (2003, 12; 2004, 15, 16–17; 2005, 22, 24–25; 2006, 11, 14; 2007, 2, 10, 18; 2008, 3, 11, 13); Cineplex Inc. annual reports (2009, 5, 16, 17; 2010, 11, 18, 20; 2011, 15, 22, 23; 2012, 16, 24, 26; 2013, 3, 16, 23; 2014, 9, 19; 2015, 16, 30; 2016, 2, 26; 2017, 10, 24; 2018, 11, 23; 2019, 4, 15)

integrate its efforts into an overarching strategy that sought to benefit from synergies and make diversification an engine for growth in the maturing Canadian market.

Cineplex Digital Media: Media Initiatives In and Out of Home

Cineplex began its forays into more ambitious diversification possibilities through the media division it had created to house its cinema advertising business in 2005. These changes ran parallel to new investments the company made in the amusements business, which I discuss in the next section. Under the umbrella of its media division, Cineplex expanded several key facets of its business: it created and expanded its customer loyalty program; it launched a webstore for film purchases and rentals from home; and, most boldly, it leveraged acquisitions and translated its new cinema advertising expertise to break into the business of out-of-home advertising and digital signage displays for a range of companies.

Though Cineplex began developing more extended brand partnerships through the cinema advertising business, it quickly expanded these initiatives beyond the bounds of practice set by other exhibitors through a more complex set of acquisitions, joint ventures, and client relationships, much of it taking place through the company's diversification practices. One of the most substantial of these programs is Cineplex's relationship with Scotiabank. In 2007, the company struck a deal with the major Canadian bank to use its brand name on five flagship theaters in downtown Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Toronto, and Montreal.[110]

Alongside the naming rights, the two companies also announced a long-term partnership in a customer loyalty program, Scene. The program allowed customers fourteen years old or older to collect loyalty points on tickets, receive discounts on concession

purchases, participate in contests and special offers, and redeem their rewards for free tickets and concessions. It also offered sign-up offers and quicker earnings through a special Scotiabank debit card affiliated with the program. For Scotiabank, the deal not only promised another venue for branding, but access to the youth demographic, especially those it could entice to sign up for their first banking products. Cineplex, meanwhile, developed new incentives to encourage cinema attendance and concession purchases, gained access to moviegoer data, and collected customer email addresses for direct promotion.[111]

By 2019, the program had reached 10 million members, giving Cineplex unprecedented access to data about moviegoing across Canada. Program expansions that allowed customers to earn and redeem rewards at nationwide chain restaurants owned by Cara Operations and sporting goods retailer Sport Chek, as well as new Cineplex properties including the company's webstore and Rec Room entertainment centers only deepened the range of information the company could collect about moviegoers' activities.[112] It later combined its loyalty program with Scotiabank's and relaunched it as Scene+ in 2021, adding Canadian grocery giant Empire Company Limited as an co-owner of the program in 2022. The new program linked loyalty program more closely with Scotiabank's banking products and substantially expanded the retailers where members could earn and redeem points, including Empire grocery stores like Sobey's and Foodland, Rakuten's online shopping platform, and a Scene+ branded travel portal.[113] "Their loyalty program is massive—you could almost call them a data company," the president of Facebook Canada commented in a *Globe and Mail* article praising the company for its diversification initiatives.[114] Of course, that Cineplex has an exhibitor loyalty program does not make it unique; most major chains in the US and Canada have similar initiatives. But the company's leveraging of the program

to create strategic marketing partnerships indicated from an early stage the exhibitor's interest in expanding the scope of its business and forming connections with other companies in the retail, financial, and entertainment sectors in a way not yet seen from its US counterparts. Its expansion since the program's founding further suggests a larger role for the chain in the retail and leisure space.

Cineplex has also invested in home film sales, launching its online store in 2008. At first, the site made DVDs and BluRays of both new releases and catalogue titles available for home purchase directly from Cineplex. Later, the company expanded this initiative to include digital film rentals and permanent downloads as well, eventually phasing out the sale of physical copies. Customers could also earn loyalty points for their purchases through the Scene program.[115] Through the webstore, the company launched SuperTicket in 2013, an initiative that partnered with Warner Bros., Sony, Paramount, and Universal to bundle the purchase of a movie ticket and future digital download for $20 through UltraViolet, a digital rights locker program that included multiple studios and online video platforms.[116] While only a small portion of the company's overall business—the Cineplex webstore received around 1.3 million monthly users in 2019, compared to 5.5 million in average monthly theater admissions, with theater patrons as a group spending more per visit—the shift to online media sales suggests the exhibitor's interest in expanding its portion of consumers' entertainment budgets and its openness to a variety of strategies to hedge against competition from home entertainment.[117]

One diversification strategy that has brought the company solidly outside the film exhibition business is its sizable investment in the business of digital signage and displays not only to use in its own lobbies, by its concession stands, or adjacent to its street-facing

marquees, but to be employed in a wide variety of retail and entertainment businesses including major restaurants, malls, commercial properties, and banks. These efforts became an aspect of Cineplex's business in May 2009, when the company spent $1.7 million to acquire Onsite Media Network Inc., a digital signage company that held contracts with major sports stadiums, office towers, and public food courts and concourses in Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Ottawa, and Toronto.[118] The next year, Cineplex acquired Digital Display and Communications Inc. for $3.5 million. It combined Digital Display and Communications with Onsite to form Cineplex Digital Solutions (CDS). While the Onsite acquisition had been framed primarily as an extension of Cineplex's cinema advertising business that could bring clients' materials into other public sites, Cineplex added a new channel of this business with the second acquisition: provision of digital signage for several retail businesses, linked to informational displays or single-client promotion rather than rotating advertising in public spaces. This branch of the business included deals with Labatt Breweries, Holt Renfrew, Scotiabank, the Toronto Maple Leafs, the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, and Rogers Communications.[119]

In 2013, Cineplex added another company, EK3 Technologies, to its digital signage portfolio and renamed it Cineplex Digital Networks (CDN). This acquisition was much larger than the first two, involving an initial payment of $39 million and another $39 million in performance-based payments. With it, Cineplex gained not only additional Canadian signage contracts, including with Tim Hortons, McDonald's, and Walmart, but business in the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Middle East.[120] CDS and CDN came to operate together under the umbrella of Cineplex's out-of-home media division, Cineplex Digital Media, with CDN creating in-store displays for retail, fast-food, and financial clients,

and CDS developing more expansive services through "full-service, digital place-based ecosystems that integrate digital signage, mobile, social media, and experiential technologies via architectural media."[121] As its out-of-home digital media business has grown, Cineplex Digital Media has contracted with Subway, Dairy Queen, A&W, and 7 Eleven; the Royal Bank of Canada, the Bank of Montreal, and Western Union; Indigo Books and Music and Toys "R" Us; National Hockey League arenas in Ottawa, Edmonton, and Calgary; ONroute rest stops along Ontario's busy 400 and 401 highways; as well as major malls and corporate real estate spaces across Canada. The company has also continued to manage Cineplex's own network of in-lobby digital signage and, in 2019, partnered with AMC Theatres to update and manage its lobby displays across its 630 U.S. multiplexes.[122] From 2013 to 2019, annual profits from Cineplex Digital Media have grown from $23.0 million to $81.3 million (see table 13).

[Table 13 about here.]

Looking at Cineplex's media-based diversification efforts together, it becomes obvious that the company has built from existing areas of expertise in developing its diversification strategy. Starting from a naming rights deal and a strategic banking partnership with Scotiabank, the company was able to grow its Scene loyalty program, gradually broadening the scope of its corporate partnerships and, in the process, the amount of data the company can capture and leverage in new ventures. The webstore, building on Cineplex's reputation as a site for the curation of popular film, eschewed stark divisions between theatrical and home viewing in favor of taking a slice of film purchases and rentals

for itself. Cineplex Digital Media's digital signage business, the media venture that's taken the company furthest from the cinema business, developed from early moves to leverage its new cinema advertising knowledge into a stake in other kinds of out-of-home advertising in public space. When considered as part of holistic strategy, the logics of behind these decisions give weight and structure to the company's ambition. While even the most profitable of these ventures, digital signage, is far from eclipsing the company's core theatrical business, it takes the more stable revenues, corporate control, and growth opportunities offered by more widespread diversification efforts like cinema advertising and event cinema to new scales. Observed as a cluster rather than in isolation, such efforts also begin to add up to significant sources of revenues for the chain, as I will explain in the next section.

Player One Amusement Group, E-Sports, and New Leisure Sites

Cineplex's media strategy worked in concert with a similar expansion of its interests in the areas of amusement, gaming, and leisure over the same period of 2007 to 2017. The first of these efforts began behind the scenes, with acquisitions of new subsidiaries whose operations would largely pass unnoticed by the public, just as they had when the company was building Cineplex Digital Media's signage business. Soon, however, Cineplex developed these holdings into a public-facing facet of its overall diversification strategy. The company launched new leisure sites in cities across Canada and eventually integrated these out-of-home leisure businesses into Cineplex's plans for its cinemas.

As Cineplex was investing in digital signage, it used a similar strategy to expand its operations into arcade games and vending equipment by making a series of strategic

acquisitions. In 2007, the company made two such acquisitions: Playdium, a chain of Canadian arcade and video game entertainment complexes, and Premier Amusements, a U.S. arcade game provider and servicer.[123] Between 2011 and 2015, it strengthened this area of operations: the company purchased New Way Sales Games, another amusement games supplier and distributor; invested $4.5-million to unify this subsidiary with the amusement game and vending divisions of Starburst Coin Machines, forming the joint venture Cineplex Starburst; and picked up the competing company Brady Distributing. Cineplex went on to acquire the remainder of Cineplex Starburst for $17.5 million at the end of 2015.[124] In September 2016, Cineplex Starburst acquired Tricorp Amusements, a US company that specialized interactive video and arcade games for movie theaters and other venues and family entertainment destinations such as bowling, laser tag, mini golf, and amusement parks.[125] Two months later, the company amalgamated the four previously separate branches of its amusement business—Cineplex Starburst, Brady Starburst, Tricorp Amusements, and Premier Amusements—into a single company, Player One Amusement Group.[126] Since the amalgamation, it has added two more companies to its portfolio that both operated in the coin-operated rides and amusements segment: SAW, in late 2016, and Dandy Amusements, in 2017.[127] The company now had sales offices across Canada and the Eastern and Southern United States, offering its services across both countries.[128]

Since its amalgamation, Player One has operated in four core service areas: equipment sales and distribution, parts and service, revenue-sharing, prizes and merchandising, and consultation.[129] The company sells, rents, and distributes amusement, vending, and arcade game equipment, and operates trade-in and buy-back programs for companies within and outside its existing client base. These sales and rentals are generally

made to family entertainment and arcade businesses, but also include sales of home games like pinball, pool, air hockey and other arcade games and short-term rentals for corporate and personal events including conferences, trade shows, weddings, and parties. Player One offers onsite servicing and repairs, parts sales, and phone support for amusement equipment. It also facilitates revenue-sharing programs, through which family entertainment centers, shopping centers, bars, restaurants, and other businesses can contract with Player One to receive amusement equipment whose profits would then be split with the company, offering lower start-up costs to clients whose main business is not in the amusement sector. The company also helps its clients with selling prizes and merchandise and implementing redemption systems. Finally, Player One provides a variety of consultation services to amusement and other client businesses, assisting with issues like game room layouts, merchandise and redemption strategies, and equipment and system training, among others. In addition to small and medium-size business clientele across the US and Canada, Player One has also struck partnerships to provide equipment and services to major companies including JW Marriott and Bass Pro Shops.[130] As with Cineplex Digital Media's partnership with AMC, the company has also joined forces with a major U.S. exhibitor, signing a deal with Cinemark in 2018 to act as an exclusive service provider to all amusement and gaming equipment at the chain's U.S. theaters and working with it on the creation of three "premium gaming locations."[131]

Amusement arcades have been a relatively commonplace element of the domestic movie theater experience for several decades now and were central to the expansion of the concept of the movie theater as an entertainment center that flourished during the megaplex-era push for upgrading theatrical sites.[132] As it built Player One, Cineplex began to vertically

integrate this facet of its business. The development of the company allowed Cineplex to give itself preferred pricing on arcade equipment, systems for prize redemption, and maintenance and repair services. By the time Cineplex's amusements acquisitions began to accelerate in 2011, the company had clearly begun to see Player One as a more than a branch of the company that would supply its theaters and bring in some minimal side revenues. Instead, Cineplex was seeking a foothold in the larger amusements business connected to traditional arcades, family entertainment centers, and a broad array of everyday retail environments. Simultaneously, as the Cinemark deal illustrates, building Player One positioned Cineplex as a service provider to exhibitors in the rest of the domestic market, the vast majority of whom had not invested in amusements to the same degree.

Building on its involvement in the physical amusements business, Cineplex also pursued investment in the e-sports business in 2015. E-sports, short for electronic sports, refers to online video game competitions, often formally organized, involving professional video game players, and leveraging live streaming as an opportunity for increased spectatorship. As with its entry to the digital signage and amusements business, Cineplex began with acquisitions in its new area of interest. In 2015, it spent $10 million to buy 80 percent of WorldGaming, an online gaming platform which facilitates online video game leagues and tournaments, and announced plans to invest another $5 million to expand the company's business model to incorporate in-theater tournament experiences.[133] In 2016, the company reached an agreement with PlayStation to launch a series of video game tournaments, featuring PlayStation titles like *Call of Duty*, *Gran Turismo*, *Street Fighter*, and *Uncharted*. Players would qualify for these tournaments through WorldGaming's online platform and then play in regional and Canada-wide finals hosted at Cineplex theaters.[134]

For Cineplex, e-sports revenues came from the sale of sponsorship and advertising for e-sports events, as well as entry fees for some online games and ticket sales for spectators of in-theater tournaments, though these revenues were not broken out from the company's "media" revenues. In its financial reports, Cineplex described e-sports as a growth business and stated that it hoped by entering this market early, it could "gain share in a meaningful portion of the business" and extend its involvement with e-sports to new territories through strategic international relationships.[135] By 2019, however, the company was revisiting this stance. It had hired an outside advisor to identify a strategic equity partner to buy a majority share of the business and identified it as a discontinued operation in that year's annual report.[136] In 2020, the company ultimately sold its interest in WorldGaming to for an undisclosed sum to the newly formed company Playfly Sports.[137]

While Cineplex eventually offloaded its e-sports investments, the company's initial interest in securing a space in this area underscores the breadth of its ambitions during this flurry of acquisition activity between 2007 and 2017. As with digital signage and amusements, Cineplex was eager to expand the scope of its business with a major e-sports acquisition and develop its holdings in digital media beyond its webstore. The venture also followed the earlier threads of cinema advertising and event cinema further by showing the company's interest in reimagining its theatrical environments for alternative uses. In both these dimensions, e-sports showcased how far Cineplex had travelled in its experiments with diversification compared to US chains. Cineplex's reassessment of the WorldGaming investment four years in also demonstrates that the company was beginning to consider the results of its diversification activity and rationalize areas where it may be overextended. The

exhibitor had demonstrated that it could afford to be ambitious, but still indicated that this ambition was being tempered by market realities.

As Cineplex has incorporated the amusements and family entertainment business into the company's operations, it has also made significant investments in building new food, gaming, and entertainment destinations of its own within Canada, broadening the scope of its public-facing entertainment offerings. Complementing developments in the Player One division, Cineplex signed a deal with TopGolf in 2017 to help bring its entertainment and dining venues to Canada, with Cineplex managing the sites' day-to-day operations. These locations feature indoor, digitally enhanced golfing bays—quite attractive given long Canadian winters—with social seating as well as television, food, and drink.[138] Especially noteworthy is Cineplex's new solo ventures in the entertainment and leisure sector. In 2016, Cineplex launched the Rec Room, a chain of adult-oriented restaurant and entertainment complexes that it called "new kind of social entertainment destination." Its first location, in South Edmonton, included arcades and recreational games, an auditorium for live entertainment with a "theater-sized, high-definition screen," digital displays for sporting games and other events, and an "upscale casual" dining environment.[139] The company has since opened nine more Rec Room locations across Canada.[140] According to the *Globe and Mail,* each site costs Cineplex between $6 and $10 million to build, and early figures from the Edmonton location suggests initial sales figures of $7 to $10 million per year.

Alongside the Rec Room, Cineplex developed a similar concept, this time targeting teenagers and their families, by relaunching the Playdium brand it had acquired during the early development of its amusement business.[141] In 2017, it announced its relaunch of

Playdium as a series of entertainment complexes in midsize Canadian cities. The sites would include video and arcade games, virtual reality experiences, "play attractions" such as "augmented climbing walls, bowling, rope courses, and two-level laser tag," as well as casual dining outlets, private party rooms, parent lounges, and casual dining options.[142] The company initially planned to build ten to fifteen locations, with the first opening in Whitby, Ontario in 2019, with locations in Brampton, Ontario and Dartmouth, Nova Scotia following soon after.[143] Vertical integration with Player One and Cineplex's longstanding relationship with Canadian real estate developers also contributed to giving the Rec Room and Playdium sites a competitive edge against rival ventures, like US company Dave and Buster's Canadian locations.[144]

These newer entertainment sites were designed to be complementary to Cineplex's theatrical business, not just as parallel revenue streams, but as geographically proximate sites of family entertainment. The first Rec Room, in Edmonton, opened next to the chain's South Edmonton cinema location, and subsequent locations followed suit, including Rec Room sites at the West Edmonton Mall, London's Masonville Place, Mississauga's Square One Shopping Center, and St. John's Avalon Mall, and a Playdium site at Dartmouth Crossing, each situated in the same shopping centers as Cineplex theaters.[145] In 2019, the company made its pursuit of synergy more explicit with the announcement of a new business concept, the Junxion, a "first-of-its-kind" concept for a "community hub" that acts as a "movie theater, dining destination, and entertainment complex—all in one place."[146] According to Sarah Van Lange, Cineplex's executive director of communications, the name signified the way the new sites would be a "junction" between the company's theatrical business and Rec Room entertainment centers.[147] As Cineplex described:

> Junxion's state-of-the-art cinemas will offer a range of movie-going experiences, including UltraAVX [Cineplex's in-house premium large format screening experience] and comfortable recliners where guests can have food and drinks delivered right to their seats. In addition to the theater experience, Junxion is the perfect entertainment destination for any occasion. It will feature an open lobby for events and performances, a stage for live music, space for outdoor screenings, and an amusement games and attractions area. Along with new and classic video and redemption games, guests can enjoy the latest interactive experiences like virtual reality from VRstudios. An evening of fun is sure to work up an appetite, so guests can look forward to a range of dining experiences at Junxion's food hall, including fresh and tasty food options, an indoor food truck and a bar offering Canada's favorite varieties of wine and beer. Junxion guests will have their pick of exciting programming and events, including live music, trivia nights, game nights, outdoor screenings of movies and live TV events and more. Plus, Scene members will earn points with every Junxion visit, which they can redeem for food, game credits or a trip to the movies.[148]

Cineplex announced plans for locations at Winnipeg's Kildonan Place and Mississauga's Erin Mills Town Center, as well as its intentions to retrofit existing theaters as Junxion sites; after pandemic delays, they opened in 2022 and 2023, respectively.[149] Van Lange linked the new initiative to the company's need to attract customers outside major blockbuster fare. "Guests are gravitating towards experiences that they can't replicate at home. We're finding the same in terms of entertainment where guests are looking for places to be social to have fun. What the Junxion provides is opportunities to come and visit us outside of when we

have a big Hollywood blockbuster." Ellis Jacob, Cineplex's CEO, meanwhile, indicated that alongside its longer running involvement in amusements, family entertainment, and dining, the Junxion would be part of a larger shift in the company's corporate strategy: "Cineplex is now moving from a cinema company to an entertainment destination."[150]

Integrating public entertainment, amusements and arcade games, and a variety of digital displays, including traditional screening rooms, The Rec Room, Playdium, and Junxion concepts draw on and repackage Cineplex's emerging areas of expertise and draws on synergies in its business to extend its customer-facing operations in new directions. These sites take on new meaning when viewed in the context of Cineplex's loyalty program, digital signage division, and amusements business. These mixed entertainment sites were not only ambitious new businesses in the leisure and retail sectors. Instead, they developed from a much longer trajectory of diversification activity. Cineplex had spent over a decade building a customer base for its Scene loyalty program and accustoming these members to using the program outside Cineplex theaters, eventually expanding it as Scene+ to catch up to the new sites and to the scope of Cineplex's ambition as a corporate partner in the Canadian retail industry. The company has also invested substantial time and resources vertically integrating what had initially been more peripheral elements of its theatrical sites—cinema advertising onscreen and in lobby displays and arcade and games areas—and using its control of the design, equipment, distribution, and maintenance of these elements to conceive and structure its newest businesses. These initiatives, therefore, can be traced back to the development of the Scene loyalty program and the acquisitions of Playdium and Premier Amusements in 2007 and the acquisition of Onsite Media Network in 2009, the earliest days of post-Famous Players Cineplex.

These roots indicate that Cineplex's emergent investments new public entertainment sites are more stably embedded in the company's strategic direction than they may appear at first glance. Whether the complete shift from a "cinema" company to an "entertainment" company Jacob claims to be aiming for will be achieved is still undetermined. The company has stated that revenues beyond box office and concession may account for as much as 50 percent of revenues in coming years.[151] By 2019, Cineplex had significantly diversified its revenue sources; however, box office and concessions still made up 71.4 percent of the revenue mix. What is clear is that Cineplex has gone further than any other exhibitor in the domestic market in striving to offset the risks inherent to relying solely on cinema product, to expand the scope of the exhibition business, and to integrate these investments into reimagined sites of public leisure. In the context of these long-term investments, the Junxion concept takes on more significance, even though it has not yet been fully realized. The Junxion is not simply an experimental new theater that may or may not become a subtype of available theater styles, but the crystallization of a decade and a half of acquisitions, carefully crafted synergies, and blossoming ambitions. With it, Cineplex intends to bring the fruits of these diversification efforts home to transform the cinema space. Cineplex's status as a monopoly exhibitor also means that, should it decide to invest the resources, it could reshape a large portion of its chain in the Junxion image, affecting the prevailing standard and model of mainstream cinemagoing across Canada. Such an outcome has been at least hinted at in the announcement that the company is planning retrofits of its existing theater sites.

Conclusion

For US and Canadian exhibitors, financial pressures from private equity owners, domestic patterns of consolidation and the long-awaited standardization of digital distribution technology at cinemas worldwide set the stage for substantial new investments in the diversification of the film exhibition business. New ventures in cinema advertising, event cinema, and provision of key digital technology grew out of and continued in parallel to the consolidation efforts that had established domestic exhibition giants by early 2007. These initiatives relied on the capital and network scale that the giants possessed due to consolidation, but they also operated as complementary strategies of control in the exhibition market. Collaboration between US giants, based on an understanding of their shared market position, enabled them to scale up quickly, establish control over these new sectors in the face of third-party competition, and bring their competing exhibitors into these activities in the subordinate position of affiliate chains. Cineplex Entertainment's Canadian monopoly has enabled it to achieve similar results without requiring it to establish equal partnerships with other exhibitors. Such efforts have solidified giants' power in the exhibition sector, enabled them to develop growth areas to appease owners and shareholders, and blunted the impact of box office and attendance fluctuations inherent to the exhibition business.

Such efforts, however, have been greatly expanded in the Canadian market, where Cineplex has spent a decade and a half developing an expansive range of original diversification strategies. Through an ambitious series of acquisitions and new investments, Cineplex has expanded into areas including retail rewards, online film sales, digital signage, amusements and gaming, e-sports, and new leisure sites. In doing so, it has expanded the

scope of what counts as the film exhibition business, creating direct economic links between movie theaters and other retail businesses and commercial public leisure sites. These activities indicate the potential scale of diversification for the domestic exhibition industry at large. While Cineplex's monopoly status in the smaller Canadian market has certainly contributed to its capacity to execute this strategy, it nonetheless offers one potential model of the future for consolidated film exhibitors domestically and internationally.

The standardization of digital distribution technology in film exhibition has been a key development that has enabled many of these diversification strategies to develop in the domestic market. In the case of US giants' efforts through Digital Cinema Implementation Partners, the collaboration between exhibitors borne from their investments in diversification initiatives itself enabled, or at least accelerated, the rollout of cinema-grade projection technology across the United States and Canada. The rapid adoption of this technology for feature film projection itself allowed for the further expansion of cinema advertising and event cinema, especially among the affiliate chains who bolstered the networks of National CineMedia, Fathom Events, and Cineplex's Canadian cinema advertising business. In the next chapter, I will examine a second major impetus and impact of the digital transition on the part of exhibitors: new screening technologies and experiences. As with diversification, digitization is only part of the story: cinema technology like 3D, large formats, immersive sound, and multisensory experiences are the most spectacular of emerging premium screening experiences, but they have developed in parallel to enhancements that emphasize convenience, comfort, and luxury as well. In both cases, these premium screening experiences have created perhaps the most decisive transformation

of the space and experience of the cinema during the 2000s and 2010s, stemming directly from ongoing shifts in exhibitors' reimagination of cinemagoers in the post-megaplex era.

Chapter 3: Digital Expansion(s)

As exhibition giants looked beyond box office and concessions to find new growth areas in the wake of exhibition's debt crisis, they also began to look towards opportunities to rework the product onscreen to enhance its profitability. After a lengthy negotiation and logistical wrangling, giants and studios completed a much-anticipated project: the rollout of digital projection technology across the domestic market. With the affordances of digital technology in place, installations of 3D and IMAX screens provided exhibitors tangible benefits for switching to new projection systems and were adopted eagerly as giants aimed to maximize the profit potential of cinemagoing audiences. A proliferation of premium formats followed, created by global cinema technology companies as well as exhibitors themselves. While many offered new technological possibilities for immersive cinema experiences, others based their appeals on comfort, service, and luxury. Together, premium cinema enabled exhibition giants to further their aim to transition from the growth strategies of the megaplex years, based in increasing cinema attendance on a dramatic scale, and towards bringing in new profits regardless of flat attendance levels. They also became the most visible evidence of the consequence of this shift in approach: the recentering of affluent audiences as the primary target audience of contemporary cinema spaces.

Digital cinema conversion was a messy, years-long process in which exhibition giants played a crucial role, as the representatives of 40 percent of US screens and a key digital cinema integrator through their Digital Cinema Implementation Partners (DCIP) joint venture. While 3D has been widely credited with tipping off the conversion, my analysis explores a variety of technological and economic conditions which coalesced around exhibition giants to first delay and finally to trigger the rollout of digital screens in 2011.

Immersive formats were an important part of this process, especially as it became imminent, but due to the larger set of possibilities premium cinema represented to exhibitors rather than due to the promise of 3D alone.

While IMAX and 3D technologies developed alongside digital cinema during the conversion process, a wide range of screening options have proliferated at the box office since 2011. Many of these are branded immersive technologies associated with cinema technology brands such as D-BOX motion seating, 4DX multisensory effects, Dolby Cinema high dynamic range screens and immersive sound, and ScreenX panoramic screens. Others are specific to cinema chains and come with an often-confusing set of technological standards, based around enhancements to picture, sound quality, and audience comfort. Still others are based partially or entirely on additions that add nontechnological enhancements to the comfort or luxury of the cinemagoing experience. All are available for a premium price and targeted to those cinemagoers most willing and able to pay ticket premiums to enhance their theater experience.

I adopt the term *premium cinema* in my analysis to remain consistency with the way these developments have been discussed in the industry and in publicity materials. It is also an analytically useful term for two more reasons. First, it draws attention to the ticket premiums that have enabled these products to become a constitutive part of emerging business models. Second, it alludes to the appeals to higher quality and social prestige associated with these new cinematic products. This generative tension between higher prices and implications of increased social status is key to exhibitors' changing strategies since the crisis of the early 2000s. As exhibitors shifted from a primary strategy of increasing mass attendance to seeking growth outside increased admissions, their approach to the box office

turned increasingly towards targeting middle- and upper-middle-class cinemagoers who were able and inclined to pay ticket premiums for upscale experiences.

This chapter analyzes the transition to digital cinema and the standardization of premium cinema to investigate exhibition giants' instrumental role in this transition and the shift it suggests in their relationship with cinemagoers in the late 2000s and 2010s. I argue giants' standardization of premium cinema has made the upscaling of cinemas, the social segregation theater spaces, and the prioritization of affluent cinemagoers a critical element of their post-crisis growth strategies. I examine these ideas in three parts. In the first part, I outline the historical contours of the transition to digital cinema and exhibitors' participation in it, and the conditions it established for the growth of premium cinema. In the second, I turn to the rise of premium cinema technologies including 3D, IMAX, exhibitor-led premium large formats, and newer technologies such as motion seating, multisensory effects, and panoramic screens. Third and finally, I discuss the related development of comfort- and luxury-based premium cinema, analyze the shifts in box office business models that have supported the growth of premium cinema, and explore the class-based cultural consequences of this shift as it relates to premium cinema and exhibition giants' new relationships with audiences in the 2000s and 2010s.

Digital Transitions

Digital Prelude and Digital Cinema Initiatives

As discussed in the previous chapter, exhibition giants were highly involved and proactive in pursuing the transition to digital distribution and projection technology that occurred industrywide beginning in the late 2000s. US exhibition giants coordinated their circuits'

conversion to digital distribution and projection through their joint venture Digital Cinema Implementation Partners, which bargained on behalf of AMC, Regal, and Cinemark's circuits to secure funding for the rollout of digital equipment, to negotiate the terms of the conversion with major studios, to develop additional projects related to digital cinema infrastructure, and to broker the conversion process for affiliate circuits in Canada and Australia. chapter Two contextualizes the development of DCIP in the context of its origins within and similarities to National CineMedia (NCM), the US giants' cinema advertising arm. NCM provided a model for exhibitors' approach to collaboration, gave them the opportunity to experiment with low-cost digital projection and distribution technology, and set the template for the affiliate structure that would define NCM and event cinema company Fathom Events' approach to building their national distribution networks and DCIP's work for other exhibitors. Canadian giant Cineplex followed suit with many of these developments, contracting with DCIP during its own digital installations and establishing a cinema advertising arm of its own that relied on digital technology. But these developments also took place within a broader environment of technological change and industrial negotiation. While the previous chapter touches on the larger landscape of the digital cinema rollout, here I step back to survey the trajectory of the digital conversion of the domestic exhibition market and exhibition giants' role within it. I investigate how US exhibition giants convinced to adopt the project of digital conversion at this juncture and how their participation affected the pace and parameters of the transition. I also explore the role premium cinema technology played in the initial transition and identify the way the conditions of the digital rollout enabled the premium cinema to flourish over the following decade.

Digital technology penetrated the work processes of the film industry belatedly and unevenly relative to other entertainment industries. Special effects, sound design, and motion picture editing were the first frontiers for digital integration, but by 1999 shooting, distributing, and projecting movies remained areas of analog lag. The mid-1990s saw several one-off digital exhibition experiments, mainly involving fiber-optic or satellite delivery. Aware of the unrealized potential of digital cinema distribution and projection, technology manufacturers also began to develop early digital projection systems around this time.[1] In 1999, George Lucas led a major digital cinema experiment that involved the technology that would become the basis for new digital cinema standards. Lucas had been closely involved with key developments in digital cinema including special effects, postproduction technologies, sound certification, and animation over the last few decades through research funded by and conducted at his production company, Lucasfilm.[2] He intended to use the production and distribution of his *Star Wars* prequel trilogy to push the film industry towards end-to-end digital workflows. While digital distribution and exhibition infrastructures lagged Lucas's ambitions as the series was developed, he did use *The Phantom Menace*'s release to showcase digital screening technologies. Lucas chose a pair of rival digital projection technologies, Texas Instrument's Digital Light Processor (DLP) and JVC-Hughes's Liquid Crystal Light Valve (LCLV) system, that had been the standouts in digital tests at a National Association of Theatre Owners (NATO) board meeting and been chosen to feature in tests at the association's annual gathering, ShoWest, in early 1999.[3] Lucas arranged screenings of the film at four theaters in California and New Jersey in June of that year to demonstrate the efficacy of the technology and the proximity of its 1.3K digital images to that of a 35mm print.[4] Ultimately, the LCLV system faltered, and DLP

remained the primary digital cinema format until Sony produced a competitive system in 2005.[5] More tests, mostly using the DLP system, occurred for screenings of *An Ideal Husband*, *Tarzan*, *Toy Story 2*, and *Bicentennial Man* throughout 1999.[6]

Lucas kept experimenting with digital production technologies and advocating for digital distribution and exhibition, but technological infrastructure continued to fall short of his grandiose visions. In 2002, the second of Lucas's prequels, *Attack of the Clones*, screened on sixty-three digital screens across the United States, far short of his hoped-for two thousand.[7] Despite the visibility Lucas and other experimenters brought to advancements in projection technology, the standardization of digital technologies hinged on the willingness of major Hollywood studios, who distributed to most lucrative and desired films in most worldwide cinema markets, to embrace the call to transition. Several factors motivated major studios to make the shift. Producing and shipping 35mm prints cost studios approximately $600 million each year, and digital distribution networks would lower these costs dramatically.[8] As momentum grew around digital distribution and presentation, studios also needed to consider the costs that would accrue from maintaining both digital and analog systems, particularly if equipment manufacturers and exhibitors adopted multiple digital systems rather than rallying behind a single standard. Piracy was another major concern. With the emergence of digital consumer formats like VCD and DVD and improvements in Internet infrastructure that enabled faster download speeds, studios understood that high-quality pirated copies could be circulated around the world, sometimes before films had even landed in US theaters. These copies were more readily available due to new vulnerabilities emerging in digital postproduction, but films were also at risk at the theater level due to enterprising projectionists who might smuggle film prints out of the booth to

scan for a digital copy. Seeing how digital piracy had bludgeoned the music industry, studios made tightened security around digital workflows and the replacement of vulnerable prints with locked-down digital copies a priority.[9] Finally, distributors saw a potential existential threat in the digital revolution if they were unable to control its progression.[10] If steps weren't taken to discipline the terms of the digital shift, major distributors risked being cut out of the process. As a *Variety* newsletter put it: "If digital projectors were in wide use with an independent middleman providing easy transmission to theaters, film producers would in theory be able to release films theatrically without studios. The ability of Hollywood's six largest studios to theatrically release films globally is unique and represents a barrier to entry to anyone thinking of crashing into the ranks of the majors."[11] These studios—Disney, Fox, Paramount, Sony, Universal, and Warner Bros.—therefore had ample reason to not only embrace the transition to digital but ensure that its rollout was standardized and proceeded as quickly as such standards could be put in place. With their control over prized content, they also retained enormous power to determine what those standards would be.

In March 2002, the six major studios took a significant step towards this goal by forming the joint venture Digital Cinema Initiatives (DCI).[12] DCI was intended to establish and document open-architecture digital cinema standards to be issued as recommendations to the entire industry. The studios needed to tread carefully. Appetite for antitrust enforcement of the film industry had waned in the decades since the Paramount case but approaching the digital transition by decree or intervening too directly in the business of equipment manufacturers or exhibitors risked attracting the government's ire.[13] DCI was only empowered to set out recommendations and adhere to them in its founding studios'

own business operations. However, its recommendations held significant weight for exhibitors, who could not risk friction in their access to films from the majors. They were also closely watched by equipment manufacturers and suppliers, who understood that their technologies would have to conform to the studio-backed standards so exhibitors would be willing to risk the sizable investments the new technology would involve. The recommendations were also critical for manufacturers and exhibitors to secure funding from financial institutions, since they would assure that technology made and purchased would have ongoing value in the marketplace and allow the film and technology industries to repay their lenders and reward their investors.[14] For the transition to proceed smoothly, DCI needed to account for the perspectives and win the consent of these and other key stakeholders. To this end, it consulted with the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers (SMPTE), the Academy's Science and Technology Council, and the American Society of Cinematographers in the course of its work.[15] DCI's CEO, Chuck Goldwater, had led two large regional theater chains, Mann Theatres and Clearview Cinemas, in addition to his work for cinema technology company Iwerks Entertainment, and so was also able to liaise effectively with exhibitors through the National Association of Theatre Owners (NATO).[16]

DCI had three primary goals: standardizing digital cinema technologies, including their means of distribution, image quality, file format, compression schemes, and other technical features; ensuring consistent performance and reliability; and securing film files against piracy. It was also asked to recommend a means of funding the industry-wide conversion. By March 2003, DCI had determined several critical technical recommendations; it published a report in November that allowed manufacturers to begin

the work of redesigning projectors, servers, and other equipment.[17] But the complex issues of antipiracy protections and funding schemes delayed DCI's timeline by nearly eighteen months. Ultimately, DCI was able to negotiate piracy protections that accounted for stakeholder concerns while leaving the strong protections desired by studios largely intact. It also proposed a funding structure that formed the initial outlines of the virtual print fee. After three and a half years and $8.4 million in costs, DCI published its final report in July 2005.[18] DCI had now put blueprints of the transition in place; the responsibility for the transition's execution now rested on distributors, exhibitors, and technology companies.

The Slow Digital Leap

By the time the DCI standards were released, US exhibition giants were prepared to move forward with the digital cinema transition. They had emerged from the bankruptcies of the early 2000s, improved their balance sheets, and made major acquisitions that solidified their positions at the top of the stabilizing industry. Studios had demonstrated their commitment to the digital transition and had completed the work of exploring and recommending a set of shared standards. As DCI moved forward with its work, exhibitors and their private equity partners had also begun to experiment with digital cinema, developing cinema advertising and event programming through their digital advertising divisions. By the release of DCI's final report, AMC, Regal, and Cinemark had launched their joint NCM venture and were looking ahead to attracting new advertisers and building the size of their network through affiliate agreements. Improved digital infrastructure, in particular the elimination of parallel projection and distribution systems for digital ads and event cinema, would bolster these efforts. Digital systems, which could be operated with a touch pad and even operated

remotely from a managers' laptop would eliminate the need for specialized projectionist labor. The new systems also promised improvements in film delivery and image quality, clarity, and consistency. Finally, unlike some smaller theater chains and independent cinemas, exhibition giants had access to the capital required to make the transition. However, exhibitors understood that the studios stood to generate major long-term savings with the transition, while exhibitors would shoulder most of the costs related to equipment installation, maintenance, and life cycles. Digital projectors cost significantly more upfront than their 35mm counterparts, but came with significant cost increases for regular maintenance, parts replacement, and almost certainly would have shorter lives considering the quickened pace of technological upgrades. US giants and other domestic exhibitors also had concerns, voiced during the DCI process by NATO, that digital antipiracy protections would mean ceding additional control over where, when, and how content was played to the studios.[19]

Ultimately, DCI was able to address the latter concern through small adjustments to its recommendations that allowed for greater flexibility in moving film files between auditoriums while keeping the bulk of file security measures in place.[20] Funding was more complex. DCI had outlined the parameters of what became known as the virtual print fee (VPF), through which studios addressed the economic imbalance of initial installations by paying exhibitors back for digital cinema equipment over a period of approximately ten years. As discussed in chapter 2, these virtual print fees were managed through an integrator, who would purchase and lease equipment to exhibitors and collect VPFs from the distributor and payments from the exhibitors. The integrator transferred ownership of the loaned equipment to the integrator once it was paid off.[21] Outside these broad strokes, specific

terms of these agreements were decided between distributors, integrators, and exhibitors and generally remained confidential.

Under this model, DCIP was created to negotiate funding, VPF agreements with studios, and equipment procurement with technology manufacturers as well as serving as an integrator, receiving VPF payments and leasing equipment to its founding members and affiliates. After beginning its life as an initiative housed within NCM, it was officially spun off and began to work in earnest towards funding, technology, and VPF agreements for the 15,000 screens represented by AMC, Regal, and Cinemark in March 2007. DCIP represented nearly 40 percent of total US screens that year.[22] This scale made US giants the tipping point for the domestic conversion process, allowed these chains to confirm the standards set by DCI, and cemented remaining areas of negotiation with the studios. As discussed in chapter 2, the effort faced several roadblocks. DCIP's drawn out negotiations over VPF terms with studios meant that its timeline dragged approximately nine months past its initial projections.[23] A major issue in these negotiations was the struggle over favorable terms for VPF agreements that matched those struck with early integrators Christie/AIX and Technicolor in 2005.[24] Once studio agreements were confirmed, the economic crunch of the 2008 recession added another seventeen months to the timeline as DCIP and its financial backers JP Morgan and Blackstone struggled to raise another $500 million of their planned total of $1 billion. It was only in March 2010 that exhibitors secured sufficient funding to begin the conversion process and DCIP could begin equipment installations.[25] With the largest US exhibitors proceeding with installations, studios were now free to begin planning for fully digital cinema futures even as they worked towards signing holdout exhibitors on for conversion. Regal, AMC, and Cinemark completed their domestic digital installations by

the end of 2014.[26] In Canada, Cineplex conversion began in 2011 after Cineplex and then number-two Canadian chain Empire Theaters partnered to finance installations for their circuits and contracted with DCIP as an integrator.[27] The financing was completed soon after, and Cineplex completed its rollout in 2012.[28]

Premium Cinema and the Digital Gap

Adding to pressure on DCIP and the studios were burgeoning investments in and promised profits from premium screening options that had flourished in the interval between the initial announcement of the DCI standards and the finalization of rollout logistics. Just ahead of the publication of the DCI specifications, Robert Zemeckis, James Cameron, Robert Rodriguez, and George Lucas went to ShoWest 2005 to sell digital cinema, largely through the promotion of new 3D offerings. Each director discussed their work on upcoming 3D films and used the promise of lucrative blockbuster titles to build exhibitor support and enthusiasm for the business possibilities of the conversion. These films promised to be major box office draws and use technological novelty to boost profits.[29] The 3D titles would also enable exhibitors to charge ticket premiums that would bolster funds for the conversion to digital and allow them to pocket further profits. These early conversations about the profit potential of digital conversion complemented DCI's work of setting standards by making it not only safe, but appealing, for exhibitors to invest in new infrastructure.

As years passed between the release of DCI specifications and the rapid conversion of DCIP-managed screens, studios began to increase their investments in 3D films, creating a crunch as format potential ran ahead of digital infrastructure. Early films including Cameron's *Ghosts of the Abyss* (2003), Rodriguez's *Spy Kids 3D: Game Over* (2003), and

Zemeckis's *The Polar Express* (2004) had generated interest in the format, but not the kind of blockbuster profits that would spur large scale investment. Releases like *Monster House* (2006), *Meet the Robinsons* (2007), *Beowulf* (2007), and *Hannah Montana* (2008) continued to reap modest profits and indicate 3D's potential at those exhibitors who had taken the digital leap early. By mid-2008, when DCIP and other exhibitors were in active negotiations over VPFs with major studios, a robust slate of 3D films from multiple distributors was taking shape for 2009, including *Coraline* (Focus Features/Universal Pictures), *Up* (Walt Disney Studios), *Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs* (Twentieth-Century Fox), *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* (Columbia Pictures/Sony Motion Picture Group), *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (Warner Bros,) and the highly hyped 3D titles *Monsters vs. Aliens* (Paramount Pictures) from DreamWorks and *Avatar* (Twentieth-Century Fox) from James Cameron, whose last traditional commercial film had been the smash hit *Titanic* (1997). With so many films on the horizon and digital deals not yet done with DCIP, there was growing concern about crowding the calendar with 3D films when a small share of screens had made the conversion. Both distributors and exhibitors understood that delays in their negotiations could hurt each of them at the box office. Studios likely felt additional urgency to recoup the technological investments on films they had produced themselves. For their part, exhibitors had been promised that the ticket premiums from 3D films would, along with VPFs, help finance the digital transition and did not want to miss out on early waves of audience curiosity around the novelties of the format.

Trade press on the digital transition, special presentations at industry events, and scholarly analysis that followed named digital 3D the flash point of the discussion around conversion. In these accounts, 3D was the format that drew exhibitors in with the promise of

profitable spectacle and the studio product that was framed either as potentially revolutionary or, more often, at risk of overhype. But premium cinema more generally was less acknowledged by commentators, contemporaneously or retrospectively, though this broader category is what has delivered for exhibitors and studios on much of the promise attributed to 3D alone. Many such formats emerged more definitively after the completion of the conversion, but one other format grew up as a digital format alongside the conversion process: IMAX. IMAX had for several years been undergoing three connected transitions: from nature and science documentaries to Hollywood blockbusters; from installations at museums, science centers, theme parks, and malls to screens at multiplex theaters; and from an analog to a digital format. When the 3D wave was emerging, so too was a promising moment for IMAX's efforts in these interdependent domains.

In the early 2000s, IMAX began to gain traction in its shift from a spectacular documentary format for specialized sites to a more routine presence at the multiplex. By 2002, IMAX had made strides in its relationships with Hollywood and multiplex chains by developing technologies that enabled the retrofitting of multiplex auditoriums for IMAX and the conversion of a 35mm film print to the format's 15/70 film stock.[30] The company had also expanded its revenue-sharing model in 2006 so that the company covered the cost of technology installation for exhibitors and film conversions for studios in exchange for a share of box office.[31] As these shifts enabled the company to expand its multiplex network, the company rereleased several popular titles in the format, with the first day-and-date release of a Hollywood IMAX title with its 35mm counterpart, *The Matrix Revolutions*, coming in 2003. Warner Bros. was an especially enthusiastic partner, embracing IMAX releases of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (2004), *Batman Begins* (2004),

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (2005), and *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2005) alongside *Revolutions* in the years that followed. In the process, the company had also established partnerships several of directors who would become 3D boosters, including Robert Zemeckis and James Cameron, who had made *The Polar Express* (2004), *Ghosts of the Abyss* (2003), and *Aliens of the Deep* (2005) for IMAX 3D and released their subsequent 3D films in the format.[32] As the terms of the digital transition solidified, IMAX began to develop its own system for projecting the format digitally, beginning installations in 2008. Digital projection significantly lowered the costs of producing and distributing IMAX film prints by swapping $30,000 15/70 film reels for $150 hard drives that were much easier to transport and were played on the company's proprietary digital projector.[33] By the end of 2008, the same moment that 3D's slate was also set to expand, IMAX had nine new remastered films slated for release in the format and had installed 141 IMAX screens at commercial multiplexes across the United States and Canada.[34]

In short, alongside 3D, 2D IMAX was emerging as a promising specialty experience for which exhibitors could expect a regular flow of content, manage installation costs, and, even with revenue-sharing, bring in a larger proportion of box office profits due to their ability to charge substantial ticket premiums. With the company's conversion to digital projection and the resulting drop in the prices of film prints and systems, it also signaled the potential for other premium cinema options beyond 3D that would draw in more moviegoers and boost exhibitor shares of box office. Upcoming IMAX releases may have also contributed to pressure on studios to strike deals so the digital conversion could proceed for the largest exhibitors. But for their part, exhibitors likely understood the allure of tapping

access to premium cinema options beyond 3D in the near and medium term and the potential of these other premium formats to make the digital conversion profitable.

Several accounts have credited the final ignition of digital cinema conversion to James Cameron's *Avatar*, released December 2009. Cameron and Twentieth Century Fox heavily promoted the film's technologically innovative use of digital 3D which, alongside traditional film marketing and Cameron's pre-existing reputation, led to major profits in domestic and international markets and much speculation in the lead-up to the release about the film's prospects as a box office smash. It was also touted as a key moment that prompted studios to invest 3D and IMAX formats, providing further incentives for exhibitors to convert.[35] Certainly, the profit potential and successes of *Avatar* contributed to major exhibitors' enthusiasm about the digital transition and premium formats and became a key marker of the industry's progress in the rollout. A closer look at the textures of the industry's development, however, points to other key factors that enabled *Avatar* to become a major hit. Looking to 2010, the year following the film's release, reveals more complex forces. 2009 and 2010 were the first years that all the major studios had committed to releasing multiple 3D films, indicating viability for the format beyond a few isolated titles. 2010, as I have demonstrated, was also a key moment for digital cinema infrastructure. The first fully DCI-compliant projector was released in 2010, and DCIP, the largest integrator in the United States, was finally able to secure funding this year as well. More generally, commitments, conditions, and preparations for the transition had been painstakingly negotiated between studios, exhibitors, technology providers, and financial institutions for years and had finally begun to be finalized. This highly uneven process came to fruition at

the right moment for *Avatar* to benefit and become a recognizable symbol of the results of these more obscure processes.

Once VPF agreements were struck with DCIP and other exhibitors, the very structure of these agreements enabled exhibitors to invest in premium cinema. While exhibitors would still need to pay part of the cost of conversion, ten years of significant studio contributions and a per-booking payment structure meant that exhibitors did not need to make large, upfront investments in digital equipment in the immediate wake of the conversion. Some of these savings could flow immediately into investments in 3D technology and IMAX, which were not covered by VPF agreements. 3D, for instance, was provided through add-on technology to digital projectors that could not be included in the total cost of systems.[36] When new possibilities for premium screening options emerged, VPFs' ten-year terms meant that large exhibitors, especially exhibition giants, would be well-positioned to take advantage. Studios also standardized conversion standards through DCI and used VPF to create consistency in funding and other agreements that enabled large domestic and international chains to convert over a short period, creating ideal conditions for the emergence of premium formats. When the global conversion to digital cinema arrived, digital cinema equipment manufacturers were able to reinvest the huge wave of profits from huge numbers of new installations into research and development activities that led to premium technologies including image quality, large formats, premium sound, laser projection, and other innovations that would emerge in branded premium cinema formats. In this way, the final contours of the conversion set the stage for the continued expansion of premium cinema, which in turn reinforced the financial benefits for large exhibitors to complete their rollouts promptly.

Exhibition Giants Buy into Premium Cinema

3D and IMAX

Premium cinema has evolved significantly in the decade since digital installations were completed, and major exhibitors' investments in premium cinema technology occurred in three phases, each linked to a different set of premium cinema formats. The first, underway as studios, exhibitors, and banks negotiated the terms of the transition, was defined by the installation and promotion of 3D and IMAX screens. While IMAX had developed an analog 3D screening process that was rolled out to theaters that had installed its film projectors, most 3D screens installed were add-ons to new digital projection systems. By far the largest provider of this product was RealD, a US company specializing in digital stereoscopic 3D. Though it was installed on fewer screens relative to 3D, exhibition giants also became major clients of IMAX's wide format 2D technology, which also played a critical role in setting standards and expectations for future formats and broadening industry conceptions of premium cinema beyond 3D.

Exhibition giants tested the waters of 3D projection before digital deals were done, but invested heavily once the rollout was officially underway, installing 3D alongside their digital systems. Initial contracts with RealD began around 2008.[37] However, these early deals expanded rapidly once DCIP had reached VPF agreements with the studios and secured equipment financing. By mid-2011, a major round of installations had brought all three US giants above 1,000 3D screens apiece and all three signed further agreements with RealD that year bringing them to 2,500 to 3,000 screens each, about 40 to 50 percent of their respective circuits.[38] At this time, studios had significantly ramped up the number of films they released in 3D, with more movies appearing on the slate for the coming years.[39]

Announcing their contract expansions with RealD, Regal and Cinemark both stated that increasing their 3D capacities would allow their theaters to screen several 3D films simultaneously and benefit more fully from the format's potential at the box office.[40] Canadian giant Cineplex followed a similar trajectory to its US counterparts. The company signed an early deal to bring 175 RealD screens to its circuit, but after the chain secured funding for its digital rollout in mid-2011, digital projector installations over the next year and a half coincided with a sharp increase in the chain's 3D system installations.[41] Like its US counterparts, Cineplex's investment in 3D stabilized at around 45 percent of its screens. For all four chains, these proportions have remained relatively steady since they reached these thresholds between 2011 and 2013, for most the same period in which they completed installing digital projection across their circuits (see tables 13, 14, 15, and 16). This degree of investment in 3D reflects the way the format was initially marked to exhibitors as a new standard, suitable for a variety of films, easy to adapt to any cinema space, and worth rolling out on as many screens as possible.

IMAX took an alternative route to the relatively early adoption of its premium cinema format, adapting its initial scarcity to emphasize the format's exceptional quality. While growing momentum around digital cinema invigorated IMAX's expansion into mainstream cinema, the company had been developing its multiplex strategy before digital technology was viable. In 1997, the company launched the IMAX SR system, which adapted its original 15/70 film projector into a dual-projection system designed for custom-built auditoriums the size of those in a multiplex theater.[42] The new system brought costs of building an IMAX auditorium down from $5 million to $1.2 million and made it possible to

Table 13: AMC Theatres 3D Movie Screens, US and International Theaters, 2010 to 2019

Year	Theatres	Screens	3D Screens[a]	3D Screen Circuit Share
2010	297	4,513	475	11%
2011	360	5,128	1,603	31%
2012	346	5,034	2,208	44%
2013[b]	345	4,976	2,232	45%
2014	348	4,960	2,263	46%
2015	387	5,426	2,643	49%
2016	906	10,558	5,070	48%
2017	1,014	11,169	5,471	49%
2018	1,006	11,091	5,411	49%
2019	1,004	11,041	4,540	41%

[a] Includes IMAX and in-house PLF brands.
[b] 2013 was the first year that AMC issued annual reports in which the reporting period ended December 31. Before this, rows refer to figures as of the end of AMC's fiscal year on March 30.

Source: Data from AMC annual reports (2011, 13; 2010, 5, 6; 2011, 4, 5; 2012, 4, 5; 2014, 6, 8–9; 2015, 6, 8–9; 2016, 5, 8, 12; 2017, 7, 9–10; 2018, 8, 10; 2019, 7, 8–9; 2020, 6, 8–9).

Table 14: Regal Entertainment Group 3D Movie Screens, 2007 to 2012

Year	Theatres	Screens	3D Screens	3D Screen Circuit Share
2007	527	6,388	135	2%
2008	552	6,801	168	2%
2009	548	6,768	427	6%
2010	539	6,698	1,710	26%
2011	527	6,614	2,784	42%
2012	540	6,880	2,898	42%

Source: Data from Regal annual reports (2008, 8–9; 2009, 7, 9; 2010, 5, 9; 2011, 5, 9; 2012, 5, 10; 2013, 5, 9).

Table 15: Cinemark Theatres 3D Movie Screens, US Theaters, 2010 to 2016

Year	Theatres	Screens	3D Screens	3D Screen Circuit Share
2010	293	3,832	1,136	30%
2011	297	3,878	1,861	48%
2012	298	3,916	1,026	51%
2013	334	4,457	1,047	52%
2014	335	4,499	1,088	54%
2015	337	4,518	1,108	55%
2016	339	4,559	1,109	55%

Source: Data from Cinemark annual reports (2011, 6–7; 2012, 5–7; 2013, 6, 8; 2014, 6, 8; 2015, 6, 8; 2016, 6, 8; 2017, 6, 8).

Table 16: Cineplex Entertainment 3D Movie Screens, 2008 to 2019

Year	Theatres	Screens	3D Screens[a]	3D Screen Circuit Share
2008	130	1,331	49	4%
2009	129	1,329	190	14%
2010	131	1,362	366	27%
2011	130	1,352	396	29%
2012	134	1,449	545	38%
2013	161	1,630	723	44%
2014	161	1,639	767	47%
2015	162	1,655	783	47%
2016	165	1,683	801	48%
2017	163	1,676	811	48%
2018	164	1,686	821	49%
2019	165	1,693	826	49%

Source: Data from Cineplex Galaxy Income Fund annual reports (2009, 7, 10; 2010, 10) and Cineplex Inc. annual reports (2011, 11; 2012, 2–3; 2013, 15, 22–23; 2014, 12; 2015, 9; 2016, 16; 2017, 2; 2018, 10; 2019, 10; 2020, 3).

retrofit existing screens for the format. Deals with twelve major exhibitors in Canada, Europe, and the United States followed.[43] IMAX refined its multiplex equipment again with the launch of the MPX system in 2004, which was designed as a placeholder for the digital systems then under development and meant to make the retrofitting process easier. For MPX, only a single projector, fitting the footprint of a standard multiplex projector, was required.[44] Uptake by exhibition giants, however, was stalled in anticipation of impending digital installations as the 2000s continued.

By 2007, IMAX had made major strides in developing digital systems capable of projecting in its branded format and had moved the launch date for these systems up approximately six months, to mid-2008.[45] AMC was the first exhibitor to strike a major deal for the new systems in December 2007, committing to installing one hundred new IMAX screens in thirty-three cities, in what was then the largest deal in the company's history. Once the installations were complete, they would triple the number of IMAX theaters in domestic multiplexes.[46] The contract solidified IMAX's place as an outlet for Hollywood blockbusters, a routine offering at the multiplex, and a major participant in premium cinema's digital future. In March, Regal followed AMC's lead, agreeing to install thirty-one systems in twenty major markets, citing the recent cost reductions related to shipping film prints as a reason for the decision.[47] In the next few years, as both companies solidified their digital installations and premium cinema strategies, they signed new agreements to boost their IMAX installations.[48] Cineplex was also a strong partner for the brand in Canada, where it too increased its IMAX footprint in the wake of IMAX's development of digital technology and the initial growth of premium cinema. While contracts on the scale of those in 2007 and 2008 were rare in the years to come, AMC, Regal, and Cineplex maintained a

significant number of IMAX screens and periodically signed up for new installations. Today, AMC still controls the largest domestic network of IMAX screens (see tables 17, 18, 19, and 20).

IMAX screens have remained less prevalent than 3D due to the company's distinctive approach to premium cinema. In line with the company's history as a spectacular technology brand, IMAX has self-consciously positioned itself as an upmarket cinema brand since its entry into the multiplex. When its distribution outlets were museums, theme parks, malls, and other special sites, the expense of proprietary projection systems, film prints, and production technology prevented widespread adoption of the format. As a result, each film was planned with long-term showings in mind, since IMAX titles played for years on a much smaller network of screens. Even as digital technology enabled the company to circulate more titles over a larger network, the company continued to constrain its network size and titles in release, emphasizing exclusivity and processes of quality control.

As IMAX courted multiplex exhibitors, it established exclusivity zones around its theaters for an initial period after installation, incentivizing exhibitors to be the first to sign contracts in particular markets and accelerated uptake of the format. These zones also maintained high per-screen averages for IMAX releases that the company could use to market its format to future exhibition and distribution partners.[49] Since IMAX served a smaller network of screens than other formats like 3D, each film needed to play longer without competition from other IMAX releases to generate meaningful revenues for the company and its partners. From the outset, then, IMAX was selective with the titles it distributed, focusing on major films that could play significant runs at the multiplex and marketing its quality control in conversion and projection. To integrate this approach into

Table 17: AMC Theatres Premium Offerings (excluding 3D), US and International Theaters, 2010 to 2019

Year	Theatres	Screens	IMAX Screens[b]	Dolby Cinema Screens	Other PLF Screens[c]	Dine-in Theatre Screens	Premium Seating Screens
2010	297	4,513	81	-	4	20	-
2011	360	5,128	107	-	14	61	-
2012	346	5,034	128	-	17	81	-
2013[d]	345	4,976	145	-	17	182	396
2014	348	4,960	150	-	20	265	598
2015	387	5,426	152	12	13	312	119
2016	906	10,558	196	48	82	342	1,984
2017	1,014	11,169	209	89	99	430	2,631
2018	1,006	11,091	216	127	112	437	3,279
2019	1,004	11,041	223	153	120	733	3,707

[a] Includes IMAX and in-house PLF brands.
[b] 3D-enabled.
[c] Includes in-house PLF brands ETX, Prime at AMC, BigD (US), and ISENSE (international). 3D-enabled.
[d] 2013 was the first year that AMC issued annual reports in which the reporting period ended December 31. Before this, rows refer to figures as of the end of AMC's fiscal year on March 30.

Source: Data from AMC annual reports (2011, 13; 2010, 5, 6; 2011, 4, 5; 2012, 4, 5; 2014, 6, 8–9; 2015, 6, 8–9; 2016, 5, 8, 12; 2017, 7, 9–10; 2018, 8, 10; 2019, 7, 8–9; 2020, 6, 8–9).

Table 18: Regal Entertainment Group Premium Offerings (excluding 3D), 2007 to 2016

Year	Theatres	Screens	IMAX Screens	RPX Screens	Premium Seating Screens
2007	527	6,388	18	-	-
2008	552	6,801	-	-	-
2009	548	6,768	42	-	-
2010	539	6,698	50	7	-
2011	527	6,614	66	17	-
2012	540	6,880	74	37	-
2013	580	7,394	82	62	-
2014	574	7,367	86	86	336
2015	572	7,361	89	91	819
2016	561	7,267	89	93	1,369

Source: Data from Regal annual reports (2008, 8–9; 2009, 9; 2010, 5; 2011, 5, 9, 31; 2012, 5, 10; 2013, 5, 9; 2014, 5, 9; 2015, 5–6, 9; 2016, 5–6, 9; 2017, 5–6, 9).

Table 19: Cinemark Theatres Premium Offerings (excluding 3D), United States and International Theatres, 2009 to 2019

Year	Theatres	Screens	IMAX Screens	NextGen Screens[a]	XD Screens	Motion Seating Screens	Premium Seating Screens
2009	424	4896	-	-	16	-	-
2010	430	4,945	6	-	47	-	-
2011	456	5,152	8	55	81	-	-
2012	465	5,240	8	109	109	-	-
2013	482	5,563	14	193	150	-	-
2014	495	5,676	14	-	179	-	-
2015	513	5,796	14	-	210	96	397
2016	526	5,903	15	-	225	152	1,028
2017	533	5,959	15	-	242	208	2,037
2018	546	6,048	16	-	256	229	2,565
2019	554	6,132	16	-	275	235	2,765

[a] NextGen was discontinued around 2015.

Source: Data from Cinemark annual reports (2010, 2, 7–8; 2011, 2–3, 7; 2012, 2–3, 7–8; 2013, 2–3, 6, 8–9; 2014, 2–3, 6, 8–9; 2015, 2–3, 6, 8–9; 2016, 2–3, 6, 8–9; 2017, 2–3, 6, 8–9; 2018, 2–3, 6, 8–9; 2019, 5–6, 7–8; 2020, 5, 7–8).

Table 20: Cineplex Entertainment Premium Offerings (excluding 3D), 2008 to 2018

Year	Theatres	Screens	UltraAVX Screens	IMAX Screens	VIP Screens	D-BOX Locations
2008	130	1,331	0	9	0	0
2009	129	1,329	0	9	3	1
2010	131	1,362	11	9	3	3
2011	130	1,352	23	14	15	11
2012	134	1,449	39	17	25	20
2013	161	1,630	55	20	28	21
2014	161	1,639	66	20	43	25
2015	162	1,655	80	23	56	43
2016	165	1,683	85	23	63	77
2017	163	1,676	87	24	63	82
2018	164	1,686	90	25	75	89
2019	165	1,693	94	25	84	97

Source: Data from Cineplex Galaxy Income Fund annual reports (2009, 7, 10; 2010, 10) and Cineplex Inc. annual reports (2011, 11; 2012, 2–3; 2013, 15, 22–23; 2014, 12; 2015, 9; 2016, 16; 2017, 2; 2018, 10; 2019, 10; 2020, 3).

IMAX's brand identity, the company courted and publicized relationships with directors like Christopher Nolan in the production and conversion phase, helping establish them as a format that showed movies as they ostensibly should be seen. Even as IMAX's prominence as a global format and the uptake of its technology grown, the number of Hollywood films it releases each year have plateaued, in part since unlike 3D, multiplexes have at most a handful of IMAX-capable screens.[50] Such caps emerge from the fact that simultaneous releases would cannibalize the proceeds of other IMAX films, deflating the format's value to its partners in distribution and exhibition. Where 3D positioned itself as a next-generation cinema technology, meant for wide-scale adoption by distributors and exhibitors, IMAX's approach—a premium cinema approach—emphasized scarcity, quality, and exceptionalism to cement its status as a global cinema brand.

The first phase of premium cinema, then, was marked by a process of experimentation, testing, and acceptance, driven by 3D and IMAX technologies. Exhibitors treated 3D as a new standard with an uncertain ceiling and installed systems widely to benefit from its potential as quickly as possible. IMAX, by contrast, developed itself from the outset as a self-consciously premium format by developing the advantages of the scarcity of its product. This approach, part of the legacy of the company's analog past, responded to the new affordances of digital by creating an exclusive product that aimed to emphasize quality over ubiquity. In doing so, the company set a template that subsequent premium cinema formats would emulate for years to come. Exhibition giants also had the capital to experiment with installations ahead of digital deals, positioning them well to make firmer decisions once their digital installation strategies solidified. Once digital projection financing was secured and mass installations were underway, the structure of VPF deals and

revenue-sharing agreements with technology providers enabled these exhibitors to quickly expand their networks of premium cinema as they desired.

In-House Premium Large Formats

As exhibitors solidified their VPF contracts with studios and began the process of securing financing for digital installations, they also began the second phase of premium cinema's development: the creation of their own large format premium cinema brands. These screening experiences generally included larger screens, improved sound, and, in some cases, premium seating and other convenience options and like their predecessors, 3D and IMAX, charged ticket premiums of a few dollars per ticket. As these new experiences proliferated, they became known within the industry as part of a larger category, "premium large formats" (PLFs), which also included third-party formats like IMAX. In-house PLFs gave exhibitors more control and flexibility with premium cinema, since these formats did not rely on special processing of the digital film print and could play virtually any release. They also allowed exhibitors to pocket more ticket premiums since they involved traditional financing for enhanced cinema equipment rather than involving revenue-sharing with a technology provider like IMAX. In other words, in-house PLFs allowed exhibitors to charge ticket premiums for more films and keep a larger proportion of surcharge revenues. Emerging soon after the emergence of digital and before DCIP had secured its rollout financing, these formats added to the repertoire of premium cinema options that made digitizing exhibition infrastructure advantageous for large theater chains and reinforced the business case for an accelerated digital rollout as it finally took off.

In the US, Cinemark was the first chain to announce their offering, Extreme Digital (XD), in mid-2009. XD auditoria featured larger-than-average screens, more comfortable seating, a thirty-speaker custom JBL digital sound system, and, of course, 3D-enabled digital projection.[51] The company moved quickly with installations, building or retrofitting sixteen XD screens by the end of the year.[52] Cinemark's foray into premium screening formats did not go unnoticed by existing premium theater brands. IMAX and Cinemark soon ended up in a legal scuffle over the XD format. Cinemark sought a pre-emptive court order in November 2009, possibly due to closed-door conflicts between the companies, that would state that XD did not infringe on IMAX patents. Within two weeks, IMAX launched a countersuit, seeking compensation and punitive damages and alleging that Cinemark had breached its contract with IMAX by "misappropriating" trade secrets, using their business relationship to copy elements of the company's theater design and compete directly with the technology brand.[53] The lawsuit didn't deter Cinemark from rolling out XD; by the end of 2010, the company had more than doubled its XD network, now numbering forty-seven screens, with plans to install another thirty-five to forty screens in 2011 (see table 15).[54] Ultimately the suit was resolved in 2011, with Cinemark agreeing to upgrade it six analog IMAX screens to digital projection and install two more systems in its circuit.[55]

Cinemark's legal dust-up also failed to deter competing chains from developing their own premium large formats. AMC, Regal, and Cineplex all launched their own in-house formats in 2010, well before Cinemark's litigation was resolved. AMC's, announced in March, was called Enhanced Theatre Experience (ETX); it included a "a wall-to-wall, floor-to-ceiling" screen that was "20 percent larger" than average, as well as an upgraded, twelve-channel audio sound system, high-resolution digital projection, and 3D capability.[56] Regal

followed suit in April with Regal Premium Experience (RPX). This format also featured larger screens (60 feet at the company's first location), digital projection, and 3D technology, as well as a "state of the art" sound system—initially, this meant nine-channel audio and eight 21-inch subwoofers—and plush seating with headrests.[57] Finally, in May, Cineplex announced its Ultra Audiovisual Visual Experience (UltraAVX) format. Again, it featured larger screens, digital projection with 3D capability, enhanced sound systems (in this case, furnished by Dolby), as well as "extra-wide high-back rocker seats" and reserved seating.[58] Unlike Cinemark, however, other chains proceeded more slowly in building the new screens, instead balancing their in-house premium cinema options with branded offerings from companies like RealD, IMAX and others. Cinemark invested far more heavily in its own format from the early days, largely declining to install premium formats beyond 3D and XD until 2015 (see tables 15 and 19). Other large exhibitors, including Marcus Theatres and Carmike Cinemas, also launched their own in-house PLFs around this time.

As exhibitor-led PLFs solidified, exhibition giants continued to tinker with their formats. Specific features of formats shifted with advancements in image projection and audio, leading to uncertainty around the core characteristics of each format and criticism, especially from third-party premium formats, about consistency and quality control across circuits. In 2013, AMC developed AMC Prime, a "second-generation" format that it did demarcate from its earlier PLF, ETX. AMC Prime also included picture and sound that had been "upgraded" from ETX and paired with power recliner seating "complete with transducers that allow guests to 'feel' the action." Beginning with three Prime screens in 2013, ETX and Prime coexisted for several years. Then, in 2015, AMC struck a deal with

Dolby Cinema to include its proprietary laser-projected image and sound formats as the official technology of AMC's PLFs and renovate its existing PLF screens, including ETX, to the parameters of the new Dolby Cinema at AMC Prime.[59] For other exhibitors, technology upgrades were generally made silently and unevenly, so that newer and older PLF screens might feature different projection and sound systems but still be marketed under the exhibitor's branding.

Despite these criticisms, exhibitor-led PLFs, like 3D and IMAX, have persisted into the present, coexisting with other premium formats. Since these formats do not require the ongoing participation of technology partners or film distributors, they offer exhibitors greater flexibility and control while complementing other premium formats to appeal to a range of cinemagoer tastes. Simultaneously, they allow cinema owners to bolster their brand identities as the purveyors of exceptional experiences and differentiate themselves, if marginally, from their competitors, a dynamic I will discuss further below.

Other Premium Technologies

In the third phase of premium cinema expansion, exhibitors moved beyond the premium formats that had been part of the digital transition and their self-created PLFs to embrace second-generation premium cinema formats that further expanded on the options for immersive experiences, including motion seating, multisensory effects, and variants on the large format screens, immersive sound, and high-quality screen images that characterized successful formats like IMAX. This phase of premium installations was driven by the multiplication of new premium cinema providers in the global exhibition market after the rollout of digital projection. Many of these providers adopted the IMAX approach, aiming to

create specialized experiences that could develop a strong brand and thrive with a more limited number of screens and films in circulation. Exhibition giants were interested in investing in these new formats not only to multiply the attractions that might entice cinemagoers to theaters, but to develop differentiation from other giants through dedicated partnerships particular formats over others.

One of the earliest expansions of the premium concept came not from the screen, but from the theater environment: motion seating that moved theater chairs in line with the soundtrack and onscreen action. Today, the main technology company in this niche is D-BOX, which initially transitioned from manufacturing home audio equipment to creating a motion simulator for home theaters in 1999.[60] After realizing the economic limitations of selling a high-priced theater chair for the home market, D-BOX aimed to transition to cinemas, where customers could use its technology more cheaply and in greater volume.[61] In the cinema setting, D-BOX chairs are installed in dedicated rows, and the chair moves for a third to half of a film's runtime, controlled by an encoding in a film's digital file developed in partnership with its distributor.[62] According to D-BOX, the technology aims to create subtle movements that immerse cinemagoers in the world of the film, rather than evoke the "jolts" of a theme park ride.[63] After initial tests, Cineplex became the first major circuit to install D-BOX screens in 2009, and Cinemark became one of its early US and global partners, also installing the technology across its Latin American circuit.[64] Of the exhibition giants, Cineplex and Cinemark remain the sole adopters of motion seating, with 97 and 235 screens, respectively (see tables 19 and 20).

Further expansions to the cinema environment followed, next with the creation of multisensory effects, synced with the film screen and produced by technologically equipped

auditoria. Korean company CJ 4DPLEX, a subsidiary of Korean exhibition giant CJ CGV, initially launched its 4DX format in its home country in 2009 before expanding globally. With vibrating chairs and other equipment, 4DX screenings simulate a variety of environmental effects, including wind, splashing water, fog, bubbles, and snow in synch with the images onscreen.[65] The format was initially popular in Asia and other global markets, and made its debut at Regal's LA Live theater in 2014.[66] Regal became CJ 4DPLEX's major partner in the United States, first expanding to New York and then in locations across the US, signing major agreements in 2016 and 2018.[67] By 2018, Regal had eight 4DX screens across its circuit.[68] In Canada, Cineplex installed 4DX at a Toronto location in 2016, and expanded its agreement with CJ 4DPLEX in 2018 with plans to establish at least thirteen 4DX locations across the country.[69]

Finally, the success of IMAX spurred alternative approaches to large format, enhanced picture screens. Dolby, having rolled out its immersive sound system Dolby Atmos to 700 screens in worldwide, developed a bundled format, Dolby Cinema, that integrated Atmos and high dynamic range Dolby Vision picture, supported by dual laser projectors. Like IMAX, the image and sound quality required Dolby to partner with studios to produce films in the format. In 2012, the company previewed the format for Hollywood directors in LA and opened the first Dolby Cinema location in the Netherlands.[70] In 2015, AMC became the format's major partner in the US by converting its existing proprietary PLF, AMC Prime, to Dolby Cinema; as of 2019, it had 153 Dolby Cinema screens in its circuit.[71] CJ 4DPLEX also turned to a large-format experience, debuting a three-panel panoramic screen format called Screen X in 2012, partnering with studios to create additional imagery for the format's side screens.[72] In concert with its existing CJ CGV

partnership for 4DX, Cineworld signed an agreement to bring one hundred ScreenX systems to its US Regal screens and other brands across its global circuit in 2018; by the next year, Regal had ScreenX at twelve of its locations.[73] Cineplex also embraced the new format, installing its first Toronto screen in late 2018 and making plans to install an additional twenty screens nationwide in 2019.[74]

By aligning themselves with specific formats, exhibition giants have used third-phase premium cinema options to differentiate themselves from one another in an exhibition industry where their chains have comparable features and amenities. Most multiplexes in major circuits have high-quality sound and screen, stadium seating, a wide range of concession options and similar design qualities that make them seem interchangeable. When 3D and IMAX were the only premium formats available, each exhibition giant saw the value of adopting them and could fear being eclipsed by competing giants if they held back from signing on, at least initially. As formats have multiplied, however, it is less likely that exhibitors will be willing or able to install each one. Moreover, the specific mix of premium cinema available at one cinema chain over another can be one of few salient differentiating factors when choosing between the major multiplex chains. Each exhibition giant, then, has crafted its own mix: Cinemark favors its XD PLF and motion seating; Regal has gotten behind IMAX and begun to align with CJ 4DPLEX's 4DX and ScreenX formats in addition to its PLF; and AMC has invested heavily in IMAX and integrated Dolby Cinema with its primary PLF (see tables 17, 18, and 19). As a monopoly exhibitor facing less pressure to differentiate itself from competing chains, Cineplex has invested in a wider range of options including IMAX, D-BOX, ScreenX, and 4DX, as well as maintaining its own PLF (see table 20). In a consolidated cinema market where corporate chains are quick to borrow one

another's features and draw on the same exhibition standards, premium cinema maintains some distinction between options for consumers that belies the degree to which major cinema chains have become homogenous.

Technological Strategies, Scale, and Power

Despite the minor differences in their strategies, exhibition giants have demonstrated a shared investment in premium cinema and contributed to its popularization across the domestic market. From the early stages of the transition to digital cinema, premium technologies have been a lure for exhibitors that have promised new ways to attract audiences and get the maximum profits from those who are already attending theaters. Such developments favor exhibition giants, who have already invested in up-to-date cinema facilities and have the capital to invest in premium cinema technologies alongside the costs represented by the digital cinema transition. Further, the presence of premium formats also helps distinguish exhibition giants and, to some extent, remaining large exhibitors, from their independent counterparts. The consolidation of cinema chains in the United States and Canada have also facilitated the growth of this sector since exhibition giants have the power to set premium standards by signing contracts for potentially hundreds of screens across national chains. As this group of branded formats has developed, exhibitors have adopted varying strategies for buying into new technological enhancements: quick standardization of promising formats, replication of immersive qualities in exhibitor-controlled formats, and selective adoption of self-consciously premium technologies. No one technology has been dominant; instead, exhibitors' investment in a variety of premium formats has enabled them

to maintain some differentiation from one another while promoting the premium cinema category as a whole.

From Immersive Technology to Premium Cinema

Premium Cinema and Upscale Experiences

Industry-wide shifts to digital cinema infrastructure and the development, affordability, and relative operational ease of new technologically driven screening experiences have undoubtedly been major drivers of the growth of premium cinema over the last fifteen years. But technological enhancement and the aesthetic qualities it brings to the film experience—most often framed as variations on immersion—are articulated alongside other appeals within this broader category. *Premium cinema* is an industry term that has emerged in the last several years to describe an overarching category of exhibition products that includes technological enhancements; luxury-, comfort-, or service-based options; and screening experiences that blend elements from these two categories. Most of the exhibition experiences marketed as premium cinema include ticket surcharges. Turning initially to the second and third of these experiences, I explore how these other enhancements emerged following the first waves of technological investment, how they fit alongside technology within broader industrial shifts in the domestic exhibition business and the relation between exhibitors and cinemagoers, and, finally, how this model and the exhibition products that support it are altering the cultural space of the cinema.

Cinema technology was a major facet of the 2010s shift towards premium cinema across the US exhibition industry and, especially, for exhibition giants' large corporate cinema chains. Despite the prominence of technology, appeals to enhanced service, comfort,

or luxury also became an important facet of several premium cinema options that appeared in this period. Key in this area were exhibitor-led PLF brands. Cinemark XD included "plush seating" and a "maximum comfort entertainment environment" in addition to larger screens and enhanced sound. Regal's RPX format also touted "elegant and luxurious seats with high-back headrests" alongside technological enhancements.[75] Cineplex's UltraAVX format added both improved seating (in this case, "extra-wide, high-back rocker seats") and reserved seating with ticket purchases, an uncommon feature in most cinemas when it was developed in 2010.[76] AMC self-consciously developed its Prime format in 2013 as a "second-generation" premium large format that added power recliners "complete with transducers that allow guests to 'feel' the action." These were designed to enable the format to charge higher ticket premiums than its first PLF, ETX.[77] Ultimately, Prime replaced ETX after AMC partnered with Dolby to add its Dolby Cinema and Atmos technologies, making premium seating and a more comfortable and luxurious environment a central feature of the company's PLF strategy.[78] These comfort seating and service-based upgrades complemented technological features as a further means of differentiation from brand-name third-party technologies. They also offered customers who preferred more traditional 2D experiences additional value for their ticket premiums that were perhaps more immediately tangible for some than screen size and audio quality.

Some exhibitors went further, developing service-, comfort- and luxury-forward premium experiences. In 2009, Cineplex revived its dormant "VIP" cinema concept. Located in a newly constructed theater in London, Ontario, three new VIP auditoriums offered cinema guests nineteen years and older "their own box office and concession stand, a private licensed lounge with appetizer menu offerings and seating area, as well as

oversized, premium, and reserved seating."[79] In 1998, Cineplex had opened a similar location at downtown Toronto's Varsity Theatre. The *Globe and Mail* described the environment at the Varsity launch:

> Customers of the first VIP screening rooms in North American movie theaters won't have to line up with the hoi polloi: they will be met at a courtesy desk by a concierge who will take their coat, lead them to their reserved seat and take and deliver their snack order. All this for just $12—$3 more than the general admission price. They will sit in high-backed plush chairs with two arm rests (no more elbow-shoving with neighbors) and can place their drinks and nibbles on the oval, faux-marble tables that separate pairs of seats. If they prefer, they can have the concierge bring them a decaf cappuccino and biscotti from the Bloor Street Diner below. The four VIP theaters, which hold twenty-four to thirty-six people, have their own private washroom and a lounge with a phone. Hollywood stars Robert Duvall and Billy Bob Thornton were on hand for the launch yesterday. Mr. Duvall praised Toronto as a "real film-going town."[80]

Describing the theater in 1998, Cineplex's executive vice-president of marketing likened it to movie mogul's private screening room, or, tellingly, a first-class plane ticket. Both comparisons brought the implications of the luxurious environment closer to the surface: they were designed for a higher class of cinemagoer, though likely one that would fly economy and need to settle for a high-end home theater system. He also lauded the theater concept for offering a financially competitive alternative to other corporate entertaining activities, such as renting a private box at a sports arena.[81] In the years after it relaunched the VIP concept in 2009, the Canadian chain eagerly expanded it, reaching eighty-four VIP

screens by 2019 (see table 20). Regal also experimented with premium VIP auditoriums, opening its first at an Atlanta theater in 2013 but not ultimately making it a core offering in its premium cinema repertoire.[82]

These examples demonstrate how the emergence of premium cinema technologies opened the door for exhibitors to explore other dimensions and appeals of premium cinema. Technological change, the investment it required from exhibitors, and the funding models that solidified around equipment purchases encouraged exhibitors to introduce new ticket pricing structures tied to immersive technologies like IMAX and 3D. As these technologically driven premium experiences created growth opportunities for exhibitors and accustomed cinemagoers to ticket premiums, exhibitors were prompted to explore alternative appeals for emerging pricing structures. Though comfort- and luxury-based appeals at the cinema are neither novel nor dependent on digital technology, as the example of the Cineplex Varsity Theatre indicates, the expansion of premium cinema technologies laid the groundwork for the standardization of premium experiences as broader category that involved a combination of appeals under the ticket premium pricing scheme.

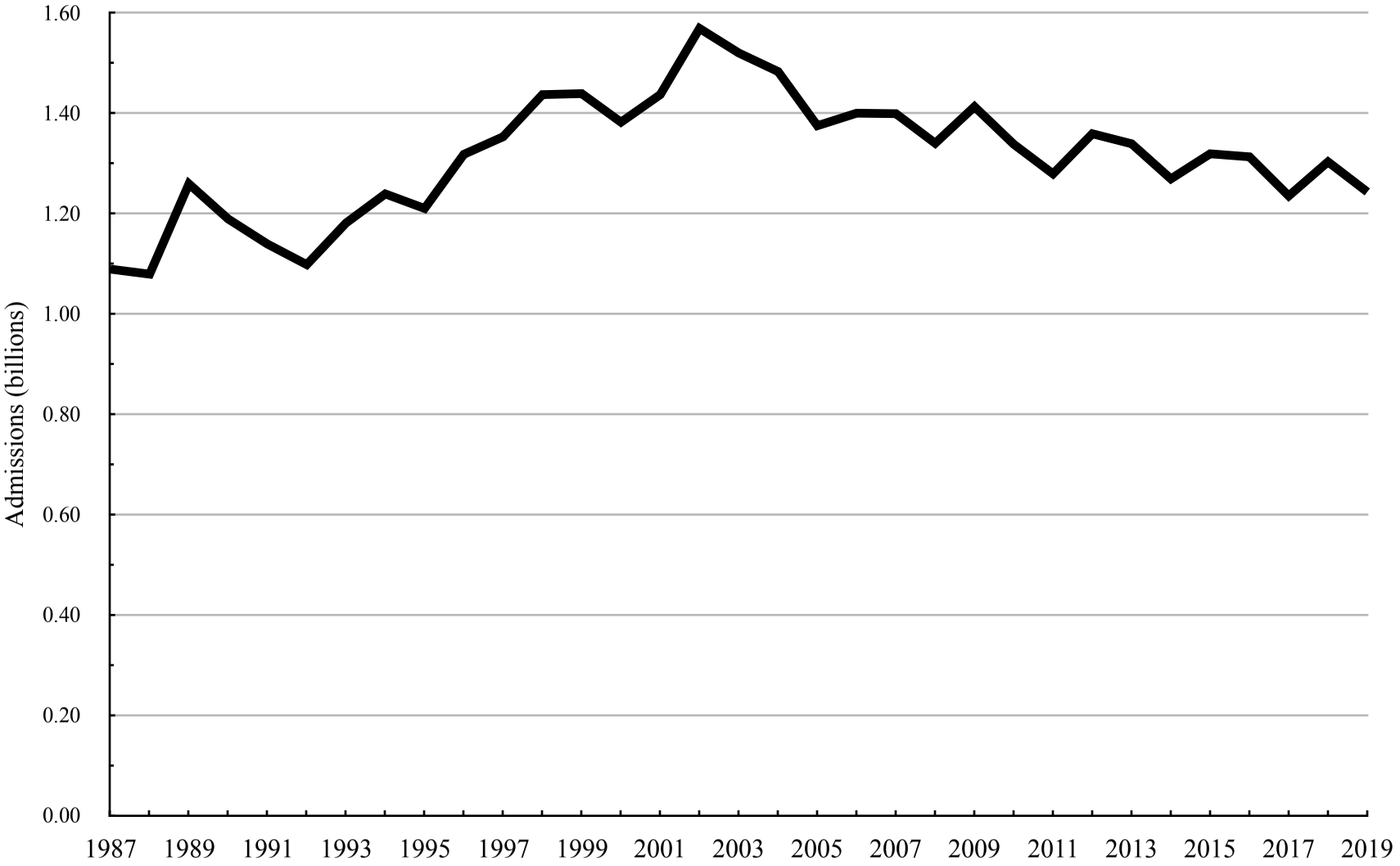
The Box Office After the Megaplex

The scale of exhibitor investment in premium technologies indicates that ticket premiums were not a mere adjunct to box office receipts. Instead, they were one element of the profound transformation of exhibitors' business strategy and relationship to cinemagoers. The sector-wide economic crisis of the early 2000s had marked the spectacular failure of the expansionist logic of the megaplex model that held that major investment in constructing and upgrading cinema sites would draw audiences back to cinemas in large numbers.

Megaplexes did substantially increase attendance levels, but these gains were outstripped by the increase in the number of screens and the debt that new constructions and renovations piled on exhibitors. Between 1994 and 1999, domestic admissions increased by 16 percent, while the screen count surged by 39 percent (see figures 1 and 4). In the wake of the crisis, large exhibitors pulled back dramatically on building new theaters and other major, risky investments that would try to expand the cinemagoing audience at the dramatic pace of the megaplex years. Attendance continued to surge through 2002, reaching the modern peak of 1.57 billion admissions. Soon, this figure leveled off to a range of approximately 1.25–1.40 billion, where it remained from 2005 to 2019.

Though admissions had flattened, box office continued to grow. Industry trade publications often fail to adjust box office figures for inflation, allowing them to announce new all-time records on a regular basis. But even accounting for inflation, box office experienced significant gains that deviated substantially from differences in admissions levels. To examine a recent peak, compare 2006 and 2018. Admissions fell 7.2 percent during this period, but inflation-adjusted box office increased by 9 percent. This trend persists across the last fifteen years of domestic cinema data, with the gap between admissions and box office widening over time (see figures 3 and 4). A major explanation for these shifts is the expansion of premium cinema options. While undoubtedly premium cinema's appeals drew some cinemagoers back to the movies or spurred them to visit more often, these moviegoers did not constitute a significant enough shift to improve attendance figures overall. However, as the 2000s and, especially, the 2010s continued, premium cinema accounted for an increasing percentage of box office as viewers who once purchased

Figure 4: Annual Movie Theater Admissions, US-Canada, 1987 to 2017



Source: Data from National Association of Theatre Owners ("Annual US/Canada Admissions").

basic tickets began to buy premium tickets instead. These formats' premium prices meant an increase in box office returns overall, even as attendance remained stagnant.

This shift at the box office towards premium cinema and its growing importance to the industry dovetails with several key shifts discussed in previous chapters, each linked to the failures of the megaplex model and with their replacement by new industrial logics. Each rested on growth strategies that worked outside the 80s- and 90s-era ideas that placed increased cinema attendance at the center of growth strategies. Consolidation of cinema chains allowed giants to bring together capital once dispersed between different chains by carving out larger slices of total box office and concessions revenues, benefit from economies scale, and use their power within the industry to structure emerging exhibition practices like cinema advertising, event cinema, and digital cinema integration in advantageous ways. Diversification brought in alternative forms of revenue to extract profits from un- or under-used times in the rhythms of the cinema schedule (before films and during slow weekday times), niche audiences, untapped elements of vertical integration (digital signage and the amusements business) and expand into new areas of retail and public entertainment. Perhaps more so than diversification efforts, the shift towards premium cinema at the box office betrayed a significant shift in cultural understandings of cinemagoers: that middle- and upper-middle-class audiences are the primary source of growth in the mature domestic exhibition market, and that cinema offerings should be tailored to their tastes and spending power.

Class, Premium Cinema, and the New Cinemagoer

Premium cinema derives its appeal not from the inherent qualities of new screening options themselves, whether or not they are based in technological enhancements, but from the exclusivity of the experience. A major feature that unites all premium cinema options according to this principle is the experience of social separation within the theatrical space. Some exhibitor PLFs and motion seating technologies use isolated in special, in-demand rows of the theater to cordon off their experiences. More often, premium screening experiences take place in dedicated auditoria outfitted with the necessary equipment and sectioned off from other cinemagoers or even a separate area of the theater, as with Cineplex's VIP concept. As has been the case for other upscale services, this social separation is an attraction as much as the upgrade itself. These spaces, many of which are designed to showcase the newest, flashiest titles at the theater are also molded to create a space from which consumers can appreciate their isolation from standard ticketholders while appreciating selective communalism around technological sophistication, increased comfort and service, and specific class markers.

These practices of class distinction have a long history in theatrical exhibition spaces. Discussing new luxury cinema concepts emerging in the world exhibition market, Juan Llamas-Rodriguez identifies two salient "genealogies" for this emerging exhibition space: the movie palace and the megaplex.[83] These origins are also apt precursors to the spatial and social organization of today's multiplexes. The downtown movie palace, developed in part to build an environment separate from the mixed-class mass audiences of the nickelodeon, crafted ornate environments centered around the desires and comfort of the middle- and upper-class audience. While the higher ticket prices of these venues might

dissuade potential cinemagoers from walking through their doors, even within these spaces, division of the theater by ticket price aimed to regulate the intimacy of potentially incompatible class fractions during the evening's entertainment.

Since the 1920s, new retrenchments of class division have reappeared periodically across the evolution of theatrical sites in the US, Canada, and around the world. Most recently, the megaplex theaters of the 1990s and the discourses of improving theater spaces that precipitated them emerged out of an impulse to upscale cinema sites and bring older and more affluent audiences back to the cinema. Such spaces were defined against not only the plain, sticky mall multiplexes they aimed to replace but against the broader threats of public space. Charles Acland uses a comparison to the gated community to explain these discourses: "An idea analogous to the gated community circulates as one strategy for the management of separated public space and for the advertising of its safety, a strategy finding expression in new theater complexes," he writes "…Both are areas of public leisure, in which attendance is selective and mediated by admission fees. The megaplex, like the theme park, is not a limitless site of public engagement but promises a fairly restricted range of possibilities, enforced by the site's own privately managed security. These locations harbor a fear of the unfettered public, an anxiety about the surrounding city or community context, and a related popular sense of inadequacy or distrust of public policing's ability to guarantee safety."[84] The logics and discourses of the megaplex made social separation a matter intertwined with both fear of a mass public and a desire for an elevated, isolated space for controlled public engagement, implicitly aligned with those classes socially primed to be most fearful and desiring. The multiplexes of the 2000s and 2010s, build (often literally) on the 90s megaplexes that became their blueprint. With the rise of premium cinema, this

gating between the safe, comfortable world of the multiplex and the implicit threats of the public street are reintegrated with social separation within the theater space reminiscent of the movie palace. Together, these features reinforce the multiplex as a space that, while ostensibly open to anyone willing to pay for a ticket, is organized and divided by classed spatial logics.

The classed appeals of premium cinema also extend beyond spatial division and exclusion to the experiential qualities of immersive technological formats. The consistent emphasis on immersion favored by these technologies recalls Charles Acland's discussion of IMAX's replication of John Urry's "tourist gaze" during its documentary phase in the 1990s.[85] Discussing the epistemological implications of IMAX's mode of vision, Acland argues that the technology "offers movement without moving, tourism without travel, and effects a brand of geographical transformation akin to that of map-making. The sequence of images puts forward an argument of geographic centrality to the spectator; the order, and the sensory experience of that order, releases a foundational myth…that of the encounter with distant lives and places, but always through a set of ordering and structuring principles. In the end, IMAX similarly writes a geographical relation in which distance does not matter and in which the organization of sites is always possible in and through its technological system."[86] For Acland, the "power to move" is inflected structures of social power but also by the representational forms that construct spaces as open for viewers to know and dominate.[87] Such forms also have particular appeal for those able to imagine themselves as part of the socially dominant group who exist in comfortable relation to this power and knowledge.

As IMAX has moved away from the museums and documentary film and into the business of multiplexes and blockbusters it has maintained this emphasis on total vision, organized around the individual spectator it transports into a now-fictional film world. This is not to say some of the characteristics that Acland identifies has not shifted in the interim; his work tightly integrates the aesthetics of IMAX documentaries, the presentation of the technology, and the sites in which it operates with a degree of specificity with which it is not possible to generalize about multiple premium cinema technologies. Each of these forms incorporates different aesthetic features, many of them nonvisual, that merit distinct analyses. I do not wish to flatten the aesthetic and sensory variation present across new formats. However, the consistent emphasis on immersive, transportive experiences across these technologies, most of them modelled on IMAX's approach to premium cinema, does suggest similar alignment with ways of seeing especially suited to the affluent cinemagoers who are most willing and able to pay ticket premiums, many of whom also hold social privilege along axes such as race and gender. In short, new digital cinema technologies embed modes of representation that reflect the preferences of the imagined audiences of technology companies and exhibition giants and, in turn, flow from their strategic goals in the changing exhibition industry.

While technological appeals define one avenue of exhibitors' appeal to affluent audiences, premium cinema based in improved comfort and service reflects another means of bringing in and retaining similar audiences. In recent years, a tier of luxury cinemas such as Cinépolis and iPic have expanded in the domestic market, offering enhanced screening experiences defined by comfortable recliner seating, in-seat service of upscale meals and cocktails, expanded amenities, and more upscale design elements at higher price point.

Integrating dine-in, recliners, and other luxury features at the multiplex, especially those available at a price beyond general admission reflects exhibitors' aim to retain the allegiance of affluent audiences as new entrants appear in the market. It also represents a hedge against fading enthusiasm for new screening technologies, many of which have not yet proven their longevity. Even if immersive technologies lose ground, the well-established practice of upscaling cultural environments will maintain another avenue to continue the by now embedded practice of ticket premiums. In the 2010s and early 2020s, this residual form of class signaling coexists with and reinforces the emergent options for technological enhancement, newly packaged and separated from the general admission experience through ticket premiums.

Despite premium cinema's spatial and cultural reorganization of theatrical sites, contemporary multiplexes ostensibly remain open to anyone able to purchase a ticket. But the growing centrality of premium cinema to exhibition giants' bottom lines and the aesthetic, cultural and industrial dynamics of these new screening options reveals the subtle ways in which giants are reshaping the theatrical experience around the tastes and preferences of affluent audiences. For now, cinemas generally remain a relatively affordable public entertainment for a mass audience in a moment when these options are rapidly shrinking. But the logics of premium cinema investment suggests an insidious form of exclusion that makes cinema spaces less hospitable to those not favored by giants' new strategies. Coupled with giants' reach and preferred access to films, key locations, and exhibition profits to reinvest in their operations, this shift is a troubling indication of one potential future for the exhibition business.

Conclusion

The digital transition in film exhibition was a slow, negotiated process in part because of what was at stake for the film industry: new affordances and opportunities, but also the risk of shifts in the balance of power. Coordinating their efforts, exhibition giants leveraged the size of their circuits to make digital deals on their terms and chase the potential for premium cinema to fit with their overarching post-crisis industrial strategies. Premium cinema offered an alternative means of growth beyond building new cinemas in the hopes of attracting new audiences or raising ticket prices outright. Instead, exhibitors offered a range of new technological options for spectacle and immersion at the multiplex, many of which built on the model of IMAX's global success in marketing the exclusivity of its format and used ticket premiums to boost profits without increasing theater attendance. As new technological options normalized ticket premiums, exhibition giants launched service-, comfort-, and luxury-based premium cinema options, offering cinemagoers the timeworn appeal of upscale experiences. In the eight years between the digital transition and 2019, premium cinema options have multiplied rapidly and become a well-established feature of contemporary exhibition practice. In doing so, they have spatially and socially reorganized cinemas around the tastes and desires of affluent audiences, a troubling trend for an industry whose largest exhibitors whose strategic imperatives encourage them to remain at best indifferent to creating cinema spaces that remain both open and inclusive to the mass audience.

Despite the concerning implications of these trends, premium cinema has been good for exhibition giants' business. The profits from ticket premiums have allowed them to mask flat attendance figures and indicate growth to their owners, investors, and partners, while the current wave of emerging premium formats have allowed for a flow of new novelties to

attract their preferred audiences. Premium cinema has become an essential complement to the consolidation and diversification strategies through which giants have established and maintained their power in the domestic market. Premium cinema, especially, reinforces giants' stature as standard-bearers in one of the world's largest cinema markets. Established partnerships with global cinema brands and the reputational reinforcement of up-to-date cinema standards, alongside giants' scale and power in the domestic market, helped them emerge as desirable acquisitions for global exhibition companies in the 2010s. Looking at similar exhibition giants in mature markets around the world, these companies aimed to create cross-continental exhibition empires that would rapidly escalate the scale of contemporary exhibition circuits.

Chapter 4: Global Chains and Exhibition Empires

In 2012, AMC and Chinese conglomerate the Dalian Wanda Group made headlines when they announced that Wanda (itself the owner of a major Chinese theater chain) would buy the US exhibition giant, then the second-largest chain in the United States, for $2.6 billion.[1] Part of the uproar around the arrangement came from the fact that the deal marked an unusual reversal of longstanding patterns in the US film industry's relationship with the global cinema market. These connections have largely been defined by runaway Hollywood production—recently the subject of competition between countries across the globe using tax incentives and other publicly funded benefits to attract projects to their shores—and distribution patterns that have flooded international markets worldwide with cheaply available Hollywood titles.[2] Patterns of exhibition ownership, too, have generally flowed from the US outward, with Hollywood studios and independent exhibition companies, including domestic exhibition giants, periodically establishing outpost cinemas in foreign markets over the decades. But despite its unconventionality, the Wanda deal was soon followed by two further foreign acquisitions of domestic cinemas. In 2017, European cinema giant Cineworld purchased Regal Cinemas for $3.6 billion, following this acquisition two years later with the $1.65 billion acquisition of Canadian giant Cineplex Entertainment.[3] Three of the four domestic exhibition companies were now on the verge of being owned by global exhibition empires which operated more than 9,000 screens across several continents.

Film exhibition has a long and fraught history with international expansion and ownership, and the participation of domestic exhibition giants and their new international owners in these patterns is no exception to the unevenness of these processes. Ross

Melnick's ninety-year history of Hollywood studios' operation of foreign cinemas, which stretched long past the midcentury divestment of their domestic theaters, is especially illustrative on this point. In his research, Melnick repeatedly illustrates the difficulty of operating continuous physical sites in the face of changing economic, political, and regulatory regimes around the world. Exhibition, he argues, poses unique challenges compared to the relative malleability of the US production and distribution apparatus overseas: "Film production was transient, contingent, temporary, and did not create a sustainable industrial base. Film distribution remained largely invisible and still dependent on domestic exhibitors. It was foreign ownership and operation of local cinemas that had long spelled trouble…."[4] In the 1990s, US exhibition companies learned this lesson anew, as the sector-wide optimism that drove the megaplex construction boom in the domestic market also turned the attention of US exhibition companies outward to foreign shores in Europe, Asia, and Latin America. Among the companies who took an interest in these ventures were future US exhibition giants Cinemark Theatres and AMC Theatres, which each set ambitious plans to build networks of US-style multiplexes from the ground up in markets including France, Sweden, the UK, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil. The new global exhibition empires that roared onto the international scene in the 2010s with dramatic acquisitions of US and international exhibition giants would employ different strategies than these predecessors but would also find themselves subject to the challenges of maintaining control over the complex economics, logistics, and politics of international cinema operation.

In this chapter, I explore the motivations, challenges, and conditions that shaped the patterns of international ownership that included domestic exhibition giants across these two

critical periods in the 1990s and 2010s, as well as the interregnum of the 2000s, when interest in the international exhibition business contracted sharply. I argue that these periods demonstrate a transformation in the dynamics of globalization in exhibition. In the first period, the optimism, expansionism, and indeed, overconfidence, of US exhibition companies abroad led to ambitious strategies to spread US multiplexes around the world, remaking and reigniting international cinema markets just as they attempted to expand the already mature domestic market, with mixed results. The failures of this period and the economic crisis in domestic exhibition soon led to a rapid contraction of US interest in the international exhibition market, one that fueled a focus on dominance in the domestic market on the part of its exhibition giants, a focus that supported many of the shifts in exhibitor practice observed in chapters 1, 2, and 3. This second period, in which domestic giants consolidated chains, built out digital and premium cinema infrastructure, and embedded themselves deeply in industry-wide diversification efforts made them attractive targets for Wanda and Cineworld as they sought to launch their own global exhibition empires. Due to the transformation of the US exhibition landscape detailed across the previous three chapters (and, as I will discuss, parallel patterns of consolidation in Europe and Australia), Wanda and Cineworld have been able to leverage large acquisitions in this third period to quickly scale up to compete with one another by commanding massive portions of the world cinema market. Domestic exhibition giants' domination of their national markets, then, has led directly to their as mediators of more expansive global exhibition networks.

To demonstrate the scope and character of this transformation in US exhibition's global relationships, I split my focus between exhibition giants' involvement in international

expansionism in the 1990s and their time as the acquisition targets of global exhibition empires in the 2010s, divided by a brief account of their general retreat from the international scene in the 2000s. To open my discussion of the 1990s, I examine Cinemark's expansion of its business to the Latin American market throughout the decade. This project was the rare long-term success in a larger trend towards international expansion by US exhibition that yielded much more inconsistent results and demonstrates the larger aim of these collective efforts: to use US expertise and capital to build elaborate multiplexes which could outmatch local competition in markets that were underdeveloped (by US standards), allowing US companies to dominate the market in these territories. Next, I turn to AMC's attempt to expand internationally in this period, in which it stretched its resources thinly across three continents aiming for wildly ambitious targets and ultimately failed to gain traction, revealing the risks of the period's expansionist mindset. I reflect briefly on the domestic reasons for the global retraction of US exhibition interests from international markets in the 2000s and the inward turn observable from exhibition giants in this period. Finally, looking to the 2010s, I examine the Dalian Wanda and Cineworld acquisitions. Each directed by executives with extensive experience transforming emerging cinema markets (in China and Eastern Europe, respectively), they benefitted from intensive, international patterns of consolidation in the 2000s that enabled them to rapidly assemble their cross-continental cinema networks. In the process, the domestic market became a battleground in a larger competition over world box office. However, even these exhibition behemoths were vulnerable to the hazards of international exhibition operations, as this chapter and my reflections on the COVID-19 pandemic in this project's conclusion will show.

Cinemark's Latin American Expansion

Cinemark Looks Across the Border

As the 1990s began, discourses around industry-wide improvements to cinema spaces were well underway and many domestic theater owners were making plans to continue investments in upgrading their circuits with continued construction and renovation. This activity, discussed in chapter 1, would lead to the construction boom of megaplex theaters that pushed exhibitors into a debt crisis by the end of the decade. Meanwhile, Cinemark Theatres, the number-six chain in the US-Canada market, was considering alternative pathways for growth. Cinemark had long favored building new theaters from the ground up in areas of the US where the chain would face little competition.[5] This approach kept the company from spending heavily in competitive marketplaces or being saddled with renovation costs for outdated acquisitions. As chapter 1 outlines, the 1990s multiplex building boom was preceded by earlier efforts in the 1980s to build upscale multiplexes across much of the US market. Increased theater construction and rising competition for theater sites meant that Cinemark's preferred means of domestic growth was becoming scarce as the 80s became the 90s. Faced with this changing landscape, the company's CEO and founder, Lee Roy Mitchell, began to look for alternative growth opportunities that would not require Cinemark to compete as intensely as its peers at home.[6]

Soon, Cinemark turned its focus south to Latin America, eyeing the entire region as a potential growth market. There had been systematic disinvestment in movie theaters across Latin America throughout the 80s. The dynamics of neglect had created similar patterns across multiple markets in the region: as attendance and revenues dropped off at cinemas, local operators had little income to fund improvements, leading to outdated and dilapidated

sites that weakened appetites for cinemagoing with little local exhibitors could do to improve their fortunes. Cinemark spotted this under resourced exhibition market as it had the neglected corners of the US market earlier in the company's history and registered the vulnerability of local exhibitors to foreign competition. From the outset, the company took a regional approach: it would draw on its exhibition expertise, mobilize foreign capital, and exploit weak local competition to develop new US-style multiplexes at a rapid pace, working in multiple national markets simultaneously. Cinemark intended its upgraded facilities to corner exhibition markets across Mexico, Central, and South America.

Cinemark began its expansion into Latin America in 1992, initially in Chile and Mexico. In Chile, the company partnered with Conate Films, the country's largest distributor-exhibitor, on a 50-50 joint venture it called Cinema Chile. Cinema Chile planned to develop US-style multiplexes for the Chilean market, with Cinemark managing the theaters' operations and programming. The venture began with three multiplexes in Santiago, the capital, built between 1992 and 1993.[7] Cinemark also moved into Mexico in 1992, signing leases for four multiplex locations of ten to twelve screens across the country. While the Conate partnership enabled the company's entry to Chile, Cinemark's foray into Mexico was driven by two factors. First, the Mexican government had eliminated a regulation that capped ticket prices at 5,000 pesos (around $1.50 at the time), enabling the chain to charge higher prices to support its planned upscale multiplexes. Second, the North American Free Trade Agreement was anticipated to come into effect, promising to lower or eliminate a range of operational costs for cross-border businesses.[8] The large Mexican market would serve as Cinemark's beachhead for its planned regional expansion.

After selecting these initial markets, Cinemark also received an influx of capital which it used to fund its international expansion and hire key talent to oversee it. In 1996, the company was partially acquired by the Cypress Group, one of the early private equity firms to invest in the domestic exhibition sector. The Cypress Group provided capital that financed Cinemark's overseas expansion as well as the domestic building I detail in chapter 1.[9] The company hired Tim Warner as its international president the same year, charging him with the strategy behind Cinemark's international expansion.[10]

By the end of the 90s, Cinemark would expand aggressively across more Latin American markets than any other foreign or regional exhibitor, developing a presence across eleven countries as part of a multiplex boom that led to rising theater attendance and box office across the region. Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil became especially important markets for Cinemark and other exhibitors building multiplexes in the region. The next three sections trace the company's development strategies, the competitive landscape, and the shifts in key cinema statistics in these countries, mapping a period of tremendous change in the largest national markets in the region and Cinemark's role in these shifts.

An Exhibition Battleground in Mexico

The earliest construction boom in Latin America took place in Mexico, which soon became a battleground for foreign and domestic exhibitors grappling for control of one of the fastest rising cinema markets in the world. Cinemark was the earliest foreign entrant to the market: it opened Mexico's first modern multiplex in 1993 and built complexes in Monterrey, Chihuahua, and Aguascalientes as well as its first Mexico City location by 1994.[11] But it would soon face fierce competition. Cinemex, a new chain in the region, also signed its first

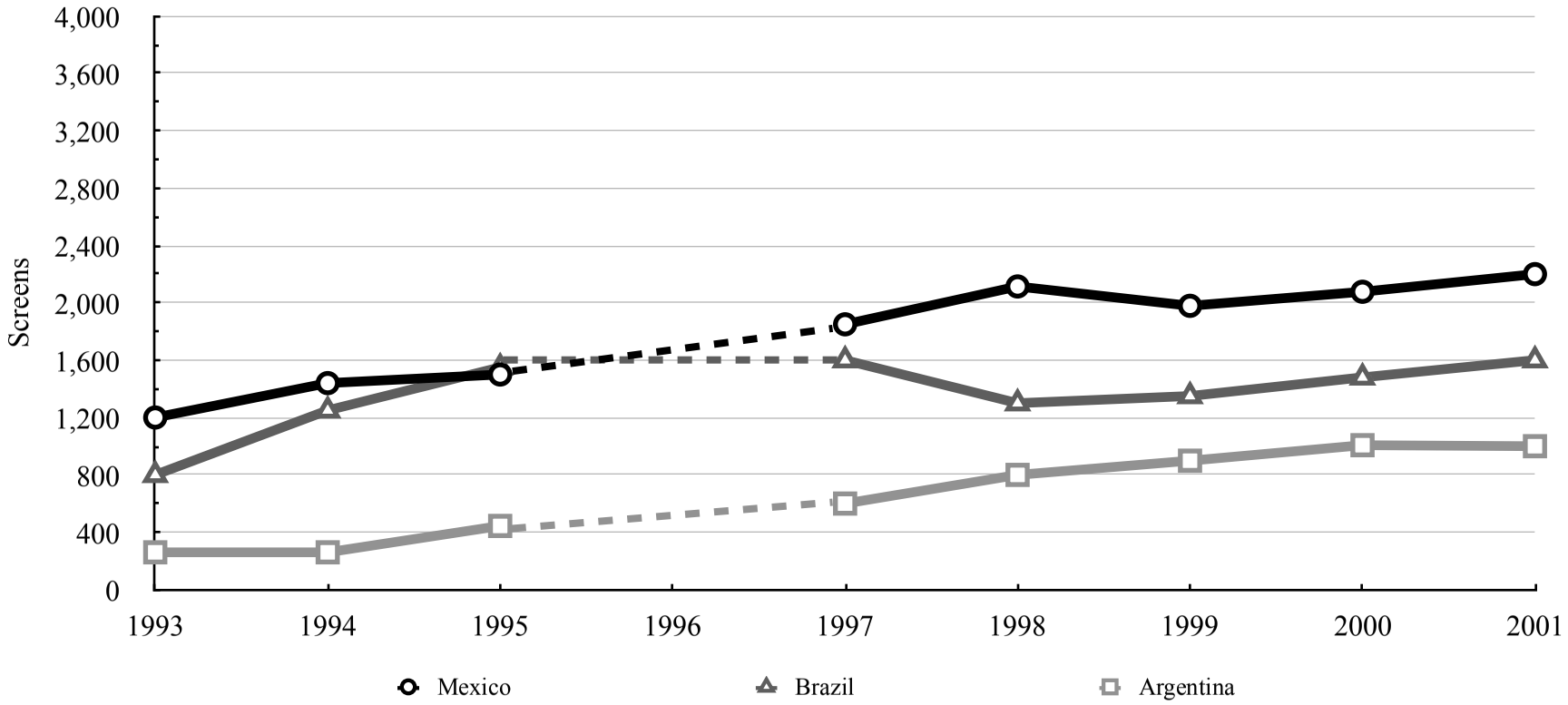
leases for capital-city theaters in 1994 and opened its first location in 1995. This upstart chain was founded in Mexico by young Harvard Business School graduates with roots in Mexican real estate and government and US-Canadian film exhibition. Cinemex quickly emerged as a dominant force.[12] Unlike Cinemark, which built from the outset in several provincial cities, Cinemex concentrated its early construction in the Mexico City's affluent neighborhoods. The capital became its power center. By the end of 1998, Cinemex had seventeen theaters in Mexico City, which accounted for 45 percent of the city's ticket sales and 17 percent of the national box office.[13] United Artists Theatres also entered the market, opening its first multiplex in 1996, but sold the five sites it built in Mexico to General Cinema the next year.[14]

The influx of competition from foreign-owned and -funded businesses prompted Mexico's leading local exhibitor, Ramírez Cinemas, to build multiplexes of its own to defend its dominance in the market. Under the Cinépolis brand, Ramírez began opening multiplexes of ten screens or more across Mexico, beginning with an initial site in Tijuana in early 1994. Owned by Organizacíon Ramírez, a large conglomerate with assets in video retail, construction and real estate, auto dealerships, and the financial industry, Ramírez Cinemas was able to compete with foreign capital despite instability in Mexican currency markets. This made it an anomaly among local operators; as development kicked off across the region, Latin American exhibitors more often partnered with or found themselves outmatched by foreign capital. In contrast, Ramírez Cinemas invested heavily from the first whispers of foreign competition, opening 51 screens in 1994 and 121 in 1995, including three large multiplexes in Monterrey, Chihuahua, and Mexicali.[15]

As competition rose across Mexico, local and foreign exhibitors, including Cinemark, fought for prime locations, built rapidly, and drove major surges in box office and attendance. By 1996, lease prices for prime sites had risen by "20 to 30 percent" in the three years since Cinemark had entered the market, according to Roberto Jenkins, the chain's Mexican director. Rising costs had significantly impacted new theaters' profit potential, Jenkins noted. "Some sites will never be able to make money," he remarked, "Though if it's your flagship theater, you're willing to take a loss."[16] Despite rising building costs, the national screen count rose quickly, from 1,200 in 1993 to 1,480 by 2000 (see figure 5), following a long period of stagnation. As exhibitors built new multiplexes, older single-screen theaters began to shut down, masking the volume of theater openings in screen totals.[17] Growth in attendance and box office was more dramatic. Attendance had slid from 800 million admissions in 1985 to a low of 65 million by 1995, at the height of a brief but intense economic crisis driven by government devaluation of the peso.[18] These figures signaled both the precipitousness with which attendance had fallen, and the potential heights the new multiplex chains hoped it could reach. Admissions in the year 2000 nearly doubled these mid-90s admissions figures, hitting 125 million tickets sold (see figure 6). Box office rose a staggering 241 percent over the same period, from $85 million in 1995 to $426 million in 2000, bolstered by the higher ticket prices charged by multiplexes in affluent urban neighborhoods (see figure 7).[19] By 2000, Mexico's cinema infrastructure had been transformed.

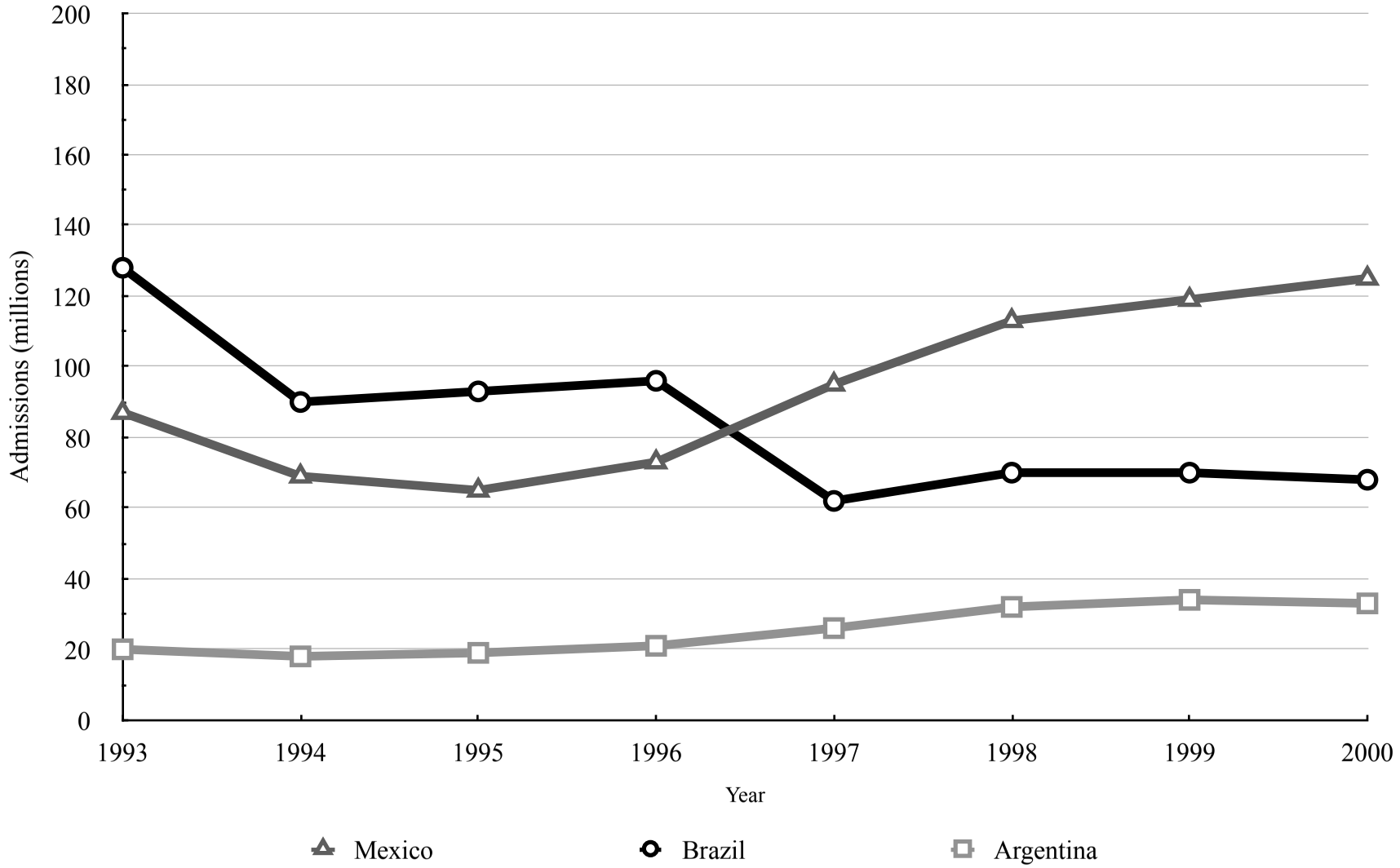
However, the opportunity to get in on the initial boom was closing and worries about the intensity of the scramble to build cinemas grew. Commentators began to raise concerns about overscreening in key Mexican markets, particularly Mexico City, similar to those

Figure 5: Movie Theater Screens; Mexico, Braxil, and Argentina; 1993 to 2001



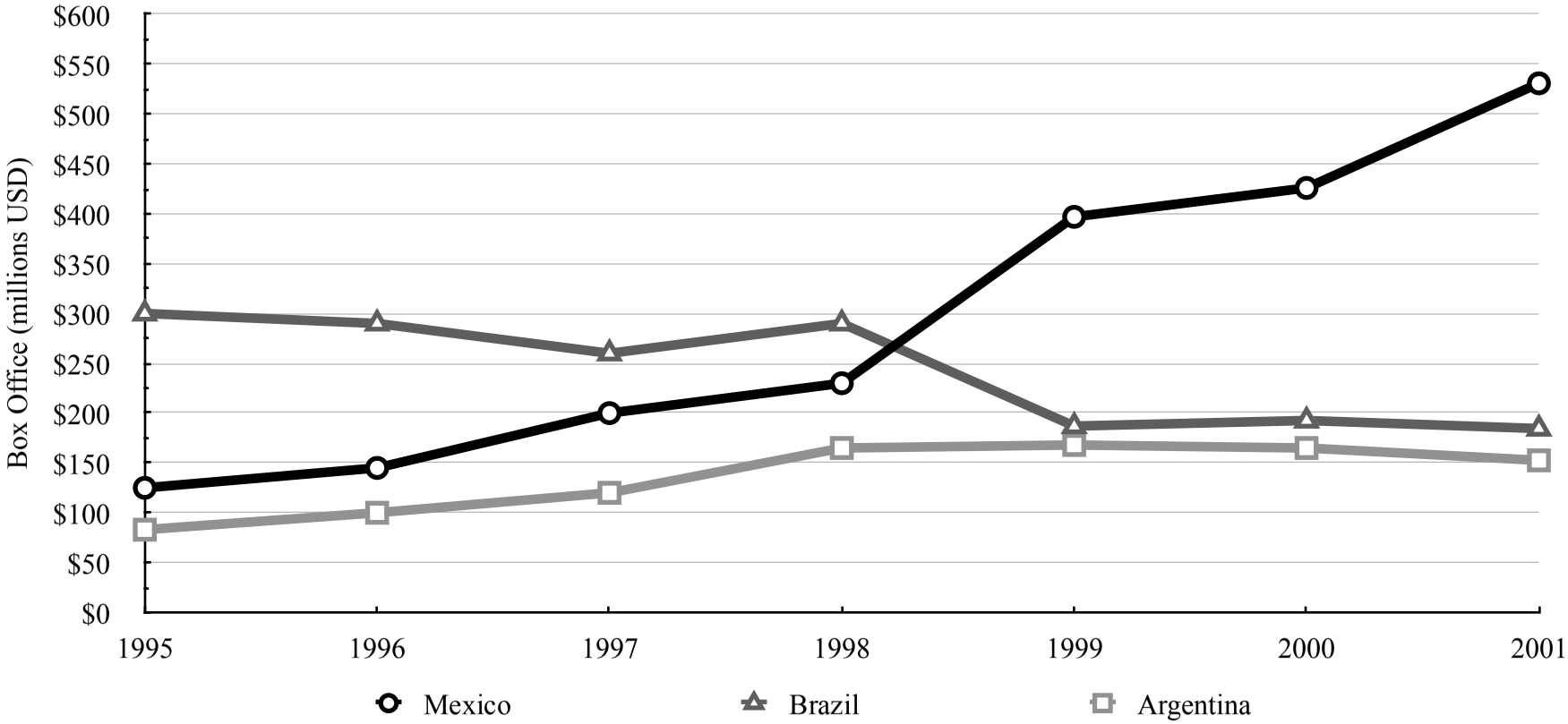
Sources: Data from Peter Besas, "Latin America—at a Glance," *Variety*, March 28, 1994, 52; Andrew Paxman, "Latin America At a Glance," *Variety*, March 27, 1995, 70; Paxman, "Latin America's Major Film Markets," *Variety*, March 25, 1996, 52; "Major Theatrical Markets," *Variety*, March 23, 1998, 44; Nelson Hoineff ("Brazilians Seek 'Central' Formula," 54), Mary Sutter ("Mexicans Bid Adios to Downtrodden Markets," 52), and Peter Hudson ("Argentine Film Fights to Cash in on Surging B.O.," 52), *Variety*, March 29, 1999; Cajueiro ("Brazil's Mixed Bag," 37), Simeon Tegel ("Mexico Hits B.O. Jackpot," 38), and Hudson ("Foreign Distribs Caught Coin at Argentine B.O. In '99," 48), *Variety*, March 27, 2000; Cajueiro ("Brazil B.O. Fire Reignited," 136), Tegel ("New Bucks Bump Mex B.O.," 134), and Hudson ("Argentine Film Biz Flourishes," 132); Cajueiro et al., "The Big Picture," *Variety*, April 1, 2002, A4.

Figure 6: Annual Movie Theater Admissions; Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina;1990 to 2000



Source: Data from André Lange, *Focus 2003: World Film Market Trends*, European Audiovisual Observatory, May 1, 2003, 8, 17.

Figure 7: Annual Movie Theater Box Office; Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina; 1995 to 2001



Sources: Data from Andrew Paxman, "Latin America At a Glance," *Variety*, March 27, 1995, 70; Paxman, "Latin America's Major Film Markets," *Variety*, March 25, 1996, 52; "Major Theatrical Markets," *Variety*, March 23, 1998, 44; Nelson Hoineff ("Brazilians Seek 'Central' Formula," 54), Mary Sutter ("Mexicans Bid Adios to Downtrodden Markets," 52), and Peter Hudson ("Argentine Film Fights to Cash in on Surging B.O.," 52), *Variety*, March 29, 1999; Cajueiro ("Brazil's Mixed Bag," 37), Simeon Tegel ("Mexico Hits B.O. Jackpot," 38), and Hudson ("Foreign Distribs Caught Coin at Argentine B.O. In '99," 48), *Variety*, March 27, 2000; Cajueiro ("Brazil B.O. Fire Reignited," 136), Tegel ("New Bucks Bump Mex B.O.," 134), and Hudson ("Argentine Film Biz Flourishes," 132); Cajueiro et al., "The Big Picture," *Variety*, April 1, 2002, A4.

boiling over in the US in the same period.[20] Ramírez, Cinemex, and Cinemark were the dominant exhibitors in the country, but Cinemark's growth began to plateau in the face of competition. In part, this was an effect of its greater efforts to build theaters in the country's provincial cities compared with Cinemex's focus on the capital; these cinemas were unevenly affected by the peso crisis compared with those in Mexico City. This setback and difficulties in the real estate industry inhibited Cinemark's development in the country at a key moment in its transition to multiplex infrastructure, perhaps contributing its failure to get a foothold as a dominant player.[21] Warner told *Variety* in 2000 that the company would "focus our future growth elsewhere" after fulfilling commitments to the eighty screens the company was set to open that year.[22] Cinemark continued to maintain its cinemas in Mexico, at least for a time, but was already in the process of turning towards other markets, including Argentina and Brazil. Still, Mexico would remain the model for Cinemark and other foreign exhibitors seeking to remake Latin America cinema markets and reap the rewards of these transformations.

New Frontiers in Argentina

As exhibitor investment and building costs intensified in Mexico, Argentina emerged as the next major Latin American market perceived to be ripe for a boom by foreign exhibition interests. Argentina had the highest per-capita income in Latin America and a sizable population. With discussions about multiplex development in full swing across the region, these qualities drew foreign exhibitors' attention to the Argentinian market. As it had in Mexico, Cinemark acted early on this emerging industry consensus, though this time it managed to hold its own in the face of accelerating competition. Cinemark and its Chilean

partner, Conate, brought their jointly owned chain to Argentina in 1996, working with leading Argentinian theater chain Coll-Sargusti-SAC, which owned 50 percent of the new venture.[23] Within three years, the partners had built forty-four screens at five theaters.[24] United Artists, National Amusements, Village Roadshow, and Hoyts also made plans to enter the market around this time (General Cinema replaced United Artists after purchasing the chain's Mexican and Argentinian assets in 1997).[25]

New multiplexes swelled the screen count, nearly quadrupling it as it rose from 260 screens in 1993 to just over 1,000 in 2000 (see figure 5). Argentinian cinema admissions had fallen considerably from the mid-1980s (as they had in Mexico), dropping from a 1984 high of 67 million to just 18 million by 1994.[26] But with multiplexes opening, attendance quickly rebounded. By 2000, exhibitors sold 33 million tickets (see figure 6). Box office roughly tracked other indicators, with US-dollar figures virtually doubling between 1995 and 1998 and remaining steady through 2000 (see figure 7). As the decade ended, competition remained hot in Argentina, with most of the foreign exhibitors who came into the market in the mid-1990s still operating. Unlike in Mexico, however, Cinemark continued to hold its own against its competitors.

Unrealized Potential in Brazil

Brazil was the last major Latin American cinema market to see significant multiplex expansion and the slowest to grow once development kicked off, due to several local economic factors. The Brazilian market was significantly underscreened, with only 1,500 screens for a country of 160 million in 1996; 800 of these locations brought in 90 percent of box office grosses during this time. Brazil was also a fragmented market; the largest local

exhibitor, Grupo Severiano Ribeiro, had only 113 screens at the end of 1996.[27] Both factors signified opportunity to local and foreign exhibitors alike, but they had difficulty realizing their ambitions until several years after multiplex mania was in full swing in Mexico. Grupo Ribeiro and other exhibitors had tried to increase the reach of their theater chains, anticipating foreign competition from their observation of foreign activity in on the Mexican and Argentinian cinema markets. But local exhibitors were stymied by the dangers of seeking foreign credit while local currency fluctuations risked making such loans untenable. They also had difficulty convincing developers to lease larger footprints in shopping centers in the absence of proven multiplex successes in the country.[28] Meanwhile, foreign exhibitors had been delayed by a long-simmering Brazilian inflation crisis that reached an inflection point with two periods of hyperinflation in 1990. The crisis was only contained with the 1994 Plano Real, a series of government measures (which replaced the cruzeiro real with the modern Brazilian real) and stabilized local currency. Notorious bureaucratic slowness in Brazil, the linguistic barriers of Portuguese, and lingering economic issues also delayed foreign entrants' expansion plans.[29]

Brazil's inflation crisis began to ameliorate in 1995. As Brazilians' disposable incomes rose during the recovery, exhibitors renewed their hopes to develop the cinema market. After scouting the country for two years, Cinemark signed its first theater leases in 1996, only opening its first Brazilian multiplex in mid-1997, four years after building its first multiplex in Chile.[30] Learning from its miscalculations with a provincial strategy in Mexico (and Cinemex's success in Mexico City), Cinemark's initial Brazilian expansion centered on Sao Paulo, Brazil's most populous state, which generated 55 percent of the country's box office. The company saw Rio state and other major cities as secondary and

tertiary targets for development.[31] Its main foreign-owned competitor was United Cinemas International (UCI), then a joint venture between Paramount and Universal, which had been operating small cinemas in ten Brazilian cities for several decades. In 1997, the company began building multiplexes, opening its first complexes late that year and operating a handful of them in partnership with Grupo Ribeiro.[32]

Given the slower growth of multiplexes in Brazil compared to Mexico and Argentina meant the shifts in key screen statistics were more uneven by 2000. The inflation crisis, multiplex building from foreign entrants and local chains, and single-screen closures meant that the number of Brazilian cinema screens fluctuated during the 1990s. Overall, the figures showed an upward trend, from 800 screens in 1993 to 1,480 in 2000 (see figure 5). Ongoing economic issues in Brazil led to a nadir of 62 million admissions in 1997. US-dollar box office totals also continued to fluctuate with the currency throughout the decade. But by 2000, cinema attendance was beginning to recover despite the currency woes, reaching 68 million (see figures 6 and 7). Unlike Mexico and Argentina, the Brazilian cinema market had not reached the same degree of infrastructural development or audience response to new multiplexes by the end of the decade. Foreign and local exhibitors still saw room to grow. Cinemark, which advanced past Grupo Ribeiro in December 1999 as the country's leading exhibitor by screen count, was well-positioned to take advantage of these opportunities.[33]

Cinemark's Panregional Strategy in Latin America

In contrast with its foreign competitors in Latin America, Cinemark adopted a panregional strategy that conceived of the entire Latin American market as a fertile ground for multiplex development and sought to develop multiplexes in multiple national markets in parallel. In

the six years since the company opened its first Chilean multiplex in 1992, Cinemark had built cinemas in eight countries. In comparison, most foreign (Cinemex, National Amusements, Village Roadshow, UCI) and domestic (Ramírez/Cinépolis, Ribeiro) exhibitors operated in only one or two markets by 1998 (see table 21). Hoyts and General Cinema, which merged their Central and South American interests in a 50-50 joint venture in mid-1998, had cinemas in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay but had been late to enter many markets and lacked Cinemark's extensive regional reach.[34] Cinemark's holdings included Chile, where Cinemark and its partner Conate expanded their reach, accelerated by the entry of National Amusements and Hoyts to the market.[35] By 1999, the Cinemark-Conate partnership encompassed 139 screens across Peru, Chile, and Argentina, and ten of the partners' Chilean multiplexes brought in between 40 and 50 percent of the country's box office. Cinemark bought its partner out of the venture that year.[36] In addition to Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Peru, Cinemark also built in Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Colombia, and Nicaragua during the 90s, often becoming first foreign chain to build multiplexes in these territories.[37] While each country Cinemark operated in had unique dynamics, the company also had an overarching approach to cinema development that affected its trajectory across the region.

This panregional strategy gave Cinemark significant advantages over its competitors, enabling it to avoid pressures to overbuild a single market and to balance out frequent fluctuations in national politics and economies. Looking back on Cinemark's Latin American expansion in the 1990s several years into the project, Warner highlighted two primary facets of the company's regional strategy. First, Cinemark avoided competition where possible when selecting targets for building, which meant entering a variety of new

Table 21: Latin American Multiplexes, March 1998

Chain	Screens	Sites	Countries	Screens by 2000[a]
Cinemark	287	29	Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Peru	1,200
Cinemex	147	15	Mexico	400–500
General Cinema	74	7	Mexico, Argentina	500–550
Hoyts	20	3	Chile	350–400
National Amusements	36	3	Argentina, Chile	150
Ramírez (Cinépolis)[b]	364	41	Mexico, Guatemala	650–700
Ribeiro[b]	50	7	Brazil	200–230
UCI[c]	10	1	Brazil	100–150
Village Roadshow	18	2	Argentina	150–200
Total	**1,006**	**108**	—	**3,700–4,000**

[a] Many of these figures fell well short of predictions, but indicate the optimism surrounding the Latin American market in the late 1990s.
[b] Figures are for sites of six screens or more.
[c] UCI's projection does not include 50 joint-venture screens with Ribeiro.

Sources: Table adapted from Andrew Paxman, "Southern Renaissance," *Variety*, March 23, 1998, 43, 68; additional data from Mary Sutter, "Cinemark Opens Mex Theaters," *Daily Variety*, December 8, 1998, 6.

national markets. “We try to focus on what we consider noncompetitive markets,” Warner told *Daily Variety*. “Over 90 percent of our screens internationally are in noncompetitive markets, and we are very reluctant to go head-to-head and overbuild a market.”[38] Most importantly, the company had committed to this strategy early, when major markets like Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil were still underscreened and under the radar of foreign exhibition interests, allowing Cinemark to gain an early foothold. Second, Warner stressed that building in multiple territories helped guard against instability in a single country: “When we complete our strategy, we’re not going to be subject to the ups and downs of one country. Say there’s a blip in the Brazilian economy, Mexico or Argentina will make up for that.”[39] This aspect of Cinemark’s approach was especially important in the face of the economic crises that major markets like Mexico and Brazil faced over the decade. It also meant that the exhibitor retained flexibility when allocating its resources in the region, allowing it to shift its investments to respond to other events, like the entrance of a new competitor in a given market.

In many territories, partnerships with retail developers, especially with those managing the wave of shopping malls being built across the region, were critical for the success of cinemas, and Cinemark used this fact to its advantage. In Brazil, many exhibitors preferred to build in shopping complexes due to fears of urban crime. The securitized space of the mall and its monitored parking lots were seen to be critical to attracting upper- and middle-class audiences to new venues.[40] In Mexico, *Variety* reported that cinemas were not only appearing primarily in shopping malls but leading the development of new retail complexes. “The biggest trend in exhibition in Mexico is cinema-led development,” Anna Marie de la Fuente wrote. “While exhibitors are not making direct investments in shopping

developments, they have become the linchpin for their construction. Developers approach exhibs, asking them to sign on even before the land is leased or purchased. Without a cinema, the project doesn't happen. Unsurprisingly, then, the number of mall-based plexes is on the rise. The leaders in this area, by far, are Cinépolis and Cinemex, which almost without exception no longer construct standalone cinemas."[41] In both markets, Cinemark not only sought out mall locations, but partnered directly with developers. As it laid construction plans in Brazil in 1997, the company persuaded shopping mall managers to pitch in approximately $1.5 million to each of its $5 million sites.[42] In 1998, Cinemark struck a multisite partnership with Carrefour, the French hypermart company then building new locations in Mexico. According to *Daily Variety*, the partnership meant that Cinemark would have a "sense of security" about the tenant adjacent to the business and allow the cinema to benefit from the retailer's foot traffic, and vice versa.[43] This mutual dependence between mall developers and cinemas was an established feature of multiplexing in the US, where it is now waning, but continues to be a critical factor in the exhibition infrastructure of so-called developing markets in Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East, as I will discuss in the context of Chinese multiplex development later in this chapter.

At the end of the 1990s, Cinemark had executed the panregional Latin American strategy it had outlined at the start of the decade. Moving first into markets across the region, committing to long-term development of its circuit in promising but difficult markets like Brazil, and targeting its investments to avoid the fiercest competition all contributed to the company's ability to establish a robust theatrical base. By 1999, Cinemark had 70 theaters with 625 screens across Latin America.[44] Allocating resources outside of US markets helped the company to avoid the worst excesses of the US construction boom, while

enabling it to undertake a more unpredictable project than it might have otherwise been able to after the crash. Simultaneously, the expansionist mood of US-based exhibition companies that fueled the domestic megaplex boom and the enthusiasm for developing multiplexes in international markets were inextricably linked, and the atmosphere of optimism that preceded the US exhibition crash no doubt was one of the conditions of possibility for Cinemark's Latin American expansion. Cinemark's success came both from the timing of the project, the political economy of cinema infrastructure in the region, and its ability to use its resources strategically and unconventionally to establish itself against competitors. Before the crisis in exhibition struck and Cinemark was sold to Madison Dearborn Partners in 2004, its Latin American assets were well-established and generating significant revenues for the company. The status of its Latin American circuit meant that it was already an established asset bringing in substantial revenues, rather than a risky new venture that the new private equity owners would be tempted to offset to bolster the company's core US business. This would not be the case for the company's next attempts at expansion in Asia and Europe.

Asian and European Misadventures

As the end of 1990s neared, Cinemark began to look beyond Latin America in search of new global cinema markets where it could build multiplexes and become a regional exhibition power. Its first target was Japan. In 1997, the company signed a hundred-screen agreement with local producer-distributor Shochiku but, a year after the companies partnered to open their first cinema, a major management change at the studio resulted in a reversal of the deal.[45] Undeterred, Cinemark looked to Taiwan, where they signed a 1998 agreement with

local conglomerate and mall developer Core Pacific Development. The partners planned to open multiplex theaters across the country, and Cinemark reportedly hoped to use the deal to open the way for further expansion in Hong Kong and China.[46] By 2000, they were also looking to Europe, and had agreements in place to open forty-one screens in the United Kingdom and a new multiplex in Germany. "The strategy has been to first focus and get our company up and operating throughout Latin America, which we've accomplished," Warner told *Daily Variety*. "Now, the countries have become sort of self-sustaining, and that allows us to focus on Europe, and then Asia."[47] This strategy soon faced local difficulties as well as a reversal of the intense optimism US-based exhibition companies had enjoyed in the 1990s.

Cinemark faced challenges in Taiwan, including a three-year admissions slide, land scarcity, scant shopping complexes outside Taipei, permit delays, and foreign competition.[48] The company opened its first cinema in Taipei's Core Pacific City Centre, a twenty-six-story complex open twenty-four hours a day that was touted as one of Asia's first "city-within-a-city" shopping centers. The new cinema became the country's second highest-attended theater.[49] Cinemark also opened an eleven-screen site in Kaohsiung as part of its deal with Core Pacific.[50] But the partnership with the developer soon stagnated, though Cinemark would manage its two Taiwanese theaters through 2006.[51]

The European deals were even shorter lived. In 2001, Cinemark was already looking to sell its interests on the continent, part of a widespread exit from Europe's cinema market by foreign operators, including US competitor AMC, that led to increased consolidation in several territories.[52] For US operators, challenges in their home market with the sector-wide crisis in exhibition detailed in chapter 1 also contributed to their sudden reluctance to make a play for the highly competitive European market.[53] After the US crisis had cooled in 2004,

Cinemark was purchased by new owners Madison Dearborn Partners, a private equity firm that (like many of its peers that owned movie theaters) had little appetite for untested ventures in unfamiliar territories. That year, Cinemark stated in its annual report that it would "continue to consider selective opportunities for development of modern multiplex theaters in underserved international markets, emphasizing Latin America, funded primarily with cash flow generated in those markets."[54] The unwillingness to invest in international markets beyond the income they already generated indicated that, for Cinemark, the moment for large-scale international expansion had departed.

Writing in *Daily Variety*, Adam Dawtrey evaluated the exit of foreign cinema owners from Europe as part of a broader shift away from global expansion in exhibition. "The trend is no longer for widely flung, thinly spread empires. Instead, cinema owners are concentrating their power and resources within national boundaries via mergers or takeovers." According to Dawtrey, the stateside crisis in exhibition, still close to its height in mid-2001, not only encouraged foreign entrants to reverse their European multiplex plans, but motivated mergers from local operators. "What's clear is that everyone is seeking critical mass to protect themselves from the kind of fallout that has driven several US circuits into bankruptcy," he wrote.[55] Indeed, the appetite for international and, especially, intercontinental multiplex construction that US-owned companies like Cinemark, AMC, and UCI, and Warner Bros. International Theaters led throughout the 1990s was followed by a sharp retreat into national and regional consolidation in the US and other markets around the world, as I will discuss in more detail below.

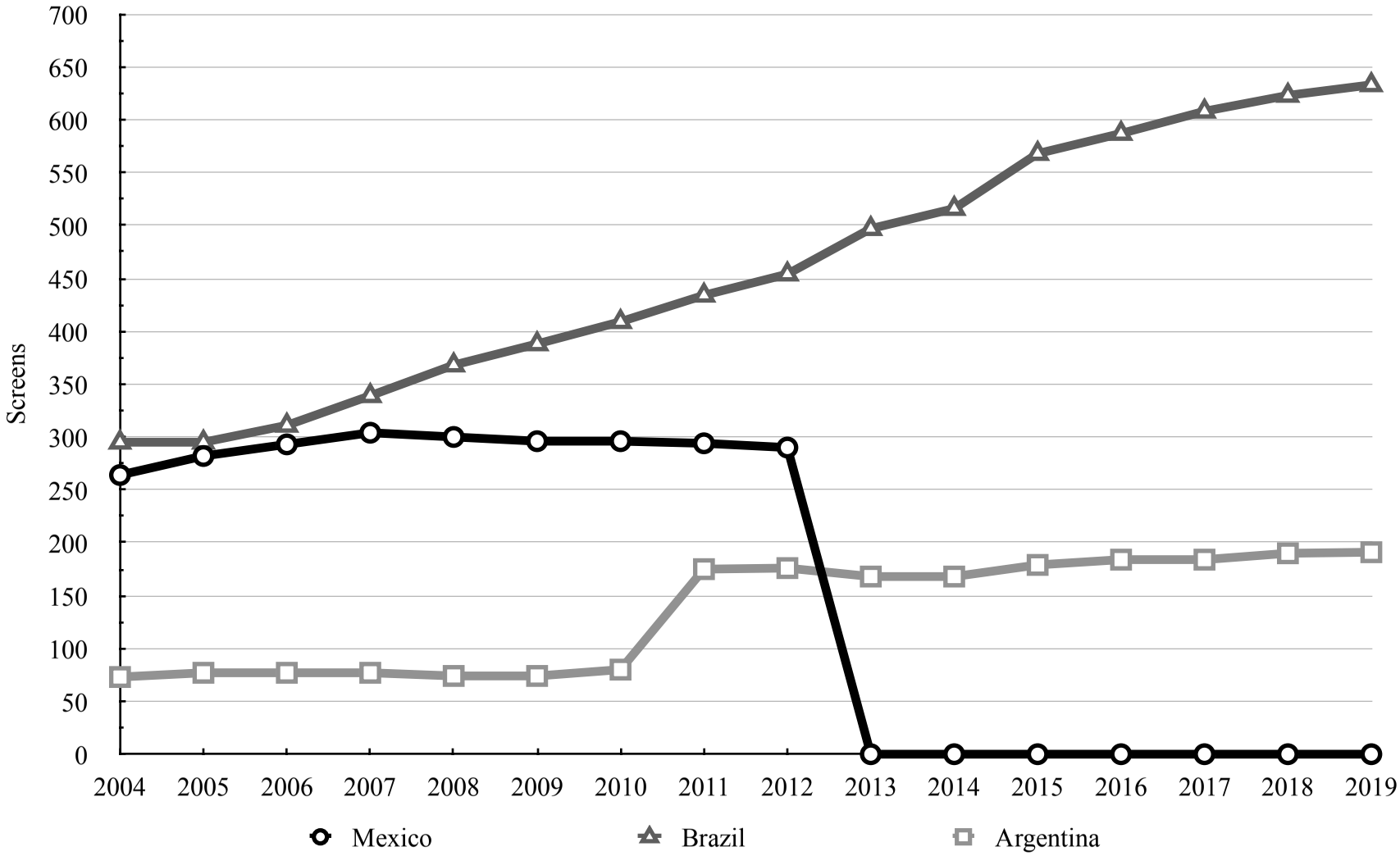
Long-Term Strategies in Latin America

Even within Latin America, Cinemark was in the process of adjusting its strategy, focusing on maintaining its cinemas in markets where it was powerful, shedding sites in areas it couldn't dominate, and moving into less developed markets. As Warner had indicated it would, Cinemark slowed its building pace in Mexico to a trickle. Between 2004 and 2007, the company only built four new Mexican theaters, then held steady at thirty-one sites in the market for the next six years (see figure 8 and table 22). In February 2013, Cinemark announced it would sell its Mexican locations to Cinemex, allowing it to focus on other markets in Central and South America, where the company saw greater growth potential.[56] Cinemark's cinema construction also slowed substantially in Argentina (see figure 8 and table 22), especially as cinemas began to crowd one another in wealthy neighborhoods of Buenos Aires by the mid-2000s.[57] However, Cinemark strengthened its position in Argentina in 2011 by acquiring Hoyts General Cinema's South American assets. With the deal, the company doubled its screen count in the Argentinian market and became the territory's largest exhibitor with a 39 percent market share.[58] Though new construction plateaued, the chain remained the top exhibitor in Argentina through 2019.[59]

Among major markets, Cinemark saw its greatest growth in Brazil during the 2000s and 2010s. During this period, the company used its position as the country's leading exhibitor to continue to develop the country's multiplex market. As in Mexico, Argentina, and other Latin American countries, cinema construction was concentrated in affluent neighborhoods of major cities.[60] *Variety* assessed the situation in Brazil in 2007:

> The exhibition biz caters to the typical Brazilian moviegoer, who is an upper-class resident of a fancy neighborhood in a large city. In smaller towns and in blue-collar

Figure 8: Cinemark Movie Theater Screens; Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina; 2004 to 2019



Sources: Data from Cinemark annual reports (2005, 9; 2006, 9; 2007, 9; 2008, 7; 2009, 7; 2010, 8; 2011, 7; 2012, 8; 2013, 9; 2014, 9; 2015, 9; 2016, 9; 2017, 9; 2018, 9; 2019, 8; 2020, 8).

Table 22: Cinemark Theater Circuit; Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina; 2004 to 2019

	Brazil		**Mexico**		**Argentina**	
	Sites	*Screens*	*Sites*	*Screens*	*Sites*	*Screens*
2004	34	295	27	264	8	73
2005	34	295	29	282	9	77
2006	36	311	30	293	9	77
2007	40	339	31	304	9	77
2008	44	368	31	300	9	74
2009	46	388	31	296	9	74
2010	49	409	31	296	10	80
2011	53	434	31	294	20	175
2012	56	454	31	290	20	176
2013	62	497	0	0	19	168
2014	65	516	0	0	19	168
2015	74	568	0	0	20	179
2016	78	587	0	0	21	184
2017	81	608	0	0	21	184
2018	84	623	0	0	22	190
2019	86	633	0	0	22	191

Sources: Data from Cinemark annual reports (2005, 9; 2006, 9; 2007, 9; 2008, 7; 2009, 7; 2010, 8; 2011, 7; 2012, 8; 2013, 9; 2014, 9; 2015, 9; 2016, 9; 2017, 9; 2018, 9; 2019, 8; 2020, 8).

> neighborhoods of big cities, the growth of network TV saw the demise of smaller theaters…. Cinemark, UCI, the Ribeiro Group and other local exhibs chose to build plexes mostly in shopping centers in rich areas of the biggest cities. And they have raised ticket prices above the inflation rate. For lower- and middle-class families, going to a movie theater is an expensive proposition and, in most cases, requires a trip to a distant location. There are plenty of other less expensive, closer forms of entertainment, including DVDs. Consequently, the DVD rental market has rapidly expanded. And, also consequently, the pirate DVD market has boomed.[61]

As it continued to build Brazilian multiplexes, Cinemark benefited from local exhibitors' (including the Ribeiro Group's) lack of access to foreign capital and the resulting time disadvantage they suffered in accessing prime sites in affluent areas. Interest rates for local financing that averaged 30 percent prevented local exhibitors from participating in large-scale multiplex construction. Meanwhile, operators with access to foreign capital, including Cinemark, built unchallenged by local competition well into the 2000s. Even after the Brazilian government established modest programs to bolster local exhibitors, these players had lost time and access to many prime, revenue-generating locations constructed by foreign operators in the early waves of building.[62] From 2005 to 2019, Cinemark grew steadily in Brazil, going from 295 screens in 2004 to 633 by 2019 (see figure 8 and table 22). It remained the country's top exhibitor until 2019, maintaining its dominance in the market for over two decades.[63]

Cinemark also continued to develop its panregional strategy by bolstering its existing holdings and entering new national markets in the region. The company remained the top exhibitor in Chile and maintained a steady presence in many of the smaller countries it had

built in during the 1990s. While expansion was more modest than it had been during the 90s gold rush, the company entered Panama, Guatemala, Curaçao, Bolivia and Paraguay during this period (see tables 23 and 24). Though the growth of each national circuit was modest outside Brazil, the company went from 869 to 1,487 screens across Latin America between 2004 and 2019.[64] Cinemark had committed to developing its presence in the region over the long term, allowing the exhibitor to find new pockets of growth outside the large domestic and international acquisitions and heavy debt loads that had fueled the growth of the other US exhibition giants during this period. As I will demonstrate in the next two sections, Cinemark's Latin American circuit is the rare remnant of a period of global interest from US companies in developing multiplexes in international markets. As Cinemark's Latin American competitors and its own experience in Asia and Europe indicate, most of these efforts failed in the face of a changing exhibition landscape at home and difficulties maintaining a foothold in diverse markets abroad. These failures marked the beginning of a period of national and regional consolidation in the global exhibition market that would persist for more than a decade.

AMC Falters Overseas

As Cinemark and other US exhibitors were aiming to build new cinema circuits in Latin America, AMC was also mulling an ambitious international expansion, though it's approach from the outset was wildly ambitious in scope. In 1992, AMC announced that it had set its sights on underscreened markets in Asia and Europe.[65] By 1993, the company had established regional offices in Hong Kong, Paris, Toronto, and Mexico City, adding Canada and Latin America to its already ambitious plans.[66] In Asia, AMC initially targeted Taiwan,

Table 23: Cinemark Theatre Circuit; Colombia, Central America, and Chile; 2004 to 2019

	Colombia		**Central America**[1]		**Chile**	
	Sites	*Screens*	*Sites*	*Screens*	*Sites*	*Screens*
2004	5	34	9	59	12	91
2005	7	44	10	67	12	91
2006	8	50	12	80	12	91
2007	9	56	12	81	12	91
2008	10	60	12	79	12	91
2009	11	64	12	81	11	87
2010	12	68	12	83	11	87
2011	16	88	12	83	12	92
2012	18	99	14	96	13	101
2013	24	129	14	98	13	102
2014	28	144	15	110	16	113
2015	29	151	17	124	16	114
2016	32	170	17	124	17	117
2017	35	193	17	126	18	126
2018	36	202	21	147	19	133
2019	36	207	22	153	19	127

[1]Includes Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Guatemala, and Curaçao.

Source: Data from Cinemark annual reports (2005, 9; 2006, 9; 2007, 9; 2008, 7; 2009, 7; 2010, 8; 2011, 7; 2012, 8; 2013, 9; 2014, 9; 2015, 9; 2016, 9; 2017, 9; 2018, 9; 2019, 8; 2020, 8).

Table 24: Cinemark Theater Circuit; Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Paraguay; 2004 to 2019

	Peru		**Ecuador**		**Bolivia**		**Paraguay**	
	Sites	*Screens*	*Sites*	*Screens*	*Sites*	*Screens*	*Sites*	*Screens*
2004	3	30	3	23	0	0	0	0
2005	3	30	4	26	0	0	0	0
2006	4	37	4	26	0	0	0	0
2007	4	37	4	26	0	0	0	0
2008	5	43	4	26	0	0	0	0
2009	6	50	4	26	0	0	0	0
2010	8	64	4	26	0	0	0	0
2011	10	76	5	32	0	0	0	0
2012	10	76	5	32	0	0	0	0
2013	10	76	6	36	0	0	0	0
2014	10	77	6	36	1	13	0	0
2015	12	84	7	45	1	13	0	0
2016	13	93	7	45	1	13	1	10
2017	13	93	7	45	1	13	1	10
2018	13	93	8	51	1	13	1	10
2019	14	102	8	51	1	13	1	10

Source: Data from Cinemark annual reports (2005, 9; 2006, 9; 2007, 9; 2008, 7; 2009, 7; 2010, 8; 2011, 7; 2012, 8; 2013, 9; 2014, 9; 2015, 9; 2016, 9; 2017, 9; 2018, 9; 2019, 8; 2020, 8).

Japan, and Singapore.[67] In Europe, its executives planned to eventually operate between three thousand and five thousand screens, first eyeing construction in France, Italy, Germany, and Spain.[68] *Variety* also reported the company's interest in Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, and Cuba, though these developments never came to fruition.[69] As it planned this international expansion, AMC was the third-largest exhibitor in the United States and was laying building plans for early megaplex sites at home. As discussed in chapter 1, the company would soon introduce supersized sites of twenty screens or more to the domestic market. These theaters featured stadium seating, curved screens, three-way sound, and other amenities that raised building costs for itself and its competitors as the 1990s construction boom kicked off. Looking to this domestic activity alongside the company's stated international ambitions indicates that AMC understood itself as an industry leader in the United States and considered its expertise in the industry and the elaborate complexes they planned to build as unmatched by competitors abroad. But when the company's strategies for these far-flung territories played out (often shifting the goalposts from the initial projections), that assumed dominance was tested by an array of tricky local conditions and fierce competition from both local and foreign operators.

AMC struggled mightily to establish a foothold in European cinema markets as it developed cinemas in Portugal, Spain, France, the United Kingdom, and Sweden. Commentators expressed reservations about the difficulties AMC would face in Europe before the company had built its first multiplex in the territory. These hurdles including challenging financing, steep construction costs, intense competition, and country-specific issues with film rental expenses and building regulations. David Seal, executive vice-president of AMC Entertainment International, acknowledged the challenges to *Variety*:

"Our balance sheet, like most US exhibitors, is not great. We don't have a lot of money to throw at co-ventures. We will mostly bring our expertise, sweat, and ability to turn [new cinemas] on."[70] Here, Seal was referring to the consequences of multiplex building and upgrades that had swept up US exhibition in the late 1980s, leaving exhibitors with high debt and less cash on hand. Nevertheless, AMC forged ahead, announcing tentative deals for Portuguese and Spanish theaters in 1993; it took until 1996 and 1997, respectively, to open its first multiplexes in these territories, though the sites quickly became high earners.[71] However, AMC faced significant competition from foreign and local exhibitors alike in both countries and development soon stalled.[72] In France, the situation was even more difficult. AMC faced the entrenched power of large local exhibitors who were well-established in the market and who successfully lobbied local governments to block the company's new sites. The result was that AMC was ultimately limited to a single complex in Dunkirk.[73] A re-entry to the United Kingdom, following a previous effort in the mid-1980s, was announced in 1996 and resulted in the construction of a Manchester complex, but fizzled as the company faced heavy competition from local exhibitors.[74] A Stockholm theater announced in 1997 also triggered defensive action from local cinema operators.[75] In the most dramatic instance of local resistance, Sweden's largest vertically integrated film studio, Svensk Filmindustri (SF, which controlled 65 percent of the country's screens), refused to sell domestic and co-production product to the AMC site after it opened in 2001.[76] As result, the complex brought in only a sixth of its expected earnings in its first year.[77] AMC had underestimated the strength of its competition in Europe, as well as the increased difficulty of developing in so many countries simultaneously.

The company faced similar challenges in Asia, despite the comparative lack of competition in multiplex construction compared to the situation it faced in Europe. AMC especially struggled in Japan, where it attracted the ire of vertically integrated studios who used their distribution power to restrict the company's access to film product. The company was not the first foreign multiplex operator to enter Japan. Partnering with local supermarket company Nichii, Warner Bros. International Theatres (WBIT) had brought multiplexes to the country in 1993 under the Warner-Mycal brand, building primarily in shopping complexes outside the country's nine major cities. These large cities were the power centers of Japan's vertically integrated studio-exhibitors. Warner Mycal avoided antagonizing the studios by competing directly with their cinemas, since Japan's status as the most lucrative market for US film exports further meant that these studios had significant control over the distribution of local and US titles.[78] But when AMC opened its first complex in 1996, it did so in the heart of the Japanese studios' home turf in Fukuoka, a move that *Variety* called a "declaration of war."[79] The company initially had significant difficulties securing first run titles from the studios and had to contend with distributors' heavy-handed control over the terms of film bookings, which meant that its access to lucrative films were often blocked in the critical first weeks of a film's release.[80] Despite these challenges (and competition from foreign and domestic cinema operators who also sensed opportunity in the market), AMC was able to build three more multiplexes in Japan over the next several years.[81] After several delays, the company also opened a complex at Hong Kong's Festival Walk mall in Kowloon in December 1998; AMC hoped building in Hong Kong could also help them establish a presence in mainland China in the future.[82] Still, they failed to gain much traction in Asia beyond these initial sites.

AMC was struggling with local conditions in new markets, but its resources were also stretched thin as it built simultaneously in far-flung countries across three continents. Assessing the state of domestic exhibition companies' interests abroad, *Variety* identified AMC as a company whose strategic position was weak. "You need economies of scale," exhibition analyst Bryan Krug told the magazine. "AMC Entertainment is losing money overseas because they don't have the economies of scale." Without naming AMC, WBIT president Millard Ochs was blunter: "To have one theater in one country and another theater in another country, that's suicide."[83] AMC was also a major participant in the Canada-US megaplex boom, constructing among the largest, most expensive theater sites of the period. This degree of domestic investment—especially as competition for key US markets reached a fever pitch and drove costs higher—strained resources for international expansion.

At the height of the company's global construction activity, it was shaken by two major developments: the death of its CEO and the debt crisis across the domestic exhibition industry. Together, these events effectively ended the company's expansion overseas. In May 1999, in the wake of pressures of its stock price and growing concern overscreening in the US market, AMC announced it would scale back the size of new domestic complexes.[84] Two months later, the company's founder and CEO Stanley Durwood died at age seventy-eight. Takeover rumors flew, and Peter Brown, the company's co-chairman and president, succeeded Durwood as the AMC's new chairman and CEO.[85] Soon after, the domestic exhibition industry collapsed under the weight of the megaplex crisis. AMC rapidly curbed spending and expansion plans as its stock price plummeted and it rushed to stabilize itself financially.[86] Protecting its domestic business was a key priority as the company adjusted to the leadership change and the sector-wide crisis. As construction activity stopped, even the

company's plans to build Canadian cinemas were rapidly curtailed.[87] Hopes of expansion into new territories became a distant consideration.

AMC was rescued from the immediate crisis by a new private equity owner, but the company's new investors had little interest in funding the company's international projects. Private equity firm Apollo Management purchased a partial share of the chain in 2001, turning AMC from one of several struggling exhibitors to one of the large theater chains looking to acquire its competitors and consolidate quickly. This consolidation, described in chapter 1, was limited to the US market, where AMC's position was already strong; new ventures in Europe and Asia languished. Like Cinemark, the crisis and new private equity involvement ended AMC's ambitions to build up its own global circuit. With only a handful of screens in these markets, any meaningful return would require immediate investment to outpace local exhibitors who were also building multiplexes, a longer-term commitment to establishing a presence in these markets, and a significant degree of risk in operating in unfamiliar territories whose distribution structures, laws, retail environments, and audience behavior was much less predictable. AMC's new owner would be joined by four other private equity firms over the next few years when Apollo partially cashed out its investment to JP Morgan and the two merged AMC with Loews-Cineplex, then jointly owned by Bain Capital, the Carlyle Group, and Spectrum Equity. Seeking short-term profitability and the creation of new efficiencies, these investors were ill-suited to furthering the chain's international expansion.

During its domestic consolidation, AMC gained several international circuits but showed little interest in developing them. When the chain purchased General Cinema in 2002, it inherited a joint venture stake in South America's Hoyts-General Cinema. AMC's

merger with the spun-off US assets of Loews Cineplex in early 2006 also brought Mexico's Cinemex and a joint venture stake in Spain's Yelmo Cineplex under its control. By now the chain's AMC's international assets had been identified as inessential to the company's core business. Under the ownership of a consortium of private equity companies, most of the European, Asian, and Latin American screens were sold between 2005 and 2009, further indicating the investors' disinterest in expanding its domestic cinema circuits overseas.[88] The crisis and its aftermath meant AMC pivoted its strategy to stabilization and expansion in the domestic market until 2012, mirroring the domestic focus of fellow exhibition giants Regal Cinemas and Cineplex Entertainment. This decade-long retreat from international markets would be an enduring feature of the 2000s for US exhibition companies.

International Contraction, Domestic Dominance

Cinemark and AMC's reversal from their ambitious plans for world-spanning cinema circuits indicated a broader shift in US exhibition's attitude towards the promise of developing new cinema circuits in foreign markets. Of the large domestic exhibition companies, Cinemark and AMC had been the most active in overseas markets during the 1990s and early 2000s. Exhibitors with sizeable US circuits including General Cinema, Hoyts (based in Australia but active in the US), National Amusements, and, briefly, United Artists, attempted to build their own circuits in Latin America, but their plans were less ambitious from the outset than either AMC or Cinemark, which were each aiming to create global circuits.[89] By the early 2000s, Cinemark had developed a self-sustaining business across Latin America and would continue to invest in new cinema construction there, especially in Brazil and a number of smaller markets in Central and South America.

Cinemark's Latin American business was the exception to the broader trends of the period. The domestic debt crisis in exhibition put a stop to its efforts to spread its international business to Europe and Asia, particularly after its purchase by Madison Dearborn partners in 2004. AMC learned quick and painful lessons as it aimed to build Asian and European multiplexes, and soon found itself in retreat under private equity owners who sold off existing and newly acquired international sites piece by piece. Cinemark's sale of its European assets and AMC's purchase by Apollo Management both took place in 2001. From this time until the early 2010s, domestic exhibitors largely abandoned development efforts in international markets.[90]

Alongside the future exhibition giants expanding their circuits abroad, two US exhibition companies owned by major studios, Warner Bros. International Theaters (WBIT) and United Cinemas International (UCI, jointly owned by Paramount and Universal), were also developing cinemas exclusively for international markets in Europe, Latin America, and Europe during the 1990s and early 2000s, as mentioned throughout the first two sections of this chapter. These efforts to globalize exhibition were also winding down by the mid-2000s. UCI's European and Brazilian assets were broken up and sold in 2005 to European private equity firm Terra Firma Capital Partners and National Amusements, respectively.[91] WBIC (now Warner Bros. International *Cinemas*) sold the last of its European circuit in 2005 and exited its investments in China in 2006 after the national government reversed recent changes to cinema ownership laws. The final sale of WBIC's assets in Asia to its Japanese partner, the Aeon Group (formerly Mycal), came in late 2012, but the company's global holdings were already much diminished by this time.[92] Efforts to build global exhibition empires from the ground up, which looked so promising during the heyday of 1990s multi-

and megaplexing, were in decline. The industrial focus of domestic and international exhibition markets alike had generally shifted towards consolidation within national borders and, at most, was restricted within regional networks.

For the three of the four top domestic exhibition giants, this trend held for a decade. Even Cinemark, which continued to develop its Latin American business, albeit at a slower pace, held back from further international expansion and participated actively in the consolidation activity reshaping the US market. AMC abandoned its more ambitious plans for global expansion in the face of industrial challenges abroad and at home and allowed its existing assets to languish under private equity ownership. Other future exhibition giants had restricted their expansion to the US-Canada market from the outset. Regal Cinemas and Loews Cineplex, both founded in the 1980s, had focused on catching up to more established exhibitors in the domestic market through significant acquisition and construction activity. For Regal, this had meant a clear focus on the US market which it went on to maintain for nearly three decades following its founding in 1988. The Cineplex Corporation, founded in Toronto in 1979, built from the outset on both sides of the border. The theater chain soon made major acquisitions of Odeon Cinemas (in Canada) and Plitt Theaters (in the US), among others, that made them one of the largest exhibitors in the domestic market. The Onex corporation, Cineplex's crisis-era private equity owner, spun off the chain's US and international theaters in 2005, disaggregating exhibition operations in the US and Canada from one another. Cineplex's focus on the Canadian market was solidified by its acquisition of Famous Players in 2005, which turned the Canadian duopoly into a monopoly. From the early 2000s to the early 2010s, AMC, Cineplex, and Regal's operations were focused on their national markets, a focus that was reflected in the approaches to consolidation,

diversification, and premium cinema discussed in chapters 1, 2, and 3, in which companies pursued scale and growth opportunities largely within their own borders. Ultimately, it was this activity, which enabled them to establish dominance of the domestic market during the 2000s that made them attractive acquisition targets for the global exhibition empires that emerged in the 2010s. Global exhibition companies Dalian Wanda and Cineworld, each run by ambitious executives that had established their careers by building chains in developing cinema markets, would reverse the flow of global exhibition connections in the 2010s as they aimed to assemble international that connected the largest cinema markets across the globe. Domestic exhibition giants became instrumental members of these networks, in part because they had so effectively dominated their national cinema markets and provided easy entry points to the US market.

From Beijing to Hollywood, Through Kansas City: The Wanda-AMC Acquisition

Wanda's Cinema Chains Criss-Cross the World

Selling off the investments it had made in international markets allowed AMC to deal with strategic initiatives at home including acquiring competitors, diversifying the cinema business, transitioning to digital cinema infrastructure, and investing in premium cinema technologies. These activities, centered on building power in the domestic market, allowed AMC to rise alongside Regal Cinemas, Cinemark, and Cineplex into the ranks of US exhibition giants. Despite the maturity if the US cinema market, the dominance of these domestic exhibition giants and their investments in the 2000s and early 2010s meant that they still showed modest growth potential. Crucially, they were poised to benefit from increased strain on small and midsize exhibitors in the wake of the digital cinema transition,

the rise of streaming platforms, and the upscaling of the cinema business. These pressures had already furthered the consolidation of the domestic cinema market and it was likely that business would increasingly flow to exhibition giants over their smaller, less resourced competitors. AMC was still owned by the group of private equity companies that made up Marquee Holdings. Unlike Marquee, other private equity firms involved in exhibition at the time had managed to offload much of their investments by taking their companies public. Given these market conditions and the conventional three- to five-year term of private equity investments, it was likely by the early 2010s that AMC would soon change hands and find a new owner.

But when it emerged in trade press that Chinese conglomerate Dalian Wanda Group was in talks to buy AMC in May 2012, the buyer, if not the sale itself, was a surprise to many commentators.[93] Among other assets in real estate, entertainment, and hospitality, Wanda owned Wanda Cinema Line, the largest theater circuit in China, which was then the second-largest and fastest growing box office market in the world. Unlike US exhibition company's periodic adventures abroad, however, it was highly unusual for a foreign cinema company to target the mature US market for expansion. Nonetheless, if Wanda's ambition was to own a major slice of the US cinema market, it was not unusual that the exhibitor it chose was AMC, given the circuit's strong market position and long-term efforts to upgrade its theaters with premium cinema options, expanded concession menus, recliner seating, and in-theater dining. Within a month of the rumors reaching the press, the sale was official. For AMC's private equity owners, the result of the acquisition was modest profits after seven years of investment, many of them spent looking for a buyer.[94] For Wanda's ambitious founder and chairman Wang Jianlin, the sale—the company's first major overseas

investment—represented a decisive entrance to the stage of global commerce. The $2.6 billion deal, when combined with Wanda Cinema Line, would make the conglomerate the world's largest cinema owner with over 5,000 screens.[95] Wang told the press that Wanda would continue pursuing cinema chain acquisitions in the US and Europe; AMC was just the beginning.[96]

The Dalian Wanda Group, named for the city it was in founded in 1988, had become a major force in the Chinese real estate, hospitality, and leisure industry under Wang's leadership. Gaining a reputation for successful developments alongside capital and political connections, in the 2000s Wanda began to focus on the interdependency of residential, shopping, and entertainment offerings within shared urban spaces through its Wanda Plaza developments. These developments sprawling shopping complexes that included apartments and condominiums as well as retail space. At its Wanda Plaza's, the company would own the complexes' commercial and residential real estate and its anchor tenants, which were often cinemas.[97] In 2002, Wanda entered into a joint venture agreement with WBIT to expand multiplex construction in China. This partnership gave Wanda an opportunity to learn about the business, management and design of contemporary multiplex cinemas. After its four-year partnership with WBIT ended abruptly due to a shifting Chinese policy on foreign cinema ownership, Wanda poured its new knowledge into its solely owned cinema chain, Wanda Cinema.[98] As property markets slowed and the Chinese government showed increasing support for building the country's soft power at home and overseas, Wanda's corporate strategy increasingly shifted to culturally oriented projects including department stores, tourism, theme parks, and movie theaters. By 2010, Wanda Cinema Line had grown to seventy-two sites and six hundred screens, with nearly $212 million in grosses, the

highest of any Chinese theater chain; in 2011 it became the country's largest exhibitor.[99] While relatively unknown abroad, the conglomerate was seen as a leader in the country's real estate, leisure, and entertainment sectors, in part due to the spectacular speed, scale, number of the projects that helped it construct its reputation as a juggernaut.[100] Soon, however, it began to look abroad to stage its next spectacle.

As its exhibition might was solidifying within China in 2010, the conglomerate first began to consider acquiring AMC. The US exhibitor had made an initial IPO filing in June 2010, which was read as interest in a sale and drew in several parties interested in buying the company, including Wanda.[101] AMC's then CEO, Gerry Lopez, was on a business trip to Hong Kong and was invited to meet Wang to discuss the sale. Lopez later described this first conversation to *Wall Street Journal* reporter Eric Schwartzel: "Wang had identified companies for sale that would help him dominate certain sectors. Wang told Lopez that he wanted to be number one in four areas of business: movie theaters, commercial real estate, department stores, and hotels. After becoming number one in those sectors in China, he would become number one in the world.…Buying an American company and taking it public soon afterward would signal to the world that he—and his country—meant business."[102] When Wang was able to finalize the AMC deal in 2012, he had taken a major leap towards this goal in the global exhibition industry.

The AMC acquisition was Wanda's first step in taking its national exhibition empire global, in part due to the US company's existing domestic dominance and expertise in the exhibition industry. AMC was, of course, the second-largest US theater chain, which gave it the necessary scale to be both a competitive and an impressive acquisition for Wanda. Beyond its size, AMC was an attractive acquisition for Wanda because it had invested

heavily in upgrading its cinemas technologically and experientially in the years before the purchase. As discussed in chapter 3, AMC had been very active in installing premium cinema technology and was also one of the first in the domestic market to renovate standard auditoria with plush recliner seating, importing the concept from a handful of luxury cinema chains in Europe. AMC claimed the renovations increased attendance figures at newly remodeled sites, and the trend was soon picked up by competitors across the domestic market.[103] AMC had also upgraded its concession offerings and expanded in-theater dining concepts.[104] As ever, up-to-date spaces and cinema-infrastructure were critical to making the acquisition of a cinema chain valuable for new owners, who would not need to invest in bringing cinemas up to contemporary standards after the purchase. Wanda also saw potential for learning from AMC's experience in the cinema business, especially when it came to international expansion, according to Lopez. "AMC has operated in South America, Europe and Asia," he pointed out, citing AMC's tumultuous experience with international cinema ownership in the late 1990s and early 2000s. "We have on our staff people who are used to cross-border transaction and foreign exchange and who know what it takes to operate buildings in many parts of the world…. They are doing other jobs now, but the ability to understand how to operate a multinational circuit resides within AMC. Chairman Wang has made a point early on, and he has continued to do so, that Wanda is buying not just the assets of AMC but also its management team to help develop and build a global footprint."[105] With its domestic power, upgraded cinema spaces, and international experience (not matter how mixed that experience was), AMC was well-suited to help Wanda realize its ambitions to build a global exhibition empire.

Wanda began its tenure as AMC's owner by making a strategic investment to accelerate AMC's ongoing cinema upgrades and strategic initiatives. Wanda put $500 million into AMC after the acquisition, earmarked to help AMC more quickly embrace enhanced screening technologies, roll out expanded concessions and dine-in screens, fund theater construction and renovation, expand its loyalty program, and increase its investments in branding and marketing.[106] Among these initiatives, Wanda backed a $600 million effort in 2014 to renovate a third of AMC's circuit (approximately 1,800 screens) to recliner seating.[107] Wang discussed these investments in bolstering the US exhibitor's competitive position as the result of a further-reaching perspective than was possible under the chain's previous owners: "Private equity lacks the long-term vision that we have," he told the *Wall Street Journal*.[108] Indeed, Wang's recent experience developing Wanda Cinema Line likely influenced these investments. Unlike AMC's previous private equity owners, which ultimately aimed to invest just enough to be able to sell AMC at a profit in a few years' time, Wang had been willing to spend to create cinemas that stood out to consumers even within China's booming cinema scene and develop a large circuit that could command the market at home. Now, he was prepared to do the same to develop his new foreign asset. These investments soon paid off. Wanda took AMC public in 2013 but retained its majority voting power.[109] With the IPO, AMC raised $331 million, reflecting a valuation twice what Wanda paid for the circuit in 2012. The proceeds from the IPO were earmarked for paying down debt, theater renovations, and acquisitions.[110]

In mid-2015, Wanda took its next step towards global dominance by adding one of Australia's exhibition giants to its growing portfolio. Hoyts Cinemas had followed a similar pattern to exhibition giants in the years preceding its sale to Wanda. Hoyts had been

purchased by the Sydney-based private equity firm Pacific Equity Partners in 2007, which oversaw the major acquisition of Australian Multiplex Cinemas in 2010, strengthening the company's position in the consolidated Australian market.[111] Wanda's purchase of Hoyts closely followed an aborted IPO attempt for the chain led by Pacific Equity; shaky financial markets prompted the private equity firm to sell the chain instead.[112] The Hoyts deal added 450 screens to its now tricontinental circuit and may have signaled the company's intentions to flex its exhibition might across the Asia-Pacific region.[113] Already a major force in the global exhibition market due to its control of key chains in the two largest world cinema markets, Wanda was now at work filling in the rest of the map.

Buying AMC and Hoyts did more than demonstrate Wanda's appetite for global exhibition acquisitions; it anticipated the unveiling of the company's broader ambitions to create a vertically integrated global film studio that might blend American and Chinese assets and cultural content. In 2013, Wanda unveiled plans for its Oriental Movie Metropolis, a five-hundred-acre studio complex in Qingdao (halfway between Beijing and Shanghai) set to be the world's largest. In addition to its expansive, state-of-the art studio facilities (managed with the guidance of Pinewood Shepperton), the Oriental Movie Metropolis is housed within an $8.2 billion residential and tourist development featuring "apartment complexes, upscale condominiums, eight resort hotels, four theme parks, a convention center, a three-hundred berth yacht club, a hospital, a school, a shopping mall, a nightlife district, and, of course, Asia's largest theater."[114] The studio and the sprawling development that housed it were tailor-made to attract Hollywood film productions. In line with rising competition among global service centers seeking to attract Hollywood productions, the complex offered generous subsidies for global producers through a

combination of funds from Wanda and Qingdao's regional government.[115] More enticing still, the complex opened the opportunity for foreign producers to gain coveted coproduction status for their projects. This would allow foreign films to circumvent the constraints of the Chinese quota system, which controlled access to the cinema market. Then, the number of film imports for theatrical distribution was capped at thirty-four films per year and the foreign share of ticket revenues could not exceed 25 percent.[116] Michael Curtin argues it was this feature, alongside the promise of partnership with the PRC's largest cinema circuit, that set the Oriental Movie Metropolis from other global facilities competing with logistical support, tax rebates, and subsidies to attract Hollywood production to their shores.[117] Indeed, at a Los Angeles gala showcasing the studio, Wang incorporated the size of the Chinese cinema market—and the access to it Wanda could offer—as a major selling point for the Qingdao complex, stating that not only would Chinese box office revenues soon surpass the US's as the world's highest, but offering the astounding prediction that "by 2026, China's box office will reach $30 billion, accounting for 40 to 50 percent of the global market share."[118]

The Oriental Movie Metropolis was only one aspect of Wanda's turn towards creating a vertically integrated global film division; the company was also laying the groundwork for acquisitions of or investments in established Hollywood players. By 2014, the conglomerate was seeking acquisitions in Hollywood, investigating purchases of mini-majors Lionsgate, MGM, and DreamWorks before spending up to $3.5 billion to acquire a majority stake Legendary Entertainment in January 2016.[119] Legendary, primarily a film production company, had contributed to several entries in the Batman, Jurassic World, and Pacific Rim franchises that were crossover successes in China. Legendary also operated a

division, Legendary East, that was designed to facilitate co-productions to bypass the PRC's quota system with films like *Warcraft* (2016, China/USA/Canada/Japan) and *The Great Wall* (2016, China/USA/Japan).[120] Later that year, Wanda advanced in talks to buy 49 percent of Paramount for $4 billion, but the deal that collapsed in the face of internal power struggles at the company.[121] After the halted talks with Paramount, Wanda continued to court the majors, setting up a coproduction deal with Sony. Wang also spoke openly about his plans to set up a multi-billion-dollar investment fund to invest in the productions of all six major studios.[122] "I wanted to acquire one of the big six, but whether we can is a different story—it's uncertain," Wang told the *Hollywood Reporter*. "I might as well start from wherever I can, such as through investment with all six. We will continue to work on a potential acquisition. But it won't hurt to start by doing what we can. Participating via investment seems like a wise choice for the time being."[123] After its attention-grabbing bid for AMC, Wanda was beginning to establish its reputation as a major player in global Hollywood, one that might upset the longstanding dominance of American blockbusters and American box office in the industry. Behind each of these bids for more power in global film production lay the might of Wanda's expansive theater network in China, Australia, and the US. Wanda's new investments in production suggested the possible return of a vertically integrated, globally networked film studio incorporating far-flung exhibition assets for the first time since the Hollywood studio system.[124]

As Wanda's ambitions came into focus, AMC was watched closely as a potential vehicle for the conglomerate's further expansion in the exhibition sector. Acquisitions by AMC and other exhibition giants had been widely expected throughout the 2010s, especially as the rise of premium cinema and other upscaling efforts increased financial pressure on

small- and mid-size chains working with tighter margins who had just pulled together funding for digital conversion.[125] However, when AMC announced an agreement to buy number-four exhibitor Carmike Cinemas in March 2016, it was possibly the largest merger that US antitrust regulators would allow the exhibition industry to execute in the contemporary policy environment. Carmike had lagged top-three chains Cinemark, Regal, and AMC, and had long been seen as a potential takeover target. In fact, AMC had been in acquisition talks with Carmike intermittently in the years leading up to the sale. New CEO Adam Aron started the final round of talks in his first week on the job in January, after being encouraged by Wanda executives to pursue acquisitions.[126] The acquisition made AMC the largest cinema chain in the US, surpassing Regal Cinemas. More critically, folding Carmike into AMC eliminated the final exhibitor that approached the size of the top three exhibitors in the US market, solidifying the growing gulf between them and the small and midsize exhibitors that remained. In line with Wanda's global strategy and departing from the logic of its previous private equity owners, AMC moved quickly from domestic to international acquisitions. Within six months of one another, AMC purchased Odeon & UCI Cinemas (July 2016) and the Nordic Cinema Group (NCG, January 2017).[127] With the Odeon & UCI and Nordic deals, AMC became the world's largest film exhibitor, with over 1,000 sites and 11,000 screens in fifteen countries. The US-based exhibitor had reached a scale that its executives could have only dreamed of as they tried to build its multiplex circuit abroad one cinema at a time in the early 2000s.

These European cinema chains were the largest in their respective territories due to several major acquisitions of their own, driven, as in other mature Western markets, by increased private equity involvement in exhibition. The Rank Group's Odeon Cinemas,

already the UK's largest exhibitor, had cemented its power in 2000 when it was purchased by Cinven, a UK private equity firm. Cinven merged Odeon with the UK's number-two chain Associated British Cinemas (ABC), which the private equity firm already owned.[128] A secondary buyout of the newly merged circuit by London-based Terra Firma Capital Partners in 2004 brought Odeon together with UCI's European division. Terra Firma had purchased UCI's European assets in Germany, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and Spain from Viacom as part of its larger project to create a consolidated European circuit.[129] Terra Firma continued to expand this circuit in subsequent years with acquisitions in Spain, Italy, and Portugal.[130] In Scandinavia and the Baltics, NCG came together when Sweden's Ratos private equity firm bought Sweden's SF Bio in 2013. With the purchase, Ratos merged SF Bio and Finland's Finnkino (which Ratos had acquired in 2011), the largest exhibitors in their respective countries, as well as the chains' subsidiaries in Norway, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.[131] Compared to the relative fragmentation that AMC had confronted in Europe in the late 1990s, these highly consolidated European circuits provided an entry point that offered the circuit instant dominance across the region and significant economies of scale. As had been the case in the United States and Australia, private equity-driven consolidation prepared the way not only for increased power for key regional exhibitors, but new networks of global connectivity as these circuits became appealing acquisition targets. Indeed, the national and regional dominance that private equity helped AMC, Hoyts, Odeon & UCI, and NCG establish in the 2000s was the necessary condition for the global exhibition empire that Wanda had assembled. Due to the consolidation of circuits in these mature markets, Wanda could assemble a dizzying global reach for its combined exhibition circuit with only four transactions over less than five years.

By early 2017, Wanda operated 1,470 cinemas with more than 15,000 screens across four continents, including the top circuits in the top two box office markets worldwide. It was a staggering reach for a single company. If Wanda could successfully execute its production strategy, these exhibition assets could be an engine that would bring its titles to screens worldwide and give it unprecedented leverage within the global film economy, especially for an exhibitor. But AMC's most recent acquisitions had only been steps towards the ultimate goal Wang had set for his global circuit: a 20 percent share of the world cinema market.[132]

Wanda's Empire Unravels

Just as Wanda's global strategy was accelerating in 2017, its expansion efforts jerked to a halt due to a changing policy environment in China. Tensions around large overseas investments by Chinese-owned global conglomerates had been brewing for several years. These conglomerates had built their empires on cheap debt, readily available from Chinese banks seeking to fuel growth and keep currency values low in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. With the encouragement of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), aiming to further China's cultural and economic influence abroad, conglomerates including Wanda aggressively sought out overseas investments. But as China's economy began to soften in 2015, the government began to see these debt-fueled outflows of Chinese capital as a risk to the national financial system. With the five-year National Congress approaching, the government moved to crack down on the largest conglomerates in 2017, scrutinizing their debt loads and imposing strict controls on overseas transactions.[133] Wanda became one of five conglomerates targeted by the regulation and its subsequent news coverage, and was hit

especially hard by the latter on both sides of the Pacific due to its chairman's newly burnished transnational reputation.[134] Wang was the richest man in Asia, with an estimated fortune of over $35 billion, and a prominent figure in Chinese business. But since the AMC acquisition he had also gained significant press attention overseas, fueled by the scale of his acquisitions and the intensity of the ambitions he voiced.[135] While these ambitions were generally carefully couched in terms of an extension of Chinese business might rather than personal power, Wang's prominence had made him a target for a show of control as China's regulatory environment transformed.

As the CCP intensified its scrutiny of Wanda, chunks of its domestic and overseas empire began to crumble. The company was forced to scrap a $1 billion deal for Dick Clark Productions, pay a $50-million break fee, and bring the remainder of its overseas acquisition spree to a screeching halt. To lower its debt, in July 2017 Wanda took the dramatic step of selling a $9.3 billion in assets, including a large proportion of its domestic hotels and all of its theme parks, to a pair of Chinese real estate companies at deeply discounted rates.[136] The deals included the sale of the Oriental Movie Metropolis—already facing difficulties and scaling back from its initial plans—to Sunac China along with Wanda's theme park portfolio. Initially, Wanda retained a 9 percent stake and continue to receive payments for managing the property and the sold theme parks, but by October 2018, the company had sold operational control of the complexes, including the Qingdao studio, to Sunac.[137] The sales were a major blow to Wanda's ambitions and reputation, slashing entire portions of its leisure and hospitality business and effectively destroying its most enticing planned synergies in the film business. AMC's stock price fell 10 percent the day Wanda's asset sale hit financial and trade news in the US. The US exhibitor issued a press release distancing its

acquisition activity from its owner's challenges, clarifying that neither Wanda nor Chinese banks had been a source of funding for its domestic and European acquisitions.[138] Nonetheless, it was difficult to imagine Wanda's world-spanning cinema circuit would remain untouched by its struggles at home.

By September 2018, Wanda's difficulties with debt and overseas investment came to a head for its ownership of AMC. AMC repurchased about a third of Wanda's stake in the exhibitor using a portion of a $600 million investment raised from Silver Lake, a private equity firm focused on technology investment. The conglomerate was left approximately half the company.[139] Aron acknowledged that the agreement would calm concerns that Wanda's troubles at home could lead it to rapidly sell its AMC shares en masse; these worries had put significant downward pressure on the company's stock price. "We never thought they would do anything that would harm AMC's public shareholders," Aron told the *Wall Street Journal,* "but we've been living this nagging concern about overhead for fifteen months." Aron also shared Wanda's assurances with the press that the sale satisfied the company's cash needs and that it intended to maintain its investment for a "considerable time."[140] By the end of 2019, Wanda held just under 50 percent of AMC's shares, but retained nearly 75 percent of the voting power on the company's board.[141] Given the rapid reversals that characterized the company's approach to other major assets, including the Oriental Movie Metropolis, Wanda's response to the possible problems posed by its investment in AMC was, for the moment, relatively measured. Still, it indicated a ceiling on Wanda's plans for global exhibition dominance. With Wanda's energy stymied and substantial private equity investment returning to AMC, it seemed that opportunities for continued international expansion could be curtailed in the future, though the picture

remained murky. The consequences of this shift would be further complicated in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, as I will discuss in my conclusion.

The British Are Coming: Cineworld Marches on Knoxville and Toronto

Cineworld, initially operating under the name Cine-UK, was formed in the UK in 1995 by Steve Wiener, previously the managing director of WBIT's European operations. Initially, the company was created to acquire the assets of MGM Cinemas, then the largest exhibition company in Britain and part of a longstanding duopoly in the market. After Cine-UK's bid for the chain failed, the company moved into developing its own multiplex circuit under the Cineworld brand. At first, the company focused initially on smaller markets with less intense competition for sites, opening its first cinema 1996.[142] Its success eventually attracted interest from US private equity firm Blackstone, which acquired the circuit for $216 million in 2004.[143] Two months later, Blackstone acquired French exhibitor UGC's UK theaters, the product of its purchase of Virgin Cinemas in 1999, doubling the Cineworld's size and creating Britain's second-largest exhibitor behind the newly merged Odeon & UCI Cinemas.[144] Blackstone eventually reduced its stake by taking the company public in 2007, selling the remainder of its shares between 2009 and 2010.[145] A further acquisition of the UK's Picturehouse arthouse circuit in 2012 added to the company's strength in the British market.[146] As in the US, Australia, elsewhere in Britain, and Europe at large, major acquisitions driven by private equity owners were a significant factor that enabled Cineworld to scale up to dominate the mature British cinema market. Like AMC, Hoyts, Odeon & UCI, and NGC, Cineworld would also soon find itself part of an international cinema circuit.

In 2014, a merger led to a shift in the company's strategic direction, allowing Cineworld to expand across Europe and shift its focus from domination within the British market to building a network of global exhibition sites. The target was Cinema City International, then a cinema chain of comparable size to Cineworld based in Israel with holdings across Central and Eastern Europe. Cinema City also operated a corresponding distribution business, Forum Film, that operated in each of its major markets.[147] With the merger, Cinema City's CEO, Moshe "Mooky" Greidinger, who had overseen the transition of his family's eighty-year-old theater chain to multiplexes in the 1980s and international expansion in the 1990s and 2000s, was set to lead the newly pan-European Cineworld.[148] Cinema City had remained a family business, and Mooky's brother, Israel, now served as Cineworld's COO, while the Greidinger family controlled a 25 percent share of the merged company through their cinema company.[149] Mooky, like Wang Jianlin, had built his career by introducing or revitalizing cinemas emerging markets. "Every one of us who has spent a few years in this industry knows that the growth potential in the US, United Kingdom and France, let's say, is average to moderate at best," Greidinger told *Film Journal International* in 2011. "The way to develop and grow the cinema business is not by opening new multiplexes in places that have a large number of them already, but to go into those regions where there is no infrastructure or almost none. In 'our territories,' as we like to call them, there are cities of 300,000 people that, until we came in, didn't have an operating cinema for ten years."[150] He now sat atop an empire that included these emerging territories as well as some of the most mature markets in Europe, but this experience would color his ambitious approach to expanding his circuit. In 2016, he planned to expand Cineworld's approximately 2,000 screens by 500 with new cinema constructions across its territories.[151]

Despite this dramatic increase in the size of his circuit, Greidinger remained hungry for acquisitions and cast his eye towards the US-Canada market and its exhibition giants. "Those who know the Greidingers," Israeli business outlet *Globes* wrote, "say they are not so much consumed with making money as becoming the world's number one theater chain."[152] Three years after its joining with Cinema City, Cineworld announced it would merge with US exhibition giant Regal Cinemas, structuring the deal as a $3.6 billion reverse takeover of the larger US chain.[153] The December 2017 deal made the company the second-largest exhibitor in the world, behind Dalian Wanda.[154] The acquisition also meant that Phillip Anschutz, who continued to hold a 10 percent share in the company from his initial investment in 2001, could finally cash out the remainder of his investment.[155] With the merger, Cineworld had "the optimal platform on which we can continue our growth strategy," said Greidinger. "Consolidation is an important move forward and the best practices we have successfully rolled out across Europe will be the key driver to continued success."[156] The acquisition, along with AMC's European investments the previous year meant that Cineworld was now not only newly competing with Wanda-AMC in the UK, where its Odeon & UCI was the company's largest rival, but on US turf as well. Cineworld's cross-border consolidation positioned them as a global rival to Wanda that was willing to undertake the same degree of aggressive acquisition and cinema development. Such international expansionism had been a distant interest for US cinema companies since the late 1990s, when AMC had made its last bid to expand overseas.

Cineworld's strategy accelerated in late 2019, when the company moved to acquire Canadian giant Cineplex Entertainment, a purchase that would let them overtake Wanda in the US-Canada market. The offer—$1.65 billion US—was a premium of 42 percent over the

chain's stock price and above the nine-times earnings price that Cineworld had paid for Regal two years before. With the Cineplex deal, Cineworld claimed it would be able save close to $65 million through greater efficiencies and generate an additional $65 million in revenue by 2021 by rolling out its subscription program and improving concession sales.[157] "Scale matters in this business," Greidinger told Canada's *Globe and Mail*, acknowledging that while rental terms would likely not improve much, cooperation with studios on marketing and promotions could create advantages for the newly consolidated exhibitor.[158] A few days after the sale, Canadian cinema historian Paul Moore used an op-ed in the same paper to contextualize Cineplex's acquisition in within a long history of consolidated Canadian chains whose dominance was secured by their access to Hollywood movies. Noting the uneasy position Canada has always faced in the international market despite the ownership of its cinemas, he concluded: "Movie theater chains, like cinema itself, were born on a global stage. The acquisition of Cineplex only reminds us that this remains a familiar story."[159] But while the ownership of a conglomerate might not change the films that appeared on Canadian screens, at least in the short term, it did mean its cinemas were connected for the first time to a cross-continental chain in increasingly global cinema networks, where it was only one piece of a larger battle for scale.

Before the deal could close, Cineplex had a seven-week "go-shop period" in which it could seek another buyer, but commentators suggested that no better bid was likely to come.[160] Cineplex, however, acknowledged the national dynamics of the sale by including a provision that the CA$55.4-million "break fee" that Cineplex would pay Cineworld in the event it found another buyer would be halved if that buyer was a Canadian company. "Cineplex is a proudly Canadian company," said CEO Ellis Jacob, "and our board wanted to

use the lower break fee to encourage a Canadian company to come forward as part of our go-shop." The Globe and Mail offered another interpretation: "Cineworld pushed for a higher break fee on any potential foreign buyer, because the company expected its most likely rival would be another global company."[161] Indeed, as exhibitors scaled up in mature markets and private equity, for the moment, moved on, few companies in smaller markets like Canada had the capital and desire to buy into exhibition. No buyer emerged; the deal was approved by shareholders in early 2020.[162] The deal, like the rest of the global exhibition industry, seemed secure, but would soon be roiled by a global issue: the COVID-19 pandemic, which I will discuss in my conclusion.

Conclusion

As optimism about the domestic exhibition market began to bubble up in the early 1990s, US exhibition companies, including domestic giants Cinemark and AMC began planning to export the multiplex model abroad. Developing a panregional strategy in Latin America, Cinemark benefitted from effective planning, timing, and its choice of a market where local competition had been effectively weakened by systematic disinvestment. The result was long-term dominance in the region, especially key markets in Argentina and Brazil. The company's success was a beacon to other US exhibition interests showing the potential rewards of international expansion. Cinemark's efforts in Europe and Asia, however, proved that this strategy was not as portable as it had initially seemed. AMC similarly ran into difficulties in these regions but compounded its difficulties overseas by spreading its resources thinly across its hoped-for empire and demonstrating ignorance, even hubris, in its estimation of the local competition its new sites would face in their far-flung markets. Taken

together, these examples demonstrate the uneven results of this period of US expansionism. Ultimately, further efforts from US exhibition interests were cut short as international connections between domestic and international exhibition contracted between 2002 and 2012 due initially to economic turmoil at home and then to the relatively narrow goals and interests of the private equity companies that controlled much of the domestic exhibition market during the 2000s. This lull in international connectivity, however, enabled domestic giants focus on dominance at home and the development of initiatives including the consolidation, digitization, diversification, and premium cinema activities discussed throughout this project.

This period of retreat from the international scene laid the groundwork for a new phase of global connectivity. Across the mature markets of the Europe and Australia as well as the US, private equity firms were at work consolidating international exhibition giants like Hoyts, Odeon & UCI, and Cineworld, which each held dominant positions in their home regions. Rather than expanding through constructing cinemas in new regions, former regional exhibition giants Dalian Wanda and Cineworld escalated the trend towards consolidation to the global level, forming cross-continental circuits by stringing together acquisitions of large corporate chains. Both were led by men who had built their own domestic cinema markets from the ground up and carried that ambition forward as they forged global chains that could compete with one another for scale. In the process, national and regional exhibition giants—including the US and Canadian giants that are the focus of this project—became smaller assets within larger global exhibition networks. The shift was dizzying in its speed and scale, but by 2019, the full extent of its impacts on the domestic exhibition market was still unclear.

In the final section of my project, I turn to a preliminary assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the exhibition industry, including the problems Wanda and Cineworld's extensive exhibition networks faced in the unstable new global environment. In addition to addressing the effects of the pandemic on the global exhibition empires detailed in this chapter, I also look to the impacts on the domestic exhibition giants who needed to respond to theater closures, delayed and redirected film product, and the challenges of reopening; and on the domestic exhibition industry at large as it faces threats both new and newly relevant in the aftermath of the immediate recovery. Alongside the changes of the last three years, I also return to that which has remained stable, distilling the key features that define the thirty-year period detailed in this project and reflecting on how these findings can help us understand the past, present and future of the exhibition industry, both domestic and global.

Conclusion

In this final section of my project, I turn to a preliminary assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the exhibition industry, including the problems Wanda and Cineworld's extensive exhibition networks faced in the unstable new global environment. Both companies have seen their expansionist ambitions diminished as the realities of the debt needed to achieve their empires collided with the turmoil of the pandemic. I explore the consequences of these challenges and assess their impacts on the global connectivity discussed in the previous chapter.

In addition to addressing the effects of the pandemic on the global exhibition empires detailed in chapter 4, I also look to the impacts on the domestic exhibition giants who needed to respond to theater closures, delayed and redirected film product, and the challenges of reopening; and on the domestic exhibition industry at large as it faces threats both new and newly relevant in the aftermath of the immediate recovery. Specifically, I address the return of existential whispers about the death of cinema and evaluate the extent to which these threats apply to the exhibition giants whose development I have traced throughout this project. Alongside the changes of the last four years, I also return to that which has remained stable, distilling the key features that define the thirty-year period detailed in this project and reflecting on how these findings can help us understand the past, present and future of the exhibition industry, both domestic and global.

Pandemic-Era Exhibition Empires

February 2020 was marked by the early spread of COVID-19 cases to countries beyond China and a growing chorus of international concern. The same month, shareholders

approved Cineworld's acquisition of Cineplex Entertainment, initially announced in December 2019, with plans to finalize approvals from the Canadian government by June 30.[1] Despite this initial optimism, as news of COVID-19's continued international spread circulated in March and initial pandemic closures began in the US, Cineplex's share price dropped significantly. Commentators wondered if the acquisition was at risk, despite specific language that excluded the outbreak of illness from the legitimate reasons for terminating the transaction.[2] In June, just ahead of the deadline to complete the necessary government approvals, Cineworld abruptly pulled out of the deal, triggering a lawsuit from Cineplex.[3] Ultimately, an Ontario court ruled in Cineplex's favor, arguing that the Canadian exhibitors had continued operations in good faith despite operational difficulties imposed by the pandemic, while Cineworld had been working to get out of the deal since March, attempting to evade the risks it had consented to in the original agreement. The court awarded Cineplex $1.24 billion in damages.[4] Cineworld filed an appeal in January, while Cineplex sought further damages in a cross-appeal.[5] With the failure of the merger, Cineworld's circuit failed to reach the full scale it seemed it would at the end of 2019. However, its expansive European circuit remained linked with Regal's in the US, keeping its cross-continental reach intact.

Cineworld and its CEO, Mooky Greidinger, had more extensive issues than the Cineplex deal as the effects of the pandemic continued to be felt by the exhibition industry. Before the pandemic, Cineworld had accumulated massive debt in its 2014 merger with Cinema City and 2017 acquisition of Regal Cinemas. These debts and the loans it had secured for the failed Cineplex merger had been understood as necessary to fuel its competition for scale in the global exhibition industry.[6] After the pandemic, they became a

destabilizing force for Cineworld. Despite its debt, the looming damages from the Cineplex case, and a cratering stock price, the company had twice avoided bankruptcy by negotiating rescue packages with its lenders.[7] By September 2022, its debts combined with the ongoing financial strain of the pandemic could no longer be mitigated, and Cineworld filed for Chapter 11 in the United States.[8] During the proceedings, the company closed 39 Regal locations in the US and restructured, reducing its debt, raising proceeds with a sale of equity to its lenders, securing new credit, and transferring ownership of the US chain to its creditors.[9] Despite rumors that the chain might be broken up and parts sold, the global circuit, minus Cineplex, remained intact. Speaking to the *Financial Times*, a former Cineworld executive blamed Mooky and Israel Greidinger's "hubris" for the chain's collapse, saying that their ambition to surpass AMC as the world's largest exhibitor caused them to accumulate too much debt too quickly, and citing the initial Cineplex deal as a major misstep in their expansion plan.[10] As part of the restructuring agreement, top executives were collectively paid between $30 and $35 million over the year following the bankruptcy to exit the company. The Greidingers, whose family trust had owned about a fifth of Cineworld before the bankruptcy, were set to receive the majority of the funds as an alternative to the equity stake they had been denied during the proceedings.[11] In July 2023, Eduardo Acuna, former president of global exhibition company Cinépolis, was appointed as Cineworld's new CEO.[12] As it concluded bankruptcy proceedings in the US, the Cineworld parent company also reorganized in the UK, transferring ownership of the company to its lenders.[13] A final effect of the bankruptcy was the effective dissolution of the damages Cineplex had won in court.[14] The pandemic had come at precisely the wrong moment for

Cineworld; the risks Greidinger had taken to link together circuits around the globe had ultimately toppled him from his position atop that empire.

AMC, too, faced serious existential threats as the pandemic roiled the exhibition business. Like Cineworld, the company had racked up substantial debts with its acquisitions of Carmike Cinemas, Odeon & UCI Cinemas, and the Nordic Cinema Group between 2016 and 2017. Bankruptcy rumors flew throughout 2020 as the company disclosed significant liquidity issues in regulatory filings, scrambling for financing to avoid running out of cash. On January 25, 2021, the company announced it had secured $917 million in financing that, for the moment, meant that "any talk of an imminent bankruptcy for AMC is completely off the table," according to president and CEO Adam Aron.[15] Two days later, AMC was caught up in a rush of "meme stock" trading, a trend among retail investors, concentrated on the social media platform Reddit, that involves trading stocks with high volatility, often those in the tech industry. During the pandemic, stocks like GameStop and AMC became meme stocks in part as a form of coordinated revenge against hedge funds and short sellers by Reddit users who invested en masse in companies vulnerable to pandemic conditions to initiate short squeezes on the companies' stocks.[16] Soon after, AMC's private equity shareholder Silver Lake Capital Partners elected to transform $600 million in debt into equity as the stock surged and sell it off, rapidly improving the chain's financial stability.[17]

Dalian Wanda, which still had majority voting control of AMC, used the opportunity provided by the stock surge to offload its asset at an attractive price. On February 1, Dalian Wanda surrendered much of its voting power in AMC through a stock conversion that would allow it to sell its shares in the company. By May 21, the conglomerate had sold off all but a marginal share of AMC. In the process, Wanda said it had doubled the money it had

invested in its $700 million purchase of the chain 2012.[18] According to the press release announcing the transition, Wanda and AMC had decided to "enter into a long-term strategy and cooperation agreement, which will facilitate efficiencies through global purchasing efforts and the sharing of best practices." This included the planned screening of some Wanda-made films at AMC theaters.[19] Wanda's global exhibition circuit had been shattered, separating AMC with its holdings in the US and Europe from Wanda Cinema Line in China and Hoyts Cinemas in Australia. Struggling with its debt due to economic and policy shifts in China, Wanda surrendered control of its film division, including its cinema holdings in China and Australia, through a 2023 sale of its investment arm to China Ruyi Holdings, a film, television and gaming company owned by Chinese streaming giant Tencent.[20] The conglomerate's ambitions for a world-spanning cinema circuit had now been sharply curtailed.

The changes Cineworld and Wanda had brought to the connections and scales of the exhibition industry, however, were not so simply undone. Connections between circuits formed at the height of this wave of global exhibition expansionism have endured. Cineworld still owns the UK's Cineworld and Picturehouse circuits, Eastern Europe's Cinema City, Israel's Planet chain, and the United States' Regal Cinemas. AMC held onto its sizable European assets with the UK's Odeon & UCI chain in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, Italy, Portugal, and Spain as well as the Nordic Cinema Group's holdings in Scandinavia and the Baltics. Under its new owners, Wanda Film has for now retained Hoyts Cinemas, giving it a substantial presence in the Asia-Pacific region, though it has periodically sought a buyer for the company since 2021.[21] Global circuits, networking exhibition giants across continents, seem for now to be a lasting feature of the international

exhibition industry. For the moment, the exhibition industry has again been chastened about the perils of debt-heavy acquisition sprees and lacks leaders like Wang Jianlin and Mooky Greidinger willing to take these risks to drive expansion to new heights. It is not yet clear to what extent Wanda Film and Cineworld's new owners will be interested in reviving their predecessors' agendas, nor whether large US exhibitors like AMC are willing to pursue such acquisitions without their support and encouragement. Nonetheless, exhibition giants remain connected across continents, and global patterns of consolidation mean that more links can, given the capital, easily be added to global chains.

Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Exhibition Industry

Of course, the pandemic had significant impacts on the domestic exhibition industry beyond the troubles and triumphs of the global exhibition empires. Domestic exhibitors faced long closures, lack of film product, competition from simultaneous home releases, and avalanche of coverage predicting that COVID-19 would destroy the global theatrical business. As the virus reached the United States and spread rapidly in mid-March 2020, theaters across the country were forced to close. While reopening patterns varied by state and exhibitor, a combination of safety concerns, lack of film product due to delayed or redirected releases, and labor and operations costs left many theaters closed well into 2021, especially with legislation in New York and Los Angeles preventing exhibitors from opening their doors.[22] Exhibitors coped with closures through a wide range of strategies, including negotiating with lenders, suppliers, and landlords, as well as tapping a range of government relief programs with the help of the National Association of Theater Owners (NATO).[23] While the theatrical market was affected by closures and depressed theater attendance, studios turned

to releasing films simultaneously in theaters and on streaming, a practice known as day-and-date release. Day-and-date releases meant some new film product for desperate exhibitors, but they also intensified discussions of the existential threat that the pandemic posed to theaters. Commentators in trade and popular outlets alike discussed the potential change in viewers' expectations to screen new films at home as a potential killing blow for the exhibition industry, especially as studios extended the practice into 2021.[24] As major markets reopened and vaccines rolled out in the summer of 2021, major film releases with exclusive theatrical windows made it back onto the calendar. By the fall, theaters had reopened across the country and the exhibition industry was looking towards recovery. Over the last three years, exhibitors have steadily seen product return to screens and box office figures rise, though not yet to their pre-COVID levels.

While the pandemic tested theaters in the short-term with long closures, collapsing revenues, and relational challenges with the press and studios alike, the pandemic's long-term threats to the business have yet to be fully assessed. By fall 2021, major studios had largely turned away from day-and-date release, aside from Warner Bros., which had already made commitments for its 2021 slate (the studio returned to traditional theatrical releases in 2022). While day-and-date release was the most discussed threat to theaters from the pandemic aside from the impact of closures themselves, it quickly became clear to studios that undercutting their profits from theatrical for uncertain results on streaming did not make financial sense as the world reopened.[25] Other, less noted threats to the exhibition business persist, however. As theaters reopened, the window of theatrical exclusivity, formerly standardized at ninety days, was shortened, mostly without fanfare, through a series of agreements between studios and exhibitors. Studios have long campaigned for a shorter

theatrical window, since it allows them to stretch the utility of their theatrical marketing campaigns to boost the films' performance in subsequent distribution windows, while keeping most of the profits they receive from its theatrical release, since studios' cut of ticket sales falls later in a film's release. Exhibitors bitterly resisted shortening the window before the pandemic, but in fall 2021, major exhibitors signed agreements with several studios for forty-five-day windows for new releases.[26] Another major issue is the number of films that make it to theatrical release. While the threat of day-and-date release was much debated by the trade press in 2020 and 2021, there has been markedly less concern that studios will send films that would previously be released theatrically directly to streaming platforms. 2022 attendance levels tracked 2019 levels on a per-film basis, but concern over the amount of theatrical product has become a recurring talking point for exhibition leaders in the later recovery period.[27] Even in 2023, twenty fewer films were released domestically than in 2019.[28] Given the long timelines of film production, the difficulties faced by the industry's production branch during the pandemic, and the impact of the 2023 writers' and actors' strikes on film releases, it is unclear if theatrical releases will rebound. However, both issues remain live threats to the profitability and prominence of the exhibition business as it continues to recover from the impacts of the pandemic. Both issues have so far slowed the pace of box office rebound; the 2023 domestic box office of $9 billion remained $2 billion short of 2019's figures, despite inflation.[29]

As exhibitors face these new challenges, it is the largest exhibitors who are best positioned to absorb these impacts. Even in the recovery period, domestic exhibition giants acted as the standard-setters, negotiating new theatrical windows with studios which, if history is any indication, independents will be forced to accept to access film product and

stay in business. As the industry adjusts to lower levels of theatrical product, giants also have greater access to premium cinema options, alternative revenue streams, and economies of scale that they can use to compensate for lower levels of film product. It is independents, especially small exhibitors, who have less margin for error and room to maneuver that will be the first to be seriously impacted by broader shifts in the film industry that negatively impact theatrical exhibition. Without government interventions such as the Shuttered Venues Operator Grant, a Small Business Administration program that funded independent cinemas and other small entertainment businesses, many more independents would not have survived the pandemic. Unlike previous transformations in the theatrical business, the same domestic giants who led the industry before the crisis have remained dominant afterwards. In that sense, the resources that exhibition giants have assembled in the thirty years prior to the pandemic will continue to impact exhibitors in the 2020s.

As the exhibition industry has emerged from the pandemic, exhibition leaders have frequently returned to a familiar refrain: that theatrical exhibition has periodically had its death declared since at least the advent of television and has yet to be killed. While these statements can be an important reminder to assess catastrophic predictions in their historical perspective, they also belie the extent to which exhibition has been transformed periodically, not always for the better. This project has sought to map the ways that those changes have occurred and transformed the industry's balance of power, often out of sight of cinemagoers. As the exhibition history I presented in my introduction shows, theatrical exhibition has been defined throughout its history by hierarchies and means of control. As exhibition emerges from a new crisis in its history, marking the end of a thirty-five-year period of

transformation, I argue that attention to the material and cultural effects of the changes of this period is as essential as affirming or predicting cinemas' prospects for survival.

Project Findings and Conclusions

It is these effects that I wish to turn to in this closing section. The observations I outline here aim to bring together material from different strands of exhibition activity discussed across the chapters of this project and organize them around several conclusions about this active period in exhibition history. My goal is to distill some of the project's core findings, while indicating a few potential starting points for future research.

A central contention of this project has been that the consolidation of cinema chains and the creation of exhibition giants has been one of the most impactful developments in the last several decades of cinema history. In the wake of the economic crisis of the early 2000s, domestic exhibition giants not only scaled up their circuits, but became fully corporatized organizations who collaborated as much as they competed; in other words, they took on the structures and practices of an oligopoly as well as its appearance. The existence, pace, and manner of the industrial transformations that I discuss throughout this project—diversification, digitization, premium cinema, and globalization—flowed directly from the creation of large, stable national chains focused on dominating the marketplace and dwarfing or absorbing their competition. Diversification efforts relied on large exhibitors' access to capital to fund new initiatives, but widespread advertising and event cinema initiatives also required giants to network their large chains together to gain the critical mass needed to make these businesses viable sources of revenues. In turn, the size of these networks granted giants new avenues to control their competitors' access to these new

revenue streams. The transition to digital projection in the domestic market (itself the linchpin for the global transition to digital) required large groups exhibitors to band together to raise the funding necessary to execute a shared agenda, a difficult task made much easier by the existence of an exhibition oligopoly. Aiming to block third-party control of the digitization process, exhibitors used their scale to establish a digital cinema integrator, Digital Cinema Implementation Partners, that again enabled them to exert control at competitors' theaters as well as their own. The rapid emergence and standardization of premium cinema options, made possible by the digital rollout, also benefitted from the domestic exhibition oligopoly. Third-party cinema technology providers were able to scale up quickly by signing contracts with large exhibitors, enabling the spread of premium cinema to competitor chains, giant and independent alike. Exhibitors' scale also enabled them to invest in and launch their own premium cinema concepts, which, while restricted to their own circuits, continued the proliferation of premium cinema options. Finally, consolidated domestic chains was the prerequisite for the rapid globalization of exhibition ownership; each building their international exhibition empires, Dalian Wanda and Cineworld sought out exhibition giants around the world that would allow them to scale up quickly and compete effectively with one another in the domestic market. Domestic giants' existing dominance in their home market was the factor that made desirable acquisition targets to both companies. Overall, the dramatic historical shift in exhibition over the last thirty years illustrates the centrality of exhibition giants within an increasingly oligopolistic marketplace.

The influence of private equity and the financial industry on the formation and activities of exhibition giants both domestic and international—and therefore, the role in

these historic transformations—should not be underestimated. As chapter 1 illustrated, together with future exhibition giants, private equity firms were critical participants in the megaplex construction boom and exhibitor debt crisis of the 1990s, but also instrumental to its recovery. And while mergers and acquisitions were certainly present before private equity entered the industry, the structural incentives of these firms and the sheer speed with which exhibitors changed hands between them across the three phases of the crisis and recovery dramatically precipitated consolidation across the industry. As the owners of theater chains, private equity companies also hastened giants' completion to more corporate cultures of operation, and away from the more entrepreneurial approach that lingered from their histories as new businesses and family-owned companies. Critical here was the push the firms that owned US chains made for the exhibitors to collaborate with one another as they were developing their diversification ventures. The timing of this pressure, a few years before the conversion to digital cinema would begin in earnest, was instrumental to the more collaborative—or collusive—approach exhibitors took in relation to shared initiatives in advertising, event cinema, and digitization, in which they shared an interest in minimizing the control of third parties in the industry and instead aimed to centralize it amongst themselves. Finally, while exploring this avenue in full was beyond the scope of this project, the recent histories of mergers and acquisitions of Hoyts Cinemas, UCI & Odeon Cinemas, and the Nordic Cinema Group under private equity ownership outlined in chapter 4 indicate that private equity has contributed to the consolidation of exhibitors worldwide, especially in mature markets like Europe and Australia. I hope that my study of the US and Canadian situation can provide a useful model for the future exploration of how exhibition giants have formed and dominated other markets around the world and how private equity has

influenced the trajectory of film exhibition as well as other media sectors beyond my area of study.

Technological as well as structural-economic change has been instrumental to this phase of exhibition history, and I have aimed to demonstrate how erratic and unpredictable this process became as well as exploring some of its less-heralded effects. Most striking to me in this research was that, despite the ink spilled on the technological shift from celluloid to digital code in both academic and journalistic circles as the transition approached, little thought was paid to the emergence of oligopolistic structures and practices beyond that of the studios that shaped process of transition. I aimed to avoid the temptation to posit digital cinema as a form of frictionless magic that seamlessly brought new forms of content, marketing, and experience to multiplexes, as is the case in many retrospective accounts from trade sources. Instead, I foregrounded the distinct textures that characterized the transition's different phases, choosing to emphasize digitization as a messy and uneven process that involved years of negotiation, development, and coordination before systems could be rolled out, standardized, and integrated. My account, however, studies the transition to digital cinema from only one perspective; there are ample opportunities to explore and assess its effects beyond the large US exhibitors and cinema technology companies discussed in this project that would contribute greatly to an understanding of how the cinema industry worldwide has been impacted by the replacement of its hundred-year-old technological standard.

As exhibition giants adapted to new industrial conditions, especially the megaplex-driven debt crisis of the early 2000s, they shifted their large-scale strategies for growth. During the 1980s and 90s, the industry had invested its resources in upgrading theaters in

the hopes of encouraging cinemagoers to return to theaters in larger numbers. This strategy had been partially effective, but the costs of pursuing it had outstripped its benefits for exhibitors, driving the industry into crisis. After the crisis, under the guidance of new private equity owners, exhibition giants shifted into growth strategies that aimed to profit from existing attendance levels. Consolidation of chains enabled them to do through economies of scale that allowed them to streamline costs and enabled the effective rollout of new initiatives. Diversification allowed giants to monetize their audiences and facilities in new ways by selling advertising space on their screens and bringing new offerings to slower weeknights; to benefit from facilitating these services for their competitors; and to pursue new revenue streams in efforts beyond the exhibition sector. Premium cinema brought opportunities to extract more value from audiences who were willing and able to pay for experiences enhanced by new technology or service options, boosting box office figures as attendance remained flat and recentering affluent audiences a in contemporary exhibition practice. Finally, these patterns encouraged domestic exhibition giants to pull back from risky international expansion and seek growth opportunities in home markets, ultimately creating the ideal conditions for global exhibition companies looking to scale up overseas through acquisitions. As the pandemic recovery continues to play out, it will be interesting to see to what extent this overarching strategy carries forward within the industry, and how exhibition giants' tactics will shift in the short and long term as the industry rebuilds.

Finally, I have documented a major transformation in the scales along which exhibitors operate and imagine their business over the thirty years covered in this study. As contemporary exhibition giants developed into a stable oligopoly, they also became truly national chains with holdings spread across the United States and Canada, collectively

accounting for more than half of domestic screens. In Canada, Cineplex's monopoly status enabled it to reshape its business as the country's national exhibitor, investing heavily in technological and experiential improvements to its theaters and spearheading new investments in cinema advertising and event cinema and beyond the exhibition business. In the US, exhibitors collaborated to link their screens with each other and their competitors to form national networks for cinema advertising, event cinema, and digital technology installations. In both cases, giants contributed to a definitive reshaping of their exhibition markets as ones ruled by national circuits that set standards for subordinate regional and local cinemas. It was this new identity as national, and nationally dominant, chains that ultimately attracted the attention of Wanda and Cineworld as they built their globally connected circuits. Establishing control of a top chain in one of the world's most lucrative cinema markets became an essential component of new global cinema circuits, and the domestic market became an important battleground in their struggle to dominate the world box office. Despite the shocks exhibition empires faced during the pandemic, the domestic exhibition industry has now been firmly entwined in networks of global operations, just like other branches the media industries.

Ultimately, this project illustrates the industrial logics and lines of force that emerge when exhibitors are studied as an industry involved in multiple, overlapping modes of activity that are analyzed together. It is my hope that this view of theater owners can be developed further within exhibition studies and expand the activities we understand as part of the domain of film exhibition business, especially as this business is increasingly integrated into the corporate cultures and industrial networks of global capital. The more that these elements can be studied as interconnected, the more accurately and fully scholars

can place film exhibition and measure its impact in the global film industry and cultural life at large.

Notes

Introduction

[1] Jay Blickstein, "Small-Town Dixie Chain on Exhib Fast Track," *Variety*, March 30, 1992, 51; "FCC, IRS Approve Merger of Martin with Fuqua," *Boxoffice*, February 17, 1969, 5.

[2] "FCC, IRS Approve Merger of Martin with Fuqua," 5; William P. Barrett, "A Wal-Mart for the Movies," *Forbes*, August 22, 1988, 60–61; Blickstein, "Small-Town Dixie Chain on Exhib Fast Track," 51.

[3] Barrett, "A Wal-Mart for the Movies," 60–61; Blickstein, "Small-Town Dixie Chain on Exhib Fast Track," 66; Pendleton, "Chain Sees Possibilities in Midst of Recession," *Variety*, March 30, 1992, 51, 60.

[4] Robert R. Jacobson and Frank Uhle, "Carmike Cinemas, Inc.," in *International Directory of Company Histories*, vol. 37, ed. Tina Grant (Detroit, MI: St. James Press, 2001), 64.

[5]Jacobson and Uhle, "Carmike Cinemas, Inc," 64; Dade Hayes, "Moody Exhib Future," *Daily Variety*, June 14, 2000, 10.

[6] Carl DiOrio, "Buyouts Help Ailing Exhibs Get Back into the Black," *Daily Variety*, October 30, 2001, A1.

[7] Pamela McClintock, "Carmike Removes Michael Patrick," *Variety*, January 20, 2009, https://variety.com/2009/film/news/carmike-removes-michael-patrick-1117998839/.

[8] Carmike Cinemas, Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2010*, March 8, 2011, Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Electronic Data Gathering, Analysis, and Retrieval (EDGAR) System, 2; Carmike Cinemas, Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2015*, February 29, 2011, SEC, EDGAR System, 2.

[9] Erich Schwartzel, "AMC Deal Boosts Chinese Control of US Theatres," *Wall Street Journal,* March 4, 2016.

[10] US figures compiled from "Number of U.S. Movie Screens," Data, National Association of Theatre Owners, accessed February 29, 2024, https://www.natoonline.org/data/us-movie-screens/ and theater chain annual reports. 2004 data from AMC Entertainment Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 2005*, June 21, 2005, SEC, EDGAR, 7; Cinemark Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2004*, March 29, 2005, SEC, EDGAR, 8; and Regal Entertainment Group, *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 30, 2004*, March 15, 2005, SEC, EDGAR, 9–10. 2018 data from AMC Entertainment Holdings Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2019*, March 1, 2019, SEC, EDGAR, 7; Cinemark Holdings, Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2018*, February 28, 2019, SEC, EDGAR, 8; and Cineworld Group plc, *Annual Report and Accounts 2018*, June 11, 2019, Companies House, iii. Canadian figure from Cineplex Inc., *2018 Annual Report*, April 16, 2019, CSA, SEDAR+, 24.

[11] For key studies of US cinemagoing, see Charles Musser and Carol Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures: Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Traveling Exhibition, 1880–1920* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991); Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992); Gregory A. Waller, *Main Street Amusements: Movies and Commercial Entertainment in a Southern City, 1896–1930* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995); Kathryn H. Fuller, *At the Picture Show: Small-Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture* (Charlottesville/London: University Press of Virginia, 1996); Barbara Wilinsky, *Sure Seaters: The Emergence of Art House Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); Jacqueline Najuma Stewart, *Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Michael Aronson, *Nickelodeon City: Pittsburgh At the Movies, 1905–1929* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008); Ross Melnick, *American Showman: Samuel 'Roxy' Rothafel and the Birth of the Entertainment Industry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Cara Caddoo, *Envisioning Freedom: Cinema and the Building of Modern Black Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); William Paul, *When Movies Were Theater: Architecture, Exhibition, and the Evolution of American Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016); and Jocelyn Szczepaniak-Gillece, *The Optical Vacuum: Spectatorship and Modernized American Theater Architecture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018uj. For international studies, see Laura Isabel Serna, *Making Cinelandia: American Films and Mexican Film Culture Before the Golden Age* (Durham, NC:

Duke University Press, 2014); Lakshmi Srinivas, *House Full: Indian Cinema and the Active Audience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Laura Fair, *Reel Pleasures: Cinema Audiences and Entrepreneurs in Twentieth-Century Urban Tanzania* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2018); and Ross Melnick, *Hollywood's Embassies: How Movie Theaters Projected American Power Around the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022).

[12] Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst, and Phillipe Meers, eds. *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011); Maltby, Biltereyst, and Meers, eds. *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History* (New York: Routledge, 2019); HoMER Network: Histories of Moviegoing, Exhibition, and Reception, https://homernetwork.org, accessed Friday, March 29, 2024.

[13] Maltby, "New Cinema Histories," in *Explorations in New Cinema History*, 3–8.

[14] Maltby, "New Cinema Histories," 8–10.

[15] Maltby, 31.

[16] See Charles R. Acland, "Matinees, Summers, and the Practice of Cinemagoing," in *Screen Traffic: Movies, Multiplexes, and Global Culture,* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 45–81 for an in-depth analysis of the impacts of temporality and the sense of cultural "currency" produced by the theatrical window on cinemagoing practice.

[17] See Acland, "The Miniaturization of the Theme Park, or After the 'Death' of Cinema," in *Screen Traffic*, 45–81, for further discussion of the linkages between the multiplex and the theme park.

[18] Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, 6–7.

[19] Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, 8–16. See Musser and Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures* for a detailed study of the practice of travelling exhibition in this period.

[20] Ross Melnick and Andreas Fuchs, *Cinema Treasures: A New Look at Classic Movie Theaters,* (St. Paul, MN: MBI, 2004), 13. See Aronson, *Nickelodeon City*, for a study of the role of Pittsburgh exhibitors in creating and popularizing of the nickelodeon theater.

[21] Gary R. Edgerton, *American Film Exhibition and an Analysis of the Motion Picture Industry's Market Structure, 1963–1980,* Dissertations on Film (New York: Garland, 1983), 22–25.

[22] Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, 30–31.

[23] See Janet Staiger, "Combination and Litigation: Structures of U.S. Film Distribution, 1896-1917," *Cinema Journal* 23, no. 2 (1984): 41–72 and Robert Anderson, "The Motion Picture Patents Company: A Reevaluation," in *The American Film Industry*, 2nd ed., ed. Tino Balio (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985) for analyses of the formation, structure, and practices of the MPPC.

[24] Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, 32.

[25] See Melnick, *American Showman* for a detailed assessment of Rothafel's career and impact on the exhibition industry in this period.

[26] Monopsony refers to a market situation, such as sole domination of moviegoing in a specific city, in which there is only one buyer. Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, 34–36.

[27] Staiger, "Combination and Litigation," 51–52, 54–57.

[28] Staiger, "Combination and Litigation," 56–57.

[29] Anderson, "The Motion Picture Patents Company," 60–61.

[30] Anderson, "The Motion Picture Patents Company," 150–52.

[31] Anderson, "The Motion Picture Patents Company," 149–50.

[32] Staiger, "Combination and Litigation," 61–63; Anderson, "The Motion Picture Patents Company," 152.

[33] Staiger, "Combination and Litigation," 63–65.

[34] Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, 55–56, 59–63.

[35] Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, 63–66.

[36] Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, 66–69.

[37] For the history of Hollywood-owned cinemas overseas, see Melnick, *Hollywood's Embassies*.

[38] Michael Conant, *Antitrust in the Motion Picture Industry: Economic and Legal Analysis,* Publications of the Bureau of Business and Economic Research, University of California (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960), 94–95.

[39] Conant, *Antitrust in the Motion Picture Industry*, 95–97.

[40] Conant, 97–100.

[41] Conant, 100–102.

[42] Conant, 102–103.

[43] Conant, 107, 109. Of course, the Paramount Decrees only forced studios to divest their theaters at home, and the studios continued to operate foreign theaters long after the divorcement of their US chains. Melnick, *Hollywood's Embassies*, 7–9.

[44] Conant, *Antitrust in the Motion Picture Industry,* 106, 111; Edgerton, *American Film Exhibition*, 22–25.

[45] Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, 83–88; Edgerton, *American Film Exhibition*, 29–34.

[46] Michael Conant, "The Paramount Decrees Reconsidered," *Law and Contemporary Problems* 44, no. 4 (1981): 100–101; Edgerton, *American Film Exhibition*, 53.

[47] Edgerton, *American Film Exhibition*, 34–39; Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, 89–91, 95–99; Conant, "The Paramount Decrees Reconsidered," 101.

[48] Edgerton, *American Film Exhibition*, 44.

[49] Writing in 1983, Edgerton argues that the powerful independent chains that emerged in the 1970s benefitted from this entrepreneurial approach, especially with the advent of multiplexing: "…Multiplexing was the stimulant which enabled a handful of chains to grow gradually at first, and then meteorically. Later, these chains would diversify, and center operations around their corporate image. Entrepreneurial behavior was only required briefly, given the market structure and latitude for creativity available to the theater chain executive." In hindsight, this entrepreneurial quality in exhibition was more persistent than Edgerton recognized, fueling the emerging chains that would themselves ascend in the sector from the late 1980s to the early 1990s and remaining a salient feature even of large exhibition companies for some time to come. Edgerton, 44–45.

[50] Edgerton, 55–56.

[51] "US Theatre Circuits Ranked by Size," *Variety*, November 10, 1982, 92; Edgerton, *American Film Exhibition*, 55.

[52] See Jennifer Holt, *Empires of Entertainment: Media Industries and the Politics of Deregulation, 1980–1996* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011).

[53] See Kate Fortmueller, *Hollywood Shutdown: Production, Distribution, and Exhibition in the Time of COVID* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2021) and Vicki Mayer, Noa Lavie, and Miranda Banks, eds. *Media Industries in Crisis: What Covid Unmasked* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2024), especially Charlotte Orzel, "Fraught Gathering: Studio-Exhibitor Reckoning at CinemaCon 2021," 161–69, for early analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the exhibition industry.

[54] For studies focused on a single mode of exhibitor practice, see John Belton, Sheldon Hall, and Stephen Neale, eds. *Widescreen Worldwide* (New Barnet, UK: John Libbey, 2010); Ariel Rogers, *Cinematic Appeals: The Experience of New Movie Technologies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013); Paul, *When Movies Were Theater*; and Szczepaniak-Gillece, *The Optical Vacuum*. For studies focused on local areas or single exhibitors, see Waller, *Main Street Amusements*; Aronson, *Nickelodeon City*; Musser and Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures*; and Melnick, *American Showman*. For digital humanities approaches to film exhibition, see Jeffrey Klenotic, "Putting Cinema History on the Map: Using GIS to Explore the Spatiality of Cinema," in *Explorations in New Cinema History*, 58–84 and Bronwyn Coate et al., "Feature Film Diversity on Australian Cinema Screens: Implications for Cultural Diversity Studies Using Big Data," in *Australian*

Screen in the 2000s, ed. Ben Goldsmith and Mark David Ryan (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 341–60.

[55] Timothy Havens, Amanda D. Lotz, and Serra Tinic, "Critical Media Industry Studies: A Research Approach," *Communication, Culture and Critique* 2 (2009): 234–53.

[56] For more on media industry studies, see Jennifer Holt and Alisa Perren, eds., *Media Industries: History, Theory, and Method* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009); *Media Industries* 1, no. 1, 2, and 3 (2014–2015); and Daniel Herbert, Amanda D. Lotz, and Aswin Punathambekar, *Media Industry Studies,* Short Introductions (New York: Polity, 2020).

[57] Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 57–58.

[58] Tsing, *Friction*, 58.

[59] Tsing, 58.

[60] John Thornton Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 5–6.

[61] Caldwell, *Production Culture*, 7.

[62] Acland, *Screen Traffic*, 13–15.

[63] Edgerton, *American Film Exhibition*, 34–39; Benjamin J. Birkinbine, "Movie Theaters and Money: Integration and Consolidation in Film Exhibition," in *Political Economy of Media Industries: Global Transformations and Challenges*, ed. Randy Nichols and Gabriela Martinez (New York: Routledge, 2019), 27.

[64] Daniel Coleman, "Dubinsky Brothers: Entertainers—Maurice (1882–1929), Edward (Circa 1886–1960), Barney (1892–1949)," *Kansas City Public Library*, Missouri Valley Special Collections: Biography, 2004, https://kchistory.org/document/biography-dubinsky-brothers-entertainers-maurice-1882-1929-edward-circa-1886-1960-and.

[65] John Quinn, "From Tent Shows to a Nationwide Chain," *Variety*, March 8, 1993, 46.

[66] Quinn, "From Tent Shows to a Nationwide Chain," 46; Susan Jezak Ford, "Stanley Durwood: Inventor of the Movie Multiplex, 1921–1999," *Kansas City Public Library*, Missouri Valley Special Collections: Biography, 2003, https://kchistory.org/document/biography-stanley-durwood-1921-1999-inventor-movie-multiplex.

[67] Quinn, "From Tent Shows to a Nationwide Chain," 46.

[68] Jay Blickstein, "First Multiplex: An Accident of Design," *Variety*, 1993, 43, 50; Jason Roe, "The Multiplex is Born," *Kansas City Public Library*, accessed April 9, 2024, https://kchistory.org/week-kansas-city-history/multiplex-born.

[69] Dave Mote, Mark Swartz, and Jeffrey L. Covell, "AMC Entertainment Inc.," *International Directory of Company Histories*, vol. 114, ed. Jay P. Pederson (Detroit, MI: Gale, 2010), 18.

[70] Quinn, "From Tent Shows to a Nationwide Chain," 46; Doug Galloway, "Obituaries: Stanley Durwood," *Variety*, July 19, 1999, 40; "Privately Owned Amer. Multi-Cinema in Public Offering," *Variety*, June 29, 1983, 4, 28.

[71] Apollo Management Buys $250 Million of Preferred," *Wall Street Journal*, April 24, 2001.

[72] Michael Learmonth, "AMC Unspools Sale to Investment Group," *Daily Variety*, July 23, 2004, 6, 17; Clifford Coonan, "China's Wanda Buys AMC for $2.6 Bil," *Variety*, May 20, 2012, https://variety.com/2012/film/news/china-s-wanda-buys-amc-for-2-6-bil-1118054388/; Brian Steinberg, "Theater Chain AMC Entertainment Files for IPO," *Variety*, August 30, 2013, https://variety.com/2013/biz/news/theater-chain-amc-entertainment-files-for-ipo-1200593154/.

[73] Erich Schwartzel, "AMC Deal Boosts Chinese Control of US Theatres," *Wall Street Journal,* March 4, 2016.

[74] Erich Schwartzel, "AMC to Acquire Europe's No. 1 Theater Chain," *Wall Street Journal,* July 13, 2016; Leo Barraclough and Patrick Frater, "AMC Theatres to Buy Odeon & UCI Cinemas Group," *Variety*, July 12,

2016, https://variety.com/2016/film/global/amc-theaters-buy-odeon-uci-1201812569/; Patrick Frater, "AMC Takeover of Odeon & UCI Approved By European Regulators," *Variety*, November 17, 2016, https://variety.com/2016/biz/finance/amc-odeon-uci-takeover-approved-by-regulators-1201920519/; Patrick Frater, "Wanda Expands Global Theater Reach as AMC Pays $929 Million for Nordic Cinema," *Variety*, January 23, 2017, https://variety.com/2017/film/finance/wanda-expands-global-theater-reach-as-amc-pays-929-million-for-nordic-cinema-1201966877/.

[75] Jeffrey L. Covell, "Cinemark Holdings, Inc.," in *International Directory of Company Histories*, vol. 95, ed. Jay P. Pederson (Detroit, MI: Gale, 2008), 95; Jim Robbins, "Chain's Founder Learned the Ropes Deep in the Heart of Texas," *Variety*, January 31, 1990, 39.

[76] Covell, "Cinemark Holdings, Inc.," 96; Robbins, "Chain's Founder Learned the Ropes Deep in the Heart of Texas," 39, 44.

[77] Lisa Gubernick, "Dollar House Mitchell," *Forbes*, October 12, 1992, 118–21.

[78] Covell, "Cinemark Holdings, Inc.," 96.

[79] Peter Besas, "Exhib Cinemark Goes Latin," *Variety*, December 27, 1992, https://variety.com/1992/biz/news/exhib-cinemark-goes-latin-102405/; Cinemark Holdings, Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2023*, February 16, 2022, SEC, EDGAR System, 5.

[80] Martin Peers, "Cinemark Gets Cash Infusion," *Daily Variety*, February 21, 1996, 6.

[81] Carl DiOrio, "Deal's on the 'Mark," *Daily Variety*, March 15, 2004, 9.

[82] Gabriel Snyder, "Cinemark USA Buys Century," *Daily Variety*, August 10, 2006, 3, 9.

[83] Yvonne Ball, "Cinemark Holdings Falls Flat on First Day of Trading," *MarketWatch*, April 24, 2007, https://www.marketwatch.com/story/cinemark-holdings-falls-flat-on-first-day-of-trading.

[84] Andrew Hindes, "Exhib'n Kings," *Variety*, March 8, 1999, 31.

[85] Hindes, "Exhib'n Kings," 46; "Regal Corporate History," *Variety*, March 8, 1999, 38, 42.

[86] Steven Lipin and Bruce Orwall, "KKR, Hicks Muse to Buy Regal Cinemas," *Wall Street Journal,* January 20, 1998; Martin Peers, "Hicks Nixes UA Buy: Firm Backs Out of $850 Mil Exhib Deal," *Daily Variety*, February 23, 1998, 1.

[87] Braden Phillips, "Chain Plans 1,000 New Screens in '99," *Variety*, March 8, 1999, 31; Jeffrey L. Covell, "Regal Entertainment Group," in *International Directory of Company Histories*, vol. 59, ed. Jay P. Pederson and Miranda H. Ferrara (Detroit, MI: St. James Press, 2004), 342.

[88] Lindsay Chaney, "Mogul's New Crown," *Daily Variety*, October 15, 2001, 6; Covell, "Regal Entertainment Group," 342.

[89] Carl DiOrio, "Exhib King Rolls Out Regal IPO," *Daily Variety*, March 12, 2002, 1; Covell, "Regal Entertainment Group," 342.

[90] Henry Chu, "Cineworld Clinches $3.6 Billion Acquisition of Regal Entertainment Group," *Variety*, December 5, 2017, https://variety.com/2017/film/news/cineworld-clinches-acquisition-regal-entertainment-group-1202630741/; Ian Walker, "UK's Cineworld to Purchase Regal," *Wall Street Journal,* December 6, 2017.

[91] "Nat Taylor: The Mogul Behind the Mogul," *Globe and Mail,* November 29, 1985; Jaimie Hubbard, *Public Screening: The Battle for Cineplex Odeon* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1990), 14–15.

[92] "Nat Taylor"; Hubbard, *Public Screening*, 15–19; Moya Verzhbinsky and Susan Windisch Brown, "Cineplex Odeon Corporation," in *International Directory of Company Histories*, vol. 23, ed. Tina Grant (Detroit, MI: St. James Press, 1998), 123.

[93] Hubbard, *Public Screening*, 26.

[94] Hubbard, *Public Screening*, 30–31. See Manjunath Pendakur, "The Combines Law Revisited: The Cineplex Case," in *Canadian Dreams and American Control: The Political Economy of the Canadian Film Industry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 222–250 for an in-depth analysis of this case.

[95] Hubbard, *Public Screening*, 26–27, 31–33.

[96] Hubbard, *Public Screening*, 59–63.

[97] Hubbard, *Public Screening*, 35–37; See Paul S. Moore, "Nathan L. Nathanson Introduces Canadian Odeon: Producing National Competition in Film Exhibition," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 12, no. 2 (2003): 22–45 for a history of Famous Players and Canadian Odeon's duopoly in Canadian exhibition.

[98] Hubbard, Public Screening, 37–38, 63–64.

[99] Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, 109–110; Verzhbinsky and Brown, "Cineplex Odeon Corporation," 124–25. See Gomery, "Contemporary Moviegoing," in *Shared Pleasures*, 103–118 for an analysis of the influence of Cineplex's tactics on the upscaling of exhibition practice during the 1980s and 90s.

[100] Verzhbinsky and Brown, "Cineplex Odeon Corporation," 125; Will Tusher and Jim Robbins, "Garth Goes, Cineplex Owes," *Variety*, December 6, 1989, 3, 7. See Hubbard, *Public Screening* for a detailed trade history of Cineplex leading up to these events.

[101] Verzhbinsky and Brown, "Cineplex Odeon Corporation," 125.

[102] Martin Peers, "Loews, Cineplex Tie Knot," *Variety*, October 6, 1997, 27.

[103] Carl DiOrio, "Loews Down, Out," *Daily Variety*, February 16, 2001, 1, 46.

[104] Sinclair Stewart, "Onex Unveils Movie Assets Trust," *Globe and Mail,* October 4, 2003.

[105] Jill Goldsmith, "Buyers High on Loews," *Daily Variety*, June 22, 2004, 1, 13; Gabriel Snyder, "Crossed Circuits," *Daily Variety*, June 22, 2005, 1, 12.

[106] Richard Blackwell, "Cineplex Road to Viacom Ran Through Ottawa," *Globe and Mail,* June 25, 2005.

[107] Peter Stiff, "Regal Deal Creates No. 1 Chain of Cinemas," *Wall Street Journal,* December 17, 2019; Susan Krashinsky Robertson, "UK Movie-Theatre Giant to Buy Cineplex in $2.2-Billion Deal," *Globe and Mail,* December 17, 2019.

[108] "Cineworld Calls Off $2.8-Billion Cineplex Takeover," *Globe and Mail,* June 13, 2020; Susan Krashinsky Robertson, "Cineplex Files Suit Against Cineworld Over Quashed Deal," *Globe and Mail,* July 4, 2020.

Chapter 1: Crisis, Recovery, and the Making of Exhibition Giants

[1] See Jennifer Holt, *Empires of Entertainment: Media Industries and the Politics of Deregulation, 1980–1996* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011).

[2] Charles R. Acland, *Screen Traffic: Movies, Multiplexes and Global Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 90–98.

[3] See Acland, "Crisis and Settlement in Exhibition and Distribution" in *Screen Traffic*, 85–106, and Holt, "1986–1988: Golden Era Redux" in *Empires of Entertainment*, 93–114.

[4] In chapter 4, I will explore a handful of international exhibition giants, though my analysis will largely center on their interactions with their domestic counterparts and the growth of US giants' role in overseas markets.

[5] See Andrew deWaard, "Financialized Hollywood: Institutional Investment, Venture Capital, and Private Equity in the Film and Television Industry," *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 59, no. 4 (2020): 54–84.

[6] Acland, *Screen Traffic*, 92.

[7] As Acland notes, the designation *megaplex* is a fuzzy one that refers to a model of exhibition characterized by the combination of these features and inclusive of renovations to smaller sites rather than the size of large multiscreen cinemas alone. He points out that trade publications (even *Variety*, which coined the term) demonstrated a shifting definition of what they counted as a megaplex in their coverage from this period. In this view, understanding the megaplex as the culmination of a longer period of shifting exhibitor priorities is key to grasping it as a distinct theater form. Acland, *Screen Traffic*, 113. For more detail on the origins of the megaplex, see Acland, *Screen Traffic*, 107–108.

[8] In fact, the movie palace was often an explicit point of reference for exhibitors in the 1980s and 90s as they sought to advance a program of theater improvement and upscaling within the industry. Acland, *Screen Traffic*, 100.

[9] Michael L. Campbell, "The State of Our Art," *Boxoffice*, January 1999, 22.

[10] Campbell, "The State of Our Art," 23.

[11] See Holt, *Empires of Entertainment*.

[12] Acland, *Screen Traffic*, 90–99.

[13] The leveraged buyout arm of Merrill Lynch acquired United Artists in 1992, leaving the exhibitor with $500 million in debt. When the financial crisis in exhibition crested in 2000, the debt from this transaction was cited as a factor that had been a drag on United Artists' finances and contributed significantly to their eventual bankruptcy filing. Geraldine Fabrikant, "Cable Giant to Sell Chain of Theaters," *New York Times,* February 20, 1992; Dave McNary, "Latest Chapter 11: UA," *Variety*, September 6, 2000, https://variety.com/2000/biz/news/latest-chapter-11-ua-1117786039/. In 1994, US merchant bank Hellman & Friedman purchased Australia-based Hoyts, which then operated 75 US theaters. Soon after, the chain began an expansion that included plans to construct 200 screens in the US, alongside a similar scale of expansion in Australia and Mexico. Don Groves, "Hoyts Adding Screens," *Daily Variety*, September 14, 1994, 4; "The Giants of Exhibition," *Boxoffice*, December 1993, 24; Don Groves, "Hoyts Adds Screens to Empire," *Variety*, September 19, 1994, 36. The Cypress Group bought 44 percent of Cinemark for $98 million in 1996 and paid an additional $41 million to finance the company's expansion program. Cinemark, which had just constructed 150 screens in 1995, announced plans to open an additional 500 screens in the next eighteen months. Martin Peers, "Cinemark Gets Cash Infusion," *Daily Variety*, February 21, 1996, 6.

[14] Act III's final acquisition price represented almost nine times the company's projected cashflow for 1998 and more than twelve times their 1997 cashflow, at a time when public exhibition companies were trading for between seven and eight times their cashflow. Martin Peers, "Getting in on Act III: KKR Leading Suitor for Lear Theatres," *Daily Variety*, October 16, 1997, 6.

[15] "Company News: Kohlberg Kravis in $660 Million Deal for Act III Cinemas," *New York Times,* October 21, 1997.

[16] Martin Peers, "Hicks Picks Pic Tix, Buys UA Chain," *Variety*, November 13, 1997, https://variety.com/1997/film/news/hicks-picks-pic-tix-buys-ua-chain-1200324734/.

[17] As with Act III, the sale price skewed high compared to the rest of the market: KKR and Hicks Muse paid almost nine times Regal's projected cashflow for 1998, and more than thirteen times their cashflow for 1997. Steven Lipin and Bruce Orwall, "KKR, Hicks Muse to Buy Regal Cinemas," *Wall Street Journal,* January 20, 1998.

[18] Martin Peers, "Regal, UA, Act III to Form Megacircuit," *Daily Variety*, January 20, 1998, 1.

[19] Lipin and Orwall, "KKR, Hicks Muse to Buy Regal Cinemas."

[20] "Regal Cinemas Corporate History," *Variety*, March 8, 1999, 38; Martin Peers, "Exhibs in Takeover Tizzy: Regal Deal Sparks Merger Speculation," *Daily Variety*, January 21, 1998, 1.

[21] Lipin and Orwall, "KKR, Hicks Muse to Buy Regal Cinemas."

[22] Allen R. Myerson, "Amid Blame, United Artists Sale Collapses," *New York Times,* February 23, 1998; Martin Peers, "Hicks Nixes UA Buy: Firm Backs Out of $850 Mil Exhib Deal," *Daily Variety*, February 23, 1998, 1.

[23] Peers, "Hicks Nixes UA Buy," 1.

[24] Allen R. Myerson and Geraldine Fabrikant, "2 Buyout Firms Make Deal to Acquire Regal Cinemas," *New York Times,* January 21, 1998; Martin Peers, "Exhibs Vexed by Wall St. Hex on Plex," *Variety*, January 26, 1998, 1, 83.

[25] On the heels of KKR's initial deal for Act III in late 1997, Silver Cinemas, a twenty-five theater discount chain, announced it would acquire US arthouse circuit Landmark Theatres fifty cinemas with the backing of venture capital firm Brentwood Associates. In the two years following the deal, Silver Cinemas added seventy-

eight theaters to its discount circuit and announced plans to expand Landmark's screen count by 20 percent. Andrew Hindes, "Hi-Yo, Silver Deal: Discount Chain Eyes Buy of Landmark," *Daily Variety*, October 29, 1997, 1; Leonard Klady, "Silver Inks Landmark Purchase," *Daily Variety*, December 18, 1997, 1; Christopher Grove, "New Screens Will Make Org Only National Art Film Chain," *Daily Variety*, October 19, 1999, A2. Warburg Pincus also came into exhibition in late 1997, purchasing Mann Theatres through a joint venture with former exhibition executive Jeff Lewine. Through the company WestStar Cinemas, the pair paid $165 million for the circuit's 62 sites. Martin Peers, "Cinamerica Dealt: TW, Viacom to Sell Circuit for $165 Mil," *Daily Variety*, November 25, 1997, 6; Andrew Hindes, "Viacom, TW Complete Cinamerica Theater Sale," *Daily Variety*, December 30, 1997, 3.

[26] They also continued to seek acquisitions, competing for the US assets of Australia's Hoyts Theatres. That deal appears to have dissolved as the exhibition sector fell further into disarray. Andrew Hindes and Don Groves, "Regal Near Deal to Buy Hoyts Chain," *Daily Variety*, August 10, 1999, 5.

[27] "The Fabulous Fifty," *Boxoffice*, December 1995, 28.

[28] AMC had already been building larger-than average sites for several years; the company opened its first fourteen-screen theater in Century City, Los Angeles in 1987. "Andrew Hindes, "Megaplex Dominance Intact," *Variety*, March 16, 1998, 39. The Grand, then still under construction, was mentioned alongside a fourteen-screen Regal theater in Chesapeake, Virginia as key examples of the trend in the article that coined the term *megaplex*. However, the same article also suggested that the trend was well underway, since "any new complex with less than ten screens is practically unheard of" and "freestanding complexes housing fourteen to twenty-four screens and 2,500 to 3,500 total seats are fast becoming the norm." Paul Noglows, "Here Come the Megaplexes," *Variety*, August 22, 1994, 65.

[29] Hindes, "Megaplex Dominance Intact," 39. This figure exceeded their 1995 plans to build 600 new screens by 1999, which was then seen as one of the largest commitments to theater construction in the industry. Noglows, "Here Come the Megaplexes," 65.

[30] AMC Entertainment Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended April 1, 1999*, June 25, 1999, Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Electronic, Gathering, Analysis, and Retrieval (EDGAR) System; Hindes, "Megaplex Dominance Intact," 39.

[31] For instance, discussing their own megaplex plans in 1999, Regal executives maintained that they intended to keep the size of future projects to an average of fourteen to eighteen screens, framing their competitors' projects as "over the top." Braden Phillips, "Chain Plans 1,000 New Screens in '99," *Variety*, March 8, 1999, 31.

[32] Stephanie Argy, "High-Tech Add-Ons Usher in 'New Wave 'of Filmgoing," *Variety*, March 16, 1998, 50.

[33] Jill Goldsmith and Dade Hayes, "Exhibs Spinning After Plex Pile-Up Plays Out," *Variety*, March 6, 2000, 16.

[34] Braden Phillips, "Stadium Seating Tops List of Theater Design Priorities," *Variety*, March 8, 1999, 36.

[35] Argy, "High-Tech Add-Ons Usher in 'New Wave' of Filmgoing," 50.

[36] Martin Peers and Andrew Hindes, "Screen Dreams Fade for Plex Tyros," *Variety*, February 15, 1999, 14.

[37] Leonard Klady, "B.O. Tumble Vexes Plexes," *Variety*, August 8, 1996, 74.

[38] Phillips, "Chain Plans 1,000 New Screens in '99," 31.

[39] Phillips, "Chain Plans 1,000 New Screens in '99," 32.

[40] Jill Goldsmith and Dade Hayes, "Exhib Gloom as B.O. Booms," *Variety*, June 5, 2000, 61. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that Regal operated only two of the 100 top-grossing theaters in the United States in the first seven months of 2000, and that even those were ranked 96th and 98th. Bruce Orwall and Gregory Zuckerman, "Regal Cinemas Joined Megaplex Frenzy, Ended Up in Back Row," *Wall Street Journal*, September 27, 2000.

[41] Cineplex built a handful of sites in Los Angeles before acquiring Plitt Theatres in 1985, becoming the fourth largest theater chain in the United States. The Plitt acquisitions were followed by a rash of other US acquisitions, including RKO Century Warner Theaters' lucrative flagship screens across New York City.

Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States,* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 108, 110–111

[42] Sony took majority ownership of Cineplex Odeon when it merged with Loews Theatres in 1998, becoming Loews Cineplex; MCA/Universal and other Cineplex shareholders retained a 48.9 percent share. Martin Peers and Andrew Hindes, "Sony, Cineplex Mull Merger," *Daily Variety*, June 19, 1997, 1; Martin Peers, "Cineplex and Loews Tie Knot," *Daily Variety*, October 1, 1997, 1; Martin Peers, "Loews Looks for Bigger Screen Play," *Daily Variety*, February 18, 1998, 1; Martin Peers and Amelia Hart, "Exhib Merger Ok'd," *Daily Variety*, April 17, 1998, 6.

[43] Sid Adilman, "Cineplex Odeon Circuit to Add 200 Canadian Screens Thru '88," *Variety*, July 2, 1986, 6; "Famous Players Set $C50-Million Toronto Expansion," *Variety*, May 18, 1988, 39.

[44] Cineplex proposed an expansion and refurbishing plan for their circuit that aimed to build 250 new screens over two years at a cost of $250 million. Pamela Cuthbert, "Screen Wars: At a Theater Near You," *Playback*, May 8, 1995, https://playbackonline.ca/1995/05/08/4297-19950508/. In 1996, they expanded these ambitions, aiming to increase their circuit by 100 screens at a cost of $145 million. Meg Mathur, "Exhibitors in Expansive Mood," *Playback*, May 4, 1998, https://playbackonline.ca/1998/05/04/21598-19980504/; "The Fabulous Fifty," December 1995, 28. Famous Players announced its own expansion plan in 1995, sketching ambitions to build 175 new screens over three years. "Famous in an Expansive Mood," *Playback*, September 11, 1995, https://playbackonline.ca/1995/09/11/4645-19950911/.

[45] Brendan Kelly, "AMC Plans Canadian Expansion," *Variety*, August 19, 1996, 21.

[46] Tamsen Tillson, "Canada is Building It, But Will They Come?" *Variety*, April 13, 1998, 9; Leo Rice-Barker, "Special Report on Distribution and Exhibition: Industry Banks on New Technology, Expanded Slates," *Playback*, May 6, 1996, 19–20; "Canadian Giants of Theatrical Exhibition," *Boxoffice*, June 2000, 34–35.

[47] Famous Players invested heavily in the megaplex model, showcasing four theater brands: ten- to sixteen-screen SilverCity complexes, twelve-screen circular Coliseum theaters, UFO-shaped Colossus theaters (otherwise designed similarly to the Coliseum sites), and sophisticated downtown Paramount venues, all of which emerged as part of its post-1996 expansion project. Brendan Kelly, "Famous Players: Multiplex Expansion Plan Targets British Columbia and Quebec," *Variety*, November 29, 1999, 38. For Cineplex, elements of the megaplex model can be observed in some of the chain's earliest theaters. The company's first theater at Toronto's Eaton Center, had eighteen screens and was among the largest theaters in North America at the time. Hubbard, *Public Screening*, 35. The company built a reputation for creating upscale cinema environments that included attention to architectural design, specialty concession offerings, reserved seating, and efforts to minimize crowds with staggered showtimes. Gomery, *Shared Pleasures,*105–114.

[48] Shlomo Schwartzberg, "Guzzo on the Go," *Boxoffice*, March 1999, 34; Francesca Dinglasan, "Building an Empire: The Maritime Chain is Doing Swimmingly in Atlantic Canada," *Boxoffice*, May 1999, 33.

[49] Peers, "Cineplex and Loews Tie Knot," 1.

[50] Peers, "Loews Looks for Bigger Screen Play," 1.

[51] At the time, these chains were Regal Cinemas, Loews Cineplex Entertainment, Carmike Cinemas, Cinemark, and the United Artists Theatre Circuit. "The Fabulous Fifty," *Boxoffice*, January 2000, 41.

[52] Peers and Hindes, "Screen Dreams Fade for Plex Tyros," 7.

[53] Bruce Orwall, "Theater Consolidation Jolts Hollywood Power Structure," *Wall Street Journal,* January 21, 1998; Orwall and Zuckerman, "Regal Cinemas Joined Megaplex Frenzy."

[54] Martin Peers and Andrew Hindes, "AMC Scales Back Plexes in Reversal," *Variety*, May 24, 1999, 10. By December, the chain had also announced a major restructuring that would see them close branch offices in Los Angeles, New Jersey, and Florida and lay off one hundred employees. Francesca Dinglasan, "AMC: Affecting Major Cuts," *Boxoffice*, December 1999, 44–45.

[55] Francesca Dinglasan, "Mann Trouble," *Boxoffice*, November 1999, 143. From the outset, the $165 million deal had been questionable for Warburg Pincus. Though the chain included the historic Grauman's Chinese Theatre in Hollywood, most of the circuit was outdated as Mann had sat out the building boom and had been shopped around at length by its former co-owners Viacom and Time Warner. Former exhibition executive Jeff

Lewine, who partnered with Warburg Pincus on the deal, was rosy on Mann's prospects in early 1998, predicting an "aggressive construction and acquisition campaign." But the chain was up for sale again after only a year of WestStar ownership. With turmoil already brewing in the industry by late 1999 and a circuit that was rapidly losing value, WestStar failed to find a buyer before filing for Chapter 11. In a reversal, Viacom-Warner Bros. would buy the chain back in bankruptcy court for a little over half the price initially paid by Lewine and Warburg Pincus. Andrew Hindes, "Viacom, TW Complete Cinamerica Theater Sale," *Daily Variety*, December 30, 1997, 3; Lisa Osborne, "Q&A: Buyout Mann Buys Cinamerica," *Boxoffice*, February 1998, 44; "Mann for Sale," *Boxoffice*, April 1999, 206; Leonard Klady, "Mann Headed Back to Cinamerica," *Daily Variety*, October 8, 1999, 6.

[56] They were Silver Cinemas (parent company of US arthouse circuit Landmark Theatres), Carmike Cinemas, Edwards Theatres, United Artists Theatre Company, General Cinema, and Resort Theatres. Francesca Dinglasan, "Lead Story: Silver Seeks Lining in Financial Cloud," *Boxoffice*, July 2000, 84; Francesca Dinglasan, "Lead Story: Carmike, Edwards File for Bankruptcy; Regal Next?" *Boxoffice*, October 2000, 62; Francesca Dinglasan, "Lead Story: UATC Files for Bankruptcy," *Boxoffice*, November 2000, 140; Francesca Dinglasan, "Lead Story: General Cinema and Resort Theatres of America File for Bankruptcy," *Boxoffice*, December 2000, 42.

[57] "The Fabulous Fifty," January 2000.

[58] Jill Goldsmith, "Exhibs Fishin' for Intermission," *Variety*, August 28, 2000, 9, 123.

[59] Orwall and Zuckerman, "Regal Cinemas Joined Megaplex Frenzy."

[60] Preferred stock refers to shares that claim higher dividends than common stock but have limited voting rights. Preferred stockholders also have a greater claim on assets than common stockholders in the event of a liquidation. With the 2001 deal, Apollo owned what would have amounted to 60 percent of the chain's equity value if the preferred shares had been converted to common stock. But even if Apollo had owned the equivalent value of common stocks, they still would have had limited voting power due to a special class of AMC shares with "supervoting" power that carried ten votes per share. The deal meant that Apollo had a better chance of positive outcomes from its investments and less risk if things went sour, but also had limited voting rights to unilaterally direct the management of the company. "Apollo Management Buys $250 Million of Preferred," *Wall Street Journal*, April 24, 2001.

[61] Carl DiOrio, "Loews Down, Out," *Daily Variety*, February 16, 2001, 1, 46.

[62] Oaktree had specialized in distressed debt since its founding in 1995 and has since become one of the world's largest investors in distressed assets. Billionaire investor Howard Marks, Oaktree's co-founder and co-chairman, was well-known even then in the investment community for his widely read memos which have detailed his thoughts on investment strategy since 1990. A recurring theme in these memos, including in the years of their involvement with Anschutz and Onex, is moving against markets whose forces are driven by investor psychologies as much as material circumstances. Marks describes the market as a pendulum that moves between extremes, one in which "the movement towards an extreme itself supplies the energy for the swing back." "Investment markets make the same pendulum-like swing," he writes, "between euphoria and depression, between celebrating positive developments and obsessing over negatives, and thus between underpriced and overpriced." Howard Marks, "First Quarter Performance," April 11, 1991, https://www.oaktreecapital.com/docs/default-source/memos/1991-04-11-first-quarter-client-performance.pdf. According to Marks, the seeds for economic crisis are sown in those moments of unbridled euphoria at one extreme of the pendulum, especially by lenders who become too permissive in periods of prosperity, as they did in the exhibition industry. Oaktree works against the prevailing mood of the market by finding unconventional investments that will allow the firm to consistently yield above-average returns, often by buying assets it considers underpriced during downturns and waiting for them to return to profitability. Howard Marks, "You Can't Predict. You Can Prepare." November 20, 2001, https://www.oaktreecapital.com/docs/default-source/memos/2001-11-20-you-cant-predict-you-can-prepare.pdf. As Marks writes in a 2006 memo: "I like to say Oaktree buys when people say 'no way 'and sells when they say 'no sweat.'…We gained control of Regal, Loews, Edwards, and Landmark when people thought overexpansion had sounded the death knell for the movie exhibition industry, and we began to sell when

industry capacity was rationalized and profitability rebounded.…These transactions were highly profitable." Howard Marks, "Dare to be Great," September 7, 2006, https://www.oaktreecapital.com/docs/default-source/memos/2006-09-07-dare-to-be-great.pdf. Oaktree's involvement in deals with Anschutz for Edwards and Regal; with Onex for Loews Cineplex; and a solo acquisition of Silver Cinemas placed them at the center of the largest and most lucrative deals of this period. Its prior experience with this investment strategy likely was a factor in Onex and Anschutz's eagerness to do business with the firm, as well as in the eventual profitability of the deals Oaktree was involved in. Carl DiOrio and Jill Goldsmith, "Exhibition of Need," *Daily Variety*, January 11, 2001, 8; Dade Hayes and Carl DiOrio, "Oaktree Nabs Exhib Silver Cinemas," *Variety*, April 30, 2001, 77.

[63] Paul M. Sherer, "Anschutz May Be Making Play for United Artists," *Wall Street Journal,* June 1, 2000.

[64] Carl DiOrio, "UA Raising Curtain After Bankruptcy," *Daily Variety*, January 23, 2001, 6.

[65] Carl DiOrio, "Anschutz Seeks Deal for Edwards Theatres," *Daily Variety*, February 16, 2001, 1.

[66] Carl DiOrio, "Edwards Creditors OK Anschutz Buyout Plan," *Daily Variety*, August 29, 2001, 1, 8.

[67] Carl DiOrio, "Anschutz Advances in Regal Bid," *Daily Variety*, March 27, 2001, 5; Carl DiOrio, "Anschutz Adds More of Regal," *Daily Variety*, May 30, 2001, 3; Paul M. Sherer, "Anschutz Advances in Bid for Control of Regal Cinemas," *Wall Street Journal,* March 26, 2001.

[68] Lindsay Chaney, "Mogul's New Crown," *Daily Variety*, October 15, 2001, 6.

[69] These sums counted among some of the largest losses in both the firms' histories. The fallout was especially ill-timed, as both KKR and Hicks Muse were in the process of raising money for new buyout funds. Orwall and Zuckerman, "Regal Cinemas Joined Megaplex Frenzy."

[70] Carl DiOrio, "Exhib King Rolls Out Regal IPO," *Daily Variety*, March 12, 2002, 1.

[71] Carl DiOrio, "Regal Returns," *Daily Variety*, May 10, 2002, 1.

[72] "The Fabulous Fifty," January 2000. Unlike in the case of the Loews Cineplex acquisition or Anschutz's deals for United Artists, Edwards, and Regal, General Cinema had filed for bankruptcy in October 2000 without a prospective buyer launching either a takeover attempt or executing a prearranged filing. In a twist that illustrates the no-win position of many exhibitors during the megaplex crisis, General Cinema was suffering financially because of its prudence about theater construction. As the company had proceeded with caution in building new theaters, competitors' new, state-of-the-art megaplexes had siphoned off business at the generally older venues in General Cinema's circuit. Carl DiOrio, "Chapter 11 Curtain to Fall on GC," *Daily Variety*, October 12, 2000, 1.

[73] This deal was valued at $36.6 million in cash and $114.3 million in assumed debt. Carl DiOrio, "General Latest Exhib Sold," *Daily Variety*, June 14, 2001, 1.

[74] AMC nearly doubled Onex-Oaktree's bid with a $62.5 million cash offer. Carl DiOrio, "AMC Unspools Offer," *Daily Variety*, July 12, 2001, 1, 30.

[75] Carl DiOrio, "AMC's 'in the Game,'" *Daily Variety*, July 19, 2001, 8.

[76] Carl DiOrio, "General Cinemas Goes to AMC via Auction," *Daily Variety*, December 7, 2001, 5. By the time the deal closed in March 2002, the chain had also added 68 screens from regional chain Gulf States Theaters to its circuit. Carl DiOrio, "AMC: GC Deal About to Close," *Variety*, March 18, 2002, https://variety.com/2002/biz/news/amc-gc-deal-about-to-close-1117864133/; Carl DiOrio, "Exhib AMC to Buy Gulf States Loop," *Daily Variety*, January 30, 2002, 8.

[77] Brendan Kelly, "Canada's Onex Eyes Exhib Biz Expansion," *Daily Variety*, May 14, 2001, 8.

[78] Gayle MacDonald, "Onex Partners Launch Cinema Chain to Show Flicks to the Sticks," *Globe and Mail,* September 15, 1999.

[79] Early merger talks between Loews Cineplex and Cinemark were reported in April 2002, but a deal never materialized. "There's this really big player now in Anschutz, and AMC is huge as well," said an unnamed commentator in *Daily Variety*, "So the other guys are saying to themselves, 'We need to get bigger to remain on an even keel.'" Carl DiOrio, "Exhibs Talk Merger," *Daily Variety*, April 26, 2002, 1. The AMC merger talks came in November 2003, as Onex and Oaktree were separating the Canadian and US assets of Loews

Cineplex (discussed below). The deal would have resulted in a combined circuit with over 5,600 screens, approaching the size of Regal's 6,100-screen circuit at this time. However, negotiations were called off in January 2004. Carl DiOrio, "AMC, Loews Mull Merger," *Daily Variety*, November 19, 2003, 2; Carl DiOrio, "Loews Parent Onex, AMC Confirm Merger Talks," *Daily Variety*, November 20, 2003, 6, 15; Carl DiOrio, "AMC, Loews Call Off Nups," *Daily Variety*, January 23, 2004, 1. The Landmark acquisition progressed furthest. Landmark had been purchased the previous year by Onex's Loews partner, Oaktree Capital, and Onex announced plans to buy the chain in November 2002. By January 2003, Onex called the deal off, citing discomfort with the extent of the US Department of Justice's requests about the details of Onex's operations. Hayes and DiOrio, "Oaktree Nabs Exhib Silver Cinemas," 77; Carl DiOrio, "Onex Eyes Landmark Deal as Bidders Mull Clearview," *Daily Variety*, November 12, 2002, 1; Carl DiOrio, "Onex Fed Up with Regs, Won't Buy Landmark," *Daily Variety*, January 15, 2003, 7.

[80] Star Theatres operated only 10 theaters comprising 156 screens, a far cry from the size of General Cinema. "Onex and Oaktree to Buy Rest of Star Theatres," *Globe and Mail,* April 3, 2002.

[81] The other 58 percent of Groupo Cinemex was purchased by Oaktree Capital as part of the same agreement. Carl DiOrio, "Loews Lifts Korea Stake," *Daily Variety*, August 2, 2002, 20; Carl DiOrio, "Exhib's Int'l Expanse," *Daily Variety*, June 20, 2002, 4.

[82] Even when adjusted for inflation, 2002 was indeed the high-water mark for box office figures since 1987: $12.32 billion in 2019 dollars. Alongside *Spider-Man* and *Attack of the Clones*, the year saw the release of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, and *Men in Black II*. 2009 is the only year since then that inflation-adjusted box office has exceeded this figure ($12.48 billion in 2019 dollars), due in large part to the influence of *Avatar*. However, the box office has hovered above $10 billion in 2019 dollars since 1999 (see figure 3).

[83] Jill Goldsmith, "Exhib Stock Zooms While B.O. Booms," *Daily Variety*, June 11, 2002, 1.

[84] Cinemark had to back out shortly before the IPO they had scheduled for July 2002. Carl DiOrio, "Cinemark Yanks IPO," *Daily Variety*, July 24, 2002, 6, 25. Onex and Oaktree filed paperwork in August, after Cinemark had already retracted their plans, but withdrew themselves in October, citing ongoing market volatility. Carl DiOrio, "Loews Yanks Planned IPO," *Daily Variety*, October 25, 2002, 1.

[85] Jacquie McNish, "Onex Looking at Loews IPO," *Globe and Mail,* May 10, 2002.

[86] Francesca Dinglasan, "The 2007 Giants of Exhibition: A Directory of the Largest Domestic Circuits Ranked by Screen Count," *Boxoffice*, February 2007, 29–30.

[87] Carl DiOrio, "Cinemark is on the Block," *Daily Variety*, January 14, 2004, 1, 70.

[88] Carl DiOrio, "Financial Players, Not Exhibs, Eye Cinemark," *Daily Variety*, March 2, 2004, 4.

[89] Carl DiOrio, "Deal's on the 'Mark," *Daily Variety*, March 15, 2004, 9.

[90] Sinclair Stewart, "Onex Unveils Movie Assets Trust," *Globe and Mail,* October 4, 2003. An income trust is structured like a real estate investment trust (REIT). These investments are designed to distribute a stable income stream to investors and benefit from tax advantages, rather than emphasizing the growth expected of traditional public corporations. At the time of the deal, income trusts were seen to offer a more stable income stream in the face of an unsteady market and were experiencing a moment of popularity. Stewart, "Onex Unveils Movie Asset Trust."

[91] Tamsen Tillson, "Galaxy Circles Cineplex Odeon Sites," *Daily Variety*, January 17, 2001, 8.

[92] DiOrio, "AMC, Loews Confirm Merger Talks"; Jill Goldsmith, "Loews Chain Seeks Buyer," *Daily Variety*, March 15, 2004, 23. Loews's international assets would flounder under the new ownership, as US exhibition companies largely turned away from the overseas expansion plans they laid in the 1990s. This history and its aftermath are discussed further in chapter 4.

[93] Jill Goldsmith, "Buyers High on Loews," *Daily Variety*, June 22, 2004, 1, 13.

[94] Richard Blackwell, "Onex Reaps Big Profit on Loews Sale," *Globe and Mail*, June 22, 2004.

[95] This figure included $399 million in cash, $1.67 billion in equity, and $758 million in debt. Michael Learmonth, "AMC Unspools Sale to Investment Group," *Daily Variety*, July 23, 2004, 6, 17. The deal was

finalized in December 2004. Lindsay Chaney, "Shareholders Savor as AMC Goes Private," *Daily Variety*, December 27, 2004, 6.

[96] Gabriel Snyder, "Crossed Circuits," *Daily Variety*, June 22, 2005, 1, 12.

[97] When the deal closed in January 2006, AMC controlled 4,431 screens in the United States and an additional 1,241 screens across 11 international markets. Gabriel Snyder, "AMC, Loews Toast Merger Completion," *Daily Variety*, January 27, 2006, 6, 28. Regal then had 6,530 domestic screens, but none outside the US. "North American Giants of Exhibition," *Boxoffice*, January 2006, 32–39.

[98] Snyder, "Crossed Circuits," 1, 12.

[99] Indeed, the deal was understood by the trade press as an investor strategy to increase AMC's value for a future IPO. Snyder, "Crossed Circuits," 1.

[100] Gabriel Snyder, "Cinemark USA Buys Century," *Daily Variety*, August 10, 2006, 3, 9.

[101] These acquisitions included half the US theaters of Australia-based Hoyts Cinema (554 screens), Hawaii and California's Signature Theatres (309 screens), Maryland's R/C Theatres (76 screens), and North Carolina's Eastern Federal (236 screens). Carl DiOrio, "Regal Pumped After Hoyts Haul, Profit Rise," *Daily Variety*, February 5, 2003, 1; Michael Learmonth, "Signature Signs Up with Exhib Regal," *Daily Variety*, October 4, 2004, 8; Blanca Torres, "R/C Theatres to Sell 7 Movie Houses to Chain," *Sun* (Baltimore, MD), March 1, 2005;" Regal to Buy Eastern Federal for $127.6M," *Charlotte Business Journal*, April 28, 2005, https://www.bizjournals.com/charlotte/stories/2005/04/25/daily41.html.

[102] "The Fabulous Fifty," *Boxoffice*, January 2005, 34. AMC and Cinemark's history of international exhibition ownership will be discussed further in chapter 4.

[103] Michael Learmonth, "Spinoff Hits Viacom," *Daily Variety*, October 29, 2004, 5; Pamela McClintock, "Viacom to Slim Down," *Daily Variety*, March 1, 2005, 1.

[104] Richard Blackwell, "Cineplex Road to Viacom Ran Through Ottawa," *Globe and Mail,* June 25, 2005.

[105] Cineplex Galaxy Income Fund, "Cineplex Galaxy Announces Sale of Theatres to Empire Theatres Limited," August 22, 2005, Canadian Securities Administrators (CSA), SEDAR+; Brendan Kelly, "Empire's Expansion," *Daily Variety*, August 23, 2005, 10. The remaining seven sites were sold to Quebec's Fortune Cinemas. Cineplex Galaxy Income Fund, "Cineplex Entertainment Completes Sale of 7 Quebec Divestiture Theatres to Fortune Cinema Inc.," March 31, 2006, CSA, SEDAR+.

[106] Cineplex Galaxy Income Fund, "Cineplex Galaxy Completes Acquisition of Famous Players," July 22, 2005, CSA, SEDAR+.

[107] Anschutz and Oaktree continued to hold a stake in the Regal Entertainment Group, collecting profits from a series of sizable dividends in the years after the company's IPO. Carl DiOrio, "$5 Per Share Dividend for Regal Investors," *Daily Variety*, June 12, 2003, 63; Nicole Sperling, "On Borrowed Dime," *Daily Variety*, June 17, 2003; Jill Goldsmith, "Regal Dividend a Windfall for Anschutz," *Daily Variety*, April 16, 2004, 6; Jill Goldsmith, "Court Shoots Down Regal Payout Lawsuit," *Variety*, June 29, 2004, https://variety.com/2004/biz/news/court-shoots-down-regal-payout-lawsuit-1117907179/. Anschutz eventually sold the remainder of his stake in when Regal was sold to the United Kingdom's Cineworld corporation in 2018, an acquisition that will be discussed in depth in chapter 4. Henry Chu, "Cineworld Clinches $3.6 Billion Acquisition of Regal Entertainment Group," *Variety*, December 5, 2017, https://variety.com/2017/film/news/cineworld-clinches-acquisition-regal-entertainment-group-1202630741/.

[108] Onex sold the remainder of its stake in Cineplex in 2009. Grant Robertson and Boyd Erman, "Amid Box Office Records, Onex Sells Cineplex Stake," *Globe and Mail,* March 31, 2009. The company was restructured as a traditional corporation in 2011. Cineplex Galaxy Income Fund, *Notice of Change in Corporate Structure Pursuant to Section 4.9 of National Instrument 51-102*, January 4, 2011, CSA, SEDAR+.

[109] Yvonne Ball, "Cinemark Holdings Falls Flat on First Day of Trading," *MarketWatch*, April 24, 2007, https://www.marketwatch.com/story/cinemark-holdings-falls-flat-on-first-day-of-trading; "AMC Suspends Its IPO After Cinemark Raises Only $532 Million," *Boxoffice*, July 2007, 4.

[110] Cinemark Holdings Inc., "Cinemark Holdings, Inc. Announces the Sale of Shares by Madison Dearborn Capital Partners IV, L.P. and Syufy Enterprises, LP," January 19, 2010, https://ir.cinemark.com/news-events/press-releases/detail/163/cinemark-holdings-inc-announces-the-sale-of-shares-by; Cinemark Holdings Inc., "Cinemark Holdings, Inc. Announces the Sale of Shares By Madison Dearborn Capital Partners IV, L.P., Syufy Enterprises, LP and the Mitchell Special Trust," March 10, 2010, https://ir.cinemark.com/news-events/press-releases/detail/131/cinemark-holdings-inc-announces-the-sale-of-shares-by; Cinemark Holdings Inc., "Cinemark Holdings, Inc. Announces the Sale of Shares By Madison Dearborn Capital Partners IV, L.P., the Mitchell Special Trust and Lee Roy Mitchell," May 9, 2011, https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20110509007133/en/Cinemark-Holdings-Inc.-Announces-the-Sale-of-Shares-by-Madison-Dearborn-Capital-Partners-IV-L.P.-The-Mitchell-Special-Trust-and-Lee-Roy-Mitchell; Cinemark Holdings Inc., "Cinemark Holdings, Inc. Announces the Sale of Shares By Madison Dearborn Capital Partners IV, L.P.," November 8, 2011, https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20111108007189/en/Cinemark-Holdings-Inc.-Announces-the-Sale-of-Shares-by-Madison-Dearborn-Capital-Partners-IV-L.P.

[111] Jill Goldsmith, "Equity Owners Plan IPO for Exhib AMC," *Daily Variety*, December 12, 2006, 4; "AMC Exhibits Plan for IPO," *Daily Variety*, March 16, 2011, 4.

[112] Clifford Coonan, "China's Wanda Buys AMC for $2.6 Bil," *Variety*, May 20, 2012, https://variety.com/2012/film/news/china-s-wanda-buys-amc-for-2-6-bil-1118054388/; Andrew Stewart, "Wanda Group Acquires AMC Entertainment," *Variety*, September 4, 2012, https://variety.com/2012/film/news/wanda-group-acquires-amc-entertainment-1118058647/. This development, along with Regal's sale to Cineworld, will be discussed at length in chapter four.

[113] Brian Steinberg, "Theater Chain AMC Entertainment Files for IPO," *Variety*, August 30, 2013, https://variety.com/2013/biz/news/theater-chain-amc-entertainment-files-for-ipo-1200593154/; Michael J. de la Merced, "AMC Prices Its IPO At $18 a Share," *New York Times*, December 17, 2013, https://dealbook.nytimes.com/2013/12/17/amc-prices-its-i-p-o-at-18-a-share/.

Chapter 2: Beyond the Box Office

[1] In 1953, the Association of Theater Screen Advertising Companies was founded; five years later, domestic cinema advertising was a $20-million industry with twenty national advertisers. However, the practice quickly waned as television ascended as the dominant national advertising venue in the United States. For the next two decades, cinema advertising was generally reduced to trailers for coming attractions, promotions for concession offerings, and sporadic local and regional advertising. Kimberly A. Owczarski, "Come Early and Enjoy the (Pre-)show: Screenvision and the Growth of Cinema Advertising," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 31, no. 2 (2014): 151–152.

[2] Keith F. Johnson, "Cinema Advertising," *Journal of Advertising* 10 (1981), 11. Since its founding, Screenvision has twice changed ownership. In 2000, it was purchased by Carlton Communications, owner of Carlton Screen Advertising, then the largest cinema advertising company in the United Kingdom. Lucy Baker, "Carlton Buys Top-Ranked American Cinema Adverts Company for $93m," *Independent* (London), May 23, 2000; Owczarski, "Come Early and Enjoy the (Pre-)show," 155. In 2010, a controlling stake of Screenvision was purchased by Los Angeles-based Shamrock Capital Advisors. Owczarski, 157. Cinema advertising's popularity in Europe was due in large part to the divergent structures of the American and European television industries. Since most European television programming was publicly funded, advertising's incursion into the medium was much more limited in this period than it was in the United States. This left space for alternative forms of advertising to flourish. The Screen Advertising World Association (SAWA) was founded in 1954 out of the organization of the inaugural International Advertising Film Festival in Venice, Italy (later the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity) to promote the practice of cinema advertising in Europe. Owczarski, 151, 151n4; Mark Tungate, *Adland: A Global History of Advertising* (Philadelphia, PA: Kogan Page, 2007), 245–46. Even SAWA's name reveals the degree to which commercial advertising in European television was limited: at the time, the cinema was the "screen" where advertising could be regularly expected.

[3] Slide programs presented a series of still image advertising via a slide projector, while rolling stock ads screened moving image advertising printed on film stock like a traditional movie trailer.

[4] Lewis Grossberger, "Oh No! A Sales Pitch at the Movie House," *Washington Post*, November 10, 1977.

[5] Owczarski, "Come Early and Enjoy the (Pre-)show," 152.

[6] Owczarski, 153.

[7] Don Groves, "Foreign Hardtops Giving Audiences the Hard Sell," *Variety*, November 25, 1996, 8, 25.

[8] Groves, 25.

[9] Kim Foltz, "Disney Bans Commercials at Showings of its Films," *New York Times,* February 10, 1990; Michael Lev, "Warner Joins Walt Disney in Banning Ads at its Films," *New York Times,* April 18, 1990; Groves, 25.

[10] Owczarski, "Come Early and Enjoy the (Pre-)show," 153. This cross-promotional environment was closely linked to the concept of movie theaters as sites of "total entertainment," or sites that blended several leisure and entertainment activities, which began to flourish in the mid-1980s. Taken from the model of the theme park, this idea suggested that theaters might benefit from adopting a wider array of leisure options within their enclosed spaces as part of the larger discourses and practices of cinema improvement that ultimately led to the multiplex. Acland, *Screen Traffic*, 92. The presence of advertising, video games, merchandise, and dining, among other elements, increased the possibilities for cross-promotion. This principle, well-established in the multi- and megaplexes of the 1990s, would be expanded by exhibitors' diversification efforts, particularly in Canada, as I discuss later in this chapter.

[11] Owczarski, 153. Though the competitive landscape had shifted somewhat since 1996 as more companies entered the cinema advertising business and experimented with rolling stock ads, none had reached a comparable scale to Screenvision's. In 2002, Screenvision acquired the assets of Australian advertising company Val Morgan's US operations. *Daily Variety* reported that this would add 1,750 screens to Screenvision's 11,000-screen circuit and give the company a 54 percent market share of rolling stock cinema advertising. At this time, the Regal Entertainment Group had just created its Regal CineMedia division, servicing 5,900 screens, as I will discuss below. Carl DiOrio, "Screenvision Buys Rival's US Ad Unit," *Daily Variety*, September 24, 2002, 8.

[12] "Apollo Management Buys $250 Million of Preferred," *Wall Street Journal,* April 24, 2001; Carl DiOrio, "Exhib King Rolls Out Regal IPO," *Daily Variety*, March 12, 2002, 1.

[13] DiOrio, "Screenvision Buys Rival's U.S. Ad Unit," 8; Carl DiOrio, "Regal Pads Pre-Show Plan," *Daily Variety*, November 14, 2002, 4.

[14] Gabriel Snyder, "Loews, AMC Plans to Lift Curtain on Preshow Ads," *Daily Variety*, March 30, 2005, 13; Michael Schneider, "Preshow Pitches Growing in Value," *Daily Variety*, October 25, 2004, A1, A18.

[15] Exhibitor-led initiatives already made up a significant portion of this total; by 2004, Regal CineMedia reported receiving $99.9 million from cinema advertising. At this point, the initiative was still a small part of their overall business. The same year, Regal reported $1.66 billion in box office revenues and $636 million from concessions. Carl DiOrio, "Digital Delivery of Regal Preshow," *Daily Variety*, March 4, 2003, A3; Regal Entertainment Group, *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 30, 2004*, March 15, 2005, Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Electronic Data Gathering, Analysis, and Retrieval (EDGAR) System, 28–29.

[16] Schneider, "Preshow Pitches Growing in Value," A18.

[17] DiOrio, "Digital Delivery of Regal Preshow," A3.

[19] Dade Hayes, "Preshow Hits Half-Billion Mark," *Daily Variety*, March 10, 2008, A8.

[20] Gabriel Snyder, "Pre-Show Ad Curtain Lifted," *Daily Variety*, March 30, 2005, 2; Doris Toumarkine, "Screenvision's Vision," *Film Journal International*, October 2005, 24-25.

[21] National CineMedia, "AMC Entertainment Inc. and Regal Entertainment Group Announce the Formation of National CineMedia, LLC," March 29, 2005, https://press.ncm.com/press-releases/press-release-

details/2005/AMC-Entertainment-Inc-and-Regal-Entertainment-Group-Announce-the-Formation-of-National-CineMedia-LLC/default.aspx.

[22] As discussed in chapter 1, Cinemark became the number-three chain with the purchase of Century Theatres in 2006. Gabriel Snyder, "Cinemark USA Buys Century," *Daily Variety*, August 10, 2006, 3, 9. Under NCM's original joint venture agreement, Regal owned a 50 percent interest in NCM, AMC owned 29 percent, and Cinemark owned 21 percent. This division was roughly proportionate with the screens each chain brought to the circuit. Gabriel Snyder, "Cinemark Adds Ad Arm," *Daily Variety*, July 19, 2005, 6; Regal Entertainment Group, *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 29, 2005*, March 14, 2006, SEC, EDGAR System, 9; AMC Entertainment Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 2005*, June 21, 2005, SEC, EDGAR System, 7; Cinemark Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2004*, March 29 2005, SEC, EDGAR System, 8. In late 2005, Screenvision, still counting Loews Cineplex as a client, remained the largest cinema advertising company with 14,700 screens. Toumarkine, "Screenvision's Vision," 24–25.

[23] Snyder, "Pre-Show Ad Curtain Lifted," 2.

[24] Interview with exhibition executive, September 28, 2021.

[25] Interview with exhibition executive, October 4, 2021.

[26] Joint ventures were more common when US companies set up theater chains abroad, enabling US and foreign exhibitors operating in a given territory to share knowledge. As the foreign interest, US exhibitors benefitted from local exhibitors' on-the-ground knowledge, while local exhibitors could bring in operational expertise from the world's largest and most competitive cinema market. This was an especially common structure as the multiplex model expanded globally during the 1990s, as I will discuss in chapter 4.

[27] Interview with exhibition executive, October 4, 2021.

[28] Interview with exhibition executive, September 28, 2021.

[29] Hayes, "Preshow Hits Half-Billion Mark," A8.

[30] For NCM, these partnerships meant not only additional revenues from their advertising programs, but access to the kind of premium forms of backstage content that would encourage audiences to view the preshow as an integrated, entertaining piece of the cinemagoing experience. For film and television partners, inclusion in the preshow meant additional opportunities to build their brands, advertise upcoming film titles, and advertise related branches of the conglomerate, like home video, music, and, later, streaming. Gabriel Snyder, "No Curbs on Blurbs," *Daily Variety*, July 27, 2005, 1, 13.

[31] Snyder, "No Curbs on Blurbs," 1, 13; Marc Graser, "Pics Take a Spin," *Variety*, May 21, 2007, 9, 12.

[32] Toumarkine, "Screenvision's Vision," 24–25.

[33] "NCM IPO Reels in Wall Street Investors," *Boxoffice*, April 2007, 6.

[34] Paul Kagan, "The Price of Admission: Cinema Biz Enters New Zeitgeist," *Boxoffice*, April 2007, 136.

[35] The association between these ideas will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

[36] National CineMedia, Inc., *Form 10-K/A for the Fiscal Year Ended December 28, 2006*, March 28, 2007, SEC, EDGAR System, 39.

[37] National CineMedia, Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 26, 2019*, February 20, 2020, SEC, EDGAR System, 13.

[38] This aspect of the cinema advertising business predates the formation of NCM; for instance, Regal CineMedia cut an early deal to provide preshow advertising to the Georgia Theatre Company in 2004. Schneider, "Preshow Pitches Growing in Value," A18.

[39] DiOrio, "Regal Pads Pre-Show Plan," 4.

[40] Hayes, "Preshow Hits Half-Billion Mark," A8.

[41] Snyder, "Cinemark Adds Ad Arm," 6.

[42] Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs, "Justice Department Files Antitrust Lawsuit to Stop National CineMedia from Buying Screenvision," November 3, 2014, https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-files-antitrust-lawsuit-stop-national-CineMedia-buying-screenvision.

[43] After the Shamrock acquisition, Screenvision hired an outside consultant who concluded that NCM benefitted disproportionately from the prevailing practices in US cinema advertising industry. The new pricing strategy sought to push back on this situation. In addition to price cuts for advertisers, Screenvision also offered other incentives including signing bonuses and increased flexibility for exhibitors and demographic guarantees to advertisers (which committed to "deliver a set number of impressions to a targeted demographic"). *United States v. National CineMedia, Inc., National CineMedia, LLC, SV HoldCo, LLC, and Screenvision, LLC*, November 3, 2014, https://www.justice.gov/atr/case/us-v-national-cinemedia-inc-et-al, 8, 11, 17.

[44] *United States v. National CineMedia*, 10. During their investigation, the DOJ uncovered several damning quotes it used to bolster its case for NCM's anticompetitive motives for the Screenvision acquisition. For instance, NCM perceived Screenvision's new tactics as a "direct threat" to NCM's business model and a "very unusual strategy in a duopoly." As the company considered acquisition as a solution, an executive remarked "we need to buy [Screenvision] before either us or [Screenvision] does a stupid deal." The DOJ also described the moment when the acquisition decision was made: "By April 2014, NCM arrived at what it called a "Strategy Decision Crossroads." As NCM had told its board it could either acquire Screenvision, which would give NCM the ability to "Control Selling Tactics," including "Pricing," or it could compete through more aggressive pricing and adding theaters to its network. NCM chose to buy out its competitor." *United States v. National CineMedia*, 11.

[45] The DOJ also registered concern over the company's ownership by major exhibitors who held a 54 percent equity share in NCM as well as governance rights that could allow them to interfere in their competitors' involvement with the cinema advertising business. The DOJ argued that Regal, AMC, and Cinemark would potentially have the power to block NCM from contracting with competing cinema chains, negatively impacting their business in the absence of a comparable alternative. Department of Justice, "Justice Department Files Antitrust Lawsuit to Stop National CineMedia from Buying Screenvision"; *United States v. National CineMedia,* 4, 15–16.

[46] In one passage, the DOJ's complaint could be mistaken for a drier version of NCM's own promotional copy: "Cinema advertising has important attributes that differentiate it from other forms of advertising," the DOJ argued. "The preshow is projected on a large screen with high-quality video and sound in a darkened auditorium. In contrast to TV and other video advertising platforms, the audience cannot avoid the advertisements by fast forwarding through them, clicking past them, or changing a channel. The preshow also allows for long-form advertisements typically not available on TV (e.g., a ninety-second spot), and reaches a weekend audience and light TV viewers who are otherwise difficult to reach." *United States v. National CineMedia*, 5–6.

[47] National CineMedia, Inc., "National CineMedia, Inc. and Screenvision Respond to Justice Department Action," November 3, 2014, https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20141103006521/en/National-CineMedia-Inc.-and-Screenvision-Respond-to-Justice-Department-Action.

[48] NCM was required to pay Screenvision a $26.84 million termination fee, covered by NCM and its founding chains. The total cost of the merger to NCM, including the termination payment and "all legal and other expenses," was $11 million. National CineMedia, Inc., "National CineMedia, Inc. and Screenvision Terminate Merger Agreement," March 16, 2015, https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20150316006241/en/National-CineMedia-Inc.-and-Screenvision-Terminate-Merger-Agreement.

[49] As a coda to this episode, the DOJ ultimately forced AMC to divest itself of its stake in NCM after the chain announced its intended acquisition of Carmike Cinemas in 2016. Carmike was Screenvision's largest exhibitor client and one of its largest investors. In December of that year, the DOJ issued a complaint proposing that AMC divest theaters in fifteen markets where Carmike was its "most significant competitor," sell all but 5 percent of its holdings in NCM, relinquish its governance rights over the cinema advertising arm, and transfer twenty-four theaters to Screenvision's network. The agreement would last for ten years. "By requiring AMC to reduce its equity stake in NCM, terminate its participation in NCM's business, and transfer screens to Screenvision," said Acting Attorney General Renata Hesse, "the settlement will promote continued vigorous competition between the two leading cinema advertising networks—competition that the division fought to

protect when it blocked the NCM-Screenvision merger." A key part of the DOJ's argument was that, with the acquisition of Carmike under AMC's existing exclusivity agreements with NCM, Screenvision would lose access to its only means of adding new theater acquisitions to its network, since Carmike was the only large exhibitor engaged in acquisition activity that was not affiliated with NCM. *United States v. AMC Entertainment Holdings, Inc. and Carmike Cinemas, Inc.*, Complaint, December 20, 2016, https://www.justice.gov/atr/case/us-v-amc-entertainment-holdings-inc-and-carmike-cinemas-inc; *United States v. AMC Entertainment Holdings, Inc. and Carmike Cinemas, Inc.*, Proposed Final Judgment, December 20, 2016, https://www.justice.gov/atr/case/us-v-amc-entertainment-holdings-inc-and-carmike-cinemas-inc; Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs, "AMC Required to Divest Movie Theatres, Reduce NCM Ownership and Complete Screen Transfers in Order to Complete Acquisition of Carmike Cinemas," December 20, 2016, https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/amc-required-divest-movie-theaters-reduce-ncm-ownership-and-complete-screen-transfers-order.

On March 7, 2017, AMC agreed to the DOJ's proposed judgment. AMC and NCM came to an agreement that would allow AMC to comply with the DOJ's judgment, through payments to NCM. The chain was required to compensate NCM for lost revenues from the transaction and from modifying their agreement with AMC, and NCM agreed to assist AMC in divesting its stock, with AMC retaining at least 4.5 percent of NCM for the ten-year term of the DOJ agreement. *United States v. AMC Entertainment Holdings, Inc. and Carmike Cinemas, Inc.*, Final Judgment, March 7, 2017, https://www.justice.gov/atr/case/us-v-amc-entertainment-holdings-inc-and-carmike-cinemas-inc; National CineMedia, Inc., "NCM and AMC Reach Agreement Allowing AMC to Comply with DOJ's Final Order on Carmike Merger," March 10, 2017, https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20170310005783/en/NCM-and-AMC-Reach-Agreement-Allowing-AMC-to-Comply-with-DOJ's-Final-Order-on-Carmike-Merger.

Ultimately, this agreement was revised; AMC sold its remaining stake in NCM to Regal and Cinemark on July 5, 2018. Three days previously, it sold a significant portion of its shares in Screenvision to Arby Partners, giving them a controlling stake. Both transactions were framed as a means of selling off the company's nonstrategic assets. AMC is still subject to several agreements, including exclusivity agreements, with NCM. AMC Entertainment Holdings, Inc., "AMC Entertainment Holdings Inc. Announces Receipt of Approximately $203 Million of Proceeds," July 6, 2018, https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20180706005327/en/; National CineMedia, Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 27, 2018*, February 22, 2019, SEC, EDGAR System, 71–72.

[50] Regal Entertainment Group, *Form 10-K/A for the Fiscal Year Ended December 26, 2002*, March 26, 2003, SEC, EDGAR System.

[51] Anna Storm, "Alternative Content Takes Center Stage," *Film Journal International*, May 2014, 60–62; Eleena de Lisser, "Rock 'N' Roll Hits the Multiplex," *Wall Street Journal,* March 25, 2004. Not all these early events were produced by Regal CineMedia. Bon Jovi and Prince contracted directly with Regal for its concert series, but others, like David Bowie's concert and Q&A, were produced by other companies and distributed by the chain.

[52] National CineMedia Inc., *Form 10-K/A for the Fiscal Year Ended December 28, 2006*, March 28, 2007, SEC, EDGAR System, 7.

[53] Kerri Mason, "Silver Screen Opera," *Billboard*, December 7, 2013, 31; Ray Waddell, "Concerts West Lands Spears Trek," *Billboard*, September 1, 2001, 12.

[54] National CineMedia, Inc., *Form 10-K/A for the Fiscal Year Ended December 28, 2006*, 7.

[55] National CineMedia, Inc., *Form 10-K/A for the Fiscal Year Ended December 28, 2006*, 4, 7.

[56] National CineMedia, Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 27, 2012*, March 22, 2013, SEC, EDGAR System, 10.

[57] Peter Gelb, the Met's general manager, recalled learning about Fathom from David Bowie's 2003 simulcast *Reality* tour when he was the president of Sony Classical, which led to a call to the event cinema company shortly after he started at the Met in 2005. Mason, "Silver Screen Opera," 31. The Met: Live in HD also signed agreements with Cineplex Entertainment in Canada and Odeon and United Cinemas International in the United Kingdom, large national chains that had made significant investments in digital cinema and satellite

technology. The initial plan was to screen the productions on one to two hundred screens; as of 2014, the program screened in two thousand screens in sixty-four countries. Enabled by agreements with performer and stagehand unions, the Met's Live in HD program was part of a larger effort to expand their business to include television broadcasts; streaming, digital downloads, and video- and audio-on demand; digital radio, and CD and DVD sales. While profitable in its own right, the Met's Live in HD cinema program acted as "the opera model of a movie rollout" according to Gelb, focalizing attention and drawing in new audiences to stimulate downstream purchases as well as ticket sales. Annlee Ellingson, "Coming Soon to a Theater Near You: The Met," *Boxoffice*, December 2006, 7. Over the next ten years, the Live in HD program became a major success for the Met. Between 2006 and 2012, the Met increased its annual audience from 800,000 to more than 2.5 million and grew annual donations from $89 million to $150 million. By 2014, the Met was the world's largest commercial distributor of opera. Mason, "Silver Screen Opera," 30.

[58] Glen Dickson, "What's Opera Next at Multiplex," *Variety*, March 25, 2014, 77.

[59] Rebecca Pahle, "Unfathomable Success: Fathom Events Takes Event Cinema to New Heights," *Film Journal International*, April 2018, 34–36.

[60] Rebecca Pahle, "The Main Event," *Boxoffice Pro*, August 2020, 184.

[61] "U Classics Screen Via Fathom," *Daily Variety*, July 12, 2012, 5; Sam Andrews, "An Event Worth Celebrating," *Boxoffice*, April 2018, 74.

[62] Each founding member now owned a 32 percent stake. NCM retained 4 percent of the new company. National CineMedia, "National CineMedia (NCM) Restructures Ownership of Fathom Events," December 30, 2013, https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20131230005560/en/National-CineMedia-NCM-Restructures-Ownership-of-Fathom-Events. Ahead of the spinoff, NCM announced their intentions to begin winding down business events, seeing more possibility for growth in Fathom's consumer event business and better congruence with the "movie exhibition business" and the company's intention to become "a more powerful digital media platform." The shift in strategy, the company argued, would enable them to expand their reach in in-theater consumer programming. National CineMedia, Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 29, 2011*, February 24, 2012, SEC, EDGAR System, 8.

[63] Fathom Events, "Breaking Record After Record, Fathom Events is Set for Banner 2019," February 11, 2019, https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/breaking-record-after-record-fathom-events-is-set-for-banner-2019-300792696.html; "Fathom Events Celebrates a Record-Breaking January," *Boxoffice*, April 2019, 18–19.

[64] Fathom Events, "Fathom Events is Set for Banner 2019"; "Fathom Events Celebrates a Record-Breaking January," 18–19.

[65] Pahle, "Unfathomable Success," 34–36.

[66] Daniel Loria, "Ray Nutt Named New CEO of Fathom Events," *Boxoffice*, September 2017, 59.

[67] Pahle, "The Main Event," 186

[68] Fathom Events, "Fathom Events Expands Live Cinema Broadcast Network to More Than 1,700 Screens Through Extended Dish Network Agreement," April 23, 2018, https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/fathom-events-expands-live-cinema-broadcast-network-to-more-than-1-700-screens-through-extended-dish-network-agreement-300634495.html; "Fathom Events Expands Network to Over 1,700 Screens Through Extended Dish Network Agreement," *Boxoffice*, May 2018, 71; Fathom Events, "Fathom Events' Live Cinema Broadcast Network Expands to More Than 2,000 Screens," April 2, 2019, https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/fathom-events-live-cinema-broadcast-network-expands-to-more-than-2-000-screens-300822704.html.

[69] Fathom Events, "Fathom Events Enters Exclusive Partnership with International Cinema Powerhouse CinEvents," April 1, 2019, https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/fathom-events-enters-exclusive-partnership-with-international-event-cinema-powerhouse-cinevents-300821796.html.

[70] Fathom Events, "Fathom Events and Meteor 17 Form Strategic Partnership for Content Development," April 2, 2019, https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/fathom-events-and-meteor-17-form-strategic-partnership-for-content-development-300823087.html; Fathom Events, "Fathom Events Secures Master Agreement with New Global Independent Film Distributor 1091," April 9, 2019, https://www.prnewswire.com/news-

releases/fathom-events-secures-master-distribution-agreement-with-new-global-independent-film-distributor-1091-300828148.html.

[71] Fathom Events, "Fathom Events Launches Fathom Affinity Network (FAN), Distributing Faith and Inspiration Content to Nearly 800 Churches Across the Country," December 10, 2018, https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/fathom-events-launches-fathom-affinity-network-fan-distributing-faith-and-inspiration-content-to-nearly-800-churches-across-the-country-300762745.html.

[72] Rebecca Pahle, "Fathom Events Goes Outside Cinemas with the Fathom Affinity Network," *Boxoffice*, February 2019, 96.

[73] National CineMedia, Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 26, 2013*, February 21, 2014, SEC, EDGAR System, 44.

[74] Gabriel Snyder, "Exec to Head Digital Effort," June 28, 2006, https://variety.com/2006/film/markets-festivals/exec-to-head-digital-effort-1200336952/; National CineMedia, "National CineMedia to Work with AMC Entertainment Inc., Cinemark USA, Regal Entertainment Group and Other Exhibitors on Digital Cinema Deployment," December 15, 2005, https://press.ncm.com/press-releases/press-release-details/2005/National-CineMedia-to-Work-with-AMC-Entertainment-Inc-Cinemark-USA-Regal-Entertainment-Group-and-Other-Exhibitors-on-Digital-Cinema-Deployment/default.aspx.

[75] Ben Fritz, "D-Cinema Reels in Studios," *Daily Variety*, March 5, 2007, 8, 15.

[76] John Fithian, "The Digital Revolution Has Arrived—Hasn't It?" *Boxoffice*, July 2008, 11.

[77] David Bordwell, *Pandora's Digital Box: Films, Files, and the Future of Movies* (Madison, WI: The Irvington Way Institute Press, 2012), 72–73.

[78] NCM also leveraged expertise in its cinema advertising and event cinema business to position its digital deployment initiative as an ally to potential affiliate chains. "NCM is uniquely qualified to assist with the industry transition to digital cinema," said NCM CEO Kurt Hall when the project was launched. "NCM has successfully designed, deployed, and operated its national Digital Content Network [DCN] for several years and has significant experience distributing its advertising preshows and various forms of live and prerecorded digital content, including sporting events, concerts, and independent films. With the DCN growing to over 11,000 screens in 2006, it will provide an excellent platform that can be upgraded to the Digital Cinema Initiatives specifications with the higher quality digital cinema equipment now available." National CineMedia, "National CineMedia to Work with AMC Entertainment Inc., Cinemark USA, Regal Entertainment Group and Other Exhibitors on Digital Cinema Deployment."

[79] Annlee Ellingson, "Digital Deployment Update," *Boxoffice*, November 2007, 95.

[80] These chains included including National Amusements and Carmike Cinemas. David S. Cohen, "Is D-Cinema's Domain Already Dealt?" *Daily Variety*, March 15, 2006, A2–A5; Fritz, "D-Cinema Reels in Studios," 5; Ellingson, "Digital Deployment Update," 93–95. Christie/AIX was a joint venture between projector manufacturer Christie Digital Systems and digital cinema software company Access Integrated Technologies (AccessIT).

[81] Ellingson, "Digital Deployment Update," 95.

[82] Sarah McBride, "Universal, Disney Back Rollout of Digital Cinema Equipment," *Wall Street Journal,* September 8, 2008; "Digital Cinema Deal Not Quite Done," *Variety*, September 8, 2008, https://variety.com/2008/biz/markets-festivals/digital-cinema-deal-not-quite-done-1117991861/; "Credit Crunch Stalls D-Cinema Rollout," *Variety*, March 27, 2009, https://variety.com/2009/more/news/credit-crunch-stalls-d-cinema-rollout-1118001760/.

[83] The process of digital conversion and the role of exhibition giants and premium cinema in the process will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

[84] Fithian, "The Digital Revolution Has Arrived," 10–11. Fithian had made similar remarks in spring 2008 at ShowCanada and the Digital Cinema Summit at the National Association of Broadcaster's convention. Pamela McClintock, "John Fithian Enters Digital Fray," *Variety*, April 30, 2008,

https://variety.com/2008/digital/markets-festivals/john-fithian-enters-digital-fray-1117984905/; Nick Dager, "A Critical Juncture," *Boxoffice*, June 2008, 8.

[85] Fithian, "The Digital Revolution Has Arrived," 11.

[86] Fithian, 11.

[87] Fithian, 12.

[88] "Digital Cinema Deal Not Quite Done"; Pamela McClintock, "Exhibs, Studios Bridge Digital Divide," *Variety*, September 30, 2008, https://variety.com/2008/digital/markets-festivals/exhibs-studios-bridge-digital-divide-1117993164/; Digital Cinema Implementation Partners, "Digital Cinema Implementation Partners Announces Agreement with Five Studios for Digital Cinema Upgrade," October 1, 2008, https://www.dcinematoday.com/dc/pr?newsID=1204. Sony and Warner Bros. were the last to reach an agreement with the company. McClintock, "Exhibs, Studios Bridge Digital Divide."

[89] "Credit Crunch Stalls D-Cinema Rollout."

[90] McClintock, "Exhibs, Studios Bridge Digital Divide."

[91] Andrew Stewart and Pamela McClintock, "Exhibitors Finalize Funding," *Variety*, March 10, 2010, https://variety.com/2010/film/markets-festivals/exhibitors-finalize-funding-1118016282/; Digital Cinema Implementation Partners, "Digital Cinema Implementation Partners Announces Completion of $660 Million Financing for Digital Cinema Upgrade," March 10, 2010, https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/digital-cinema-implementation-partners-announces-completion-of-660-million-financing-for-digital-cinema-upgrade-87249262.html.

[92] Digital Cinema Implementation Partners, "Digital Cinema Implementation Partners Names Richard Manzione as President and CEO," March 24, 2011, https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/digital-cinema-implementation-partners-names-richard-manzione-as-president-and-ceo-118574279.html.

[93] Cineplex Entertainment had been in talks to join DCIP's conversion efforts since before it was spun off from NCM, but finally reached a formal agreement with DCIP through a partnership with number-two chain Empire Theatres in April 2011, under the umbrella of the Canadian Digital Cinema Partnership (CDCP). Through CDCP, Cineplex and Empire arranged financing and cut their own digital deployment agreements with studios, with DCIP providing "administrative services and system support" for the conversion of 1,600 screens. CDCP completed its financing for the deployment within three months and planned to complete its digital systems installations by the end of 2012. Hoyts converted around 400 screens in partnership with DCIP. It appears that the majority of DCIP's affiliate conversions came from these three chains. Cineplex Entertainment, "Cineplex Entertainment to Explore Digital Cinema With National CineMedia," August 31, 2006, https://mediafiles.cineplex.com/_att/7ebcf48d-8e9e-4915-8276-1bf28f25238a/2006-08-31--Cineplex_and_National_CineMedia--.pdf; Peter Cane, "Talking Shop," *Boxoffice*, June 2007, 29; Cineplex Entertainment, "Cineplex Entertainment and Empire Theatres Create New Partnership to Manage the Conversion to Digital Cinema," April 14, 2011, https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2011/04/14/1397254/0/en/Cineplex-Entertainment-and-Empire-Theatres-Create-New-Partnership-to-Manage-the-Conversion-to-Digital-Cinema.html; Cineplex Entertainment, "Canadian Digital Cinema Partnership Announces Completion of $115 Million Financing for Digital Cinema Conversion," June 21, 2011, https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2011/06/21/1397344/0/en/Canadian-Digital-Cinema-Partnership-Announces-Completion-of-115-Million-Financing-for-Digital-Cinema-Conversion.html.

[94] Leo Barraclough, "Digital Cinema Conversion Nears End Game," *Variety*, June 23, 2013, https://variety.com/2013/film/global/digital-cinema-conversion-nears-end-game-1200500975/.

[95] Cinergy's features include asset tracking (monitoring of cinemas, auditoriums, equipment, and digital files), content monitoring (management of show schedules, trailers, films, and playlists), health monitoring (maintenance information and alerts about the condition of digital equipment), key delivery (automated distribution of security keys needed to unlock film files for projection), preventative maintenance (administration of customized equipment maintenance plans), and reporting (collection and display of organization-specific operational data). DCIP, "DCIP Takes Its Cinergy Platform to the Next Level," November 12, 2018, https://www.dcinematoday.com/dc/pr?newsID=5262.

[96] Digital Cinema Implementation Partners, "National Amusements to Roll Out Cinergy," March 25, 2017, https://www.dcinematoday.com/dc/pr?newsID=4707; Digital Cinema Implementation Partners, "Regal Rolls Out DCIP's Cinergy Solution Circuit Wide," April 1, 2019, https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/regal-rolls-out-dcips-cinergy-solution-circuit-wide-300821847.html; Digital Cinema Implementation Partners, "Fathom Events Completes Rollout of Cinergy Event Monitoring System," April 2, 2019, https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/fathom-events-completes-rollout-of-cinergy-event-monitoring-system-300823283.html.

[97] Christie Digital Systems, "Christie Purchases Cinergy Software From DCIP," April 25, 2022, https://celluloidjunkie.com/wire/christie-purchases-cinergy-software-from-dcip/.

[98] See Paul S. Moore, "Nathan L. Nathanson Introduces Canadian Odeon: Producing National Competition in Film Exhibition," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 12, no. 2 (2003): 22–45, for a more in-depth history of the Canadian duopoly.

[99] Jaimie Hubbard, *Public Screening: The Battle for Cineplex Odeon,* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1990), 35–37.

[100] Richard Blackwell, "Cineplex Road to Viacom Ran Through Ottawa," *Globe and Mail*, June 25, 2005.

[101] Cineplex Inc., *2019 Annual Report*, March 23, 2020, Canadian Securities Administrators (CSA), SEDAR+, 16.

[102] Cineplex Galaxy Income Fund, "Cineplex Galaxy LP Announces New Digital Advertising Network," August 13, 2004, CSA, SEDAR+; Cineplex Galaxy LP, "Cineplex Galaxy Announces the Launch of a New Digital Pre-Show Cinema Network for Toronto and Southern Ontario," February 24, 2005, https://mediafiles.cineplex.com/_att/bd2eeb93-d88d-4ae9-872f-3e621618a7b9/2005-02-24--Digital_Pre-show_Launch--.pdf.; Cineplex Galaxy Income Fund, *Redefining Entertainment: 2005 Annual Report*, March 31, 2006, CSA, SEDAR, 38. Onex only completed its acquisition of Loews Cineplex in April 2002 and had been contending with failed acquisitions, the spinoff of Loews, and the acquisition of Famous Players, all of which may have delayed its efforts to invest in the infrastructure required to create digital preshows. In comparison, Regal had completed its major consolidation activity and IPO by early 2002 and was free to explore these new avenues much sooner than its competitors.

[103] Cineplex Galaxy LP, "Cineplex Galaxy Announces the Launch of a New Digital Pre-Show Cinema Network for Toronto and Southern Ontario."

[104] This division of the company that had been jointly owned with Salah Bachir, its president and the founder of *Famous Magazine*, the chain's in-house entertainment and marketing magazine. Chris Daniels, "Movie Mogul," *Marketing*, January 28, 2008, http://marketingmag.ca/media/movie-mogul-12998/.

[105] Cineplex Entertainment, "Cineplex Entertainment Creates New Cinema Media Division," November 1, 2005, https://mediafiles.cineplex.com/_att/35e6e177-c2b7-4666-b676-5209cc79f72f/2005-11-01--Cineplex%20Creates%20New%20Cinema%20Media%20Division--.pdf; Cineplex Galaxy Income Fund, "Cineplex Galaxy Announces Sale of Theatres to Empire Theatres Limited," August 22, 2005, CSA, SEDAR+; Cineplex Galaxy Income Fund, "Cineplex Entertainment Completes Sale of 7 Quebec Divestiture Theatres to Fortune Cinema Inc.," March 31, 2006, CSA, SEDAR+.

[106] Cineplex Entertainment, "Cineplex Entertainment Creates New Cinema Media Division"; Cineplex Galaxy Income Fund, *Redefining Entertainment: 2005 Annual Report*, 38.

[107] Daniels, "Movie Mogul."

[108] Cineplex Galaxy Income Fund, "Cineplex Galaxy LP Announces New Digital Advertising Network"; Cineplex Galaxy LP, "Cineplex Galaxy Announces the Launch of a New Digital Pre-Show Cinema Network for Toronto and Southern Ontario."

[109] Ellingson, "Coming Soon to a Theater Near You: The Met," 7; Cineplex Entertainment, "Cineplex Entertainment Lifts the Curtains on the 'Metropolitan Opera: Live in HD' at Select Canadian Theatres," November 15, 2006, https://mediafiles.cineplex.com/_att/9bed9304-a665-49e8-b889-6644358c9bd8/2006-11-15--Cineplex_Entertainment_Lifts_Its_Curtains_on_the_Metropolitan%20Opera--.pdf.

[110] This effort was in part inspired by necessity; four of the theaters bore the Paramount name because they were former sites of the newly acquired Famous Players and had been built and branded by Viacom, who held rights over the moniker. Shirley Won, "Cineplex Cinemas Peddle Marquee Appeal," *Globe and Mail,* February 1, 2006. Since the initial deal, Cineplex has added the Scotiabank name to additional theaters in Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Halifax, and St. John's. Cineplex Entertainment, "Cineplex and Scotiabank Announce Expanded Sponsorship Extending the Entertainment Experience for Moviegoers," February 4, 2014, https://mediafiles.cineplex.com/_att/5af6230e-d045-48e4-8fdc-9d7560d5ea4d/02%2004%2014%20Scotiabank%20VIP%20Cinema%20announcement%20-%20Final_ENG.pdf; Cineplex Entertainment, "Cineplex and Scotiabank Announce Ten-Year Extension of Scene Loyalty Program," November 6, 2015, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/cineplex-and-scotiabank-announce-10-year-extension-of-scene-loyalty-program-407909275.html.

[111] Cineplex Entertainment, "Scotiabank and Cineplex Entertainment Announce Partnership and Loyalty Initiative," November 2, 2006, https://mediafiles.cineplex.com/_att/bf727b1d-28bf-49dc-9d9a-2a1e05b309f5/2006-11-02--Scotiabank_and_Cineplex_Entertainment_Announce_Partnership_and_Loyalty_Initiative--.pdf; Shirley Won, "New Cineplex-Scotiabank Deal: Eat Popcorn, Earn Some Points," *Globe and Mail,* November 3, 2006; Cineplex Entertainment, "Cineplex Entertainment and Scotiabank Launch First-Ever Canadian Entertainment Loyalty Rewards Program and Rename Paramount Theatre to Scotiabank Theatre Toronto," January 24, 2007, https://mediafiles.cineplex.com/_att/26d130db-cf48-4d88-b260-3398cdf4b554/2007-01-24--Cineplex_Entertainment_and_Scotiabank_Launch_First-Ever_Canadian_Entertainment_Loyalty_Rewards_Program.pdf; Shirley Won, "Scotiabank, Cineplex Team Up on Loyalty Program," *Globe and Mail,* January 25, 2007.

[112] Cineplex Entertainment, "Scene and Cara Announce Strategic Marketing Partnership," February 11, 2015, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/scene-and-cara-announce-strategic-marketing-partnership-407774585.html; Foranzi Group Ltd. (FGL) Sports, "Scene and Sport Chek Announce Strategic Marketing Partnership," October 9, 2014, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/scene-and-sport-chek-announce-strategic-marketing-partnership-515821951.html. The Sport Chek deal emerged in part from a strategic marketing and financial partnership between Scotiabank and Sport Chek's parent company, the Canadian Tire Corporation. Val Maloney, "Sport Chek Joins Scene to Create Buzz-Worthy Deals," *Media in Canada*, October 10, 2014, https://mediaincanada.com/2014/10/10/sport-chek-joins-scene-to-create-buzz-worthy-deals; Canadian Tire Corporation, "Canadian Tire Corporation and Scotiabank Enter Strategic Business Partnership That Includes Scotiabank Acquiring 20% of Canadian Tire's Financial Services Business," May 8, 2014, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/canadian-tire-corporation-and-scotiabank-enter-strategic-business-partnership-that-includes-scotiabank-acquiring-20-of-canadian-tires-financial-services-business-514268221.html. Cara Operations changed its name to Recipe Unlimited in 2018; it operates the restaurants Swiss Chalet, Harvey's, Milestones, Montana's, Kelsey's, and East Side Mario's.

[113] Cineplex, "Scotiabank and Cineplex Announce Enhancements to the SCENE Loyalty Program," December 18, 2020, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/scotiabank-and-cineplex-announce-enhancements-to-the-scene-loyalty-program-883358115.html; Scotiabank, "Scotiabank and Cineplex Transform Loyalty Landscape in Canada With Launch of Scene+," December 14, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/scotiabank-and-cineplex-transform-loyalty-landscape-in-canada-with-the-launch-of-scene--890617084.html; Scotiabank, "Scotiabank and Cineplex Welcome Empire as Co-Owner of Scene+ Loyalty Program," June 7, 2022, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/scotiabank-and-cineplex-welcome-empire-as-co-owner-of-scene-loyalty-program-808342453.html.

[114] Steve Ladurantaye, "Cineplex's Next Role: Building on Its Big-Screen Success," *Globe and Mail,* December 22, 2011.

[115] Cineplex Entertainment, "Cineplex Entertainment Launches E-Commerce Site: The Cineplex Store is Now Open at www.cineplex.com," December 12, 2008, https://mediafiles.cineplex.com/_att/7553a23c-8721-4e32-bc43-57fa65e41eb2/12%2012%2008%20Cplx%20Store%20Release%20FINAL.pdf.

[116] Cineplex Entertainment, "Cineplex Launches SuperTicket," June 20, 2013, http://www.marketwired.com/press-release/cineplex-launches-superticket-tsx-cgx-1804116.htm. This was a

first-of-its-kind initiative in the United States and Canada, preceded only by a Regal pilot program around the film *World War Z* (2013) earlier the same month. Early SuperTicket films included *Pacific Rim* (2013), *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug* (2013), and *The Smurfs 2* (2013). It is unclear if the program will continue following the shuttering of UltraViolet in 2019, though it was mentioned as an ongoing initiative in the company's 2019 annual report. Annlee Ellingson, "It's a Bird! It's a Plane! It's a SuperTicket!," *Boxoffice*, August 2013, 8; Janko Roettgers, "UltraViolet Cloud Movie Locker to Shut Down," *Variety*, January 30, 2019, https://variety.com/2019/digital/news/ultraviolet-shutting-down-1203123898/; Cineplex Inc., *2019 Annual Report*, March 23, 2020, CSA, SEDAR+, 12.

[117] Cineplex Inc., *2019 Annual Report*, 4, 6.

[118] Cineplex Galaxy Income Fund, "Cineplex Entertainment Completes Acquisition of Onsite Media Network," May 1, 2009, CSA, SEDAR+.

[119] Cineplex Entertainment, "Cineplex Entertainment Completes Acquisition of Digital Display and Communications Inc.," July 5, 2010, https://mediafiles.cineplex.com/_att/03f6f3ce-3de2-46d1-bb2d-def0b6510cd9/07%2005%2010%20CPX%20Completes%20DDC%20Acquisition.pdf; Cineplex Entertainment, "Introducing Cineplex Digital Solutions, a New Name for Digital Display and Communications Inc.," February 18, 2011, https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2011/02/18/1397223/0/en/Introducing-Cineplex-Digital-Solutions-A-New-Name-for-Digital-Display-and-Communications-Inc.html.

[120] Cineplex Inc., "Cineplex Offers to Acquire Digital Signage Company, EK3 Technologies Inc.," July 17, 2013, CSA, SEDAR+; Cineplex Entertainment, "Cineplex Completes Acquisition of EK3 Technologies," August 30, 2013, https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2013/08/30/1398235/0/en/Cineplex-Completes-Acquisition-of-EK3-Technologies-Inc.html.

[121] Cineplex Entertainment, *2013 Annual Report*, February 10, 2014, http://irfiles.cineplex.com/investors/investorkit/2013AnnualReport.pdf, 6.

[122] Cineplex Entertainment, "AMC Theatres and Cineplex Digital Media Partner to Elevate the Moviegoing Experience," September 24, 2019, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/amc-theaters-r-and-cineplex-digital-media-partner-to-elevate-the-movie-going-experience-879114596.html.

[123] "Ready Player One?" *RePlay Magazine*, 2017, https://www.replaymag.com/player-one-amusement-group-february-2017/; "The Player One Story," *Player One Amusement Group*, accessed June 5, 2024, https://www.winwithp1ag.com/about-us/our-story.

[124] Cineplex Inc., "Cineplex Entertainment to Acquire New Way Sales Games Ltd.," April 26, 2011, CSA, SEDAR+; Cineplex Inc., "New Way Games Sales Ltd. and Starburst Coin Machines Inc. Merge to Create New Amusement Games Business," January 31, 2012, CSA, SEDAR+.

[125] Cineplex Inc., "Cineplex Announces Strategic Acquisition of Tricorp Amusements," September 21, 2016, CSA, SEDAR+.

[126] Cineplex Entertainment, "The Game Just Changed: Cineplex Starburst Inc. Becomes Player One Amusement Group," November 9, 2016, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/the-game-just-changed-cineplex-starburst-inc-becomes-player-one-amusement-group-407939845.html.

[127] Cineplex Inc., "Cineplex Strengthens US Entertainment and Amusement Gaming Business with Another Strategic Acquisition," November 10, 2016, CSA, SEDAR+; Cineplex Entertainment, "Cineplex to Acquire Dandy Amusements International Inc.," March 10, 2017, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/cineplex-to-acquire-dandy-amusements-international-inc-615871584.html.

[128] "Ready Player One?"

[129] "Total Solutions Through Four Core Services," *Player One Amusement Group*, accessed June 5, 2024, https://www.winwithp1ag.com/business-services/p1ag-total-solution.

[130] "Bass Pro Shops Adding Underwater-Themed Fun Center Arcades in Select Restaurants," *Player One Amusement Group*, March 8, 2019, https://www.winwithp1ag.com/news/News/Bass-Pro-Shops-adding-underwater-themed-fun-center-arcades-in-select-restaurants; "Bass Pro Shops and P1AG Show How Attractions Can Benefit Retailers," *Player One Amusement Group*, January 7, 2020,

https://www.winwithp1ag.com/news/News/Bass-Pro-Shops-and-P1AG-Show-How-Attractions-Can-Benefit-Retailers; "JW Marriott Partners With P1AG to Bring Immersive Gameplay to New Entertainment Destination," *Player One Amusement Group*, November 5, 2018, https://www.winwithp1ag.com/news/News/JW-Marriott-Partners-with-P1AG.

[131] Cineplex Entertainment, "Cinemark and P1AG Take Gaming to the Next Level with Exclusive New Agreement," June 26, 2018, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/cinemark-and-p1ag-take-gaming-to-the-next-level-with-exclusive-new-agreement-686553081.html. These "premium gaming locations" echo Cineplex's efforts to integrate its amusements business in its own theaters, as discussed below.

[132] Acland, *Screen Traffic*, 197–98, 200–202. Cineplex and Famous Players participated actively in this endeavor during the megaplex era.

[133] Cineplex Inc., "Cineplex Entertainment Transforms eSports in Canada with Strategic Acquisition," September 17, 2015, CSA, SEDAR+. The WorldGaming acquisition also included the company's subsidiary, Collegiate Starleague, the largest collegiate e-sports organization in the US and Canada. The company acquired the remaining 20 percent of WorldGaming in 2018. Cineplex Inc., *2017 Annual Report*, April 17, 2018, CSA, SEDAR+, 6.

[134] Cineplex Inc., "Game On: Cineplex and WorldGaming Sign Comprehensive Deal with Sony Computer Entertainment Canada (PlayStation)," January 11, 2016, CSA, SEDAR+.

[135] Cineplex Inc., *2015 Annual Report*, April 1, 2016, CSA, SEDAR+, 11; Cineplex Inc., *2016 Annual Report*, July 4, 2017, CSA, SEDAR+, 6.

[136] Cineplex Inc., *2019 Annual Report*, 5.

[137] Playfly Sports was a then new sports marketing and media company led by former Hulu, NBCUniversal, Comcast, and Altice News executive Michael Schreiber. In addition to its new holdings in e-sports, Playfly is involved in multimedia rights and management for high school and collegiate sports teams, live game coverage and content for major league and college sports teams, sports media technology and content creation, and sponsorship management for venues and tournaments. Tobias Seck, "Playfly Sports Acquires Collegiate Star League and WorldGaming Network," *eSports Observer*, September 17, 2020, https://archive.esportsobserver.com/playfly-csl-wgn-acquisitions/; Playfly Sports, accessed June 5, 2024, https://playfly.com.

[138] Cineplex Entertainment, "Topgolf and Cineplex Announce Partnership to Bring Sports Entertainment Venues to Canada," July 26, 2017, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/topgolf-and-cineplex-announce-partnership-to-bring-sports-entertainment-venues-to-canada-636713453.html. As of 2024, Topgolf's Canadian rollout appears to have been delayed, though there is not yet an indication that the Cineplex agreement has been suspended.

[139] Cineplex Entertainment, "Cineplex Introduces the Rec Room: Canada's Premier Social Entertainment Destination," January 26, 2015, https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2015/01/26/1398504/0/en/Cineplex-introduces-The-Rec-Room-Canada-s-Premier-Social-Entertainment-Destination.html.

[140] Cineplex Entertainment, "Get Ready to Bring Your 'A' Game: The Rec Room Opens Today in Barrie!" July 26, 2021, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/get-ready-to-bring-your-a-game-the-rec-room-opens-today-in-barrie--810437204.html.

[141] Geoffrey Rowan, "Playdium Plans 40 Video Arcades," *Globe and Mail,* May 23, 1996; "Playdium-FP Alliance," *Globe and Mail,* January 16, 1997; Geoffrey Rowan, "Playdium to Build Toronto Complex," *Globe and Mail,* August 28, 1997; "Playdium Gets Game," *Strategy*, October 25, 1999, https://strategyonline.ca/1999/10/25/27028-19991025/; Wendy Cuthbert, "Playdium Creates Order From Chaos," *Strategy*, March 13, 2000, https://strategyonline.ca/2000/03/13/28410-20000313/; Matt Harding, "Canada's Playdium Closes After 24 Years," *RePlay Magazine*, October 16, 2020, https://www.replaymag.com/canadas-playdium-closes-doors-after-24-years/.

[142] Cineplex Entertainment, "Let the Games Begin: Cineplex Announces Roll-Out of New 'Playdium' Concept," October 2, 2017, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/let-the-games-begin-cineplex-announces-roll-out-of-new-playdium-concept-649042813.html.

[143] Cineplex Entertainment, "Get Ready to Play Without Limits: New Playdium Complex Opens Today in Whitby," November 4, 2019, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/get-ready-to-play-without-limits-new-playdium-complex-opens-today-in-whitby--886705530.html; Cineplex Entertainment, "Prepare to #livewild: Canada's First Reinvented Playdium Complex Opens Today in Brampton, Ontario!," September 16, 2019, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/prepare-to-livewild-canada-s-first-reinvented-playdium-complex-opens-today-in-brampton-ontario--848330202.html; Cineplex Entertainment, "Cineplex Announces First Playdium Location in Atlantic Canada Coming Soon to Dartmouth," March 21, 2019, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/cineplex-announces-first-playdium-location-in-atlantic-canada-coming-soon-to-dartmouth-815638358.html.

[144] Andrew Willis, "Cineplex's New Rec Room Emporiums May be Company's Next Blockbuster," *The Globe and Mail,* July 4, 2017.

[145] Cineplex Entertainment, "Attention Edmonton Social Seekers: The Rec Room at West Edmonton Mall is Now Officially Open," August 23, 2017, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/attention-edmonton-social-seekers-the-rec-room-at-west-edmonton-mall-is-now-officially-open-641518043.html; Cineplex Entertainment, "Run, Don't Walk. The Rec Room Opens Today in London, Ontario!" April 30, 2018, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/run-dont-walk--the-rec-room-opens-today-in-london-ontario-681244821.html; Cineplex Entertainment, "It's Time to Play it Forward! The Rec Room Opens Today in Mississauga," March 18, 2019, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/it-s-time-to-play-it-forward-the-rec-room-opens-today-in-mississauga-826777775.html; Cineplex Entertainment, "Calling All Lovers of Food and Fun: The Rec Room Opens This Thursday in St. John's Newfoundland," April 16, 2019, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/calling-all-lovers-of-food-and-fun-the-rec-room-opens-this-thursday-in-st-john-s-newfoundland-854284286.html; Cineplex Entertainment, "Get Ready to Get Your Game On: The First Playdium in Atlantic Canada Opens Today in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia!," February 16, 2021, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/get-ready-to-get-your-game-on-the-first-playdium-in-atlantic-canada-opens-today-in-dartmouth-nova-scotia--887994288.html.

[146] Cineplex Entertainment, "Introducing the Cinema of the Future: Cineplex Announces Junxion," November 27, 2019, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/introducing-the-cinema-of-the-future-cineplex-announces-junxion-859230531.html.

[147] Tara Deschamps, "Cineplex to Open 'Cinema of the Future,'" *Toronto Star*, November 28, 2019.

[148] Cineplex Entertainment, "Introducing the Cinema of the Future."

[149] Cineplex Entertainment, "Introducing the Cinema of the Future"; Cineplex, "Cineplex Opens Its First Junxion Location: An Innovative Entertainment Concept That Brings Movies, Amusement, Gaming, Dining, and Live Performances Together for the Ultimate Guest Experience," December 8, 2022, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/cineplex-opens-its-first-junxion-location-an-innovative-entertainment-concept-that-brings-movies-amusement-gaming-dining-and-live-performances-together-for-the-ultimate-guest-experience-808224392.html; Cineplex, "The Ultimate Escape is Finally Here! Highly Anticipated Cineplex Junxion Erin Mills Now Open," May 17, 2023, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/the-ultimate-escape-is-finally-here-highly-anticipated-cineplex-junxion-erin-mills-now-open-812942848.html.

[150] Deschamps, "Cineplex to Open 'Cinema of the Future.'" This comment echoes a previous statement by Jacob in a 2017 *Globe and Mail* report on the opening of Cineplex's Rec Room entertainment centers. Willis, "Cineplex's New Rec Room Emporiums May be Company's Next Blockbuster."

[151] Willis, "Cineplex's New Rec Room Emporiums May be Company's Next Blockbuster."

Chapter 3: Digital Expansion(s)

[1] David Bordwell, *Pandora's Digital Box: Films, Files, and the Future of Movies* (Madison, WI: Irvington Way Institute Press, 2012), 24–27, 33. David Bordwell also identifies the 1993 development and popularization of the Video Compact Disc (VCD) format as an important precursor to the development of digital cinema distribution and exhibition. While quickly superseded by the Digital Video Disc (DVD) domestically, VCDs flourished in grey markets across Asia and Latin America, thanks to weak antipiracy protections and the ease of portability and mass copying over Video Home System (VHS). The discs were used not only in the home but in "video parlors" and other public screening spaces where patrons paid to view pirated materials with an audience. "VCD is important historically because it was the first significant digital platform for showing movies," Bordwell writes. "It illustrates as well how technology is more than gear. Intended for home use, the VCD was absorbed into a pattern of social use that had already been laid down for videotape. An outlaw format in the West, the VCD enabled piracy on a vast scale. In the process, it provided the world's first 'digital cinema' experience for mass audiences" (40).

[2] For a detailed history of Lucas and Lucasfilm's efforts in these areas, see Michael Rubin, *Droidmaker: George Lucas and the Digital Revolution* (Gainsville, FL: Triad, 2006).

[3] Andrew Hindes, "When Prints Will No Longer Be King," *Variety*, January 25, 1999; Andrew Hindes, "Future Projections," *Variety*, March 10, 1999, https://variety.com/1999/film/news/future-projections-1117492182/.

[4] Bordwell, *Pandora's Digital Box*, 24, 41–42; Tim Carvell, "Hello, Mr. Chips (Goodbye, Mr. Film)," *Fortune*, August 16, 1999, 138–40.

[5] Sheigh Crabtree, "Sony Promises '05 Debut After 4K D-Cinema's Demo," *Hollywood Reporter*, June 8, 2004, 67.

[6] Bordwell, *Pandora's Digital Box*, 24, 43.

[7] Bordwell, 46.

[8] Carvell, "Hello, Mr. Chips (Goodbye, Mr. Film)," 138–40.

[9] Bordwell, *Pandora's Digital Box*, 53–55.

[10] Bordwell, 54–55.

[11] "Digital Cinema's Picture Starts to Fade," *Variety Deal Memo*, July 15, 2002, quoted in Bordwell, 55.

[12] Bordwell, 56.

[13] Bordwell, 55–56. An initial proposal, for instance, saw studios consider leasing equipment directly to exhibitors through a jointly held nonprofit entity, NewCo, but was abandoned due to antitrust concerns. Bordwell, 55.

[14] Michael Karagosian, "A Review of Digital Cinema," *MKPE*, May 11, 2012, https://mkpe.com/publications/d-cinema/presentations/2012-5-11%20ABCine%20Digital%20Cinema%20Review%20-%20Karagosian.key.pdf.

[15] Bordwell, *Pandora's Digital Box*, 57.

[16] Bordwell, 58.

[17] Bordwell, 60.

[18] Bordwell, 62; Digital Cinema Initiatives, LLC, *Digital Cinema System Specification, V1.0*, July 20, 2005, https://www.dcimovies.com/archives/spec_v1/.

[19] Bordwell, *Pandora's Digital Box*, 61–62.

[20] Bordwell, 61–62. These issues would resurface in confidential VPF agreements, where studios were able to solidify additional avenues of control over exhibition.

[21] Bordwell, 72–73.

[22] "Number of U.S. Movie Screens," *Data*, National Association of Theatre Owners, accessed February 29, 2024, https://www.natoonline.org/data/us-movie-screens/.

[23] Annlee Ellingson, "Digital Deployment Update," *Boxoffice*, November 2007, 95; Pamela McClintock, "Exhibs, Studios Bridge Digital Divide," *Variety*, September 30, 2008, https://variety.com/2008/digital/markets-festivals/exhibs-studios-bridge-digital-divide-1117993164/.

[24] John Fithian, "The Digital Revolution Has Arrived—Hasn't It?" *Boxoffice*, July 2008, 11–12.

[25] Andrew Stewart and Pamela McClintock, "Exhibitors Finalize Funding," *Variety*, March 10, 2010, https://variety.com/2010/film/markets-festivals/exhibitors-finalize-funding-1118016282/; Digital Cinema Implementation Partners, "Digital Cinema Implementation Partners Announces Completion of $660 Million Financing for Digital Cinema Upgrade," March 10, 2010, https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/digital-cinema-implementation-partners-announces-completion-of-660-million-financing-for-digital-cinema-upgrade-87249262.html. As digital cinema consultant Michael Karagosian argues, the complexities of VPF-financed digital cinema deployment deals can make investors especially nervous, since they are unlike traditional asset-backed financing agreements. The financial industry can struggle to understand the range of potential outcomes, increasing the apparent risk of investments. Michael Karagosian, "Business FAQs," *Cinepedia*, accessed December 18, 2022, https://cinepedia.com/faqs/business-faqs#dci-b.

[26] Some chains were faster than others. Cinemark completed its digital installations in late 2011, while Regal finished its deployment in 2012. AMC lagged slightly but had close to a completely digital circuit by 2014. Cinemark Holdings, Inc., "Cinemark Completes DCIP Digital Rollout," December 6, 2011, https://ir.cinemark.com/news-events/press-releases/detail/81/cinemark-completes-dcip-digital-projection-rollout; Regal Entertainment Group, *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 27, 2012*, February 25, 2013, SEC, EDGAR System; AMC Entertainment Holdings, Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2014*, March 10, 2015, Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Electronic Document Data Gathering, Analysis, and Retrieval (EDGAR) System, 9.

[27] Cineplex Entertainment, "Cineplex Entertainment and Empire Theatres Create New Partnership to Manage the Conversion to Digital Cinema," April 14, 2011, https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2011/04/14/1397254/0/en/Cineplex-Entertainment-and-Empire-Theatres-Create-New-Partnership-to-Manage-the-Conversion-to-Digital-Cinema.html. Cineplex had agreed to partner with NCM (soon to spin off the DCIP initiative) in the company's planned digital cinema procurement initiative in 2005. Cineplex Entertainment, "Cineplex Entertainment to Explore Digital Cinema with National CineMedia," August 31, 2006, https://mediafiles.cineplex.com/_att/7ebcf48d-8e9e-4915-8276-1bf28f25238a/2006-08-31--Cineplex_and_National_CineMedia--.pdf.

[28] Cineplex Entertainment, "Canadian Digital Cinema Partnership Announces Completion of $115 Million Financing for Digital Cinema Conversion," June 21, 2011, https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2011/06/21/1397344/0/en/Canadian-Digital-Cinema-Partnership-Announces-Completion-of-115-Million-Financing-for-Digital-Cinema-Conversion.html; Cineplex Inc., *2012 Annual Report*, May 6, 2013, CSA, SEDAR+, 5.

[29] Bordwell, *Pandora's Digital Box*, 65–67. Peter Jackson also appeared via prerecorded clip. Zemeckis went on to release *Beowulf* (2007) and *A Christmas Carol* (2009) for 3D release. Rodriguez produced *The Adventures of Sharkboy and Lavagirl* (2005) for the same audience as his popular Spy Kids franchise. Cameron promised *Battle Angel* but delivered smash hit *Avatar* (2009) instead—Rodriguez would go on to direct Cameron's script, released as *Alita: Battle Angel*, in 2019. Lucas retrofitted *The Phantom Menace* for a 3D rerelease in 2012, but poor performance at the box office and the acquisition of Lucasfilm by Disney led to the cancellation of rereleases for the remaining five installments in the series. Jackson released *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* in 3D in 2012. Bordwell, 66–67; Nikki Finke, "Exclusive: No More Star Wars 3D Prequel Releases; Lucasfilm Passes to Focus on New Trilogy," January 28, 2013, https://deadline.com/2013/01/exclusive-no-more-star-wars-3d-prequel-releases-lucasfilm-passes-to-focus-on-new-trilogy-414739/.

[30] Tamsen Tillson, "IMAX Beefs Up Network with Eye on Hollywood," *Variety*, February 23, 1998, 30; Paul McDonald, "IMAX: The Hollywood Experience," in *Widescreen Worldwide*, ed. Sheldon Hall, Steve Neale, and John Belton, (New Barnet, UK: John Libbey, 2010), 46, 51.

[31] Richard Gelfond, "The CEO of IMAX on How it Became a Hollywood Powerhouse," *Harvard Business Review*, July–August 2013, 38.

[32] Bordwell, 73. In 2002, George Lucas's second Star Wars prequel film, *Attack of the Clones* (2002), was also one of the first feature films remastered and rereleased by IMAX, which involved shortening the film's runtime by twenty-two minutes due to technological limitations of the IMAX projector. "Making it Big: Episode II—the IMAX Experience," *StarWars.com*, October 11, 2002, accessed October 23, 2002, http://www.starwars.com/episode-ii/feature/20021011/index.html. Lucas was reportedly disappointed with the result, and the third prequel film, *Revenge of the Sith* (2005), was not remastered for IMAX. William Kallay, "Change Comes to LFCA," *In70mm.com*, May 7, 2004, https://www.in70mm.com/news/2004/lfca/index.htm.

[33] Gelfond, "The CEO of IMAX on How it Became a Hollywood Powerhouse," 38.

[34] IMAX Corporation, *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2009*, March 11, 2010, SEC, EDGAR System, 10, 12.

[35] Gelfond, "The CEO of IMAX on How it Became a Hollywood Powerhouse," 38–39.

[36] Karagosian, "Business FAQs."

[37] RealD Inc., "RealD and Regal Entertainment Group to Double 3D Cinema Screen Count," January 27, 2011, https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20110127005258/en/RealD-Regal-Entertainment-Group-Double-3D-Cinema.

[38] RealD Inc., "RealD and AMC to Equip Additional 1,000 Screens With RealD 3D," July 28, 2011, https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20110728006060/en/RealD-and-AMC-Entertainment®-to-Equip-Additional-1000-Screens-With-RealD-3D; RealD Inc., "RealD and Cinemark Agree to 1,500 Additional RealD 3D-Enabled Screens," July 21, 2011, https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20110721005492/en/RealD-and-Cinemark-Agree-to-1500-Additional-RealD-3D-Enabled-Screens; RealD Inc., "RealD and Regal Entertainment Group to Double 3D Cinema Screen Count."

[39] 3D slates expanded significantly in 2011 and stayed large through 2017, with large numbers of 3D films released through 2019.

[40] RealD Inc., "RealD and Cinemark Agree to 1,500 Additional RealD 3D-Enabled Screens."; RealD Inc., "RealD and Regal Entertainment Group to Double 3D Cinema Screen Count."

[41] Cineplex Entertainment, "Cineplex Entertainment and RealD Sign Major Agreement for 175 3D Installations," July 22, 2008, https://www.dcinematoday.com/dc/pr?newsID=1165&newsID=1165; Cineplex Entertainment, "Canadian Digital Cinema Partnership Announces Completion of $115 Million Financing for Digital Cinema Conversion." The company also signed a major deal with RealD for 100 screens in early 2012. Cineplex Entertainment, "Cineplex Entertainment to Add 100 RealD Systems," February 8, 2012, https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2012/02/08/1397627/0/en/Cineplex-Entertainment-to-Add-100-RealD-3D-Systems.html.

[42] "The Shrinking IMAX Screen," *LF Examiner*, April 21, 2010, https://lfexaminer.com/2010/04/the-shrinking-imax-screen/; McDonald, "IMAX: The Hollywood Experience," 46.

[43] These chains included Regal Cinemas, Edwards Theatres, Cinemark Theatres, Cineplex Odeon, Famous Players, and Gaumont. Tillson, "IMAX Beefs Up Network with Eye on Hollywood," 30.

[44] "The Shrinking IMAX Screen."

[45] The new digital IMAX was not a direct digital copy of the 15/70 film projection system on which the company had built its brand before 1997. Bringing the cost of systems and the complexities of installation into a feasible range for multiplex operators meant, among other changes, meant progressive reductions in screen size as the company adapted the systems. Digital IMAX screens, for instance, were reduced to 38 percent of the size of the original IMAX systems. As new digital systems were installed, controversy emerged as the large-format industry and the public criticized IMAX for failing to meet the expectations the brand had fostered ahead of its move to the multiplex. See Peter Lester, "It's Not the Size (of the Screen) That Matters: IMAX, Lie-Max and the 'Meaning' of a Brand," *Scope* 25 (2013).

[46] IMAX Corporation, *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2007*, March 17, 2008, SEC, EDGAR System, 9, 71.

[47] Brooks Barnes, "Regal, Like AMC, to Add IMAX Screens," *New York Times,* March 24, 2008.

[48] IMAX Corporation, "IMAX and AMC Entertainment Expand Joint Venture Relationship for Up to 25 New IMAX Theatres," June 1, 2010, https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2010/06/01/422188/193137/en/IMAX-and-AMC-Entertainment-R-Expand-Joint-Venture-Relationship-for-Up-to-25-New-IMAX-R-Theatres.html; Andrew Stewart, "AMC, IMAX Add to Large-Screen Deal," *Daily Variety*, June 2, 2010, 4; IMAX Corporation, "IMAX and Regal Entertainment Group Expand Revenue Share Partnership With 10 New IMAX Theatres," October 4, 2012, https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/imax-and-regal-entertainment-group-expand-revenue-share-partnership-with-10-new-imax-theaters-172631211.html.

[49] Andy Georgiades, "IMAX Popularity Brings Large-Screen Copycats," *Wall Street Journal,* June 10, 2009

[50] In recent years, additional IMAX titles have come from local-language films in the company's strongest international markets, China in particular.

[51] Cinemark Holdings Inc., "Cinemark Launches New Large Screen Digital Format in West Jordan, UT," July 10, 2009, https://ir.cinemark.com/news-events/press-releases/detail/50/cinemark-launches-new-large-screen-digital-format-in-west.

[52] Cinemark Holdings, Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2009*, March 10, 2010, SEC, EDGAR System, 5.

[53] Jeff Bounds, "Cinemark and IMAX in XD Theater Tussle," *Dallas Business Journal*, November 19, 2009, https://www.bizjournals.com/dallas/stories/2009/11/23/story10.html.

[54] Cinemark Holdings, Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2010*, March 1, 2011, SEC, EDGAR System, 5.

[55] IMAX Corporation, "IMAX Corporation and Cinemark Holdings, Inc. Sign Multi-Theatre Deal," January 4, 2011, https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2011/01/04/437044/11773/en/IMAX-Corporation-and-Cinemark-Holdings-Inc-Sign-Multi-Theatre-Deal.html.

[56] AMC Theatres, "AMC Theatres Offers ETX, an Enhanced Theatre Experience, for Guests of AMC Pleasure Island 24 at Walt Disney World," March 2, 2010, https://s25.q4cdn.com/472643608/files/doc_news/2010/03/AMC-Theatres®-Offers-ETX™-an-Enhanced-Theatre-Experience-For-Guests-Of-AMC-Pleasure-Island-24-at-Walt-Disney-World®-Resort.pdf.

[57] Scott Jentsch, "Regal Announces Their Own Big-Screen Concept: RPX (Regal Premium Experience)," *The Big Screen Cinema Guide*, April 15, 2010, https://www.bigscreen.com/j/Regal-Announces-Their-Own-BigScreen-Concept-RPX-Regal/1868.

[58] Cineplex Entertainment, "A New Entertainment Experience: Cineplex UltraAVX Premieres at Two Cineplex Entertainment Theatres on Wednesday, June 30th," June 16, 2010, https://mediafiles.cineplex.com/_att/a18adc3e-85bb-4f04-9263-dfecc6df612e/06%2016%2010%20UltraAVX%20FINAL.pdf.

[59] AMC Theatres, "AMC Theatres and Dolby Laboratories to Launch Dolby Cinema at AMC Prime," April 9, 2015, https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20150409005248/en/AMC-Theatres-Dolby-Laboratories-Launch-Dolby-Cinema.

[60] Bertrand Marotte, "D-Box Aiming to Crank Home Theatres Up a Notch," *Globe and Mail,* March 15, 2004.

[61] Daniel Loria, "A Moving Experience," *Boxoffice*, June 2019, 103.

[62] Alexa Harrison, "Exhibs Shake Out Extra Coin," *Variety*, March 28, 2011, 14; "What's Shakin'?" *Boxoffice*, April 2010, 47.

[63] "What's Shakin'?" 47.

[64] Loria, "A Moving Experience," 104.

[65] Sonia Kil, "CGV 4DX Celebrates Decades of High-Tech Cinema Equipment," *Variety*, October 4, 2019, https://variety.com/2019/film/asia/cgv-4dx-celebrates-decade-high-tech-cinemas-1203358801/.

[66] Carolyn Giardina, "LA Live's New 4DX Theater Has a Whole Lot of Shaking Going on," *The Hollywood Reporter*, June 30, 2014, https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/la-lives-new-4dx-theater-715599/.

[67] Carolyn Giardina, "Regal Inks Deal with CJ 4DPLEX to Bring More Motion-Activated Seats to Its Theaters," *Hollywood Reporter*, August 1, 2016, https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/regal-cj-4dplex-deal-bring-916183/; Amanda N'Duka, "CJ 4DPLEX & Cineworld Group Expand Pact to Boost Number of 4DX Theaters," *Deadline*, April 23, 2018, https://deadline.com/2018/04/4dx-theater-expansion-cineworld-group-regal-cinema-city-1202374590/.

[68] Cineworld Group plc, *Annual Report and Accounts 2018*, June 11, 2019, Companies House, ii.

[69] Cineplex Entertainment, "Canada's First 4DX Auditorium Opens This Friday At Cineplex Cinemas Yonge-Dundas and VIP," https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/canadas-first-4dx-auditorium-opens-this-friday-at-cineplex-cinemas-yonge-dundas-and-vip-407926165.html; Cineplex Inc., "Cineplex CJ 4DPLEX Announce Strategic Partnership and Canadian Expansion Plans," September 19, 2018, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/cineplex-and-cj-4dplex-announce-strategic-partnership-and-canadian-expansion-plans-693707061.html.

[70] Carolyn Giardina, "Sensory Assault: Dolby Takes on IMAX," *Hollywood Reporter*, December 12, 2014, 16.

[71] AMC Theatres, "AMC Theatres and Dolby Laboratories to Launch Dolby Cinema at AMC Prime."

[72] Patrick Frater, "CinemaCon: Korean Immersive Format ScreenX Targets Hollywood and China," *Variety*, April 6, 2016, https://variety.com/2016/film/asia/screenx-targets-hollywood-and-china-at-cinemacon-1201747914/.

[73] Patrick Frater, "Cineworld to Install ScreenX in 100 Cinemas," *Variety*, June 14, 2018, https://variety.com/2018/film/asia/cineworld-screenx-1202845835/; Laura Silver, "Regal and CJ 4DPLEX Open 200th ScreenX Theater," *Boxoffice*, March 2019, 9.

[74] Cineplex Inc., "ScreenX, Canada's First Panoramic Movie-Watching Experience, Opens Tomorrow with 'Aquaman,'" December 19, 2018, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/screenx-canadas-first-panoramic-movie-watching-experience-opens-tomorrow-with-aquaman-703125452.html; Cineplex Inc., *2019 Annual Report*, March 23, 2020, CSA, SEDAR+, 59.

[75] Quoted in Jentsch, "Regal Announces Their Own Big-Screen Concept."

[76] Cineplex Entertainment, "A New Entertainment Experience."

[77] AMC Entertainment Holdings, Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2013*, March 4, 2014, SEC, EDGAR System, 8.

[78] AMC Entertainment Holdings, Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2015*, March 8, 2016, SEC, EDGAR System, 7.

[79] Cineplex Entertainment, "Be a VIP at Cineplex Odeon Westmount and VIP Cinemas: New Theatre Opens Friday, May 8th," April 28, 2009, https://mediafiles.cineplex.com/_att/cebf5b38-2db4-455a-92e3-541e9a88d141/04%2028%2009%20Westmount%20Opening%20Release%20FINAL.pdf.

[80] Jane Gadd, "Patrons Can View Movies in High Style," *Globe and Mail,* April 8, 1994.

[81] Gadd, "Patrons Can View Movies in High Style."

[82] Michael White, "Going in Style," *Boxoffice*, August 2014, 20.

[83] Juan Llamas-Rodriguez, "A Global Cinematic Experience: Cinépolis, Film Exhibition, and Luxury Branding," *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 58, no. 3 (2019): 55–57.

[84] Charles R. Acland, *Screen Traffic: Movies, Multiplexes, and Global Culture*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 150–151.

[85] See John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze,* 2nd ed., (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2002).

[86] Charles R. Acland, "IMAX Technology and the Tourist Gaze," *Cultural Studies* 12, no. 3 (1998): 436.

[87] Acland, "IMAX Technology and the Tourist Gaze," 439.

Chapter 4: Global Chains and Exhibition Empires

[1] Michelle King and Ryan Dezember, "A Beijing Ticket to Hollywood," *Wall Street Journal*, May 22, 2012; Andrew Stewart and Clifford Coonan, "China Flexes Plex Muscle," *Daily Variety*, May 22, 2012, 1, 17.

[2] See Michael Curtin and Kevin Sanson, eds. *Precarious Creativity: Global Media, Local Labor* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016) for reflections on the textures of these global production dynamics.

[3] Henry Chu, "Cineworld Clinches $3.6 Billion Acquisition of Regal Entertainment Group," *Variety*, December 5, 2017, https://variety.com/2017/film/news/cineworld-clinches-acquisition-regal-entertainment-group-1202630741/; Ian Walker, "UK's Cineworld to Purchase Regal," *Wall Street Journal,* December 6, 2017; Peter Stiff, "Regal Deal Creates No. 1 Chain of Cinemas," *Wall Street Journal,* December 17, 2019; Susan Krashinsky Robertson, "UK Movie-Theatre Giant to Buy Cineplex in $2.2-Billion Deal," *Globe and Mail,* December 17, 2019.

[4] Ross Melnick, *Hollywood's Embassies: How Movie Theaters Projected American Power Around the World,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022), 375.

[5] Ian Mohr, "Exhib Succeeds by Picking Its Markets, Growing Slowly," *Daily Variety*, March 6, 2000, A8; Lisa Gubernick, "Dollar House Mitchell," *Forbes*, October 12, 1992, 118.

[6] Gubernick, "Dollar House Mitchell," 121.

[7] Peter Besas, "Exhib Cinemark Goes Latin," *Variety*, December 27, 1992, https://variety.com/1992/biz/news/exhib-cinemark-goes-latin-102405/; Hans Ehrmann, "Yank-Style Tourniquet for Chile B.O.," *Variety*, March 29, 1993, 62. Between 1988 and 1992, Chilean cinema attendance dropped by 46.2 percent. In response, local exhibitors had steadily raised ticket prices, which exacerbated attendance issues but meant revenues in dollars fell more modestly, by slightly less than 5 percent. In 1993, *Variety* reported that there were only forty-five cinemas in Santiago and less than a hundred in the rest of Chile, the majority single-screens or venues that had been roughly converted to duplexes. Ehrmann, "Yank-Style Tourniquet." In 1995, Conate owned 31 of the 51 first-run cinemas in Santiago; their 1994 share of Santiago's first- and second-run box office was 93 percent. Two-thirds of Chilean box office was generated in the city at the time. Conate brought in another significant portion of local box office through its distribution business. In 1994, it received 26.5 percent of the country's box office as the local distributor for Disney as well as 11.6 percent for independent product. It also had a stake in major video distributor Video Chile and retail chains Errol's and Blockbuster. Hans Ehrmann, "Conate Tops Chilean Distrib'n," *Variety*, March 27, 1995, 50.

[8] Cinemark's initial investments in Mexico and Chile were estimated at $30 million. Besas, "Exhib Cinemark Goes Latin"; Gubernick, "Dollar House Mitchell," 121.

[9] Martin Peers, "Cinemark Gets Cash Infusion," *Daily Variety*, February 21, 1996, 6.

[10] Ian Mohr, "Int'l Venture Pays Off for Cinemark's Warner," *Daily Variety*, March 6, 2000, A8. Warner would stay in this role until 2006; he became the company's president and COO and then, in 2012, its CEO. Andrew Stewart, "Cinemark in CEO Switch," *Daily Variety*, February 16, 2012, 5.

[11] Andrew Paxman, "Trio Plexes Muscles in Mexico Exhib Venture," *Variety*, 1994, 37.

[12] The young founders, Matthew Heyman, Miguel Angel Davila, and Adolfo Fastlicht met at Harvard, where they wrote the original Cinemex business plan in early 1993. Fastlicht had family in the Mexican real estate market, Davila had political connections and knowledge through his father, who worked in the Mexican government, and Heyman had experience in exhibition, including as a vice-president at Cineplex Odeon. The company was initially funded by $21.5 in venture capital from J.P. Morgan and Chicago's JMB Realty. In May 1997, Australian exhibitor Hoyts Cinemas bought a 31.5 percent stake in the company that complemented its own Latin American expansion. Paxman, "Trio Plexes Muscles"; Don Groves, "Hoyts Has Hots for Cinemex," *Variety*, November 25, 1996, 28.

[13] Seven of these theaters were in Mexico City's ten highest grossing sites, including the number-one theater, the nineteen-screen Mundo E. At this time, the company owned only one theater outside the capital. Cinemex codirector Matthew Heyman laid out the chain's strategy at the time: "We regard Mexico City as a country, not a city. And we want to own it. There are 22 million people here. This is a huge market and one which has not really been given what it needs until now." Andrew Paxman, "Mexico Plex Plan a Capital Idea," *Variety*, March 8, 1999, 23–24; Simeon Tegel, "Mexico City Exhib Grabs 50 Percent of Market," *Variety*, March 27, 2000, 58.

[14] In addition to five screens in Mexico, United Artists also sold two Argentinian multiplexes to General Cinema. General Cinema ultimately failed to expand the circuit in Mexico after acquiring it from United Artists. However, the company did expand further in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay through a partnership with Hoyts Cinemas. Cinemex bought General Cinema's Mexican theaters in 2000, bringing them an initial expansion to three provincial cities beyond their stronghold in the capital. Andrew Paxman, "United Artists Bows Mexican Multiplex," *Variety*, November 4, 1996, 22; Beatriz Goyoaga and Andrew Paxman, "General Cinema in Paradiso Plex Plot," *Variety*, March 18, 1998, https://variety.com/1998/biz/news/general-cinema-in-paradiso-plex-plot-1117468880/; Don Groves, "Hoyts, GCC Merge Latin American Ops," *Variety*, August 3, 1998, 22; Simeon Tegel, "Mexican Cinemex Buys Up Rival Chain," *Daily Variety*, June 13, 2000, 11.

[15] Andrew Paxman, "Peso, B.O. Woes Fail to Reduce Ramirez Cinemas Growth Plans," *Variety*, June 19, 1995, 14.

[16] This was reportedly the case for a $7 million United Artists location in Mexico City that opened in October 1996: "Industry consensus is that it may never make money, but it does serve as UATC's calling card for a market in which the exhib plans to open 20 multiplexes in four years." These plans were quickly reversed when the chain sold its Mexican assets to General Cinema in 1997, likely due to the frenzied competition in the Mexican market and United Artists' comparatively late entry. Andrew Paxman, "Multi Mania Grips Mexico," *Variety*, November 11, 1996, 22.

[17] Paxman, "Multi Mania Grips Mexico," 22.

[18] Paxman, 22.

[19] Initially much of this box office was driven by foreign titles, but as Mexico recovered from the peso crisis, reinvested in national production, and redirected the profits from new megaplexes, the national industry received a box office boost. One effort in this area was the imposition of a one-peso levy on Mexican ticket sales in 2000 whose proceeds would go to the federally funded Mexican Film Institute (*Instituto Mexicano de Cinematografía*, or IMCINE). Though the levy accounted for just over 3 percent of the average ticket price at the time, exhibitors resisted the change. Andrew Paxman, "Locals Miss Mexican B.O. Boom," *Variety*, January 27, 1997, 22; Simeon Tegel, "Mexico Hits B.O. Jackpot," *Variety*, March 27, 2000, 38; Simeon Tegel, "South of the Border, Box Office is En Fuego," *Variety*, July 30, 2001, 10; Simeon Tegel, "Exhibs Nix Tix Levy," *Variety*, December 25, 2002, https://variety.com/2002/film/markets-festivals/exhibs-nix-tix-levy-1117877890/.

[20] Anna Marie De La Fuente, "Latin America Faces Screen Jam," *Variety*, June 28, 2004, 9.

[21] Andrew Paxman, "Mexican Multiplexers Vex US Exhibs," *Variety*, March 25, 1996, 46; Andrew Paxman, "Southern Renaissance," *Variety*, March 23, 1998, 43, 68.

[22] Mary Sutter, "Latin Exhibs Chase Rising Coin," *Variety*, March 27, 2000, 56.

[23] Beatriz Goyoaga, "Argentina's Hardtops Rebound," *Variety*, March 4, 1996, 71.

[24] Andrew Paxman, "Cinemark Buys Out Partner," *Variety*, January 18, 1999, 35.

[25] At the time of the sale, United Artists operated two multiplexes in Argentina. Hoyts and General Cinema merged their interests in South and Central America in mid-1998, as discussed below. The agreement gave the combined chain highest market share in Argentina. When AMC purchased General Cinema in 2002, it took over the company's 50 percent share of the venture and maintained their investment until 2007. Goyoaga and Paxman, "General Cinema in Paradiso Plex Plot"; Groves, "Hoyts, GCC Merge," 22; Carl DiOrio, "AMC Sees March Closure for Pickup of GC Screens," *Daily Variety*, March 20, 2002, 6; AMC Entertainment Inc., *Form*

10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 2005, June 21, 2005, Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Electronic Document Gathering, Analysis, and Retrieval (EDGAR) System, 55; AMC Entertainment Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended April 3, 2008*, June 18, 2008, SEC, EDGAR System, 93.

[26] Paxman, "Southern Renaissance," 63; Peter Besas, "Latin America—at a Glance," *Variety*, March 28, 1994, 52.

[27] Andrew Paxman, "Multiplex Advance Closes in on Brazil," *Variety*, November 4, 1996, 68. Another encouraging development for new entrants to Brazil was the elimination of 118 percent tariff on imported cinema projectors as part of a slate of economic reforms in 1996. Andrew Paxman, "Showbiz Benefits from Econo Boom," *Variety*, November 4, 1996, 67.

[28] Paxman, "Showbiz Benefits from Econo Boom," 59–60; Andrew Paxman, "Playarte: Screen Champ," *Variety*, October 21, 1996, 70. Even Cinemark lamented the difficulty of convincing exhibitors to allocate space to their first multiplexes in a new territory. "The biggest challenge [we face] is to talk a local developer into building a larger multiplex in countries where the largest [cinema] they've had is a twin theater, which hasn't been doing that well," Warner told *Daily Variety*. Building on an initial success made these negotiations much easier, according to Warner. Mohr, "Exhib Succeeds by Picking Its Markets," A10.

[29] Andrew Paxman, "Brazil Buoys Latin Biz in Tough '95," *Variety*, March 25, 1996, 52; Paxman, "Southern Renaissance," 68.

[30] Paxman, "Multiplex Advance Closes in on Brazil," 68; Marcelo Cajueiro, "Exhib Cinemark Reels in Brazil," *Variety*, May 12, 1997, 20.

[31] Paxman, "Multiplex Advance Closes in on Brazil," 68.

[32] Marcelo Cajueiro, "Outside $ Ramps Up Brazil Screen Count," *Variety*, August 4, 1997, 18; Marcelo Cajueiro, "Loop Fights to Stay No. 1 in Brazil," *Variety*, September 8, 1997, 18; Marcelo Cajueiro, "Cinemark Targets Brazil With 6 Plexes," *Variety*, April 6, 1998, 17.

[33] Sutter, "Latin Exhibs Chase Rising Coin," 56.

[34] In 2000, Hoyts-General Cinema operated 14 theaters with 132 screens across these markets, far short of the 250 screens and 25 theaters they had projected for 1999 when the joint venture was established. Groves, "Hoyts, GCC Merge Latin American Ops," 22; Sutter, "Latin Exhibs Chase Rising Coin," 56.

[35] National Amusements and Hoyts entered Chile in 1995 and 1997, respectively. Andrew Paxman, "Conate Revving Up Multiplex Venture," *Variety*, June 12, 1995, 49.; Don Groves, "Hoyts Mines Latin Market," *Variety*, July 28, 1997, 18.

[36] The company cited Conate's interest in focusing on its existing distribution business, as well as new investments in production and film labs. Commentators suggested that the company's owner, Jose Patricio Daire, had also tired of reinvesting profits from new multiplexes into further expansion, which was still Cinemark's priority. Conate continued to operate its own exhibition business, then a circuit of 32 screens. Paxman, "Cinemark Buys Out Partner," 35.

[37] Mary Sutter, "Cinemark Opens Mex Theaters," *Daily Variety*, December 8, 1998, 6; Leonard Klady, "Exhib Cinemark Plans Multiplex for Colombia," *Variety*, March 7, 1999, https://variety.com/1999/biz/news/exhib-cinemark-plans-multiplex-for-colombia-1117492002/; Mohr, "Exhib Succeeds by Picking its Markets," A8.

[38] Warner went on to draw direct parallels between the company's international strategy and its domestic one, including its ability to navigate contemporaneous anxieties about overbuilding that had culminated in the megaplex crisis: "Even in the US the focus of our building plan is to find an isolated market rather than go into head-to-head competition, and that's always been the strategy…. A market only has so much elasticity. I think the industry has to be very cautious about not overbuilding. In the US, some markets have been overbuilt, and it's to the detriment of exhibition and the industry. So, we are trying to avoid the duplications of those mistakes in the international marketplace, and we would rather work a little harder to find an isolated pocket than go head-to-head." Mohr, "Int'l Venture Pays Off for Cinemark's Warner," A8; Andreas Fuchs, "Lo Mejor En Cines," *Film Journal International*, October 2003, 72.

[39] Paxman, "Southern Renaissance," 43.

[40] Cajueiro, "Outside $ Ramps Up Brazil Screen Count," 18.

[41] De La Fuente, "Latin America Faces Screen Jam," 9.

[42] Cajueiro, "Outside $ Ramps Up Brazil Screen Count," 18.

[43] At the time, the Carrefour partnership included three planned cinemas: the first location opened in Mexico City in November 1998, with the second and third set to open by the end of the year. Sutter, "Cinemark Opens Mex Theaters," 6.

[44] Mohr, "Exhib Succeeds by Picking its Markets," A8.

[45] In their initial announcement of their agreement in early 1997, the companies had planned to open ten multiplexes by 2000. The first site opened in Kobe in March 1997, but within a year Shochiku had ousted its management and begun to scale back on existing plans and economize. "Under the new management, profit is paramount, and we are expected to take full responsibility for what is, or is not, accomplished," an unnamed Shochiku official told *Variety*. The company's partnership with Cinemark was dissolved by the end of March 1998. Jon Herskovitz, "Shochiku Goes West to Cinemark," *Variety*, March 3, 1997, 9; Jon Herskovitz, "Shochiku, Cinemark Bow Kobe Multi," *Variety*, March 31, 1997, 30; Jon Herskovitz, "Japanese Plexing in Bid to Expand Market," *Variety*, December 1, 1997, 54; Jon Herskovitz, "Headless Shochiku's Film Future Fuzzy," *Variety*, February 9, 1998, 23; Jon Herskovitz, "Shochiku is Revamping to Maximize Its Profits," *Variety*, February 10, 1998, https://variety.com/1998/film/news/shochiku-is-revamping-to-maximize-its-profits-1117467624/; Jon Herskovitz, "Shochiku to Ax Cinemark Partnership," *Daily Variety*, March 30, 1998, 26.

[46] Richard Morgan, "Cinemark to Partner in Taiwan Plex Plan," *Variety*, September 14, 1998, https://variety.com/1998/biz/news/cinemark-to-partner-in-taiwan-plex-plan-1117480350/; Mohr, "Exhib Succeeds by Picking its Market," A8.

[47] Mohr, "Exhib Succeeds by Picking its Market," A8.

[48] Cinemark's Latin American competitors UCI and Village Roadshow (in partnership with Warner Bros. International Theaters) were also building multiplexes in Taiwan during this period, aiming to replicate the Latin American strategy of upgrading the infrastructure of underscreened markets with the aim of reigniting attendance. Spean Bridge Cinemas (SBC), predecessor of UK exhibitor Vue International, also entered the Taiwanese market during this time. Don Groves, "Biz Blues May Run Deeper Than Per-Plexing Answer," *Variety*, September 24, 2001, 13; Andreas Fuchs, "Early Bird, Sleepless Cat," *Film Journal International*, November 2003, 32.

[49] Fuchs, "Early Bird, Sleepless Cat," 32.

[50] In addition to the Core Pacific cinema, the specialized shopping center location and developer partnership granted Cinemark the opportunity to generate ancillary profits by operating restaurants and a VIP lounge serving wine and beer within the cinema complex. Fuchs, "Early Bird, Sleepless Cat," 32.

[51] Cinemark, Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2006*, March 28, 2007, SEC, EDGAR System, F-7. The company sold its interest in the joint venture in 2014. Cinemark Holdings, Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2015*, February 24, 2016, SEC, EDGAR System, 33–34.

[52] In addition to Cinemark and AMC, Australia's Hoyts and Village Roadshow, and South Africa's Ster Century were all in the process of selling. Local consolidation included the merger of Pathé and Gaumont in France and Odeon and Associated British Cinemas (ABC) in the United Kingdom, and the takeover of Theile Hoyts Kinepolis by Kinowelt in Germany. Adam Dawtrey, "Circuit Breakers," *Variety*, June 25, 2001, 33.

[53] Dawtrey, "Circuit Breakers," 33. By 2003, *Film Journal International* did not report British or German screens as part of Cinemark's international circuit. Fuchs, "Lo Mejor En Cines," 72.

[54] Carl DiOrio, "Deal's on the 'Mark," *Daily Variety*, March 15, 2004, 9; Cinemark, Inc*., Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2004*, March 29, 2005, SEC, EDGAR System, 9.

[55] Dawtrey, "Circuit Breakers," 33.

[56] After initially blocking the deal, the Mexican Federal Competition Commission reversed its decision and allowed the sale to proceed in November. The agreement left Mexico with only two major exhibitors,

Cinépolis and Cinemex. Cinemark Holdings, Inc., "Cinemark to Sell Mexico Subsidiaries to Cinemex," February 15, 2013, https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20130215005812/en/Cinemark-to-Sell-Mexico-Subsidiaries-to-Cinemex; Cinemark Holdings, Inc., "Cinemark Closes on Sale of Mexican Subsidiaries to Cinemex," November 15, 2013, https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20131115005931/en/Cinemark-Closes-on-Sale-of-Mexico-Subsidiaries-to-Cinemex; Annlee Ellingson, "Mexican Exit," *Boxoffice*, April 2013, 7–8.

[57] De La Fuente, "Latin America Faces Screen Jam," 9.

[58] Hoyts General Cinema South America was purchased by Chilean financial company Linzor Capital Partners in 2007 but had kept the chain's brand name. Charles Newbery, "Cinemark Grows in Argentina," *Daily Variety*, August 29, 2011, 9.

[59] Cinemark Holdings, Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2019*, February 21, 2020, SEC, EDGAR System, 5.

[60] In addition to Ribeiro Group and UCI, Hoyts General Cinema and Spanish exhibitor Cinebox were also players in the Brazilian market by 2004. De La Fuente, "Latin America Faces Screen Jam," 9.

[61] Marcelo Cajueiro, "TV Revs Roll, Pix So-So," *Variety*, September 17, 2007, A8.

[62] In late 2004, the government initiated a program that allowed exhibitors to receive credit lines through the National Bank for Economic and Social Development (*Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social*, or BNDES) for construction and renovation of cinemas and the purchase of exhibition equipment at much lower interest rates than those available from commercial banks. New interest rates ranged from annual rates of 10.75 percent for small exhibitors to 13.75 percent for large exhibitors. According to *Variety*, BNDES "ranked the exhib sector among its top priorities along with infrastructure, transportation, energy, and other key industries." Local exhibitors were also slow to access the funds; only two smaller exhibitors had borrowed through the program by September 2007. De La Fuente, "Latin America Faces Screen Jam," 9; Marcelo Cajueiro, "Brazil Gets Loan Boost for Cinemas," *Variety*, November 15, 2004, 16; Cajueiro, "TV Revs Roll, Pix So-So," A9.

[63] Cinemark Holdings, Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2019*, 5.

[64] Cinemark, Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2004*, March 29, 2005, SEC, EDGAR System, 9; Cinemark Holdings, Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2019*, 8.

[65] "AMC Sees Island Ripe for Multiplexing," *Variety*, February 17, 1992, 62; Don Groves, "'Plex Plans Give Euros Pause," *Variety*, November 16, 1992, 84.

[66] Jay Blickstein, "Globe-Trotter Returns to Honcho O'Seas Push," *Variety*, March 8, 1993, 50.

[67] "AMC Sees Island Ripe for Multiplexing," 62. In 1996, company executives also suggested their interest in South Korea, Hong Kong, and China. Don Groves, "Asia's Exhibition Boom," *Variety*, January 29, 1996, 39; Christopher Grove, "AMC Makes Worldwide Push for New Plex Places," *Daily Variety*, March 5 1996.

[68] Groves, "Plex Plans Give Euros Pause," 84; Jay Blickstein, "Execs Shoot for the Stars," *Variety*, March 8, 1993, 43. In 1996, the company expressed that they were on the verge of deals in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Austria. They also discussed moving into Scandinavia by 1997. Marlene Edmunds, "Northern Exposure," *Variety*, November 10, 1997, 31.

[69] Paxman, "Trio Plexes Muscles," 37; Andrew Paxman, "A Latin Screen Play," *Variety*, February 27, 1995, 59; Blickstein, "Globe-Trotter Returns to Honcho O'Seas Push," 58; Grove, "AMC Makes Worldwide Push for New Plex Places." AMC likely faltered in Latin America due to heavy competition in markets like Mexico and Argentina, economic crises in the region mid-decade, and the resources required by their US, Canadian, European, and Asian expansion plans in the 1990s.

[70] Groves, "'Plex Plans Give Euros Pause," 1, 84.

[71] John Hopewell, "AMC Preps European Multiplex," *Variety*, February 26, 1996, 170; Grove, "AMC Makes Worldwide Push for New Plex Places"; Chris Petrikin, "AMC Plex Going Euro," *Variety*, December 17, 1996, https://variety.com/1996/scene/vpage/amc-plex-going-euro-1117466485/; John Hopewell, "Warner Bros.

Leads Charge Into Spain," *Variety*, June 24, 1996, 42; Pat Kramer, "Bold Designs Drive Expansion," *Variety*, March 16, 1998, 40.

[72] In Spain, foreign competition included the UCI-owned Cinesa; a joint venture between Warner Bros. International Theaters (WBIT), Portugal's Lusomundo and Spain's Prisa; French player Union Générale Cinématographique (UGC); Belgium's Kinepolis; and South Africa's Ster Century in addition to a large group of vertically integrated and independent local players. AMC was also late to the market; Cinesa had been building Spanish multiplexes since 1989, triggering defensive building plans from local exhibitors. Peter Besas, "Foreign Multis Focus on Spain," *Variety*, June 27, 1994, 74; "Multiplex Mania Hits Exhibitors," *Variety*, September 26, 1994, 55; Hopewell, "Warner Bros. Leads Charge Into Spain," 42, 54; John Hopewell, "Spain Solves Plexing Tasks Via Multi Mania," *Variety*, November 25, 1996, 66.; John Hopewell, "Spain Hits Saturation Point," *Variety*, June 23, 1997, 62; Stephen Mackey, "Madrid's Megaplex Mania," *Variety*, April 20, 1998, 33; Emiliano De Pablos and John Hopewell, "Megas and Big Multis Push B.O.," *Variety*, April 19, 1999, 36, 42; Emiliano De Pablos, "Spanish Megaplex Count Ratchets Up," *Variety*, June 21, 1999, 61; Emiliano De Pablos, "Foreign Coin Plumps Spain's B.O., Screens," *Variety*, June 19, 2000, 54. Portugal was a smaller prize and much of the company's competition came from local exhibitors, but WBIT-Lusomundo also entered the market alongside AMC. John Hopewell, "Tiny Portugal Offers Plenty Plex Potential," *Variety*, June 24, 1996, 68; Dale Martin, "Portugal Pursues Plexing," *Variety*, June 23, 1997, 58.

[73] A site in Toulouse was opposed most fervently by French arthouse chain Utopia Cinemas, which circulated a petition referring to the twenty-screen site as a "neocolonial horror." Local press also covered the conflict over the AMC multiplex as a struggle between French and American interests. To counter the opposition, AMC proposed self-imposed quotas of 40 percent French content, despite French exhibitors' fierce opposition to such quotas and foreign exhibitors' own lobbying against them in other international markets. Michael Williams, "Gauls to AMC: Yankee Go Home!," *Variety*, April 20, 1998, 14; Michael Williams, "AMC in French Twist," *Variety*, May 17, 1998, https://variety.com/1998/more/news/amc-in-french-twist-1117470926/; Nancy Tartaglione, "Plex Boom Boosts Biz," *Variety*, January 11, 1999, 90.

[74] Grove, "AMC Makes Worldwide Push for New Plex Places "; Allen Eyles, "Plex Growth Outstrips UK Biz," *Variety*, June 23, 1997, 55; Allen Eyles, "The Last Remaining Sites for UK Plexes," *Variety*, 1998, 49–50; Allen Eyles, "Blighty Box Office Tapers Off," *Variety*, June 21, 1999, 58; Adam Dawtrey, "Exhibs Shaken, Not Deterred," *Variety*, December 13, 1999, 80; Allen Eyles, "Exhib Biz Mighty in Blighty," *Variety*, June 24, 2002, A7.

[75] Edmunds, "Northern Exposure," 31.

[76] SF owned this portion of Swedish exhibition through the combination of its sole-owned chain SF Bio and Svenska Bio, its joint venture with Fornstams Biografer. Rossing Jensen Jorn, "Swedish Distrib Svensk Snubs New AMC Multiplex," *Variety*, April 9, 2001, 53.

[77] Marlene Edmunds, "Nordic Locals Outpace Intl. Loops," *Variety*, June 24, 2002, A10.

[78] Gwen Robinson, "Plexing Muscle," *Variety*, September 18, 1995, 78.

[79] Michelle Magee, "AMC Bows Multiplex in Japan," *Variety*, April 22, 1996, 20, 22; Michelle Magee, "Multiplexes Moving In," *Variety*, June 16, 1996, 60; Michelle Magee, "Japanese Build on Plex Growth," *Variety*, January 27, 1997, 52.

[80] Even as the situation with product improved, foreign multiplexes near cinemas operated by major studios often faced delays of several weeks for prime product. All foreign and independent exhibitors in Japan were forced to deal with local studios' practices of block booking and track booking. In addition to using block booking to force exhibitors to play specific films for set periods, track booking meant that theaters with contractual agreements with one of the three major distributors would be obligated to play their films. Additionally, foreign movies rented from these distributors could rarely be played by theaters outside the studio's own circuit in their first weeks of release. New foreign multiplexes were predicted to have an impact on these practices due to their popularity with local audiences, but change was slow. Magee, "AMC Bows Multiplex in Japan," 20, 22; Magee, "Multiplexes Moving In," 60, 62; Don Groves, "Japan Flexes Plexes," *Variety*, January 30, 1997, https://variety.com/1997/biz/news/japan-flexes-plexes-1117343267/; Jon Herskovitz, "Distribs Maintain Hold on Hits Via Archaic Booking Systems," *Variety*, May 18, 1998, 58.

[81] AMC Entertainment, Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 2005*, 7.

[82] Maureen Sullivan, "Hong Kong Adds Screens," *Variety*, November 30, 1998, 38; "AMC Builds 11-Screen Hong Kong Multiplex," *Variety*, November 20, 1995, 15; Groves, "Asia's Exhibition Boom," 52. Unlike other international markets, where AMC's rhetoric was highly ambitious, the company was more reserved about their immediate plans for China. "We don't necessarily want to be the first into China" AMC International's senior vice president told *Variety*. "The pioneers get the arrows; the settlers get all the land." Groves, "Asia's Exhibition Boom," 52.

[83] Carl DiOrio, "Circuits Search for Global Spark," *Variety*, June 23, 2003, A1–A2.

[84] Martin Peers and Andrew Hindes, "AMC Scales Back Plexes in Reversal," Variety, May 24, 1999, 10.

[85] Andrew Hindes, "Will Chief's Death Short-Circuit AMC?" *Variety*, July 19, 1999, 4.

[86] Rich Ingrassia, "Taking Stock: Paul Kagan Associates Overviews the Industry in Its Exhibition Annual," *Boxoffice*, April 2000, 96.

[87] As discussed in chapter 1, AMC did successfully expand to Canada for a time, though the theaters it eventually constructed fell short of the company's initial plans and never rivaled the local duopoly of Cineplex and Famous Players. Ultimately, the company sold its four Canadian theaters to Cineplex Entertainment when it exited the market in 2012. Brendan Kelly, "AMC Plans Canadian Expansion," *Variety*, August 19, 1996, 21; Leonard Klady, "B.O. Tastes Yank-Flavored," *Variety*, September 2, 1996, 42, 62; Tamsen Tillson, "Canada is Building it But Will They Come?," *Variety*, April 13, 1998, 5, 9; Shlomo Schwartzberg, "AMC Heads North: Harry Peckham Explains How AMC Plans to Expand the Canadian Movie Market," *Boxoffice*, May 1998, 40, 44, 46, 48; Cineplex Inc., "Cineplex Completes Acquisition of Four AMC Theatres in Canada," July 12, 2012, CSA, SEDAR+.

[88] AMC Entertainment Inc., *Form 10-K/A for the Fiscal Year Ended March 30, 2006*, April 16, 2007, SEC, EDGAR System, 10; Patrick Frater, "Screen Grabs," *Variety*, October 17, 2005, B6; John Hopewell and Emiliano De Pablos, "AMC Pullout Signals Spanish Exhib Woes," *Variety*, January 2, 2006, 8; John Hopewell, "Terra Firma Lands AMC Entertainment," *Variety*, February 10, 2006, https://variety.com/2006/film/news/terra-firms-lands-amc-entertainment-1117937843/; Emiliano de Pablos, "Loews Ends Spanish Run," *Daily Variety*, December 20, 2006, 12. The earliest of the company's international sales in this period was the Stockholm complex, which it sold to SF Bio in 2003, taking a $5.6 million loss. Pia Lundberg, "AMC Quits Swedish Exhibition Sector," *Screen Daily*, December 9, 2003, https://www.screendaily.com/amc-quits-swedish-exhibition-sector/4016436.article; AMC Entertainment, Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 2005*, 4. AMC held onto its French theater for several more years, disposing of it between March 2011 and March 2012. AMC Entertainment Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 2011*, June 3, 2011, SEC, EDGAR System, 5; AMC Entertainment Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended March 29, 2012*, May 25, 2012, SEC, EDGAR System, 5. The company sold their Hong Kong theater in 2006, but continued to license its name to local operator Edko. Vicki Rothrock and Patrick Frater, "AMC Reels Out Amid HK Exhib War," *Daily Variety*, March 15, 2006, 7. AMC sold Hoyts-General Cinema and Cinemex to Chile's Linzor Capital Partners and Mexican exhibitor MMCinemas, respectively. With the latter deal, they bolstered Cinemex's challenge to Cinépolis in Mexico (MMCinemas took the Cinemex name). In 2011, Linzor sold Hoyts-General Cinema to Cinemark, solidifying the chain's dominance in Argentina. AMC Entertainment Inc., *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended April 3, 2008*, June 18, 2008, SEC, EDGAR System, 93; Ames Young, "AMC's Cinemex Sale OK'd," *Daily Variety*, December 19, 2008, 6; Newbery, "Cinemark Grows in Argentina," 7.

[89] In 2002, AMC took over Hoyts General Cinema's South American joint venture, but halted further development of its assets in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay. DiOrio, "AMC Sees March Closure for Pickup of GC Screens," 6. Some domestic chains also aimed to expand elsewhere; National Amusements operated theaters in the UK, while United Artists made efforts to expand to Hong Kong, India, and Thailand through joint ventures. Charles R. Acland, *Screen Traffic: Movies, Multiplexes, and Global Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 138–141.

[90] National Amusements was an exception to this rule, much like Cinemark; despite offloading many of its domestic screens during the 2000s and 2010s, the company purchased UCI's Brazilian assets in 2004 and

2005. The company continues to operate as UCI Cinemas in Brazil and as Showcase Cinemas in the US, the UK, and Argentina. Marcelo Cajueiro, "Brazil's UCI Cinemas on the Market," *Daily Variety*, March 18, 2005, 61; Anna Marie de la Fuente, "National Nabs UCI," *Daily Variety*, November 2, 2005, 18.

[91] "Hands Lands Odeon Cinemas," *Daily Variety*, August 30, 2004, 7; Liza Klausmann, "UCI Lands At Terra Firma," *Daily Variety*, October 29, 2004, 5; Cajueiro, "Brazil's UCI Cinemas on the Market," 61; de la Fuente, "National Nabs UCI," 18.

[92] Nick Vivarelli, "Warner's Final Reel?" *Daily Variety*, July 19, 2005, 14; Zhang Rui, "Warner Bros. Pulling Out from China's Cinema Business," China.org.cn, November 8, 2006, http://www.china.org.cn/english/entertainment/188323.htm; Mark Schilling, "Warner Exits Japan Exhib Market," *Variety*, December 19, 2012, https://variety.com/2012/film/news/warner-exits-japan-exhib-market-1118063823/. For a comprehensive historical account of WBIT's bid to break into the Chinese exhibition market and partnership with Dalian Wanda, see Ross Melnick, "China as Hollywood's Final Frontier, 1946–2013: Hollywood's Chinese Cinemas and the End of Hollywood's Exhibition Empires" in *Hollywood's Embassies: How Movie Theaters Projected American Power Around the World,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022), 361–379.

[93] Jill Goldsmith, "AMC Chain in Talks with China's Wanda," *Daily Variety*, May 9, 2012, 3.

[94] Stewart and Coonan, "China Flexes Plex Muscle," 17; King and Dezember, "A Beijing Ticket to Hollywood." Drawing on his conversations with Lopez, Schwartzel described the atmosphere under private equity ownership: "At the demand of the private equity firms controlling his company, potential acquirers started coming through the Kansas City headquarters of AMC…. Executives grew accustomed to the dog and pony show: the NDA signing, the financial audit, the negotiations that never went anywhere. Following the 2008 recession, few wanted to get into the movie business—in America, at least." Erich Schwartzel, *Red Carpet: Hollywood, China, and the Global Battle for Cultural Supremacy,* (New York: Penguin Press, 2022), 98.

[95] King and Dezember, "A Beijing Ticket to Hollywood"; Stewart and Coonan, "China Flexes Plex Muscle," 1, 17. Discussing the acquisition price, widely understood as generous, Wang argued that it made fiscal sense when comparing the per-screen costs of acquiring cinemas in the Chinese and US markets. Laurie Burkitt, "Chinese Tycoon Sees Deals Beyond AMC," *Wall Street Journal*, May 24, 2012.

[96] King and Dezember, "A Beijing Ticket to Hollywood." The deal received regulatory approval by both US and Chinese governments in July 2012 and closed that September. Clifford Coonan, "AMC Deal Clears Regulatory Turnstiles," *Daily Variety*, July 26, 2012, 1; Andrew Stewart, "Wanda Buys AMC With US Blessing," *Daily Variety*, September 4, 2012, 4.

[97] Wanda's emphasis on multiuse complexes reinforced the tightening intertwinement of consumption, entertainment, social, and domestic life in contemporary China. While these developments likely drew inspiration from the success of Western shopping malls' blending of entertainment and consumption space, they also developed out of the specific profile of Chinese urban environments, particularly in their incorporation of residential space in the designs, a departure from the Western model. At the beginning of the 2000s, large waves of rural-urban migration had led to significant housing demand in cities, while rising incomes had corresponded with an increase in consumption. The small size of domestic spaces in densely populated urban space had, in concert with these coinciding shifts in lifestyle, made public space a site for leisure, entertainment, and sociality. Michael Curtin argues that even as Wanda has pursued political affiliations and influence, its success has stemmed equally from providing infrastructure and services which fulfill social needs and respond to prevailing economic and cultural conditions. Michael Curtin, "The New Geography of the Global Blockbuster: Wanda Scales Up," in *Willing Collaborators: Foreign Partners in Chinese Media*, ed. Michael Keane, Brian Yecies, and Terry Flew (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2018), 34–36.

For more on Wang's biography and rise to economic and political power within China, including Wanda's close economic ties to the relatives of prominent politicians, see Michael Forsythe, "Billionaire at the Intersection of China's Business and Power," *New York Times,* April 29, 2015 and Patrick Brzeski, "Wanda Chairman Reveals Ambitious Plan to Invest Billions in 'All Six' Hollywood Studios," *Hollywood Reporter*,

November 2, 2016, https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/tv/tv-features/wanda-chairman-wang-jianlin-plans-invest-billions-hollywood-942854/.

[98] Curtin, "The New Geography of the Global Blockbuster," 35. Former WBIT CEO Millard Ochs reflected in 2013 on the knowledge transfer between the companies: "We trained lots of employees and showed them how to run the business…. we left them with that knowledge base, and they've improved on it. Now China is the number one international box office territory outside the US and by 2020 China will be the number one box office territory in the world." Jeremy Kay, "Millard Ochs, Warner Bros.," *Screen Daily*, June 20, 2013, https://www.screendaily.com/features/millard-ochs-warner-bros/5057576.article.

[99] Curtin, "The New Geography of the Global Blockbuster," 37–38.

[100] Curtin, "The New Geography of the Global Blockbuster," 36–37.

[101] Andreas Fuchs, "The United Republic of Cinemas," *Film Journal International*, August 2012, 18–22.

[102] Schwartzel, *Red Carpet*, 98. A contemporaneous report from *Daily Variety* also suggested that the earlier talks had also involved AMC as a potential ally in the company's expansion plans for Chinese multiplexes. An unnamed executive told the outlet that "when talks started, Wanda was much smaller than it is now, and the idea was that it could import expertise." Goldsmith, "AMC Chain in Talks with China's Wanda," 3. After negotiations quieted down, a Chinese real estate boom swelled Wanda's revenues from its real estate business as well as from the expansion of its domestic cinema circuit, increasing the cash available to the company for acquisitions. Serious talks resumed in November 2011. "While it was really triggered by our filing for the IPO," said Lopez, "the process really had many players come and go. At the end, the one that remained standing was Wanda." Fuchs, "The United Republic of Cinemas," 18–22; Stewart and Coonan, "China Flexes Plex Muscle," 17.

[103] Erich Schwartzel, "Struggling Cinemas Go Luxe to Survive," *Wall Street Journal,* April 10, 2018; Fuchs, "The United Republic of Cinemas," 18–22.

[104] Fuchs, "The United Republic of Cinemas," 18–22.

[105] Fuchs, "The United Republic of Cinemas," 18–22.

[106] Stewart and Coonan, "China Flexes Plex Muscle," 17; Burkitt, "Chinese Tycoon Sees Deals"; Andrew Stewart, "AMC's Capital Move," *Variety*, July 9, 2012, 6; Fuchs, "The United Republic of Cinemas," 18–22.

[107] Schwartzel, "Struggling Cinemas Go Luxe to Survive."

[108] Burkitt, "Chinese Tycoon Sees Deals."

[109] This was due to its possession of Class B shares that carried three times as much voting power as the Class A shares being sold in the public offering. Ben Fritz, "Movie Chain AMC Files for IPO," *Wall Street Journal,* August 31, 2013.

[110] These renovations included AMCs introduction of recliner seating a feature across up to 55 percent of their circuit, as well as an expansion of dine-in concepts and other upscale amenities. Regal and Cinemark soon followed suit, introducing plush seating across their own circuits. Fritz, "Movie Chain AMC Files for IPO; Schwartzel, "Struggling Cinemas Go Luxe to Survive."

[111] Paul Chai, "Pacific Buys Hoyts," *Daily Variety*, September 25, 2007, 4; Paul Chai, "Oz's Hoyts Absorbs AMC," *Variety*, October 21, 2010, https://variety.com/2010/film/news/oz-s-hoyts-absorbs-amc-1118026092/.

[112] Patrick Frater, "Australian Exhibitor Hoyts Halts IPO, Say Reports," *Variety*, November 8, 2014, https://variety.com/2014/biz/asia/australian-exhibitor-halts-ipo-say-reports-1201351425/; J. Sperling Reich, "A Closer Look at Wanda's Acquisition of Hoyts," *Celluloid Junkie*, June 3, 2015, https://celluloidjunkie.com/2015/06/03/closer-look-wanda-acquisition-hoyts/.

[113] Patrick Frater, "China's Wanda Buys Australia's Hoyts Multiplex Chain," *Variety*, June 2, 2015, https://variety.com/2015/film/asia/chinas-wanda-buys-australias-hoyts-1201510298/; Curtin, "The New Geography of the Global Blockbuster," 31–45. The deal passed through the hands of Wanda's Chinese ally ID Leisure Ventures, headed by Sun Xishuang, who acquired the company from Pacific Equity Partners in December 2014. At the time, Wanda was in the process of launching a pair of IPOs for Wanda Commercial Properties and Wanda Cinema Line, making a new acquisition logistically difficult. Patrick Frater, "Chinese

Investor Buys Australia's Hoyts as Wanda Properties Completes IPO," *Variety*, December 22, 2014, https://variety.com/2014/biz/asia/chinese-investor-buys-australias-hoyts-as-wanda-properties-completes-ipo-1201385961/.

[114] Curtin, "The New Geography of the Global Blockbuster," 39. The expansive leisure options and services, according to the company, were designed in part to make long shoots at the facility more comfortable and attractive for key talent. Nancy Romano, COO of Wanda Studios Qingdao and the former head of Fox Studios Australia told *The Atlantic*: "You are selling a lifestyle, because the cast has to come with their families. And they travel with an entourage. So, you have to create a lifestyle for them, not just a film studio. A stage is a stage no matter what country you are in. But it is what they are doing outside of work, and what their families are doing—their children, their mother, their nanny, their hairdresser, their makeup artist. So, we also have to create a lifestyle that enables them to commit to spending three to six months in a city." Willy Shih and Henry McGee, "Hollywood on the Yellow Sea," *The Atlantic*, December 2015, 44–51.

[115] Wanda announced that the subsidies would amount to 40 percent up to a cap of $18 million, funded by a five-year development of $750 million. This amounted to a 10 percent premium on the then highest production rebate in Asia, at Pinewood Iskandar Malaysia Studios. Patrick Brzeski, "Wanda's Big Qingdao Studio Pitch: Will Hollywood Take the Bait?" *Hollywood Reporter*, October 19, 2016, https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/general-news/wandas-qingdao-studio-pitch-hollywood-939629/.

[116] In contrast, domestic product (including co-productions) received 43 percent of ticket revenues. Coproduction status would still require "Chinese story elements" and local cast members and production staff, but the Qingdao complex promised to make meeting these production and personnel demands simpler and cheaper for global producers. Brzeski "Wanda's Big Qingdao Studio Pitch."

[117] Curtin, "The New Geography of the Global Blockbuster," 40–41.

[118] Brzeski, "Wanda Chairman Reveals Ambitious Plan."

[119] Patrick Frater, "Legendary Deal Will Transform China's Wanda into Entertainment Giant," *Variety*, January 5, 2016, https://variety.com/2016/film/asia/legendary-deal-wanda-entertainment-giant-1201672279/; Patrick Brzeski, "It's Official: China's Wanda Acquires Legendary Entertainment for $3.5 Billion," *Hollywood Reporter*, January 11, 2016, https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/general-news/official-chinas-wanda-acquires-legendary-854827/.

[120] While Wanda stood to benefit from increased vertical and horizontal integration in the Chinese and global film industry, Legendary's status as a private company meant it had less access to capital as major Hollywood studios. In combination with its lack of robust distribution infrastructure, this meant the production company was driven primarily by its hits and was susceptible to major losses from the failure of individual titles. Wanda could provide both the capital and the distribution infrastructure to cushion Legendary from these vulnerabilities. Frater, "Legendary Deal Will Transform China's Wanda into Entertainment Giant."

[121] James Rainey and Brent Lang, "How Wanda Plans to Acquire Paramount," *Variety*, July 15, 2016, https://variety.com/2016/biz/asia/paramount-wanda-sumner-redstone-viacom-wang-jianlin-china-1201814751/; Curtin, "The New Geography of the Global Blockbuster," 39.

[122] Doug Young, "Spurned by Paramount, Wanda Settles for Sony," *Forbes*, September 23, 2016, https://www.forbes.com/sites/dougyoung/2016/09/23/spurned-by-paramount-wanda-settles-for-sony/?sh=3a5dd21626f1; Brzeski, "Wanda Chairman Reveals Ambitious Plan."

[123] Brzeski, "Wanda Chairman Reveals Ambitious Plan."

[124] *The Atlantic* made just this comparison in a feature story on the Oriental Movie Metropolis. See Shih and McGee, "Hollywood on the Yellow Sea."

[125] Rachel Abrams, "AMC Entertainment IPO: Wall Street Embraces Exhibition Stocks," *Variety*, September 2, 2013, https://variety.com/2013/biz/news/amc-entertainment-ipo-wall-street-embraces-exhibition-stocks-1200593754/; Erich Schwartzel, "AMC Shares Climb in Debut," *Wall Street Journal*, December 19, 2013.

[126] Erich Schwartzel, "AMC Deal Boosts Chinese Control of US Theatres," *Wall Street Journal,* March 4, 2016.

The deal faced some friction when Carmike's largest shareholder, the investment advisory firm Mittleman Brothers, took issue with the pricing of the initial offer. CIO Chris Mittleman argued that AMC should pay a premium because Carmike was likely the largest domestic company that AMC could acquire under current antitrust regulations. AMC increased the value of its offer by 10 percent, and though Mittleman was still opposed, the deal succeeded in a November 2016 shareholder vote. The acquisition received regulatory approval and closed in December. Erich Schwartzel, "Business Watch: AMC Merger Wins Shareholder Vote," *Wall Street Journal,* November 16, 2016; Erich Schwartzel, "Big Holder in Carmike Opposes Merger," *Wall Street Journal,* March 9, 2016; Anne Steele, "Business Watch: AMC, Carmike Reach Sweetened Deal," *Wall Street Journal,* July 26, 2016; Brent Kendall and Erich Schwartzel, "Business Watch: US Clears Purchase of Carmike Cinemas," *Wall Street Journal,* December 21, 2016; AMC Entertainment Holdings, Inc., "AMC Entertainment Holdings, Inc. Completes Acquisition of Carmike Cinemas, Inc., Becomes Largest US Movie Exhibitor," December 21, 2016, https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20161221005418/en/AMC-Entertainment-Holdings-Inc.-Completes-Acquisition-of-Carmike-Cinemas-Inc.-Becomes-Largest-U.S.-Movie-Exhibitor. In addition to the Carmike purchase, AMC also acquired Starplex Cinemas, a midsize chain of thirty-three theaters, in late 2015. AMC Entertainment Holdings, Inc., "AMC Entertainment Holdings, Inc. Completes Acquisition of Starplex Cinemas," December 16, 2015, https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20151216006287/en/AMC-Entertainment-Holdings-Completes-Acquisition-Starplex-Cinemas.

[127] Wanda had been in talks to acquire Odeon in 2013, but ultimately balked at the price at the acquisition. Falling British currency in the wake of the successful Brexit vote ultimately allowed AMC to close the deal in 2016. Ben Fritz, Laura Burkitt, and Dana Cimilluca, "Chinese Mogul in Talks for Cinemas," *Wall Street Journal,* April 8, 2013; Erich Schwartzel, "AMC to Acquire Europe's No. 1 Theater Chain," *Wall Street Journal,* July 13, 2016; Leo Barraclough and Patrick Frater, "AMC Theatres to Buy Odeon & UCI Cinemas Group," *Variety*, July 12, 2016, https://variety.com/2016/film/global/amc-theaters-buy-odeon-uci-1201812569/; Patrick Frater, "AMC Takeover of Odeon & UCI Approved By European Regulators," *Variety*, November 17, 2016, https://variety.com/2016/biz/finance/amc-odeon-uci-takeover-approved-by-regulators-1201920519/; Patrick Frater, "Wanda Expands Global Theater Reach as AMC Pays $929 Million for Nordic Cinema," *Variety*, January 23, 2017, https://variety.com/2017/film/finance/wanda-expands-global-theater-reach-as-amc-pays-929-million-for-nordic-cinema-1201966877/.

[128] Adam Dawtrey and Liza Foreman, "Mergers in Works for Euro Exhibs," *Variety*, January 17, 2000, 30; Adam Dawtrey, "Odeon and ABC Chains to Meld," *Variety*, February 28, 2000, 31.

[129] "Hands Lands Odeon Cinemas," 7; Klausmann, "UCI Lands At Terra Firma," 5; Ralf Ludemann, "Circuits on Overdrive," *Variety*, June 27, 2005, B2. In addition to a British presence, UCI's holdings at the time included screens in Germany, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and the Cinesa circuit in Spain.

[130] These acquisitions included WBIT's joint venture in Spain and AMC's Spanish and Portuguese screens as these companies exited the European market, making them the leading exhibitor in Spain. Terra Firma also purchased theaters from Italy's Cinestar and sites from UGC Cine Cite in Spain and Italy, further bolstering their position in key European markets. John Hopewell and Emiliano de Pablos, "Terra Eyes Warner Loop," *Daily Variety*, February 4, 2005, 9; Hopewell and De Pablos, "AMC Pullout Signals Spanish Exhib Woes," 8; Hopewell, "Terra Firma Lands AMC Entertainment."; Nick Vivarelli, "UCI Adds Screens," *Daily Variety*, May 5, 2011, 5.

[131] SF Bio had long been the dominant chain in Sweden. It had expanded to Norway in 1998 by acquiring six theaters and beginning operations under the SF Kino brand. In addition to its eponymous chain in Finland, Finnkino operated under the Forum Cinemas brand in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Ratos sold its stake in NCG in 2015 in a secondary buyout to the UK's Bridgepoint. Between the SF Bio-Finnkino merger and the AMC acquisition, NCG's ownership was split between Ratos/Bridgepoint and SF Bio's parent company, Swedish media group Bonnier. Marlene Edmunds, "Exhibitor Arm SF Bio Flexes Its Independent Global Muscle," *Variety*, May 17, 1999, A6; Ratos AB, "Ratos Acquires Finnkino," March 21, 2011, https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2011/03/21/206285/0/en/Ratos-acquires-Finnkino.html; Ratos AB, "Ratos Sells Nordic Cinema Group: Exit Gain Approximately SEK 900m," April 28, 2015, https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2015/04/28/728880/0/en/Ratos-sells-Nordic-Cinema-Group-

exit-gain-approximately-SEK-900m.html; "History," Nordic Cinema Group, accessed March 19, 2023, http://www.nordiccinemagroup.se/about-nordic-cinema-group/history/.

[132] Wanda Group, "AMC Entertainment to Acquire Largest Theatre Operator in Nordic Europe as Wanda Expands Influence in European Film Market," January 31, 2017, https://www.wanda-group.com/2017/latest_0123/7556.html.

[133] Keith Bradsher and Wee Sui-Lee, "'Gray Rhinos,' Choking on Debt, Prompt Beijing to Tighten Reins," *New York Times,* July 24, 2017.

[134] Curtin, "The New Geography of the Global Blockbuster," 41–42.

[135] Forsythe, "Billionaire at the Intersection of China's Business and Power."

[136] Keith Bradsher, "A Giant Whittled by Debt," *New York Times,* August 2, 2017.

[137] The Qingdao complex had already scrapped plans for a studio tour and theme park and stalled the promised establishment of the Qingdao International Film Festival. Aside from Legendary Entertainment, the studio failed to attract US film projects and had struggled to bring in domestic filmmakers as well. Wayne Ma, "Mogul's Hollywood Dream Shrinks," *Wall Street Journal,* July 28, 2017; Bradsher, "A Giant Whittled by Debt"; Patrick Frater, "China's Wanda Completes Exit from Film Studios and Theme Parks," *Variety*, October 31, 2018, https://variety.com/2018/film/asia/wanda-completes-exit-from-film-studios-and-theme-parks-1203015923/.

[138] AMC Entertainment Holdings, Inc., "AMC Entertainment Holdings, Inc. Comments on Recent Media Reports," July 18, 2017, https://celluloidjunkie.com/wire/amc-entertainment-holdings-inc-comments-on-recent-media-reports/.

[139] As part of the agreement, Silver Lake would also receive the right of first refusal on future sales of Wanda shares. Allison Prang, "China Firm Pulls Back from AMC Investment," *Wall Street Journal,* September 15, 2018.

[140] Prang, "China Firm Pulls Back from AMC Investment."

[141] Patrick Brzeski and George Szalai, "Will China's Wanda Group Bail Out AMC Theatres?" *The Hollywood Reporter*, April 15, 2020, https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/general-news/will-chinas-wanda-group-bail-amc-theaters-1290328/.

[142] According to Wiener, the frenzy over acquiring MGM spurred his interest in developing new cinemas: "I realized that every single cinema chain in the UK had registered interest in buying MGM. My friends in the property industry were all moaning that they couldn't get any cinema operators to focus on new sites because they were all focused on chasing MGM. That's when I decided the right thing to do was go in under the radar screen of these other chains and talk to property developers and do deals." "Cineworld," Cinema Theatre Association, accessed June 6, 2024, https://cinema-theater.org.uk/uk-cinemas/uk-multiplexes/cineworld/; Allen Eyles, "Cine-UK's Wiener Proves Less is More," *Variety*, June 25, 2001, 37, 42. MGM Cinemas was eventually sold to Richard Branson's Virgin Group and operated as Virgin Cinemas before being acquired by UGC, a later acquisition target of Cineworld. Adam Dawtrey, "Virgin Territory," *Variety*, July 10, 1995, 31–32; Erich Boehm, "French Exhib Buys Virgin UK Cinemas," *Variety*, October 19, 1999, https://variety.com/1999/biz/news/french-exhib-buys-virgin-u-k-cinemas-1117756753/. For more on the history of the British duopoly, the transition to multiplexing in the British market, and the MGM sale, see Stuart Hanson, "Exporting the Multiplex to Britain," and "The Multiplex is Consolidated in Britain" in *Screening the World: Global Development of the Multiplex Cinema* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 89–136.

[143] At the time, Blackstone had recently lost a bid for the Odeon circuit to Terra Firma. Adam Dawtrey, "Blackstone Changes Reels, Eyes Cine-UK," *Daily Variety*, September 27, 2004, 11.

[144] Adam Dawtrey, "Cineworld Takes UGC," *Daily Variety*, December 6, 2004, 12; Leo Barraclough, "Cineworld Clear to Buy Exhib UGC," *Daily Variety*, April 29, 2005, 22; Boehm, "French Exhib Buys Virgin UK."

[145] "Cineworld Prepares to Float," *Variety*, April 27, 2007, https://variety.com/2007/film/news/cineworld-prepares-to-float-1117963905/; "Cineworld," Cinema Theatre Association.

[146]Robert Mitchell, "UK's Cineworld Buys Picturehouse," *Variety*, December 6, 2012, https://variety.com/2012/film/news/u-k-s-cineworld-buys-picturehouse-1118063224/.

[147] At the time, Cinema City International operated 99 sites with 966 screens across Israel, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Slovakia, with another 36 theaters (380 screens) under development. Cineworld had 102 cinemas with 886 screens and planned to open another 196 screens the following year. Forum Film was the exclusive distributor for Disney in all its markets, and had distribution agreements with Sony, Fox, Paramount, and Universal in various territories. Leo Barraclough, "Cineworld to Merge With Cinema City, Creating Europe's 2nd Largest Exhib Chain," *Variety*, January 10, 2014, https://variety.com/2014/film/global/cineworld-bids-to-buy-cinema-city-creating-europes-2nd-largest-exhib-chain-1201042868/; Cinema City International NV, "Cinema City and Cineworld Combine Businesses," January 10, 2014, http://en.cinemacity.nl/a/1342%2Ccinema-city-and-cineworld-combine-cinema-businesses; "Film Distribution," Cinema City, accessed September 4, 2014, http://en.cinemacity.nl/page/38%2Cfilm-distribution.

[148] Melanie Goodfellow, "Moshe 'Mooky' Greidinger," *Variety*, March 22, 2004, A4; Andreas Fuchs, "The I.T. Factor," *Film Journal International*, April 2004, 80–88; Barraclough, "Cineworld to Merge with Cinema City." Seeking growth outside Israel, Greidinger had originally chosen Central Europe for its proximity, which would make it easier to oversee operations as the company expanded. Speaking to *Film Journal International*, he credited this proximity with his success in developing the Central European cinema market: "A big part of our success is that we kept ourselves relatively close to home. All our territories are within a maximum four-hour flight time, which gives us as management the flexibility to visit and to be in the territory almost every other week, if not every single week sometimes. This gives us great advantages in terms of timing and decision-making and also in introducing our way of operations properly. Does this mean we'll never go farther than where we are now? To do so would require a different strategy, but nothing is ever not possible [sic]. In fact, Cinema City is currently looking to other opportunities across Europe and not necessarily just on our side of the continent." Fuchs, "The I.T. Factor," 80–88.

[149] Cinema City International NV, "Cinema City and Cineworld Combine Businesses."

[150] Andreas Fuchs, "Building a Cinema City," *Film Journal International*, July 2011, 48–58.

[151] Kevin Lally, "Expanding Cineworld," *Film Journal International*, May 2016, 116–20.

[152] Zeela Kotler Hadari and Assaf Uni, "First Haifa, Then Tel Aviv, Then the World," *Globes*, January 5, 2020, https://en.globes.co.il/en/article-first-haifa-then-tel-aviv-then-the-world-1001313569.

[153] Dave McNary, "Regal Entertainment Group in Merger Talks with Cineworld," *Variety*, November 28, 2017, https://variety.com/2017/film/news/regal-entertainment-group-merger-cineworld-1202625002/; Chu, "Cineworld Clinches $3.6 Billion Acquisition of Regal Entertainment Group"; Walker, "UK's Cineworld to Purchase Regal."

[154] Walker, "UK's Cineworld to Purchase Regal."

[155] Anschutz had initially tried to sell his 10 percent share of the company in 2015 but could not find a buyer. McNary, "Regal Entertainment Group in Merger Talks."

[156] McNary, "Regal Entertainment Group in Merger Talks."

[157] Stiff, "Regal Deal Creates No. 1 Chain of Cinemas"; Robertson, "UK Movie-Theatre Giant to Buy Cineplex in $2.2-Billion Deal." The company was also expected to sell off some of Cineplex's diversified businesses in digital signage, e-sports, and, possibly, amusements to pay down the debt accumulated in the acquisition. Andrew Willis, "Spoiler Alert: Other Suitors for Cineplex Can't Top Cineworld's Bid," *Globe and Mail,* December 17, 2019.

[158] Robertson, "UK Movie-Theatre Giant to Buy Cineplex."

[159] Paul Moore, "The Cineplex Sale is Just a Sequel to a Familiar Story," *Globe and Mail,* December 20, 2019.

[160] After a sharp decline in its share price between 2017 and 2019, Cineplex had reportedly been in talks with several potential bidders ahead of the Cineworld offer, including Britain's Vue International, which was owned by Canadian pension fund OMERS and the Alberta Investment Management Co. All were outbid by Cineworld. Willis, "Spoiler Alert."

[161] The break fee for a Canadian bidder was 1.25 percent of the purchase price, on the low end of the conventional cost of these fees. The *Globe and* Mail wrote that "corporate lawyers said different break fees for domestic companies compared with foreign buyers mark[ed] a novel development in Canadian takeovers." Andrew Willis, "A Takeover Plot Twist: Cineplex Board Cuts Termination Fee to Make a Canadian Bid More Attractive," *Globe and Mail,* December 18, 2019.

[162] Cineplex Entertainment, "Cineplex Shareholders Approve Transaction with Cineworld," February 11, 2020, CSA, SEDAR+.

Conclusion

[1] Susan Krashinsky Robertson, "Cineplex Shareholders Green-Light Company's Acquisition by Britain-Based Cineworld," *Globe and Mail,* February 12, 2020.

[2] David Berman, "Drop in Cineplex Shares Rattles Investors," *Globe and Mail,* March 6, 2020; Jeffrey Jones and Andrew Willis, "Market Turmoil Puts Cineworld, Cineplex, Other Deals in Doubt," *Globe and Mail,* March 18, 2020. Ellis Jacob, Cineplex's CEO, had overseen the chain when Toronto experienced a significant SARS outbreak in 2003. Andrew Willis, "Cineplex Takeover Won't Happen Any Time Soon," *Globe and Mail,* March 16, 2020.

[3] "Cineworld Calls Off $2.8-Billion Cineplex Takeover," *Globe and Mail,* June 13, 2020; Susan Krashinsky Robertson, "Cineplex Files Suit Against Cineworld Over Quashed Deal," *Globe and Mail,* July 4, 2020.

[4] Susan Krashinsky Robertson, "Cineworld Not Justified in Abandoning Cineplex Deal Amid COVID-19 Fallout, Judge Writes in $1.24-Billion Decision," *Globe and Mail,* December 16, 2021.

[5] "Cineworld Argues Judge Erred in Decision to Award Damages to Cineplex," *Globe and Mail,* January 18, 2022; Tara Deschamps, "Cineplex Ups the Ante as Fight with Cineworld Goes to Appeal," *Globe and Mail,* January 29, 2022.

[6] Oliver Barnes and Robert Smith, "Cineworld Takes Lead Role in Its Own Horror Story," *Financial Times,* August 29, 2022.

[7] Barnes and Smith, "Cineworld Takes Lead Role in Its Own Horror Story."

[8] Naman Ramachandran, "Regal Owner Cineworld Commences Chapter 11 Proceedings in Texas Bankruptcy Court," *Variety*, September 7, 2022, https://variety.com/2022/film/global/regal-cineworld-chapter-11-texas-bankruptcy-court-1235363000/.

[9] Travis Clark and Sindhu Sundar, "130 Regal, Eastgate, and Other Movie Theaters Could Close in the US—See the List of Those Already Shuttering," *Business Insider*, April 11, 2023, https://www.businessinsider.com/movie-theaters-closing-shut-down-full-list-of-regal-cineworld-2023-1; Naman Ramachandran and Patrick Frater, "Regal Cinemas Owner Cineworld Reveals Agreement with Creditors, Pathway Out of Chapter 11 Bankruptcy," *Variety*, April 2, 2023, https://variety.com/2023/film/news/regal-cinemas-cineworld-agreement-bankruptcy-1235571467/.

[10] Barnes and Smith, "Cineworld Takes Lead Role in Its Own Horror Story."

[11] Oliver Barnes and Robert Smith, "Cineworld Bosses Secure Up to $35mn Exit Cash," *Financial Times,* June 17, 2023.

[12] Naman Ramachandran, "Cinépolis President Eduardo Acuna Set to Take Over as Cineworld CEO," *Variety*, July 13, 2023, https://variety.com/2023/film/global/cinepolis-president-eduardo-acuna-cineworld-ceo-1235669168/.

[13] Naman Ramachandran, "Regal Owner Cineworld to File Administration in the UK Without Affecting Business," *Variety*, June 26, 2023, https://variety.com/2023/film/global/cineworld-uk-administration-

1235654312/; Naman Ramachandran, "Cineworld Enters Administration as Restructuring Moves Forward," *Variety*, July 31, 2023, https://variety.com/2023/film/news/cineworld-250-million-credit-facility-1235682112/.

[14] Cineplex Inc., *2023 Annual Report*, April 1, 2024, Canadian Securities Administrators (CSA), SEDAR+, 70.

[15] George Szalai, "AMC Theatres Boosts Liquidity, Saying it Has 'Financial Runway Deep Into 2021,'" *Hollywood Reporter*, January 25, 2021, https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/business/business-news/amc-theaters-boosts-liquidity-saying-it-has-financial-runway-deep-into-2021-4112973/

[16] Rebecca Rubin and Todd Spangler, "AMC Theatres Shares Just Plunged More Than 50%. What's Next for Stocks Roiled by Reddit?" *Variety*, January 28, 2021, https://variety.com/2021/digital/news/amc-theaters-stock-plunge-stock-reddit-1234894768/; Pete Arne Johnson, "'The Sun is Shining on AMC': Meme Stocks and (Temporary?) Media Industry Reorganization," *Flow*, Over*flow, March 4, 2021, https://www.flowjournal.org/2021/03/meme-stocks-media-industry-reorganization/. A short squeeze is a rapid price increase in a stock that forces a short seller to close their position to avoid further losses. Short sellers' purchase of stocks to close their positions contributes to pushing the stock price higher, and the rising price attracts buyers to the stock, fueling the surge.

[17] Jill Goldsmith, "AMC Entertainment Investor Silver Lake Rides Cinema Chain's Stock Surge to Swap Debt for Equity," *Deadline*, January 28, 2021, https://deadline.com/2021/01/amc-entertainment-silver-lake-swaps-debt-for-equity-as-cinema-chains-stock-surged-1234682417/; Rubin and Spangler, "AMC Theatres Shares Just Plunged More Than 50%."

[18] Rebecca Davis, "China's Dalian Wanda Dumps Remaining AMC Entertainment Shares for $426 Million," *Variety*, May 21, 2021, https://variety.com/2021/film/news/wanda-sells-amc-stake-1234979016/; Jacky Wong, "Wanda, AMC Get a Happy Ending," *Wall Street Journal,* May 25, 2021.

[19] AMC Entertainment Holdings, Inc., "AMC Entertainment Praises Wanda's Near Decade-Long Ownership of Industry Leading Movie Theater Company," May 21, 2021, https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20210521005521/en/.

[20] Liz Shackleton, "China's Wanda Group Sells Stake to Film and TV Producer Ruyi Holdings to Pay Down Debt," *Deadline*, July 23, 2023, https://deadline.com/2023/07/wanda-group-ruyi-holdings-china-property-debt-1235446096/; Patrick Frater, "Wang Jianlin, Chinese Billionaire Who Stalked Hollywood, Poised to Sell Last Piece of Wanda Film," *Variety*, December 6, 2023, https://variety.com/2023/film/news/wang-jianlin-chinese-billionaire-wanda-film-hollywood-1235823915/.

[21] Patrick Frater and Rebecca Davis, "China's Wanda Preparing to Sell Hoyts Australian Cinema Chain," *Variety*, May 3, 2021, https://variety.com/2021/biz/asia/china-wanda-hoyts-australia-cinema-1234964938/; Patrick Frater, "China's Wanda Seeks Buyers for Australia's Hoyts Cinema Chain," *Variety*, April 12, 2023, https://variety.com/2023/film/news/china-wanda-selling-hoyts-australia-1235580396/.

[22] Charlotte Orzel and Ross Melnick, "Looking Out the Window(s): How US Film Exhibitors Survived the Early Years of the Covid-19 Pandemic," interview with Jackie Brenneman and Bryan Braunlich, *Aniki* 10, no. 2 (2023): 180–81.

[23] See Orzel and Melnick, "Looking Out the Window(s)," for a firsthand account of NATO operations and assistance to exhibitors during the early years of the pandemic, including their involvement in helping their members access government relief programs.

[24] Warner Bros. notoriously announced it would release its entire slate for 2021 day-and-date in December 2021 as it aimed to boost subscriptions for its HBO Max service. The move earned significant backlash from exhibitors and talent. Rebecca Rubin and Matt Donnelly, "Warner Bros. To Debut Entire 2021 Film Slate, Including 'Dune' and 'Matrix 4,' Both on HBO Max and in Theaters," *Variety*, December 3, 2020, https://variety.com/2020/film/news/warner-bros-hbo-max-theaters-dune-matrix-4-1234845342/.

[25] See Charlotte Orzel, "Fraught Gathering: Studio-Exhibitor Reckoning at CinemaCon 2021," in *Media Industries in Crisis: What Covid Unmasked*, ed. Vicki Mayer, Noa Lavie, and Miranda Banks, (New York: Routledge, 2024), 161–69 for an assessment of this moment in the pandemic and conflicting crisis communications from exhibitors and studios as it played out.

[26] Mitchell Clark, "AMC and Warner Bros. Have Agreed to Make Movies Exclusive to Theaters for 45 Days," *The Verge*, August 10, 2021, https://www.theverge.com/2021/8/10/22618697/amc-warner-brothers-theater-window-45-days-movies-streaming-battle-hbo-max.

[27] Cinema Foundation, *State of the Cinema Industry*, March 2023, https://theatreowners.org/state-of-the-industry/, 7.

[28] Rebecca Rubin and Brent Lang, "Box Office Report Card: Grading Disney, Warner Bros. and Other Studios on 2023 Movies," December 7, 2023, https://variety.com/2023/film/news/2023-box-office-numbers-movie-studios-1235847399/.

[29] Anthony D'Alessandro, "2023 Box Office Crosses $9 Billion, Led by Universal; 'Wonka' Tops New Year's Weekend With $30m," *Deadline*, January 1, 2024, https://deadline.com/2024/01/box-office-2023-marketshare-new-years-weekend-1235683633/.

Bibliography

Annual Reports by Report Year

AMC Entertainment

AMC Entertainment, Inc. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 2005*. June 21, 2005. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Electronic Document Gathering, Analysis, and Retrieval (EDGAR) System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended March 30, 2006*. June 28, 2006. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K/A for the Fiscal Year Ended March 30, 2006*. April 16, 2007. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended March 29, 2007*. June 18, 2007. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended April 3, 2008*. June 18, 2008. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended April 2, 2009*. May 21, 2009. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended April 1, 2010*. June 15, 2010. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 2011*. June 3, 2011. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended March 29, 2012*. May 25, 2012. SEC, EDGAR System.

AMC Entertainment Holdings, Inc. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2013*. March 4, 2014. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2014*. March 10, 2015. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2015*. March 8, 2016. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2016*. March 10, 2017. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2017*. March 1, 2018. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2018*. March 1, 2019. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2019*. February 28, 2020. SEC, EDGAR System.

Cinemark Theatres

Cinemark, Inc. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2004*. March 29, 2005. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2005*. March 28, 2006. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2006*. March 28, 2007. SEC, EDGAR System.

Cinemark Holdings, Inc. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2007*. March 28, 2008. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2008*. March 13, 2009. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2009*. March 10, 2010. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2010*. March 1, 2011. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2011*. February 29, 2012. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2012*. February 28, 2013. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2013*. February 28, 2014. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2014*. February 27, 2015. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2015*. February 24, 2016. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2016*. February 23, 2017. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2017*. February 23, 2018. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2018*. February 28, 2019. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2019*. February 21, 2020. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2023*. February 16, 2024. SEC, EDGAR System.

Cineplex Galaxy and Cineplex Entertainment

Cineplex Galaxy Income Fund. *2003 Annual Report*. April 20, 2004. Canadian Securities Administrators (CSA), SEDAR+.

———. *1 + 1 =: 2004 Annual Report*. April 29, 2005. CSA, SEDAR+.

———. *Redefining Entertainment: 2005 Annual Report*. March 31, 2006. CSA, SEDAR+.

———. *Go Big: 2006 Annual Report*. April 2, 2007. CSA, SEDAR+.

———. *Beyond Movies: 2007 Annual Report*. April 29, 2008. CSA, SEDAR+.

———. *Escape With US: 2008 Annual Report*. February 11, 2009. http://irfiles.cineplex.com/reportsandfilings/annuallyquarterlyreports/2008/2008_annual_report_final.pdf

Cineplex Inc. *Evolving the Entertainment Experience: Annual Report 2009*. May 17, 2013. CSA, SEDAR+.

———. *Destination Cineplex: 2010 Annual Report*. May 17, 2013. CSA, SEDAR+.

———. *Delivering a Premium Entertainment Experience: 2011 Annual Report*. May 17, 2013. CSA, SEDAR+.

———. *2012 Annual Report*. May 6, 2013. CSA, SEDAR+.

———. *2013 Annual Report*. February 10, 2014. http://irfiles.cineplex.com/investors/investorkit/2013AnnualReport.pdf

———. *2014 Annual Report*. April 14, 2015. CSA, SEDAR+.

———. *2015 Annual Report*. April 1, 2016. CSA, SEDAR+.

———. *2016 Annual Report*. July 4, 2017. CSA, SEDAR+.

———. *2017 Annual Report*. April 17, 2018. CSA, SEDAR+.

———. *2018 Annual Report*. April 16, 2019. CSA, SEDAR+.

———. *2019 Annual Report*. March 23, 2020. CSA, SEDAR+.

———. *2023 Annual Report*. April 1, 2024. CSA, SEDAR+.

IMAX

IMAX Corporation. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2007*. March 17, 2008. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2009*. March 11, 2010. SEC, EDGAR System.

National CineMedia

National CineMedia, Inc. *Form 10-K/A for the Fiscal Year Ended December 28, 2006*. March 28, 2007. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 27, 2007*. March 7, 2008. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K/A for the Fiscal Year Ended January 1, 2009*. November 5, 2009. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *From 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2009*. March 9, 2010. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 30, 2010*. February 25, 2011. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 29, 2011*. February 24, 2012. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 27, 2012*. March 22, 2013. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 26, 2013*. February 21, 2014. SEC, Edgar System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended January 1, 2015*. February 27, 2015. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2015*. February 26, 2016. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 29, 2016*. February 24, 2017. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 28, 2017*. March 19, 2018. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 27, 2018*. February 22, 2019. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 26, 2019*. February 20, 2020. SEC, EDGAR System.

Regal Cinemas

Regal Entertainment Group. *Form 10-K/A for the Fiscal Year Ended December 26, 2002*. March 26, 2003. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended January 1, 2004*. March 16, 2004. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 30, 2004*. March 15, 2005. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 29, 2005*. March 14, 2006. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 28, 2006*. February 26, 2007. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 27, 2007*. February 26, 2008. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended January 1, 2009*. March 2, 2009. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2009*. March 1, 2010. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 30, 2010*. February 28, 2011. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 29, 2011*. February 27, 2012. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 27, 2012*. February 25, 2013. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 26, 2013*. February 24, 2014. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended January 1, 2015*. March 2, 2015. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2015*. February 29, 2016. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2016*. February 27, 2017. SEC, EDGAR System.

———. *Form 10-K for the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2017*. March 1, 2018. SEC, EDGAR System.

Cineworld Group, plc. *Annual Report and Accounts 2018*. June 11, 2019. Companies House.

———. *Annual Report and Accounts 2019*. May 26, 2020. Companies House.

Additional Sources by Author, Title

AMC Entertainment Holdings, Inc. "AMC Entertainment Holdings, Inc. Completes Acquisition of Starplex Cinemas." December 16, 2015. https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20151216006287/en/AMC-Entertainment-Holdings-Completes-Acquisition-Starplex-Cinemas.

Abrams, Rachel. "AMC Entertainment IPO: Wall Street Embraces Exhibition Stocks." *Variety.* September 2, 2013. https://variety.com/2013/biz/news/amc-entertainment-ipo-wall-street-embraces-exhibition-stocks-1200593754/.

Acland, Charles R. "IMAX Technology and the Tourist Gaze." *Cultural Studies* 12, no. 3 (1998): 429–45, https://doi.org/10.1080/095023898335492/.

———. *Screen Traffic: Movies, Multiplexes, and Global Culture*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003.

Adilman, Sid. "Cineplex Odeon Circuit to Add 200 Canadian Screens Thru '88." *Variety*, July 2, 1986.

"AMC Builds 11-Screen Hong Kong Multiplex." *Variety*, November 20, 1995.

AMC Entertainment Holdings, Inc. "AMC Entertainment Holdings Inc. Announces Receipt of Approximately $203 Million of Proceeds." July 6, 2018. https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20180706005327/en/.

———. "AMC Entertainment Holdings, Inc. Comments on Recent Media Reports." July 18, 2017. https://celluloidjunkie.com/wire/amc-entertainment-holdings-inc-comments-on-recent-media-reports/.

———. "AMC Entertainment Holdings, Inc. Completes Acquisition of Carmike Cinemas, Inc., Becomes Largest US Movie Exhibitor." December 21, 2016. https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20161221005418/en/AMC-Entertainment-Holdings-Inc.-Completes-Acquisition-of-Carmike-Cinemas-Inc.-Becomes-Largest-U.S.-Movie-Exhibitor.

———. "AMC Entertainment Holdings, Inc. Completes Acquisition of Starplex Cinemas." December 16, 2015. https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20151216006287/en/AMC-Entertainment-Holdings-Completes-Acquisition-Starplex-Cinemas.

"AMC Sees Island Ripe for Multiplexing." *Variety*, February 17, 1992.

"AMC Suspends Its IPO After Cinemark Raises Only $532 Million." *Boxoffice*, July 2007.

AMC Theatres. “AMC Theatres and Dolby Laboratories to Launch Dolby Cinema at AMC Prime.” April 9, 2015. https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20150409005248/en/AMC-Theatres-Dolby-Laboratories-Launch-Dolby-Cinema.

———. “AMC Theatres Offers ETX, an Enhanced Theatre Experience, for Guests of AMC Pleasure Island 24 At Walt Disney World.” March 2, 2010. https://s25.q4cdn.com/472643608/files/doc_news/2010/03/AMC-Theatres®-Offers-ETX™-an-Enhanced-Theatre-Experience-For-Guests-Of-AMC-Pleasure-Island-24-at-Walt-Disney-World®-Resort.pdf.

Anderson, Robert. “The Motion Picture Patents Company: A Reevaluation.” In *The American Film Industry*, 2nd ed., edited by Tino Balio. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.

Andrews, Sam. “An Event Worth Celebrating.” *Boxoffice*, April 2018.

“Apollo Management Buys $250 Million of Preferred.” *Wall Street Journal,* April 24, 2001.

Argy, Stephanie. “High-Tech Add-Ons Usher in ‘New Wave’ of Filmgoing.” *Variety*, March 16, 1998.

Aronson, Michael. *Nickelodeon City: Pittsburgh At the Movies, 1905-1929*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008.

Baker, Lucy. “Carlton Buys Top-Ranked American Cinema Adverts Company for $93m.” *The Independent* (London), May 23, 2000.

Ball, Yvonne. “Cinemark Holdings Falls Flat on First Day of Trading.” *MarketWatch.* April 24, 2007. https://www.marketwatch.com/story/cinemark-holdings-falls-flat-on-first-day-of-trading.

Barnes, Brooks. “Regal, Like AMC, to Add IMAX Screens.” *New York Times,* March 24, 2008.

Barnes, Oliver and Robert Smith. “Cineworld Bosses Secure Up to $35mn Exit Cash.” *Financial Times,* June 17, 2023.

———. “Cineworld Takes Lead Role in Its Own Horror Story.” *Financial Times,* August 29, 2022.

Barraclough, Leo. “Cineworld Clear to Buy Exhib UGC.” *Daily Variety*, April 29, 2005.

———. “Cineworld to Merge with Cinema City, Creating Europe’s 2nd Largest Exhib Chain.” *Variety.* January 10, 2014. https://variety.com/2014/film/global/cineworld-bids-to-buy-cinema-city-creating-europes-2nd-largest-exhib-chain-1201042868/.

———. “Digital Cinema Conversion Nears End Game.” *Variety*. June 23, 2013. https://variety.com/2013/film/global/digital-cinema-conversion-nears-end-game-1200500975/.

Barraclough, Leo and Patrick Frater. “AMC Theatres to Buy Odeon & UCI Cinemas Group.” *Variety.* July 12, 2016. https://variety.com/2016/film/global/amc-theatres-buy-odeon-uci-1201812569/.

Barrett, William P. “A Wal-Mart for the Movies.” *Forbes*, August 22, 1988.

“Bass Pro Shops Adding Underwater-Themed Fun Center Arcades in Select Restaurants.” Player One Amusement Group. March 8, 2019.

https://www.winwithp1ag.com/news/News/Bass-Pro-Shops-adding-underwater-themed-fun-center-arcades-in-select-restaurants.

"Bass Pro Shops and P1AG Show How Attractions Can Benefit Retailers." Player One Amusement Group. January 7, 2020. https://www.winwithp1ag.com/news/News/Bass-Pro-Shops-and-P1AG-Show-How-Attractions-Can-Benefit-Retailers.

Belton, John, Sheldon Hall, and Stephen Neale, eds. *Widescreen Worldwide* New Barnet, UK: John Libbey, 2010.

Berman, David. "Drop in Cineplex Shares Rattles Investors." *Globe and Mail,* March 6, 2020.

Besas, Peter. "Exhib Cinemark Goes Latin." *Variety.* December 27, 1992. https://variety.com/1992/biz/news/exhib-cinemark-goes-latin-102405/.

———. "Foreign Multis Focus on Spain." *Variety*, June 27, 1994.

———. "Latin America—At a Glance." *Variety*, March 28, 1994.

Birkinbine, Benjamin J. "Movie Theaters and Money: Integration and Consolidation in Film Exhibition." In *Political Economy of Media Industries: Global Transformations and Challenges*, edited by Randy Nichols and Gabriela Martinez, 22–40. New York: Routledge, 2019.

Blackwell, Richard. "Cineplex Road to Viacom Ran Through Ottawa." *Globe and Mail,* June 25, 2005.

———. "Onex Reaps Big Profit on Loews Sale." *Globe and Mail,* June 22, 2004.

Blickstein, Jay. "Corporate Report—Carmike Cinemas: Small-Town Dixie Chain on Exhib Fast Track." *Variety*, March 30, 1992.

———. "Execs Shoot for the Stars." *Variety*, March 8, 1993.

———. "First Multiplex: An Accident of Design." *Variety*, March 8, 1993.

———. "Globe-Trotter Returns to Honcho O'Seas Push." *Variety*, March 8, 1993.

Boehm, Erich. "French Exhib Buys Virgin UK Cinemas." *Variety.* October 19, 1999. https://variety.com/1999/biz/news/french-exhib-buys-virgin-u-k-cinemas-1117756753/.

Bordwell, David. *Pandora's Digital Box: Films, Files, and the Future of Movies*, Madison, WI: The Irvington Way Institute Press, 2012.

Bounds, Jeff. "Cinemark and IMAX in XD Theater Tussle." *Dallas Business Journal.* November 19, 2009. https://www.bizjournals.com/dallas/stories/2009/11/23/story10.html.

Bradsher, Keith and Wee Sui-Lee. "'Gray Rhinos,' Choking on Debt, Prompt Beijing to Tighten Reins." *New York Times,* July 24, 2017.

Brzeski, Patrick. "It's Official: China's Wanda Acquires Legendary Entertainment for $3.5 Billion." *Hollywood Reporter.* January 11, 2016. https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/general-news/official-chinas-wanda-acquires-legendary-854827/.

———. "Wanda Chairman Reveals Ambitious Plan to Invest Billions in 'All Six' Hollywood Studios." *Hollywood Reporter.* November 2, 2016.

https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/tv/tv-features/wanda-chairman-wang-jianlin-plans-invest-billions-hollywood-942854/.

———. "Wanda's Big Qingdao Studio Pitch: Will Hollywood Take the Bait?" *Hollywood Reporter.* October 19, 2016. https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/general-news/wandas-qingdao-studio-pitch-hollywood-939629/.

Brzeski, Patrick and George Szalai. "Will China's Wanda Group Bail Out AMC Theatres?" *The Hollywood Reporter.* April 15, 2020. https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/general-news/will-chinas-wanda-group-bail-amc-theatres-1290328/.

Bureau of Labor Statistics, United States Department of Labor. "Historical Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U): US City Average, All Items, by Month." April 2024. https://www.bls.gov/cpi/tables/supplemental-files/historical-cpi-u-202404.pdf.

Burkitt, Laurie. "Chinese Tycoon Sees Deals Beyond AMC." *Wall Street Journal,* May 24, 2012.

Caddoo, Cara. *Envisioning Freedom: Cinema and the Building of Modern Black Life*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014.

Cajueiro, Marcelo. "Brazil B.O. Fire Reignited." *Variety*, March 26, 2001.

———. "Brazil Gets Loan Boost for Cinemas." *Variety*, November 15, 2004.

———. "Brazil's Mixed Bag." *Variety*, March 27, 2000.

———. "Brazil's UCI Cinemas on the Market." *Daily Variety*, March 18, 2005.

———. "Cinemark Targets Brazil With 6 Plexes." *Variety*, April 6, 1998.

———. "Exhib Cinemark Reels in Brazil." *Variety*, May 12, 1997.

———. "Loop Fights to Stay No. 1 in Brazil." *Variety*, September 8, 1997.

———. "Outside $ Ramps Up Brazil Screen Count." *Variety*, August 4, 1997.

———. "TV Revs Roll, Pix So-So." *Variety*, September 17, 2007.

Cajueiro, Marcelo, Simeon Tegel, Jonathan Franklin, Charles Newbery, and Pablo Conde. "The Big Picture." *Variety*, April 1, 2002.

Caldwell, John Thornton. *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.

Canadian Tire Corporation. "Canadian Tire Corporation and Scotiabank Enter Strategic Business Partnership That Includes Scotiabank Acquiring 20% of Canadian Tire's Financial Services Business." May 8, 2014. https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/canadian-tire-corporation-and-scotiabank-enter-strategic-business-partnership-that-includes-scotiabank-acquiring-20-of-canadian-tires-financial-services-business-514268221.html.

Cane, Peter. "Talking Shop." *Boxoffice*, June 2007.

Carvell, Tim. "Hello, Mr. Chips (Goodbye, Mr. Film)." *Fortune*, August 16, 1999.

Chai, Paul. "Oz's Hoyts Absorbs AMC." *Variety.* October 21, 2010. https://variety.com/2010/film/news/oz-s-hoyts-absorbs-amc-1118026092/.

———. "Pacific Buys Hoyts." *Daily Variety*, September 25, 2007.

Chaney, Lindsay. "Mogul's New Crown." *Daily Variety*, October 15, 2001.

———. “Mogul’s New Crown.” *Daily Variety*, October 15, 2001.

———. “Shareholders Savor as AMC Goes Private.” *Daily Variety*, December 27, 2004.

Christie Digital Systems. “Christie Purchases Cinergy Software From DCIP.” April 25, 2022. https://celluloidjunkie.com/wire/christie-purchases-cinergy-software-from-dcip/.

Chu, Henry. “Cineworld Clinches $3.6 Billion Acquisition of Regal Entertainment Group.” *Variety.* December 5, 2017. https://variety.com/2017/film/news/cineworld-clinches-acquisition-regal-entertainment-group-1202630741/.

Cinema Advertising Council. “128 New Brands Embrace Cinema Advertising in 2011, While Local Spending Grew 4.3 Percent.” April 25, 2012. https://69543c9b-efa7-43b9-89a3-a78d4d715a9e.filesusr.com/ugd/644f80_6f4ebed76e954e369f4c81e842e7bbcb.pdf.

———. “Cinema Advertising Announces 2018 Revenue Exceeding $740 Million for the Third Year in a Row.” April 16, 2019. https://69543c9b-efa7-43b9-89a3-a78d4d715a9e.filesusr.com/ugd/644f80_7aabdd97037841269ad9db837f09bf7e.pdf.

———. “Cinema Advertising Closes Out 2017 With Revenue Topping $750 Million for the Second Year Running.” April 25, 2018. https://69543c9b-efa7-43b9-89a3-a78d4d715a9e.filesusr.com/ugd/eeeab3_190807f0d8484e1eaa46a59d65f1322e.pdf.

———. “Cinema Advertising Closes Out Record Year With Revenue Topping $750 Million for the First Time.” March 29, 2017. http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/eeeab3_ce921557d97d4e8986b21825c45bcf40.pdf.

———. “Cinema Advertising Closes Out Record Year With Revenue Topping $750 Million for the First Time.” March 29, 2017. https://69543c9b-efa7-43b9-89a3-a78d4d715a9e.filesusr.com/ugd/eeeab3_ce921557d97d4e8986b21825c45bcf40.pdf.

———. “Cinema Advertising Continues Strong Growth: Posts 12.7% Gain to $658 Million in 2010.” March 28, 2011. https://69543c9b-efa7-43b9-89a3-a78d4d715a9e.filesusr.com/ugd/644f80_200739a35c8247329e4093f8c087e166.pdf.

———. “Cinema Advertising Council Membership Reports 15% Increase in Cinema Ad Spending for 2006.” October 15, 2007. https://69543c9b-efa7-43b9-89a3-a78d4d715a9e.filesusr.com/ugd/644f80_62471723e47f4e059a2c900b86c9e7d8.pdf.

———. “Cinema Advertising Council Reports 18.5% Increase in Cinema Advertising Spending for 2007.” June 16, 2008. https://69543c9b-efa7-43b9-89a3-a78d4d715a9e.filesusr.com/ugd/644f80_faec4033b2dd4820bc7088fcf5744f05.pdf.

———. “Cinema Advertising Council Reports Record Spending in 2013, Up 6.5%.” March 26, 2014. https://69543c9b-efa7-43b9-89a3-a78d4d715a9e.filesusr.com/ugd/644f80_cec200baf434497db0ad359a64ca0438.pdf.

———. “Cinema Advertising Reports 2019 Revenue Pushes Past $800 Million.” May 29, 2020. https://69543c9b-efa7-43b9-89a3-a78d4d715a9e.filesusr.com/ugd/644f80_cded5fa6bae748b88aca7e295b6d0756.pdf.

———. “Cinema Advertising Revenue: Historical Data.” https://69543c9b-efa7-43b9-89a3-a78d4d715a9e.filesusr.com/ugd/644f80_bd32c1adc0024b6988e6e15affb62835.pdf.

———. “Cinema Advertising Spending Tops $600 Million for the Fifth Consecutive Year as 121 New Brands Go to the Movies in 2014.” May 22, 2015. https://69543c9b-efa7-

43b9-89a3-a78d4d715a9e.filesusr.com/ugd/644f80_08a761371e8a4d349cedddaeb7d6fc63.pdf.

———. “Cinema Advertising Spending Tops $600 Million for Third Straight Year as 161 New Brands Go to the Movies in 2012.” August 12, 2013. https://69543c9b-efa7-43b9-89a3-a78d4d715a9e.filesusr.com/ugd/644f80_55f873e8ca394bdf8214d94a424d1024.pdf.

———. “Cinema Advertising Spending Up 5.8 Percent in 2008 to Over $571 Million.” June 15, 2009. https://69543c9b-efa7-43b9-89a3-a78d4d715a9e.filesusr.com/ugd/644f80_510df7bb72094a8fa88299a352df46ed.pdf.

———. “Cinema Advertising, Further Cementing Premium Video Leadership Role, Has Blockbuster 2015, Up 13.4% With Revenue Topping $700 Million for the First Time.” April 13, 2016. https://69543c9b-efa7-43b9-89a3-a78d4d715a9e.filesusr.com/ugd/eeeab3_c8cc1b12d65a4d80b05b5b68150d1406.pdf.

———. “National and Regional Cinema Advertising Posts 5.4% Gain for 2009 While Other Major Media Experienced Double-Digit Losses.” June 7, 2010. https://69543c9b-efa7-43b9-89a3-a78d4d715a9e.filesusr.com/ugd/644f80_c1a533b633444ed69f50048a95a9bf6d.pdf.

Cinema City International NV. “Cinema City and Cineworld Combine Businesses.” January 10, 2014. http://en.cinemacity.nl/a/1342%2Ccinema-city-and-cineworld-combine-cinema-businesses.

Cinema Foundation. *State of the Cinema Industry*. March 2023. https://theatreowners.org/state-of-the-industry/.

Cinemark Holdings, Inc. “Cinemark Closes on Sale of Mexican Subsidiaries to Cinemex.” November 15, 2013. https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20131115005931/en/Cinemark-Closes-on-Sale-of-Mexico-Subsidiaries-to-Cinemex.

———. “Cinemark Completes DCIP Digital Rollout.” December 6, 2011. https://ir.cinemark.com/news-events/press-releases/detail/81/cinemark-completes-dcip-digital-projection-rollout.

———. “Cinemark Holdings, Inc. Announces the Sale of Shares by Madison Dearborn Capital Partners IV, L.P.” November 8, 2011. https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20111108007189/en/Cinemark-Holdings-Inc.-Announces-the-Sale-of-Shares-by-Madison-Dearborn-Capital-Partners-IV-L.P.

———. “Cinemark Holdings, Inc. Announces the Sale of Shares by Madison Dearborn Capital Partners IV, L.P. and Syufy Enterprises, LP.” January 19, 2010. https://ir.cinemark.com/news-events/press-releases/detail/163/cinemark-holdings-inc-announces-the-sale-of-shares-by.

———. “Cinemark Holdings, Inc. Announces the Sale of Shares by Madison Dearborn Capital Partners IV, L.P., Syufy Enterprises, LP and the Mitchell Special Trust.” March 10, 2010. https://ir.cinemark.com/news-events/press-releases/detail/131/cinemark-holdings-inc-announces-the-sale-of-shares-by.

———. “Cinemark Holdings, Inc. Announces the Sale of Shares by Madison Dearborn Capital Partners IV, L.P., the Mitchell Special Trust and Lee Roy Mitchell.” May 9, 2011. https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20110509007133/en/Cinemark-

Holdings-Inc.-Announces-the-Sale-of-Shares-by-Madison-Dearborn-Capital-Partners-IV-L.P.-The-Mitchell-Special-Trust-and-Lee-Roy-Mitchell.

———. “Cinemark Launches New Large Screen Digital Format in West Jordan, UT.” July 10, 2009. https://ir.cinemark.com/news-events/press-releases/detail/50/cinemark-launches-new-large-screen-digital-format-in-west.

———. “Cinemark to Sell Mexico Subsidiaries to Cinemex.” February 15, 2013. https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20130215005812/en/Cinemark-to-Sell-Mexico-Subsidiaries-to-Cinemex.

Cineplex. “Cineplex Opens Its First Junxion Location: An Innovative Entertainment Concept That Brings Movies, Amusement, Gaming, Dining, and Live Performances Together for the Ultimate Guest Experience.” December 8, 2022. https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/cineplex-opens-its-first-junxion-location-an-innovative-entertainment-concept-that-brings-movies-amusement-gaming-dining-and-live-performances-together-for-the-ultimate-guest-experience-808224392.html.

———. “Scotiabank and Cineplex Announce Enhancements to the SCENE Loyalty Program.” December 18, 2020. https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/scotiabank-and-cineplex-announce-enhancements-to-the-scene-loyalty-program-883358115.html.

Cineplex Entertainment. “A New Entertainment Experience: Cineplex UltraAVX Premieres at Two Cineplex Entertainment Theatres on Wednesday, June 30th.” June 16, 2010. https://mediafiles.cineplex.com/_att/a18adc3e-85bb-4f04-9263-dfecc6df612e/06%2016%2010%20UltraAVX%20FINAL.pdf.

———. “AMC Theatres and Cineplex Digital Media Partner to Elevate the Moviegoing Experience.” September 24, 2019. https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/amc-theatres-r-and-cineplex-digital-media-partner-to-elevate-the-movie-going-experience-879114596.html.

———. “Attention Edmonton Social Seekers: The Rec Room at West Edmonton Mall is Now Officially Open.” August 23, 2017. https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/attention-edmonton-social-seekers-the-rec-room-at-west-edmonton-mall-is-now-officially-open-641518043.html.

———. “Be a VIP At Cineplex Odeon Westmount and VIP Cinemas: New Theatre Opens Friday, May 8th.” April 28, 2009. https://mediafiles.cineplex.com/_att/cebf5b38-2db4-455a-92e3-541e9a88d141/04%2028%2009%20Westmount%20Opening%20Release%20FINAL.pdf.

———. “Calling All Lovers of Food and Fun: The Rec Room Opens This Thursday in St. John’s Newfoundland.” April 16, 2019. https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/calling-all-lovers-of-food-and-fun-the-rec-room-opens-this-thursday-in-st-john-s-newfoundland-854284286.html.

———. “Canada’s First 4DX Auditorium Opens This Friday at Cineplex Cinemas Yonge-Dundas and VIP.” https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/canadas-first-4dx-auditorium-opens-this-friday-at-cineplex-cinemas-yonge-dundas-and-vip-407926165.html.

———. “Canadian Digital Cinema Partnership Announces Completion of $115 Million Financing for Digital Cinema Conversion.” June 21, 2011.

https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2011/06/21/1397344/0/en/Canadian-Digital-Cinema-Partnership-Announces-Completion-of-115-Million-Financing-for-Digital-Cinema-Conversion.html.

———. “Cinemark and P1AG Take Gaming to the Next Level with Exclusive New Agreement.” June 26, 2018. https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/cinemark-and-p1ag-take-gaming-to-the-next-level-with-exclusive-new-agreement-686553081.html.

———. “Cineplex and Scotiabank Announce Expanded Sponsorship Extending the Entertainment Experience for Moviegoers.” February 4, 2014. https://mediafiles.cineplex.com/_att/5af6230e-d045-48e4-8fdc-9d7560d5ea4d/02%2004%2014%20Scotiabank%20VIP%20Cinema%20announcement%20-%20Final_ENG.pdf.

———. “Cineplex and Scotiabank Announce Ten-Year Extension of SCENE Loyalty Program.” November 6, 2015. https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/cineplex-and-scotiabank-announce-10-year-extension-of-scene-loyalty-program-407909275.html.

———. “Cineplex Announces First Playdium Location in Atlantic Canada Coming Soon to Dartmouth.” March 21, 2019. https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/cineplex-announces-first-playdium-location-in-atlantic-canada-coming-soon-to-dartmouth-815638358.html.

———. “Cineplex Completes Acquisition of EK3 Technologies.” August 30, 2013. https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2013/08/30/1398235/0/en/Cineplex-Completes-Acquisition-of-EK3-Technologies-Inc.html.

———. “Cineplex Entertainment and Empire Theatres Create New Partnership to Manage the Conversion to Digital Cinema.” April 14, 2011. https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2011/04/14/1397254/0/en/Cineplex-Entertainment-and-Empire-Theatres-Create-New-Partnership-to-Manage-the-Conversion-to-Digital-Cinema.html.

———. “Cineplex Entertainment and RealD Sign Major Agreement for 175 3D Installations.” July 22, 2008. https://www.dcinematoday.com/dc/pr?newsID=1165&newsID=1165.

———. “Cineplex Entertainment and Scotiabank Launch First-Ever Canadian Entertainment Loyalty Rewards Program and Rename Paramount Theatre to Scotiabank Theatre Toronto.” January 24, 2007. https://mediafiles.cineplex.com/_att/26d130db-cf48-4d88-b260-3398cdf4b554/2007-01-24--Cineplex_Entertainment_and_Scotiabank_Launch_First-Ever_Canadian_Entertainment_Loyalty_Rewards_Program.pdf.

———. “Cineplex Entertainment Completes Acquisition of Digital Display and Communications Inc.” July 5, 2010. https://mediafiles.cineplex.com/_att/03f6f3ce-3de2-46d1-bb2d-def0b6510cd9/07%2005%2010%20CPX%20Completes%20DDC%20Acquisition.pdf.

———. “Cineplex Entertainment Creates New Cinema Media Division.” November 1, 2005. https://mediafiles.cineplex.com/_att/35e6e177-c2b7-4666-b676-5209cc79f72f/2005-11-01--Cineplex%20Creates%20New%20Cinema%20Media%20Division--.pdf.

———. “Cineplex Entertainment Launches E-Commerce Site: The Cineplex Store is Now Open at www.cineplex.com.” December 12, 2008. https://mediafiles.cineplex.com/_att/7553a23c-8721-4e32-bc43-57fa65e41eb2/12%2012%2008%20Cplx%20Store%20Release%20FINAL.pdf.

———. “Cineplex Entertainment Lifts the Curtains on the ‘Metropolitan Opera: Live in HD’ At Select Canadian Theatres.” November 15, 2006. https://mediafiles.cineplex.com/_att/9bed9304-a665-49e8-b889-6644358c9bd8/2006-11-15--Cineplex_Entertainment_Lifts_Its_Curtains_on_the_Metropolitan%20Opera--.pdf.

———. “Cineplex Entertainment to Add 100 RealD Systems.” February 8, 2012. https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2012/02/08/1397627/0/en/Cineplex-Entertainment-to-Add-100-RealD-3D-Systems.html.

———. “Cineplex Entertainment to Explore Digital Cinema with National CineMedia.” August 31, 2006. https://mediafiles.cineplex.com/_att/7ebcf48d-8e9e-4915-8276-1bf28f25238a/2006-08-31--Cineplex_and_National_CineMedia--.pdf.

———. “Cineplex Introduces the Rec Room: Canada’s Premier Social Entertainment Destination.” January 26, 2015. https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2015/01/26/1398504/0/en/Cineplex-introduces-The-Rec-Room-Canada-s-Premier-Social-Entertainment-Destination.html.

———. “Cineplex Launches SuperTicket.” June 20, 2013. http://www.marketwired.com/press-release/cineplex-launches-superticket-tsx-cgx-1804116.htm.

———. “Cineplex Offers to Acquire Digital Signage Company, EK3 Technologies Inc.” July 17, 2013. Canadian Securities Administrators, SEDAR+.

———. “Cineplex Shareholders Approve Transaction with Cineworld.” February 11, 2020. Canadian Securities Administrators, SEDAR+.

———. “Cineplex to Acquire Dandy Amusements International Inc.” March 10, 2017. https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/cineplex-to-acquire-dandy-amusements-international-inc-615871584.html.

———. “Get Ready to Bring Your ‘a’ Game: The Rec Room Opens TODAY in Barrie!” July 26, 2021. https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/get-ready-to-bring-your-a-game-the-rec-room-opens-today-in-barrie--810437204.html.

———. “Get Ready to Get Your Game on: The First Playdium in Atlantic Canada Opens Today in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia!” February 16, 2021. https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/get-ready-to-get-your-game-on-the-first-playdium-in-atlantic-canada-opens-today-in-dartmouth-nova-scotia--887994288.html.

———. “Get Ready to Play Without Limits: New Playdium Complex Opens Today in Whitby.” November 4, 2019. https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/get-ready-to-play-without-limits-new-playdium-complex-opens-today-in-whitby--886705530.html.

———. “Introducing Cineplex Digital Solutions, a New Name for Digital Display and Communications Inc.” February 18, 2011. https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2011/02/18/1397223/0/en/Introducing-Cineplex-Digital-Solutions-A-New-Name-for-Digital-Display-and-Communications-Inc.html.

———. “Introducing the Cinema of the Future: Cineplex Announces Junxion.” November 27, 2019. https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/introducing-the-cinema-of-the-future-cineplex-announces-junxion-859230531.html.

———. “It’s Time to Play it Forward! The Rec Room Opens Today in Mississauga.” March 18, 2019. https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/it-s-time-to-play-it-forward-the-rec-room-opens-today-in-mississauga-826777775.html.

———. “Let the Games Begin: Cineplex Announces Roll-Out of New ‘Playdium’ Concept.” October 2, 2017. https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/let-the-games-begin-cineplex-announces-roll-out-of-new-playdium-concept-649042813.html.

———. “Prepare to #LiveWild: Canada’s First Reinvented Playdium Complex Opens Today in Brampton, Ontario!” September 16, 2019. https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/prepare-to-livewild-canada-s-first-reinvented-playdium-complex-opens-today-in-brampton-ontario--848330202.html.

———. “Run, Don’t Walk. The Rec Room Opens Today in London, Ontario!” April 30, 2018. https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/run-dont-walk--the-rec-room-opens-today-in-london-ontario-681244821.html.

———. “SCENE and CARA Announce Strategic Marketing Partnership.” February 11, 2015. https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/scene-and-cara-announce-strategic-marketing-partnership-407774585.html.

———. “Scotiabank and Cineplex Entertainment Announce Partnership and Loyalty Initiative.” November 2, 2006. https://mediafiles.cineplex.com/_att/bf727b1d-28bf-49dc-9d9a-2a1e05b309f5/2006-11-02--Scotiabank_and_Cineplex_Entertainment_Announce_Partnership_and_Loyalty_Initiative--.pdf.

———. “The Game Just Changed: Cineplex Starburst Inc. Becomes Player One Amusement Group.” November 9, 2016. https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/the-game-just-changed-cineplex-starburst-inc-becomes-player-one-amusement-group-407939845.html.

———. “Topgolf and Cineplex Announce Partnership to Bring Sports Entertainment Venues to Canada.” July 26, 2017. https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/topgolf-and-cineplex-announce-partnership-to-bring-sports-entertainment-venues-to-canada-636713453.html.

Cineplex Galaxy Income Fund. “Cineplex Entertainment Completes Acquisition of Onsite Media Network.” May 1, 2009. Canadian Securities Administrators, SEDAR+.

———. “Cineplex Entertainment Completes Sale of 7 Quebec Divestiture Theatres to Fortune Cinema Inc.” March 31, 2006. Canadian Securities Administrators, SEDAR+.

———. “Cineplex Galaxy Announces Sale of Theatres to Empire Theatres Limited.” August 22, 2005. Canadian Securities Administrators, SEDAR+.

———. “Cineplex Galaxy Completes Acquisition of Famous Players.” July 22, 2005. Canadian Securities Administrators, SEDAR+.

———. “Cineplex Galaxy LP Announces New Digital Advertising Network.” August 13, 2004. Canadian Securities Administrators, SEDAR+.

———. *Notice of Change in Corporate Structure Pursuant to Section 4.9 of National Instrument 51–102*. January 4, 2011. Canadian Securities Administrators, SEDAR+.

Cineplex Galaxy LP. "Cineplex Galaxy Announces the Launch of a New Digital Pre-Show Cinema Network for Toronto and Southern Ontario." February 24, 2005. https://mediafiles.cineplex.com/_att/bd2eeb93-d88d-4ae9-872f-3e621618a7b9/2005-02-24--Digital_Pre-show_Launch--.pdf.

Cineplex Inc. "Cineplex Announces Strategic Acquisition of Tricorp Amusements." September 21, 2016. Canadian Securities Administrators, SEDAR+.

———. "Cineplex CJ 4DPLEX Announce Strategic Partnership and Canadian Expansion Plans." September 19, 2018. https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/cineplex-and-cj-4dplex-announce-strategic-partnership-and-canadian-expansion-plans-693707061.html.

———. "Cineplex Completes Acquisition of Four AMC Theatres in Canada." July 12, 2012. Canadian Securities Administrators, SEDAR+.

———. "Cineplex Completes Acquisition of 24 Empire Theatres in Atlantic Canada." October 24, 2013. Canadian Securities Administrators, SEDAR+.

———. "Cineplex Entertainment to Acquire New Way Sales Games Ltd." April 26, 2011. Canadian Securities Administrators, SEDAR+.

———. "Cineplex Entertainment Transforms eSports in Canada with Strategic Acquisition." September 17, 2015. Canadian Securities Administrators, SEDAR+.

———. "Cineplex Strengthens US Entertainment and Amusement Gaming Business with Another Strategic Acquisition." November 10, 2016. Canadian Securities Administrators, SEDAR+.

———. "Game on: Cineplex and WorldGaming Sign Comprehensive Deal with Sony Computer Entertainment Canada (PlayStation)." January 11, 2016. Canadian Securities Administrators, SEDAR+.

———. "New Way Games Sales Ltd. and Starburst Coin Machines Inc. Merge to Create New Amusement Games Business." January 31, 2012. Canadian Securities Administrators, SEDAR+.

———. "ScreenX, Canada's First Panoramic Movie-Watching Experience, Opens Tomorrow With 'Aquaman.'" December 19, 2018. https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/screenx-canadas-first-panoramic-movie-watching-experience-opens-tomorrow-with-aquaman-703125452.html.

"Cineworld Argues Judge Erred in Decision to Award Damages to Cineplex." *Globe and Mail,* January 18, 2022.

"Cineworld Calls Off $2.8-Billion Cineplex Takeover." *Globe and Mail,* June 13, 2020.

"Cineworld Prepares to Float." *Variety.* April 27, 2007. https://variety.com/2007/film/news/cineworld-prepares-to-float-1117963905/.

Clark, Mitchell. "AMC and Warner Bros. Have Agreed to Make Movies Exclusive to Theaters for 45 Days." *The Verge.* August 10, 2021. https://www.theverge.com/2021/8/10/22618697/amc-warner-brothers-theater-window-45-days-movies-streaming-battle-hbo-max.

Clark, Travis and Sundar, Sindhu. “130 Regal, Eastgate, and Other Movie Theaters Could Close in the US—See the List of Those Already Shuttering.” *Business Insider.* April 11, 2023. https://www.businessinsider.com/movie-theaters-closing-shut-down-full-list-of-regal-cineworld-2023-1.

Coate, Bronwyn, Deb Verhoeven, Colin Arrowsmith, and Vejune Zemaityte. “Feature Film Diversity on Australian Cinema Screens: Implications for Cultural Diversity Studies Using Big Data.” In *Australian Screen in the 2000s*, edited by Ben Goldsmith and Mark David Ryan, 341–60. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Cohen, David S. “Is D-Cinema’s Domain Already Dealt?” *Daily Variety*, March 15, 2006.

Coleman, Daniel. “Dubinsky Brothers: Entertainers—Maurice (1882–1929), Edward (Circa 1886-1960), Barney (1892–1949).” *Kansas City Public Library.* Missouri Valley Special Collections: Biography. 2004. https://kchistory.org/document/biography-dubinsky-brothers-entertainers-maurice-1882-1929-edward-circa-1886-1960-and.

“Company News: Kohlberg Kravis in $660 Million Deal for Act III Cinemas.” Business Day. *New York Times,* October 21, 1997.

Conant, Michael. *Antitrust in the Motion Picture Industry: Economic and Legal Analysis*, Publications of the Bureau of Business and Economic Research, University of California Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960.

———. “The Paramount Decrees Reconsidered.” *Law and Contemporary Problems* 44, no. 4 (1981): 79–107, https://doi.org/10.2307/1191225/.

Contrino, Phil. “NCM Takes Center Stage.” *Boxoffice*, June 2014.

Coonan, Clifford. “AMC Deal Clears Regulatory Turnstiles.” *Daily Variety*, July 26, 2012.

———. “China’s Wanda Buys AMC for $2.6 Bil.” *Variety.* May 20, 2012. https://variety.com/2012/film/news/china-s-wanda-buys-amc-for-2-6-bil-1118054388/.

Covell, Jeffrey L. “Cinemark Holdings, Inc.” In *International Directory of Company Histories*, vol. 95, edited by Jay P. Pederson, 95–99. Detroit, MI: Gale, 2008.

———. “Regal Entertainment Group.” In *International Directory of Company Histories*, vol. 59, edited by Jay P. Pederson and Miranda H. Ferrara, 340–43. Detroit, MI: St. James Press, 2004.

Crabtree, Sheigh. “Sony Promises ‘05 Debut After 4K D-Cinema’s Demo.” *Hollywood Reporter*, June 8, 2004.

“Credit Crunch Stalls D-Cinema Rollout.” *Variety.* March 27, 2009. https://variety.com/2009/more/news/credit-crunch-stalls-d-cinema-rollout-1118001760/.

Curtin, Michael. “The New Geography of the Global Blockbuster: Wanda Scales Up.” In *Willing Collaborators: Foreign Partners in Chinese Media*, edited by Michael Keane, Brian Yecies, and Terry Flew, 31–45. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2018.

Curtin, Michael and Kevin Sanson, eds. *Precarious Creativity: Global Media, Local Labor* Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016.

Cuthbert, Pamela. “Screen Wars: At a Theater Near You.” *Playback.* May 8, 1995. https://playbackonline.ca/1995/05/08/4297-19950508/.

Cuthbert, Wendy. “Playdium Creates Order from Chaos.” *Strategy.* March 13, 2000. https://strategyonline.ca/2000/03/13/28410-20000313/.

D’Alessandro, Anthony. “2023 Box Office Crosses $9 Billion, Led by Universal; ‘Wonka’ Tops New Year’s Weekend With $30m.” *Deadline.* January 1, 2024. https://deadline.com/2024/01/box-office-2023-marketshare-new-years-weekend-1235683633/.

Dager, Nick. “A Critical Juncture.” *Boxoffice*, June 2008.

Daniels, Chris. “Movie Mogul.” *Marketing.* January 28, 2008. http://marketingmag.ca/media/movie-mogul-12998/.

Davis, Rebecca. “China’s Dalian Wanda Dumps Remaining AMC Entertainment Shares for $426 Million.” *Variety.* May 21, 2021. https://variety.com/2021/film/news/wanda-sells-amc-stake-1234979016/.

Dawtrey, Adam. “Blackstone Changes Reels, Eyes Cine-UK.” *Daily Variety*, September 27, 2004.

———. “Cineworld Takes UGC.” *Daily Variety*, December 6, 2004.

———. “Circuit Breakers.” *Variety*, June 25, 2001.

———. “Exhibs Shaken, Not Deterred.” *Variety*, December 13, 1999.

———. “Odeon and ABC Chains to Meld.” *Variety*, February 28, 2000.

———. “Virgin Territory.” *Variety*, July 10, 1995.

Dawtrey, Adam and Liza Foreman. “Mergers in Works for Euro Exhibs.” *Variety*, January 17, 2000.

De La Fuente, Anna Marie. “Latin America Faces Screen Jam.” *Variety*, June 28, 2004.

———. “National Nabs UCI.” *Daily Variety*, November 2, 2005.

de la Merced, Michael J. “AMC Prices Its IPO At $18 a Share.” *New York Times.* December 17, 2013. https://dealbook.nytimes.com/2013/12/17/amc-prices-its-i-p-o-at-18-a-share/.

de Lisser, Eleena. “Rock ‘N’ Roll Hits the Multiplex.” *Wall Street Journal,* March 25, 2004.

De Pablos, Emiliano. “Foreign Coin Plumps Spain’s B.O., Screens.” *Variety*, June 19, 2000.

———. “Loews Ends Spanish Run.” *Daily Variety*, December 20, 2006.

———. “Spanish Megaplex Count Ratchets Up.” *Variety*, June 21, 1999.

De Pablos, Emiliano and John Hopewell. “Megas and Big Multis Push B.O.” *Variety*, April 19, 1999.

Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs. “AMC Required to Divest Movie Theatres, Reduce NCM Ownership and Complete Screen Transfers in Order to Complete Acquisition of Carmike Cinemas.” December 20, 2016. https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/amc-required-divest-movie-theatres-reduce-ncm-ownership-and-complete-screen-transfers-order.

———. “Justice Department Files Antitrust Lawsuit to Stop National CineMedia from Buying Screenvision.” November 3, 2014. https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-files-antitrust-lawsuit-stop-national-cinemedia-buying-screenvision.

Deschamps, Tara. “Cineplex to Open ‘Cinema of the Future.’” *Toronto Star* (Toronto, Canada), November 28, 2019.

———. “Cineplex Ups the Ante as Fight with Cineworld Goes to Appeal.” *Globe and Mail,* January 29, 2022.

deWaard, Andrew. “Financialized Hollywood: Institutional Investment, Venture Capital, and Private Equity in the Film and Television Industry.” *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 59, no. 4 (2020): 54–84, https://doi.org/10.1353/cj.2020.0041/.

Dickson, Glen. “What’s Opera Next at Multiplex.” *Variety*, March 25, 2014.

“Digital Cinema Deal Not Quite Done.” *Variety.* September 8, 2008. https://variety.com/2008/biz/markets-festivals/digital-cinema-deal-not-quite-done-1117991861/.

Digital Cinema Implementation Partners. “DCIP Takes Its Cinergy Platform to the Next Level.” November 12, 2018. https://www.dcinematoday.com/dc/pr?newsID=5262.

———. “Digital Cinema Implementation Partners Announces Agreement with Five Studios for Digital Cinema Upgrade.” October 1, 2008. https://www.dcinematoday.com/dc/pr?newsID=1204.

———. “Digital Cinema Implementation Partners Announces Completion of $660 Million Financing for Digital Cinema Upgrade.” March 10, 2010. https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/digital-cinema-implementation-partners-announces-completion-of-660-million-financing-for-digital-cinema-upgrade-87249262.html.

———. “Digital Cinema Implementation Partners Names Richard Manzione as President and CEO.” March 24, 2011. https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/digital-cinema-implementation-partners-names-richard-manzione-as-president-and-ceo-118574279.html.

———. “Fathom Events Completes Rollout of Cinergy Event Monitoring System.” April 2, 2019. https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/fathom-events-completes-rollout-of-cinergy-event-monitoring-system-300823283.html.

———. “National Amusements to Roll Out Cinergy.” March 25, 2017. https://www.dcinematoday.com/dc/pr?newsID=4707.

———. “Regal Rolls Out DCIP’s Cinergy Solution Circuit Wide.” April 1, 2019. https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/regal-rolls-out-dcips-cinergy-solution-circuit-wide-300821847.html.

Digital Cinema Initiatives, LLC. *Digital Cinema System Specification, V1.0*. July 20, 2005. November 1.

“Digital Cinema’s Picture Starts to Fade.” *Variety Deal Memo*, July 15, 2002.

Dinglasan, Francesca. “AMC: Affecting Major Cuts.” *Boxoffice*, December 1999.

———. “Building an Empire: The Maritime Chain is Doing Swimmingly in Atlantic Canada.” *Boxoffice*, May 1999.

———. “Lead Story: Carmike, Edwards File for Bankruptcy; Regal Next?” *Boxoffice*, October 2000.

———. “Lead Story: General Cinema and Resort Theatres of America File for Bankruptcy.” *Boxoffice*, December 2000.

———. “Lead Story: Silver Seeks Lining in Financial Cloud.” *Boxoffice*, July 2000.

———. “Mann Trouble.” *Boxoffice*, November 1999.

DiOrio, Carl. "$5 Per Share Dividend for Regal Investors." *Daily Variety*, June 12, 2003.
———. "AMC Sees March Closure for Pickup of GC Screens." *Daily Variety*, March 20, 2002.
———. "AMC Unspools Offer." *Daily Variety*, July 12, 2001.
———. "AMC, Loews Call Off Nups." *Daily Variety*, January 23, 2004.
———. "AMC, Loews Mull Merger." *Daily Variety*, November 19, 2003.
———. "AMC: GC Deal About to Close." *Variety.* March 18, 2002. https://variety.com/2002/biz/news/amc-gc-deal-about-to-close-1117864133/.
———. "AMC's 'In the Game.'" *Daily Variety*, July 19, 2001.
———. "Anschutz Adds More of Regal." *Daily Variety*, May 30, 2001.
———. "Anschutz Advances in Regal Bid." *Daily Variety*, March 27, 2001.
———. "Anschutz Leads Regal Out of Court." *Daily Variety*, January 31, 2002.
———. "Anschutz Seeks Deal for Edwards Theatres." *Daily Variety*, February 16, 2001.
———. "Chapter 11 Curtain to Fall on GC." *Daily Variety*, October 12, 2000.
———. "Cinemark is on the Block." *Daily Variety*, January 14, 2004.
———. "Cinemark Yanks IPO." *Daily Variety*, July 24, 2002.
———. "Circuits Search for Global Spark." *Variety*, June 23, 2003.
———. "Deal's on the 'Mark." *Daily Variety*, March 15, 2004.
———. "Digital Delivery of Regal Preshow." *Daily Variety*, March 4, 2003.
———. "Edwards Creditors OK Anschutz Buyout Plan." *Daily Variety*, August 29, 2001.
———. "Exhib AMC to Buy Gulf States Loop." *Daily Variety*, January 30, 2002.
———. "Exhib King Rolls Out Regal IPO." *Daily Variety*, March 12, 2002.
———. "Exhib's Int'l Expanse." *Daily Variety*, June 20, 2002.
———. "Exhibs Talk Merger." *Daily Variety*, April 26, 2002.
———. "Financial Players, Not Exhibs, Eye Cinemark." *Daily Variety*, March 2, 2004.
———. "General Cinemas Goes to AMC Via Auction." *Daily Variety*, December 7, 2001.
———. "General Latest Exhib Sold." *Daily Variety*, June 14, 2001.
———. "Loews Down, Out." *Daily Variety*, February 16, 2001.
———. "Loews Lifts Korea Stake." *Daily Variety*, August 2, 2002.
———. "Loews Parent Onex, AMC Confirm Merger Talks." *Daily Variety*, November 20, 2003.
———. "Loews Yanks Planned IPO." *Daily Variety*, October 25, 2002.
———. "Onex Eyes Landmark Deal as Bidders Mull Clearview." *Daily Variety*, November 12, 2002.
———. "Onex Fed Up with Regs, Won't Buy Landmark." *Daily Variety*, January 15, 2003.
———. "Regal Pads Pre-Show Plan." *Daily Variety*, November 14, 2002.
———. "Regal Returns." *Daily Variety*, May 10, 2002.
———. "Regal's Pumped After Hoyt's Haul, Profit Rise." *Daily Variety*, February 5, 2003.
———. "Screenvision Buys Rival's US Ad Unit." *Daily Variety*, September 24, 2002.

———. “UA Raising Curtain After Bankruptcy.” *Daily Variety*, January 23, 2001.

DiOrio, Carl and Jill Goldsmith. “Exhibition of Need.” *Daily Variety*, January 11, 2001.

Edgerton, Gary R. *American Film Exhibition and an Analysis of the Motion Picture Industry’s Market Structure, 1963–1980*. Dissertations on Film. New York: Garland, 1983.

Edmunds, Marlene. “Exhibitor Arm SF Bio Flexes Its Independent Global Muscle.” *Variety*, May 17, 1999.

———. “Nordic Locals Outpace Intl. Loops.” *Variety*, June 24, 2002.

———. “Northern Exposure.” *Variety*, November 10, 1997.

Ehrmann, Hans. “Conate Tops Chilean Distrib’n.” *Variety*, March 27, 1995.

———. “Yank-Style Tourniquet for Chile B.O.” *Variety*, March 29, 1993.

Ellingson, Annlee. “Coming Soon to a Theater Near You: The Met.” *Boxoffice*, December 2006.

———. “Digital Deployment Update.” *Boxoffice*, November 2007.

———. “It’s a Bird! It’s a Plane! It’s a SuperTicket!” *Boxoffice*, August 2013.

———. “Mexican Exit.” *Boxoffice*, April 2013.

Eyles, Allen. “Blighty Box Office Tapers Off.” *Variety*, June 21, 1999.

———. “Cine-UK’s Wiener Proves Less is More.” *Variety*, June 25, 2001.

———. “Exhib Biz Mighty in Blighty.” *Variety*, June 24, 2002.

———. “Plex Growth Outstrips UK Biz.” *Variety*, June 23, 1997.

———. “The Last Remaining Sites for UK Plexes.” *Variety*, 1998.

Fabrikant, Geraldine. “Cable Giant to Sell Chain of Theaters.” *New York Times,* February 20, 1992.

Fair, Laura. *Reel Pleasures: Cinema Audiences and Entrepreneurs in Twentieth-Century Urban Tanzania*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2018.

“Famous in an Expansive Mood.” *Playback.* September 11, 1995. https://playbackonline.ca/1995/09/11/4645-19950911/.

“Famous Players Sets $C50-Million Toronto Expansion.” *Variety*, May 18, 1988.

Fathom Events. “Breaking Record After Record, Fathom Events is Set for Banner 2019.” February 11, 2019. https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/breaking-record-after-record-fathom-events-is-set-for-banner-2019-300792696.html.

———. “Fathom Events and Meteor 17 Form Strategic Partnership for Content Development.” April 2, 2019. https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/fathom-events-and-meteor-17-form-strategic-partnership-for-content-development-300823087.html.

———. “Fathom Events Enters Exclusive Partnership with International Cinema Powerhouse CinEvents.” April 1, 2019. https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/fathom-events-enters-exclusive-partnership-with-international-event-cinema-powerhouse-cinevents-300821796.html.

———. “Fathom Events Expands Live Cinema Broadcast Network to More Than 1,700 Screens Through Extended DISH Network Agreement.” April 23, 2018.

https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/fathom-events-expands-live-cinema-broadcast-network-to-more-than-1-700-screens-through-extended-dish-network-agreement-300634495.html.

———. "Fathom Events Launches Fathom Affinity Network (FAN), Distributing Faith and Inspiration Content to Nearly 800 Churches Across the Country." December 10, 2018. https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/fathom-events-launches-fathom-affinity-network-fan-distributing-faith-and-inspiration-content-to-nearly-800-churches-across-the-country-300762745.html.

———. "Fathom Events Secures Master Agreement with New Global Independent Film Distributor 1091." April 9, 2019. https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/fathom-events-secures-master-distribution-agreement-with-new-global-independent-film-distributor-1091-300828148.html.

———. "Fathom Events' Live Cinema Broadcast Network Expands to More Than 2,000 Screens." April 2, 2019. https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/fathom-events-live-cinema-broadcast-network-expands-to-more-than-2-000-screens-300822704.html.

"Fathom Events Celebrates a Record-Breaking January." *Boxoffice*, April 2019.

"Fathom Events Expands Network to Over 1,700 Screens Through Extended Dish Network Agreement." *Boxoffice*, May 2018.

"FCC, IRS Approve Merger of Martin with Fuqua." *Boxoffice*, February 17, 1969.

Finke, Nikki. "Exclusive: No More Star Wars 3D Prequel Releases; Lucasfilm Passes to Focus on New Trilogy." January 28, 2013. https://deadline.com/2013/01/exclusive-no-more-star-wars-3d-prequel-releases-lucasfilm-passes-to-focus-on-new-trilogy-414739/.

Fithian, John. "The Digital Revolution Has Arrived—Hasn't it?" *Boxoffice*, July 2008.

Foltz, Kim. "Disney Bans Commercials at Showings of Its Films." *New York Times,* February 10, 1990.

Foranzi Group Ltd. (FGL) Sports. "SCENE and Sport Chek Announce Strategic Marketing Partnership." October 9, 2014. https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/scene-and-sport-chek-announce-strategic-marketing-partnership-515821951.html.

Ford, Susan Jezak. "Stanley Durwood: Inventor of the Movie Multiplex, 1921–1999." *Kansas City Public Library.* Missouri Valley Special Collections: Biography. 2003. https://kchistory.org/document/biography-stanley-durwood-1921-1999-inventor-movie-multiplex.

Forsythe, Michael. "Billionaire At the Intersection of China's Business and Power." *New York Times,* April 29, 2015.

Fortmueller, Kate. *Hollywood Shutdown: Production, Distribution, and Exhibition in the Time of Covid*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2021.

Frater, Patrick. "AMC Takeover of Odeon & UCI Approved by European Regulators." *Variety.* November 17, 2016. https://variety.com/2016/biz/finance/amc-odeon-uci-takeover-approved-by-regulators-1201920519/.

———. "Australian Exhibitor Hoyts Halts IPO, Say Reports." *Variety.* November 8, 2014. https://variety.com/2014/biz/asia/australian-exhibitor-halts-ipo-say-reports-1201351425/.

———. “China’s Wanda Buys Australia’s Hoyts Multiplex Chain.” *Variety.* June 2, 2015. https://variety.com/2015/film/asia/chinas-wanda-buys-australias-hoyts-1201510298/.

———. “China’s Wanda Completes Exit from Film Studios and Theme Parks.” *Variety.* October 31, 2018. https://variety.com/2018/film/asia/wanda-completes-exit-from-film-studios-and-theme-parks-1203015923/.

———. “China’s Wanda Seeks Buyers for Australia’s Hoyts Cinema Chain.” *Variety.* April 12, 2023. https://variety.com/2023/film/news/china-wanda-selling-hoyts-australia-1235580396/.

———. “Chinese Investor Buys Australia’s Hoyts as Wanda Properties Completes IPO.” *Variety.* December 22, 2014. https://variety.com/2014/biz/asia/chinese-investor-buys-australias-hoyts-as-wanda-properties-completes-ipo-1201385961/.

———. “CinemaCon: Korean Immersive Format ScreenX Targets Hollywood and China.” *Variety.* April 6, 2016. https://variety.com/2016/film/asia/screenx-targets-hollywood-and-china-at-cinemacon-1201747914/.

———. “Cineworld to Install ScreenX in 100 Cinemas.” *Variety.* June 14, 2018. https://variety.com/2018/film/asia/cineworld-screenx-1202845835/.

———. “Legendary Deal Will Transform China’s Wanda into Entertainment Giant.” *Variety.* January 5, 2016. https://variety.com/2016/film/asia/legendary-deal-wanda-entertainment-giant-1201672279/.

———. “Screen Grabs.” *Variety*, October 17, 2005.

———. “Wanda Expands Global Theater Reach as AMC Pays $929 Million for Nordic Cinema.” *Variety.* January 23, 2017. https://variety.com/2017/film/finance/wanda-expands-global-theater-reach-as-amc-pays-929-million-for-nordic-cinema-1201966877/.

———. “Wang Jianlin, Chinese Billionaire Who Stalked Hollywood, Poised to Sell Last Piece of Wanda Film.” *Variety.* December 6, 2023. https://variety.com/2023/film/news/wang-jianlin-chinese-billionaire-wanda-film-hollywood-1235823915/.

Frater, Patrick and Rebecca Davis. “China’s Wanda Preparing to Sell Hoyts Australian Cinema Chain.” *Variety.* May 3, 2021. https://variety.com/2021/biz/asia/china-wanda-hoyts-australia-cinema-1234964938/.

Fritz, Ben. “D-Cinema Reels in Studios.” *Daily Variety*, March 5, 2007.

———. “Movie Chain AMC Files for IPO.” *Wall Street Journal,* August 31, 2013.

Fritz, Ben, Laura Burkitt, and Dana Cimilluca. “Chinese Mogul in Talks for Cinemas.” *Wall Street Journal,* April 8, 2013.

Fuchs, Andreas. “Building a Cinema City.” *Film Journal International*, July 2011.

———. “Early Bird, Sleepless Cat.” *Film Journal International*, November 2003.

———. “Lo Mejor En Cines.” *Film Journal International*, October 2003.

———. “The I.T. Factor.” *Film Journal International*, April 2004.

———. “The United Republic of Cinemas.” *Film Journal International*, August 2012.

Fuller, Kathryn H. *At the Picture Show: Small-Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture*. Charlottesville/London: University Press of Virginia, 1996.

Gadd, Jane. “Patrons Can View Movies in High Style.” *Globe and Mail,* April 8, 1994.

Galloway, Doug. “Obituaries: Stanley Durwood.” *Variety*, July 19, 1999.

Gelfond, Richard. “The CEO of IMAX on How it Became a Hollywood Powerhouse.” *Harvard Business Review*, July–August, 2013.

Georgiades, Andy. “IMAX Popularity Brings Large-Screen Copycats.” *Wall Street Journal,* June 10, 2009.

Giardina, Carolyn. “LA Live’s New 4DX Theater Has a Whole Lot of Shaking Going on.” *The Hollywood Reporter.* June 30, 2014. https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/la-lives-new-4dx-theater-715599/.

———. “Regal Inks Deal with CJ 4DPLEX to Bring More Motion-Activated Seats to Its Theaters.” *Hollywood Reporter.* August 1, 2016. https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/regal-cj-4dplex-deal-bring-916183/.

———. “Sensory Assault: Dolby Takes on IMAX.” *Hollywood Reporter*, December 12, 2014.

Goldsmith, Jill. “AMC Chain in Talks with China’s Wanda.” *Daily Variety*, May 9, 2012.

———. “AMC Entertainment Investor Silver Lake Rides Cinema Chain’s Stock Surge to Swap Debt for Equity.” *Deadline.* January 28, 2021. https://deadline.com/2021/01/amc-entertainment-silver-lake-swaps-debt-for-equity-as-cinema-chains-stock-surged-1234682417/.

———. “Buyers High on Loews.” *Daily Variety*, June 22, 2004.

———. “Court Shoots Down Regal Payout Lawsuit.” *Variety.* June 29, 2004. https://variety.com/2004/biz/news/court-shoots-down-regal-payout-lawsuit-1117907179/.

———. “Equity Owners Plan IPO for Exhib AMC.” *Daily Variety*, December 12, 2006.

———. “Exhib Stock Zooms While B.O. Booms.” *Daily Variety*, June 11, 2002.

———. “Exhibs Fishin’ for Intermission.” *Variety*, August 28, 2000.

———. “Loews Chain Seeks Buyer.” *Daily Variety*, March 15, 2004.

Goldsmith, Jill and Dade Hayes. “Exhib Gloom as B.O. Booms.” *Variety*, June 5, 2000.

———. “Exhibs Spinning After Plex Pile-Up Plays Out.” *Variety*, March 6, 2000.

Gomery, Douglas. *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992.

Goodfellow, Melanie. “Moshe ‘Mooky’ Greidinger.” *Variety*, March 22, 2004.

Goyoaga, Beatriz. “Argentina’s Hardtops Rebound.” *Variety*, March 4, 1996.

Goyoaga, Beatriz and Andrew Paxman. “General Cinema in Paradiso Plex Plot.” *Variety.* March 18, 1998. https://variety.com/1998/biz/news/general-cinema-in-paradiso-plex-plot-1117468880/.

Graser, Marc. “Pics Take a Spin.” *Variety*, May 21, 2007.

Grossberger, Lewis. “Oh No! A Sales Pitch at the Movie House.” *Washington Post*, November 10, 1977.

Grove, Christopher. “AMC Makes Worldwide Push for New Plex Places.” *Daily Variety*, March 5, 1996.

———. “New Screens Will Make Org Only National Art Film Chain.” *Daily Variety*, October 19, 1999.

Groves, Don. “’Plex Plans Give Euros Pause.” *Variety*, November 16, 1992.

———. “Asia’s Exhibition Boom.” *Variety*, January 29, 1996.

———. “Biz Blues May Run Deeper Than Per-Plexing Answer.” *Variety*, September 24, 2001.

———. “Foreign Hardtops Giving Audiences the Hard Sell.” *Variety*, November 25, 1996.

———. “Hoyts Adding Screens.” *Daily Variety*, September 14, 1994.

———. “Hoyts Adds Screens to Empire.” *Variety*, September 19, 1994.

———. “Hoyts Has Hots for Cinemex.” *Variety*, November 25, 1996.

———. “Hoyts Mines Latin Market.” *Variety*, July 28, 1997.

———. “Hoyts, GCC Merge Latin American Ops.” *Variety*, August 3, 1998.

———. “Japan Flexes Plexes.” *Variety.* January 30, 1997. https://variety.com/1997/biz/news/japan-flexes-plexes-1117343267/.

Gubernick, Lisa. “Dollar House Mitchell.” *Forbes*, October 12, 1992.

Hadari, Zeela Kotler and Assaf Uni. “First Haifa, Then Tel Aviv, Then the World.” *Globes.* January 5, 2020. https://en.globes.co.il/en/article-first-haifa-then-tel-aviv-then-the-world-1001313569.

“Hands Lands Odeon Cinemas.” *Daily Variety*, August 30, 2004.

Hanson, Stuart. *Screening the World: Global Development of the Multiplex Cinema*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

Harding, Matt. “Canada’s Playdium Closes After 24 Years.” *RePlay Magazine.* October 16, 2020. https://www.replaymag.com/canadas-playdium-closes-doors-after-24-years/.

Harrison, Alexa. “Exhibs Shake Out Extra Coin.” *Variety*, March 28, 2011.

Havens, Timothy, Amanda D. Lotz, and Serra Tinic. “Critical Media Industry Studies: A Research Approach.” *Communication, Culture and Critique* 2 (2009): 234–53, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-9137.2009.01037.x/.

Hayes, Dade. “Moody Exhib Future.” *Daily Variety*, June 14, 2000.

———. “Preshow Hits Half-Billion Mark.” *Daily Variety*, March 10, 2008.

Hayes, Dade and Carl DiOrio. “Oaktree Nabs Exhib Silver Cinemas.” *Variety*, April 30, 2001.

Herbert, Daniel, Amanda D. Lotz, and Aswin Punathambekar. *Media Industry Studies*. Short Introductions. New York: Polity, 2020.

Herskovitz, Jon. “Distribs Maintain Hold on Hits Via Archaic Booking Systems.” *Variety*, May 18, 1998.

———. “Headless Shochiku’s Film Future Fuzzy.” *Variety*, February 9, 1998.

———. “Japanese Plexing in Bid to Expand Market.” *Variety*, December 1, 1997.

———. “Shochiku Goes West to Cinemark.” *Variety*, March 3, 1997.

———. “Shochiku is Revamping to Maximize Its Profits.” *Variety.* February 10, 1998. https://variety.com/1998/film/news/shochiku-is-revamping-to-maximize-its-profits-1117467624/.

———. “Shochiku to Ax Cinemark Partnership.” *Daily Variety*, March 30, 1998.

———. “Shochiku, Cinemark Bow Kobe Multi.” *Variety*, March 31, 1997.

Hindes, Andrew. “Exhib’n Kings.” *Variety*, March 8, 1999.

———. “Future Projections.” *Variety.* March 10, 1999. https://variety.com/1999/film/news/future-projections-1117492182/.

———. “Hi-Yo, Silver Deal: Discount Chain Eyes Buy of Landmark.” *Daily Variety*, October 29, 1997.

———. “Megaplex Dominance Intact.” *Variety*, March 16, 1998.

———. “Viacom, TW Complete Cinamerica Theater Sale.” *Daily Variety*, December 30, 1997.

———. “When Prints Will No Longer be King.” *Variety*, January 25, 1999.

———. “Will Chief’s Death Short-Circuit AMC?” *Variety*, July 19, 1999.

Hindes, Andrew and Don Groves. “Regal Near Deal to Buy Hoyts Chain.” *Daily Variety*, August 10, 1999.

“History.” Nordic Cinema Group. Accessed March 19, 2023, http://www.nordiccinemagroup.se/about-nordic-cinema-group/history/.

Holt, Jennifer. *Empires of Entertainment: Media Industries and the Politics of Deregulation, 1980-1996*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011.

Holt, Jennifer and Alisa Perren, eds. *Media Industries: History, Theory, and Method*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

HoMER Network: Histories of Moviegoing, Exhibition, and Reception. https://homernetwork.org.

Hoineff, Nelson. “Brazilians Seek ‘Central’ Formula.” *Variety*, March 29, 1999.

Hopewell, John. “AMC Preps European Multiplex.” *Variety*, February 26, 1996.

———. “Spain Hits Saturation Point.” *Variety*, June 23, 1997.

———. “Spain Solves Plexing Tasks Via Multi Mania.” *Variety*, November 25, 1996.

———. “Terra Firma Lands AMC Entertainment.” *Variety.* February 10, 2006. https://variety.com/2006/film/news/terra-firms-lands-amc-entertainment-1117937843/.

———. “Tiny Portugal Offers Plenty Plex Potential.” *Variety*, June 24, 1996.

———. “Warner Bros. Leads Charge into Spain.” *Variety*, June 24, 1996.

Hopewell, John and Emiliano De Pablos. “AMC Pullout Signals Spanish Exhib Woes.” *Variety*, January 2, 2006.

———. “Terra Eyes Warner Loop.” *Daily Variety*, February 4, 2005.

Hubbard, Jaimie. *Public Screening: The Battle for Cineplex Odeon*. Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1990.

Hudson, Peter. “Argentine Film Biz Flourishes.” *Variety*, March 26, 2001.

———. “Argentine Film Fights to Cash in on Surging B.O.” *Variety*, March 29, 1999.

———. “Foreign Distribs Caught Coin at Argentine B.O. In ‘99.” *Variety*, March 27, 2000.

IMAX Corporation. “IMAX and AMC Entertainment Expand Joint Venture Relationship for Up to 25 New IMAX Theatres.” June 1, 2010. https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2010/06/01/422188/193137/en/IMAX-and-AMC-Entertainment-R-Expand-Joint-Venture-Relationship-for-Up-to-25-New-IMAX-R-Theatres.html.

———. “IMAX and Regal Entertainment Group Expand Revenue Share Partnership With 10 New IMAX Theatres.” October 4, 2012. https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/imax-and-regal-entertainment-group-expand-revenue-share-partnership-with-10-new-imax-theatres-172631211.html.

———. “IMAX Corporation and Cinemark Holdings, Inc. Sign Multi-Theatre Deal.” January 4, 2011. https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2011/01/04/437044/11773/en/IMAX-Corporation-and-Cinemark-Holdings-Inc-Sign-Multi-Theatre-Deal.html.

Ingrassia, Rich. “Taking Stock: Paul Kagan Associates Overviews the Industry in Its Exhibition Annual.” *Boxoffice*, April 2000.

Jacobson, Robert R. and Frank Uhle. “Carmike Cinemas, Inc.” In *International Directory of Company Histories*, vol. 37, edited by Tina Grant, 62–65. Detroit, MI: St. James Press, 2001.

Jentsch, Scott. “Regal Announces Their Own Big-Screen Concept: RPX (Regal Premium Experience).” *The Big Screen Cinema Guide.* April 15, 2010. https://www.bigscreen.com/j/Regal-Announces-Their-Own-BigScreen-Concept-RPX-Regal/1868.

Johnson, Keith F. “Cinema Advertising.” *Journal of Advertising* 10 (1981): 11–19.

Johnson, Pete Arne. ““The Sun is Shining on AMC”: Meme Stocks & (Temporary?) Media Industry Reorganization.” *Flow.* Over*flow. March 4, 2021. https://www.flowjournal.org/2021/03/meme-stocks-media-industry-reorganization/.

Jones, Jeffrey and Andrew Willis. “Market Turmoil Puts Cineworld, Cineplex, Other Deals in Doubt.” *Globe and Mail,* March 18, 2020.

Jorn, Rossing Jensen. “Swedish Distrib Svensk Snubs New AMC Multiplex.” *Variety*, April 9, 2001.

“JW Marriott Partners with P1AG to Bring Immersive Gameplay to New Entertainment Destination.” Player One Amusement Group. November 5, 2018. https://www.winwithp1ag.com/news/News/JW-Marriott-Partners-with-P1AG.

Kagan, Paul. “The Price of Admission: Cinema Biz Enters New Zeitgeist.” *Boxoffice*, April 2007.

Kallay, William. “Change Comes to LFCA.” *In70mm.com.* May 7, 2004. https://www.in70mm.com/news/2004/lfca/index.htm.

Karagosian, Michael. “A Review of Digital Cinema.” MKPE. May 11, 2012. https://mkpe.com/publications/d-cinema/presentations/2012-5-11%20ABCine%20Digital%20Cinema%20Review%20-%20Karagosian.key.pdf.

———. “Business FAQs.” Cinepedia. Accessed December 18, 2022. https://cinepedia.com/faqs/business-faqs.

Kay, Jeremy. “Millard Ochs, Warner Bros.” *Screen Daily.* June 20, 2013. Accessed October 2, 2022. https://www.screendaily.com/features/millard-ochs-warner-bros/5057576.article.

Kelly, Brendan. “AMC Plans Canadian Expansion.” *Variety*, August 19, 1996.

———. “Canada’s Onex Eyes Exhib Biz Expansion.” *Daily Variety*, 2001.

———. “Empire’s Expansion.” *Daily Variety*, August 23, 2005.

———. “Multiplex Expansion Plan Targets British Columbia and Quebec.” *Variety*, November 29, 1999.

Kendall, Brent and Erich Schwartzel. “Business Watch: US Clears Purchase of Carmike Cinemas.” *Wall Street Journal,* December 21, 2016.

Kil, Sonia. “CGV 4DX Celebrates Decades of High-Tech Cinema Equipment.” *Variety.* October 4, 2019. https://variety.com/2019/film/asia/cgv-4dx-celebrates-decade-high-tech-cinemas-1203358801/.

King, Michelle and Ryan Dezember. “A Beijing Ticket to Hollywood.” *Wall Street Journal,* May 22, 2012.

Klady, Leonard. “B.O. Tastes Yank-Flavored.” *Variety*, September 2, 1996.

———. “B.O. Tumble Vexes Plexes.” *Variety*, August 8, 1996.

———. “Exhib Cinemark Plans Multiplex for Colombia.” *Variety.* March 7, 1999. https://variety.com/1999/biz/news/exhib-cinemark-plans-multiplex-for-colombia-1117492002/.

———. “Mann Headed Back to Cinamerica.” *Daily Variety*, October 8, 1999.

———. “Silver Inks Landmark Purchase.” *Daily Variety*, December 18, 1997.

Klausmann, Liza. “UCI Lands At Terra Firma.” *Daily Variety*, October 29, 2004.

Kramer, Pat. “Bold Designs Drive Expansion.” *Variety*, March 16, 1998.

Ladurantaye, Steve. “Cineplex’s Next Role: Building on Its Big-Screen Success.” *Globe and Mail,* December 22, 2011.

Lally, Kevin. “Expanding Cineworld.” *Film Journal International*, May 2016.

Lange, André. *Focus 2003: World Film Market Trends*. European Audiovisual Observatory. May 1, 2003. https://rm.coe.int/focus-2003/168088dc8f.

Learmonth, Michael. “AMC Unspools Sale to Investment Group.” *Daily Variety*, July 23, 2004.

———. “Signature Signs Up with Exhib Regal.” *Daily Variety*, October 4, 2004.

———. “Spinoff Hits Viacom.” *Daily Variety*, October 29, 2004.

Lester, Peter. “It’s Not the Size (of the Screen) That Matters: IMAX, Lie-Max and the ‘Meaning’ of a Brand.” *Scope* 25 (2013).

Lev, Michael. “Warner Joins Walt Disney in Banning Ads at Its Films.” *New York Times,* April 18, 1990.

Lipin, Steven and Bruce Orwall. “KKR, Hicks Muse to Buy Regal Cinemas.” *Wall Street Journal,* January 20, 1998.

Llamas-Rodriguez, Juan. “A Global Cinematic Experience: Cinépolis, Film Exhibition, and Luxury Branding.” *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 58, no. 3 (2019): 49–71, https://doi.org/10.1353/cj.2019.0022/.

Loria, Daniel. “A Moving Experience.” *Boxoffice*, June 2019.

———. “Ray Nutt Named New CEO of Fathom Events.” *Boxoffice*, September 2017.

Lowry, Tom. “AMC Exhibits Plan for IPO.” *Daily Variety*, March 16, 2011.

Ludemann, Ralf. “Circuits on Overdrive.” *Variety*, June 27, 2005.

Lundberg, Pia. “AMC Quits Swedish Exhibition Sector.” *Screen Daily.* December 9, 2003. https://www.screendaily.com/amc-quits-swedish-exhibition-sector/4016436.article.

Ma, Wayne. “Mogul’s Hollywood Dream Shrinks.” *Wall Street Journal,* July 28, 2017.

Mackey, Stephen. “Madrid’s Megaplex Mania.” *Variety*, April 20, 1998.

Magee, Michelle. “AMC Bows Multiplex in Japan.” *Variety*, April 22, 1996.

———. “Japanese Build on Plex Growth.” *Variety*, January 27, 1997.

———. “Multiplexes Moving in.” *Variety*, June 16, 1996.

“Major Theatrical Markets,” *Variety*, March 23, 1998, 44.

“Making it Big: Episode II—The IMAX Experience.” *StarWars.com.* October 11, 2002. Accessed October 23, 2002. http://www.starwars.com/episode-ii/feature/20021011/index.html.

Maloney, Val. “Sport Chek Joins Scene to Create Buzz-Worthy Deals.” *Media in Canada.* October 10, 2014. https://mediaincanada.com/2014/10/10/sport-chek-joins-scene-to-create-buzz-worthy-deals/.

Maltby, Richard, Daniel Biltereyst, and Philippe Meers, eds. *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History* New York: Routledge, 2019.

Maltby, Richard, Daniel Biltereyst, and Phillipe Meers, eds. *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies* Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

“Mann for Sale.” *Boxoffice*, April 1999.

Marotte, Bertrand. “D-Box Aiming to Crank Home Theatres Up a Notch.” *Globe and Mail,* March 15, 2004.

Martin, Dale. “Portugal Pursues Plexing.” *Variety*, June 23, 1997.

Mason, Kerri. “Silver Screen Opera.” *Billboard*, December 7, 2013.

Mathur, Meg. “Exhibitors in Expansive Mood.” *Playback.* May 4, 1998. https://playbackonline.ca/1998/05/04/21598-19980504/.

McBride, Sarah. “Universal, Disney Back Rollout of Digital Cinema Equipment.” *Wall Street Journal,* September 8, 2008.

McClintock, Pamela. “Carmike Removes Michael Patrick.” *Variety.* January 20, 2009. https://variety.com/2009/film/news/carmike-removes-michael-patrick-1117998839/.

———. “Exhib AMC Brings Kerasotes into Loop.” *Daily Variety*, January 20, 2010.

———. “Exhibs, Studios Bridge Digital Divide.” *Variety.* September 30, 2008. https://variety.com/2008/digital/markets-festivals/exhibs-studios-bridge-digital-divide-1117993164/.

———. “John Fithian Enters Digital Fray.” *Variety.* April 30, 2008. https://variety.com/2008/digital/markets-festivals/john-fithian-enters-digital-fray-1117984905/.

———. “Viacom to Slim Down.” *Daily Variety*, March 1, 2005.

McDonald, Paul. “IMAX: The Hollywood Experience.” In *Widescreen Worldwide*, edited by Sheldon Hall, Steve Neale, and John Belton, 41–57. New Barnet, UK: John Libbey Publishing, 2010.

McNary, Dave. “Latest Chapter 11: UA.” *Variety.* September 6, 2000. https://variety.com/2000/biz/news/latest-chapter-11-ua-1117786039/.

———. “Regal Entertainment Group in Merger Talks with Cineworld.” *Variety.* November 28, 2017. https://variety.com/2017/film/news/regal-entertainment-group-merger-cineworld-1202625002/.

McNish, Jacquie. “Onex Looking at Loews IPO.” *Globe and Mail,* May 10, 2002.

Melnick, Ross. *American Showman: Samuel ‘Roxy’ Rothafel and the Birth of the Entertainment Industry*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.

———. *Hollywood’s Embassies: How Movie Theaters Projected American Power Around the World*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2022.

Melnick, Ross and Andreas Fuchs. *Cinema Treasures: A New Look at Classic Movie Theaters*. St. Paul, MN: MBI, 2004.

Campbell, Michael L. “The State of Our Art.” *Boxoffice*, January 1999.

Mitchell, Robert. “UK’s Cineworld Buys Picturehouse.” *Variety.* December 6, 2012. https://variety.com/2012/film/news/u-k-s-cineworld-buys-picturehouse-1118063224/.

Mohr, Ian. “Exhib Succeeds by Picking Its Markets, Growing Slowly.” *Daily Variety*, March 6, 2000.

———. “Int’l Venture Pays Off for Cinemark’s Warner.” *Daily Variety*, March 6, 2000.

Moore, Paul. “The Cineplex Sale is Just a Sequel to a Familiar Story.” *Globe and Mail,* December 20, 2019.

———. “Nathan L. Nathanson Introduces Canadian Odeon: Producing National Competition in Film Exhibition.” *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 12, no. 2 (2003): 22–45.

Morgan, Richard. “Cinemark to Partner in Taiwan Plex Plan.” *Variety.* September 14, 1998. https://variety.com/1998/biz/news/cinemark-to-partner-in-taiwan-plex-plan-1117480350/.

Mote, Dave, Mark Swartz, and Jeffrey L. Covell. “AMC Entertainment, Inc.” In *International Directory of Company Histories*, vol. 114, edited by Jay P. Pederson, 17–21. Detroit, MI: Gale, 2010.

“Multiplex Mania Hits Exhibitors.” *Variety*, September 26, 1994.

Musser, Charles and Carol Nelson. *High-Class Moving Pictures: Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Traveling Exhibition, 1880–1920*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Myerson, Allen R. “Amid Blame, United Artists Sale Collapses.” Business Day. *New York Times,* February 23, 1998.

Myerson, Allen R. and Geraldine Fabrikant. “2 Buyout Firms Make Deal to Acquire Regal Cinemas.” *New York Times,* January 21, 1998.

N’Duka, Amanda. “CJ 4DPLEX & Cineworld Group Expand Pact to Boost Number of 4DX Theaters.” *Deadline.* April 23, 2018. https://deadline.com/2018/04/4dx-theater-expansion-cineworld-group-regal-cinema-city-1202374590/.

“Nat Taylor: The Mogul Behind the Mogul.” *Globe and Mail,* November 29, 1985.

National Association of Theatre Owners. “Annual US/Canada Admissions.” Data. Accessed November 30, 2023. http://www.natoonline.org/data/admissions/.

———. “Annual US/Canada Box Office Grosses.” Data. Accessed October 6, 2023. https://www.natoonline.org/data/boxoffice/.

———. “Number of US Movie Screens.” Data. Accessed February 29, 2024. https://www.natoonline.org/data/us-movie-screens/.

National CineMedia. “AMC Entertainment Inc. And Regal Entertainment Group Announce the Formation of National CineMedia, LLC.” March 29, 2005. https://press.ncm.com/press-releases/press-release-details/2005/AMC-Entertainment-Inc-and-Regal-Entertainment-Group-Announce-the-Formation-of-National-CineMedia-LLC/default.aspx.

———. “National CineMedia to Work with AMC Entertainment Inc., Cinemark USA, Regal Entertainment Group and Other Exhibitors on Digital Cinema Deployment.” December 15, 2005. https://press.ncm.com/press-releases/press-release-details/2005/National-CineMedia-to-Work-with-AMC-Entertainment-Inc-Cinemark-USA-Regal-Entertainment-Group-and-Other-Exhibitors-on-Digital-Cinema-Deployment/default.aspx.

National CineMedia Inc. “National CineMedia (NCM) Restructures Ownership of Fathom Events.” December 30, 2013. https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20131230005560/en/National-CineMedia-NCM-Restructures-Ownership-of-Fathom-Events.

National CineMedia, Inc. “National CineMedia, Inc. and Screenvision Respond to Justice Department Action.” November 3, 2014. https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20141103006521/en/National-CineMedia-Inc.-and-Screenvision-Respond-to-Justice-Department-Action.

———. “National CineMedia, Inc. and Screenvision Terminate Merger Agreement.” March 16, 2015. https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20150316006241/en/National-CineMedia-Inc.-and-Screenvision-Terminate-Merger-Agreement.

———. “NCM and AMC Reach Agreement Allowing AMC to Comply with DOJ’s Final Order on Carmike Merger.” March 10, 2017. https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20170310005783/en/NCM-and-AMC-Reach-Agreement-Allowing-AMC-to-Comply-with-DOJ’s-Final-Order-on-Carmike-Merger.

“NCM IPO Reels in Wall Street Investors.” *Boxoffice*, April 2007.

Newbery, Charles. “Cinemark Grows in Argentina.” *Daily Variety*, August 29, 2011.

Noglows, Paul. “Here Come the Megaplexes.” *Variety*, August 22, 1994.

“North American Giants of Exhibition.” *Boxoffice*, January 2006.

"Onex and Oaktree to Buy Rest of Star Theatres." *Globe and Mail,* April 3, 2002.

Orwall, Bruce. "Theater Consolidation Jolts Hollywood Power Structure." *Wall Street Journal,* January 21, 1998.

Orwall, Bruce and Gregory Zuckerman. "Regal Cinemas Joined Megaplex Frenzy, Ended Up in Back Row." *Wall Street Journal,* September 27, 2001.

Orzel, Charlotte and Ross Melnick. "Looking Out the Window(s): How US Film Exhibitors Survived the Early Years of the COVID-19 Pandemic." Interview with Jackie Brenneman and Bryan Braunlich. *Aniki* 10, no. 2 (2023): 172–94.

Osborne, Lisa. "Q&A: Buyout Mann Buys Cinamerica." *Boxoffice*, February 1998.

Owczarski, Kimberly A. "Come Early and Enjoy the (Pre-)show: Screenvision and the Growth of Cinema Advertising." *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 31, no. 2 (2014): 148–60, https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208.2011.606409/.

Pahle, Rebecca. "Fathom Events Goes Outside Cinemas with the Fathom Affinity Network." *Boxoffice*, February 2019.

———. "The Main Event." *Boxoffice Pro*, August 2020.

———. "Unfathomable Success: Fathom Events Takes Event Cinema to New Heights." *Film Journal International*, April 2018.

Paul, William. *When Movies Were Theater: Architecture, Exhibition, and the Evolution of American Film*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.

Paxman, Andrew. "A Latin Screen Play." *Variety*, February 27, 1995.

———. "Brazil Buoys Latin Biz in Tough '95." *Variety*, March 25, 1996.

———. "Cinemark Buys Out Partner." *Variety*, January 18, 1999.

———. "Conate Revving Up Multiplex Venture." *Variety*, June 12, 1995.

———. "Latin America at a Glance." *Variety*, March 27, 1995.

———. "Latin America's Major Film Markets." *Variety*, March 25, 1996.

———. "Locals Miss Mexican B.O. Boom." *Variety*, January 27, 1997.

———. "Mexican Multiplexers Vex US Exhibs." *Variety*, March 25, 1996.

———. "Mexico Plex Plan a Capital Idea." *Variety*, March 8, 1999.

———. "Multi Mania Grips Mexico." *Variety*, November 11, 1996.

———. "Multiplex Advance Closes in on Brazil." *Variety*, November 4, 1996.

———. "Peso, B.O. Woes Fail to Reduce Ramirez Cinemas Growth Plans." *Variety*, June 19, 1995.

———. "Playarte: Screen Champ." *Variety*, October 21, 1996.

———. "Showbiz Benefits from Econo Boom." *Variety*, November 4, 1996.

———. "Southern Renaissance." *Variety*, March 23, 1998.

———. "Trio Plexes Muscles in Mexico Exhib Venture." *Variety*, 1994.

———. "United Artists Bows Mexican Multiplex." *Variety*, November 4, 1996.

Peers, Martin. "Cinamerica Dealt: TW, Viacom to Sell Circuit for $165 Mil." *Daily Variety*, November 25, 1997.

———. "Cinemark Gets Cash Infusion." *Daily Variety*, February 21, 1996.

———. “Cineplex and Loews Tie Knot.” *Daily Variety*, October 1, 1997.

———. “Exhibs in Takeover Tizzy: Regal Deal Sparks Merger Speculation.” *Daily Variety*, January 21, 1998.

———. “Exhibs Vexed by Wall St. Hex on Plex.” *Variety*, January 26, 1998.

———. “Getting in on Act III: KKR Leading Suitor for Lear Theatres.” *Daily Variety*, October 16, 1997.

———. “Hicks Nixes UA Buy: Firm Backs Out of $850 Mil Exhib Deal.” *Daily Variety*, February 23, 1998.

———. “Hicks Picks Pic Tix, Buys UA Chain.” *Variety.* November 13, 1997. https://variety.com/1997/film/news/hicks-picks-pic-tix-buys-ua-chain-1200324734/.

———. “Loews Looks for Bigger Screen Play.” *Daily Variety*, February 18, 1998.

———. “Loews, Cineplex Tie Knot.” *Variety*, October 6, 1997.

Peers, Martin and Amelia Hart. “Exhib Merger OK’d.” *Daily Variety*, April 17, 1998.

Peers, Martin and Andrew Hindes. “AMC Scales Back Plexes in Reversal.” *Variety*, May 24, 1999.

———. “Screen Dreams Fade for Plex Tyros.” *Variety*, February 15, 1999.

———. “Sony, Cineplex Mull Merger.” *Daily Variety*, June 19, 1997.

Pendakur, Manjunath. *Canadian Dreams and American Control: The Political Economy of the Canadian Film Industry*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990.

Pendleton, Jennifer. “Chain Sees Possibilities in Midst of Recession.” *Variety*, March 30, 1992.

Petrikin, Chris. “AMC Plex Going Euro.” *Variety.* December 17, 1996. https://variety.com/1996/scene/vpage/amc-plex-going-euro-1117466485/.

Phillips, Braden. “Chain Plans 1,000 New Screens in ‘99.” *Variety*, March 8, 1999.

———. “Stadium Seating Tops List of Theater Design Priorities.” *Variety*, March 8, 1999.

“Playdium Gets Game.” *Strategy.* October 25, 1999. https://strategyonline.ca/1999/10/25/27028-19991025/.

“Playdium-FP Alliance.” *Globe and Mail,* January 16, 1997.

Playfly Sports. Accessed June 5, 2024. https://playfly.com.

Prang, Allison. “China Firm Pulls Back from AMC Investment.” *Wall Street Journal,* September 15, 2018.

“Privately Owned Amer. Multi-Cinema in Public Offering.” *Variety*, June 29, 1983.

Quinn, John. “From Tent Shows to a Nationwide Chain.” *Variety*, March 8, 1993.

Rainey, James and Lang, Brent. “How Wanda Plans to Acquire Paramount.” *Variety.* July 15, 2016. https://variety.com/2016/biz/asia/paramount-wanda-sumner-redstone-viacom-wang-jianlin-china-1201814751/.

Ramachandran, Naman. “Cinépolis President Eduardo Acuna Set to Take Over as Cineworld CEO.” *Variety.* July 13, 2023. https://variety.com/2023/film/global/cinepolis-president-eduardo-acuna-cineworld-ceo-1235669168/.

———. “Cineworld Enters Administration as Restructuring Moves Forward.” *Variety.* July 31, 2023. https://variety.com/2023/film/news/cineworld-250-million-credit-facility-1235682112/.

———. “Regal Owner Cineworld Commences Chapter 11 Proceedings in Texas Bankruptcy Court.” *Variety.* September 7, 2022. https://variety.com/2022/film/global/regal-cineworld-chapter-11-texas-bankruptcy-court-1235363000/.

———. “Regal Owner Cineworld to File Administration in the UK Without Affecting Business.” *Variety.* June 26, 2023. https://variety.com/2023/film/global/cineworld-uk-administration-1235654312/.

Ramachandran, Naman and Patrick Frater. “Regal Cinemas Owner Cineworld Reveals Agreement with Creditors, Pathway Out of Chapter 11 Bankruptcy.” *Variety.* April 2, 2023. https://variety.com/2023/film/news/regal-cinemas-cineworld-agreement-bankruptcy-1235571467/.

Ratos AB. “Ratos Acquires Finnkino.” March 21, 2011. https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2011/03/21/206285/0/en/Ratos-acquires-Finnkino.html.

———. “Ratos Sells Nordic Cinema Group: Exit Gain Approximately SEK 900m.” April 28, 2015. https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2015/04/28/728880/0/en/Ratos-sells-Nordic-Cinema-Group-exit-gain-approximately-SEK-900m.html.

“Ready Player One?” *RePlay Magazine*. 2017. https://www.replaymag.com/player-one-amusement-group-february-2017/.

RealD Inc. “RealD and AMC to Equip Additional 1,000 Screens with RealD 3D.” July 28, 2011. https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20110728006060/en/RealD-and-AMC-Entertainment®-to-Equip-Additional-1000-Screens-With-RealD-3D.

———. “RealD and Cinemark Agree to 1,500 Additional RealD 3D-Enabled Screens.” July 21, 2011. https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20110721005492/en/RealD-and-Cinemark-Agree-to-1500-Additional-RealD-3D-Enabled-Screens.

———. “RealD and Regal Entertainment Group to Double 3D Cinema Screen Count.” January 27, 2011. https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20110127005258/en/RealD-Regal-Entertainment-Group-Double-3D-Cinema.

“Regal Corporate History.” *Variety*, March 8, 1999.

Regal Entertainment Group. “Regal Entertainment Group Completes Acquisition of Consolidated Theaters.” April 30, 2008. https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20080430006414/en/Regal-Entertainment-Group-Completes-Acquisition-Consolidated-Theatres.

“Regal Plots Escape.” *Boxoffice*, January 2013.

“Regal to Buy Eastern Federal for $127.6m.” *Charlotte Business Journal.* April 28, 2005. https://www.bizjournals.com/charlotte/stories/2005/04/25/daily41.html.

Reich, J. Sperling. “A Closer Look at Wanda’s Acquisition of Hoyts.” *Celluloid Junkie.* June 3, 2015. https://celluloidjunkie.com/2015/06/03/closer-look-wanda-acquisition-hoyts/.

Robbins, Jim. “Chain’s Founder Learned the Ropes Deep in the Heart of Texas.” *Variety*, January 31, 1990.

Robertson, Grant and Boyd Erman. “Amid Box Office Records, Onex Sells Cineplex Stake.” *Globe and Mail,* March 31, 2009.

Robertson, Susan Krashinsky. “Cineplex Files Suit Against Cineworld Over Quashed Deal.” *Globe and Mail,* July 4, 2020.

———. “Cineplex Shareholders Green-Light Company’s Acquisition by Britain-Based Cineworld.” *Globe and Mail,* February 12, 2020.

———. “Cineworld Not Justified in Abandoning Cineplex Deal Amid COVID-19 Fallout, Judge Writes in $1.24-Billion Decision.” *Globe and Mail,* December 16, 2021.

———. “UK Movie-Theatre Giant to Buy Cineplex in $2.2-Billion Deal.” *Globe and Mail,* December 17, 2019.

Robinson, Gwen. “Plexing Muscle.” *Variety*, September 18, 1995.

Roe, Jason. “The Multiplex is Born.” *Kansas City Public Library.* Accessed April 9, 2024. https://kchistory.org/week-kansas-city-history/multiplex-born.

Roettgers, Janko. “UltraViolet Cloud Movie Locker to Shut Down.” *Variety.* January 30, 2019. https://variety.com/2019/digital/news/ultraviolet-shutting-down-1203123898/.

Rogers, Ariel. *Cinematic Appeals: The Experience of New Movie Technologies*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.

Rothrock, Vicki and Patrick Frater. “AMC Reels Out Amid HK Exhib War.” *Daily Variety*, March 15, 2006.

Rowan, Geoffrey. “Playdium Plans 40 Video Arcades.” *Globe and Mail,* May 23, 1996.

———. “Playdium to Build Toronto Complex.” *Globe and Mail,* August 28, 1997.

Rubin, Michael. *Droidmaker: George Lucas and the Digital Revolution*. Gainsville, FL: Triad, 2006.

Rubin, Rebecca and Matt Donnelly. “Warner Bros. To Debut Entire 2021 Film Slate, Including ‘Dune’ and ‘Matrix 4,’ Both on HBO Max and in Theaters.” *Variety.* December 3, 2020. https://variety.com/2020/film/news/warner-bros-hbo-max-theaters-dune-matrix-4-1234845342/.

Rubin, Rebecca and Brent Lang. “Box Office Report Card: Grading Disney, Warner Bros. And Other Studios on 2023 Movies.” *Variety*. December 7, 2023. https://variety.com/2023/film/news/2023-box-office-numbers-movie-studios-1235847399/.

Rubin, Rebecca and Todd Spangler. “AMC Theatres Shares Just Plunged More Than 50%. What’s Next for Stocks Roiled by Reddit?” *Variety.* January 28, 2021. https://variety.com/2021/digital/news/amc-theatres-stock-plunge-stock-reddit-1234894768/.

Schneider, Michael. “Preshow Pitches Growing in Value.” *Daily Variety*, October 25, 2004.

Schwartzberg, Shlomo. “AMC Heads North: Harry Peckham Explains How AMC Plans to Expand the Canadian Movie Market.” *Boxoffice*, May 1998.

———. “Guzzo on the Go.” *Boxoffice*, March 1999.

Schwartzel, Erich. “AMC Deal Boosts Chinese Control of US Theatres.” *Wall Street Journal,* March 4, 2016.

———. “AMC Shares Climb in Debut.” *Wall Street Journal,* December 19, 2013.

———. “AMC to Acquire Europe’s No. 1 Theater Chain.” *Wall Street Journal,* July 13, 2016.

———. “Big Holder in Carmike Opposes Merger.” *Wall Street Journal,* March 9, 2016.

———. “Business Watch: AMC Merger Wins Shareholder Vote.” *Wall Street Journal,* November 16, 2016.

———. *Red Carpet: Hollywood, China, and the Global Battle for Cultural Supremacy*. New York: Penguin Press, 2022.

———. “Struggling Cinemas Go Luxe to Survive.” *Wall Street Journal,* April 10, 2018.

Scotiabank. “Scotiabank and Cineplex Transform Loyalty Landscape in Canada with Launch of Scene+.” December 14, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/scotiabank-and-cineplex-transform-loyalty-landscape-in-canada-with-the-launch-of-scene--890617084.html.

———. “Scotiabank and Cineplex Welcome Empire as Co-Owner of Scene+ Loyalty Program.” June 7, 2022. https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/scotiabank-and-cineplex-welcome-empire-as-co-owner-of-scene-loyalty-program-808342453.html.

Seck, Tobias. “Playfly Sports Acquires Collegiate Star League and WorldGaming Network.” *The eSports Observer.* September 17, 2020. https://archive.esportsobserver.com/playfly-csl-wgn-acquisitions/.

Serna, Laura Isabel. *Making Cinelandia: American Films and Mexican Film Culture Before the Golden Age*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014.

Shackleton, Liz. “China’s Wanda Group Sells Stake to Film and TV Producer Ruyi Holdings to Pay Down Debt.” *Deadline.* July 23, 2023. https://deadline.com/2023/07/wanda-group-ruyi-holdings-china-property-debt-1235446096/.

Sherer, Paul M. “Anschutz Advances in Bid for Control of Regal Cinemas.” *Wall Street Journal,* March 26, 2001.

———. “Anschutz May be Making Play for United Artists.” *Wall Street Journal,* June 1, 2000.

Shih, Willy and Henry McGee. “Hollywood on the Yellow Sea.” *The Atlantic*, December 2015.

Silver, Laura. “Regal and CJ 4DPLEX Open 200th ScreenX Theater.” *Boxoffice*, March 2019.

Snyder, Gabriel. “AMC, Loews Toast Merger Completion.” *Daily Variety*, January 27, 2006.

———. “Cinemark Adds Ad Arm.” *Daily Variety*, July 19, 2005.

———. “Cinemark USA Buys Century.” *Daily Variety*, August 10, 2006.

———. “Crossed Circuits.” *Daily Variety*, June 22, 2005.

———. “Exec to Head Digital Effort.” June 28, 2006. https://variety.com/2006/film/markets-festivals/exec-to-head-digital-effort-1200336952/.

———. “Loews, AMC Plans to Lift Curtain on Preshow Ads.” *Daily Variety*, March 30, 2005.

———. “No Curbs on Blurbs.” *Daily Variety*, July 27, 2005.

———. “Pre-Show Ad Curtain Lifted.” *Daily Variety*, March 30, 2005.

Sperling, Nicole. “On Borrowed Dime.” *Daily Variety*, June 17, 2003.

Srinivas, Lakshmi. *House Full: Indian Cinema and the Active Audience*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Staiger, Janet. “Combination and Litigation: Structures of U.S. Film Distribution, 1896–1917.” *Cinema Journal* 23, no. 2 (1984): 41–72, https://doi.org/10.2307/1225124/.

Steele, Anne. “Business Watch: AMC, Carmike Reach Sweetened Deal.” *Wall Street Journal,* July 26, 2016.

Steinberg, Brian. “Theater Chain AMC Entertainment Files for IPO.” *Variety.* August 30, 2013. https://variety.com/2013/biz/news/theater-chain-amc-entertainment-files-for-ipo-1200593154/.

Stewart, Andrew. “AMC, IMAX Add to Large-Screen Deal.” *Daily Variety*, June 2, 2010.

———. “AMC’s Capital Move.” *Variety*, July 9, 2012.

———. “Cinemark in CEO Switch.” *Daily Variety*, February 16, 2012.

———. “Rave Deals Fuel Exhib Pact Pace.” *Daily Variety*, November 20, 2012.

———. “Regal Goes Hollywood for Plexes.” *Daily Variety*, February 20, 2013.

———. “Wanda Buys AMC With US Blessing.” *Daily Variety*, September 4, 2012.

———. “Wanda Group Acquires AMC Entertainment.” *Variety.* September 4, 2012. https://variety.com/2012/film/news/wanda-group-acquires-amc-entertainment-1118058647/.

Stewart, Andrew and Clifford Coonan. “China Flexes Plex Muscle.” *Daily Variety*, May 22, 2012.

Stewart, Andrew and Pamela McClintock. “Exhibitors Finalize Funding.” *Variety.* March 10, 2010. https://variety.com/2010/film/markets-festivals/exhibitors-finalize-funding-1118016282/.

Stewart, Jacqueline Najuma. *Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

Stewart, Sinclair. “Onex Unveils Movie Assets Trust.” *Globe and Mail,* October 4, 2003.

Stiff, Peter. “Regal Deal Creates No. 1 Chain of Cinemas.” *Wall Street Journal,* December 17, 2019.

Storm, Anna. “Alternative Content Takes Center Stage.” *Film Journal International*, May 2014.

Sullivan, Maureen. “Hong Kong Adds Screens.” *Variety*, November 30, 1998.

Sutter, Mary. “Cinemark Opens Mex Theaters.” *Daily Variety*, December 8, 1998.

———. “Latin Exhibs Chase Rising Coin.” *Variety*, March 27, 2000.

———. “Mexicans Bid Adios to Downtrodden Markets.” *Variety*, March 29, 1999.

Szalai, George. “AMC Theatres Boosts Liquidity, Saying it Has ‘Financial Runway Deep Into 2021’.” *Hollywood Reporter.* 2January, 2021. https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/business/business-news/amc-theatres-boosts-liquidity-saying-it-has-financial-runway-deep-into-2021-4112973/.

Szczepaniak-Gillece, Jocelyn. *The Optical Vacuum: Spectatorship and Modernized American Theater Architecture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Tartaglione, Nancy. “Plex Boom Boosts Biz.” *Variety*, January 11, 1999.

Tegel, Simeon. “Exhibs Nix Tix Levy.” *Variety.* December 25, 2002. https://variety.com/2002/film/markets-festivals/exhibs-nix-tix-levy-1117877890/.

———. “Mexican Cinemex Buys Up Rival Chain.” *Daily Variety*, June 13, 2000.

———. “Mexico City Exhib Grabs 50 Percent of Market.” *Variety*, March 27, 2000.

———. “Mexico Hits B.O. Jackpot.” *Variety*, March 27, 2000.

———. “New Bucks Bump Mex B.O.” *Variety*, March 26, 2001.

———. “South of the Border, Box Office is En Fuego.” *Variety*, July 30, 2001.

“The 2008 Giants of Exhibition.” *Boxoffice*, February 2008.

“The 2018 Giants of Exhibition.” *Boxoffice*, February 2018.

“The Fabulous Fifty.” *Boxoffice*, December 1995.

“The Fabulous Fifty.” *Boxoffice*, January 1998.

“The Fabulous Fifty.” *Boxoffice*, January 2000.

“The Fabulous Fifty.” *Boxoffice*, January 2005.

“The Giants of Exhibition.” *Boxoffice*, December 1993.

“The History of Advertising 20: A Cannes Lion.” *Campaign.* The History of Advertising in Quite a Few Objects. June 24, 2011. https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/history-advertising-20-cannes-lion/1076691.

“The Player One Story.” Player One Amusement Group. Accessed June 5, 2024. https://www.winwithp1ag.com/about-us/our-story.

“The Shrinking IMAX Screen.” *LF Examiner.* April 21, 2010. https://lfexaminer.com/2010/04/the-shrinking-imax-screen/.

Tillson, Tamsen. “Canada is Building it, But Will They Come?” *Variety*, April 13, 1998.

———. “Galaxy Circles Cineplex Odeon Sites.” *Daily Variety*, January 17, 2001.

———. “IMAX Beefs Up Network with Eye on Hollywood.” *Variety*, February 23, 1998.

Torres, Blanca. “R/C Theatres to Sell 7 Movie Houses to Chain.” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), March 1, 2005.

“Total Solutions Through Four Core Services.” Player One Amusement Group. Accessed June 5, 2024. https://www.winwithp1ag.com/business-services/p1ag-total-solution.

Toumarkine, Doris. “Screenvision’s Vision.” *Film Journal International*, October 2005.

Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Tusher, Will and Jim Robbins. “Garth Goes, Cineplex Owes.” *Variety*, December 6, 1989.

“U Classics Screen Via Fathom.” *Daily Variety*, July 12, 2012.

United States v. AMC Entertainment Holdings, Inc. and Carmike Cinemas, Inc. December 20, 2016. https://www.justice.gov/atr/case/us-v-amc-entertainment-holdings-inc-and-carmike-cinemas-inc.

United States v. National CineMedia, Inc., National CineMedia, LLC, SV Holdco, LLC, and Screenvision, LLC. November 3, 2014. https://www.justice.gov/atr/case/us-v-national-cinemedia-inc-et-al.

Urry, John. *The Tourist Gaze*, 2nd ed. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2002.

“US Theatre Circuits Ranked by Size.” *Variety*, November 10, 1982.

Verzhbinsky, Moya and Susan Windisch Brown. “Cineplex Odeon Corporation.” In *International Directory of Company Histories*, vol. 23, edited by Tina Grant, 123–26. Detroit, MI: St. James Press, 1998.

Vicki, Mayer, Noa Lavie, and Miranda Banks, eds. *Media Industries in Crisis: What COVID Unmasked*. New York: Routledge, 2024.

Vivarelli, Nick. “UCI Adds Screens.” *Daily Variety*, May 5, 2011.

———. “Warner’s Final Reel?” *Daily Variety*, July 19, 2005.

Waddell, Ray. “Concerts West Lands Spears Trek.” *Billboard*, September 1, 2001.

Walker, Ian. “UK’s Cineworld to Purchase Regal.” *Wall Street Journal,* December 6, 2017.

Waller, Gregory A. *Main Street Amusements: Movies and Commercial Entertainment in a Southern City, 1896–1930*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995.

Wanda Group. “AMC Entertainment to Acquire Largest Theatre Operator in Nordic Europe as Wanda Expands Influence in European Film Market.” January 31, 2017. https://www.wanda-group.com/2017/latest_0123/7556.html.

“What’s Shakin’?” *Boxoffice*, April 2010.

White, Michael. “Going in Style.” *Boxoffice*, August 2014.

Wilinsky, Barbara. *Sure Seaters: The Emergence of Art House Cinema*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

Williams, Michael. “AMC in French Twist.” *Variety.* May 17, 1998. https://variety.com/1998/more/news/amc-in-french-twist-1117470926/.

———. “Gauls to AMC: Yankee Go Home!” *Variety*, April 20, 1998.

Willis, Andrew. “A Takeover Plot Twist: Cineplex Board Cuts Termination Fee to Make a Canadian Bid More Attractive.” *Globe and Mail,* December 18, 2019.

———. “Cineplex Takeover Won’t Happen Any Time Soon.” *Globe and Mail,* March 16, 2020.

———. “Spoiler Alert: Other Suitors for Cineplex Can’t Top Cineworld’s Bid.” *Globe and Mail,* December 17, 2019.

Won, Shirley. “Cineplex Cinemas Peddle Marquee Appeal.” *Globe and Mail,* February 1, 2006.

———. “New Cineplex-Scotiabank Deal: Eat Popcorn, Earn Some Points.” *Globe and Mail,* November 3, 2006.

———. “Scotiabank, Cineplex Team Up on Loyalty Program.” *Globe and Mail,* January 25, 2007.

Wong, Jacky. “Wanda, AMC Get a Happy Ending.” *Wall Street Journal,* May 25, 2021.

Young, Ames. “AMC’s Cinemex Sale OK’d.” *Daily Variety*, December 19, 2008.

Young, Doug. “Spurned By Paramount, Wanda Settles for Sony.” *Forbes.* September 23, 2016. https://www.forbes.com/sites/dougyoung/2016/09/23/spurned-by-paramount-wanda-settles-for-sony/?sh=3a5dd21626f1.

Zhang, Rui. “Warner Bros. Pulling Out from China’s Cinema Business.” China.org.cn. November 8, 2006. http://www.china.org.cn/english/entertainment/188323.htm.