

TopTown Cinema 5

A Daily News Advertising Feature



FINE FIT: TopTown Cinemas director Stuart Green (left) and managing director Graham Lindsay check out the new theatre before last night's official opening.



FINE FOYER: TopTown Cinemas manager Pam Smith pictured in the new theatre's foyer — an area which will allow special functions to be held.

New theatre reflects audience support for New Plymouth's cinema complex

Feature by **MIKE SHAW**
Photos by **MARK DWYER**

TARANAKI cinema audiences are among the best in the country. And their commitment to movies is being rewarded with another cinema added to the TopTown multiplex in New Plymouth.

Located a floor above the main cinema area, the new 168-seat movie theatre has the added attraction of a functions facility associated with it. As well as the normal movie sessions, the theatre and functions area can be rented out for a variety of uses combining big-screen presentations with food and refreshments.

More technological enhancements are also planned for the theatre, including video and live television presentations.

New Plymouth manager Pam Smith is appreciative of the support which has prompted the further development at the multiplex.

"To be able to include a fifth cinema at

TopTown in just over three years is exciting for the people of Taranaki and is an indication of the overwhelming support we have received from the movie-going public," she said.

"Multiplex cinemas are all about offering movie choices to all patrons and the fifth cinema will provide even better customer choice of movies.

"It will also allow us to hold our most popular movies longer as well as introducing specialist art-type movies at their time of release which are not normally available to small theatre complexes in provincial areas."

The extra theatre will establish a new entertainment dimension in Taranaki, over and above the capacity to screen extra movies, according to Pam Smith.

"Cinema 5 will have the best technology currently available in New Zealand with fabulous total-surround digital Dolby sound."

"And within a few months we will also

have video and television capacity.

"Imagine the ability to show direct on-screen Michael Campbell or Frank Nobile competing in the USA PGA championship, or the Melbourne Cup, rugby league games, the All Blacks and Bathurst — or the Three Tenors live in concert, as recently seen in Melbourne.

"Companies, clubs and individuals will be able to pre-book the venue for staff or client presentations with refreshments and food."

TopTown Cinemas managing director Graham Lindsay said the new facility was a multipurpose auditorium, able to be re-fitted for special occasions.

"It can be a lecture theatre or host trade presentations," he said. An overhead projector could be set up to utilise the big screen.

"The Flicks restaurant on the ground floor of the shopping complex will be providing catering services needed for the new theatre," Mr Lindsay said.

"The prototype seventh cinema in the Downtown multiplex in Palmerston North has been enormously successful. Here we are following a formula that's worked in Palmerston North and is widely used. I expect it will be equally successful, if not more so, here."

The Palmerston North prototype only had 119 seats and was not as generous in size as TopTown's new theatre, he said.

Special thanks went to those individuals with the vision, determination and confidence to make the five-screen cinema complex a reality in New Plymouth, Pam Smith said.

"However, particular thanks must go to you, the movie-going public of Taranaki, whose support has made the addition of a fifth cinema a priority for our company."

"Be assured that the management and staff at TopTown Cinema 5 are committed to continuing to present the very best in big-screen movie entertainment that the movie-going public of Taranaki deserve."

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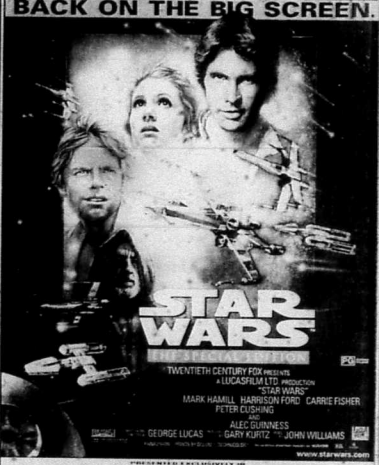
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Meal deals boost theatre audiences

MOVIE meal deals have been a popular innovation at TopTown Cinema 5, according to Flicks Restaurants' David Lean.

In the multiplex's first three years, more than 10,000 people had booked in for a meal and movie package, he said. That figure was impressive considering the package was only available three nights a week.

TopTown Cinema 5 was only one of two cinemas in the country offering telephone bookings. "Most other complexes don't worry about it."

The bookings had an extra bonus for the cinema management — they indicated where the support for the multiplex was coming from. People from all over Taranaki patronised the theatres with particular support from the farming communities.

Flicks was currently expanding its own operation, Mr Lean said. An extension to the restaurant is almost ready adjacent to the street-front original and will feature steak meals where the customer can pick their own steak and see it being cooked.

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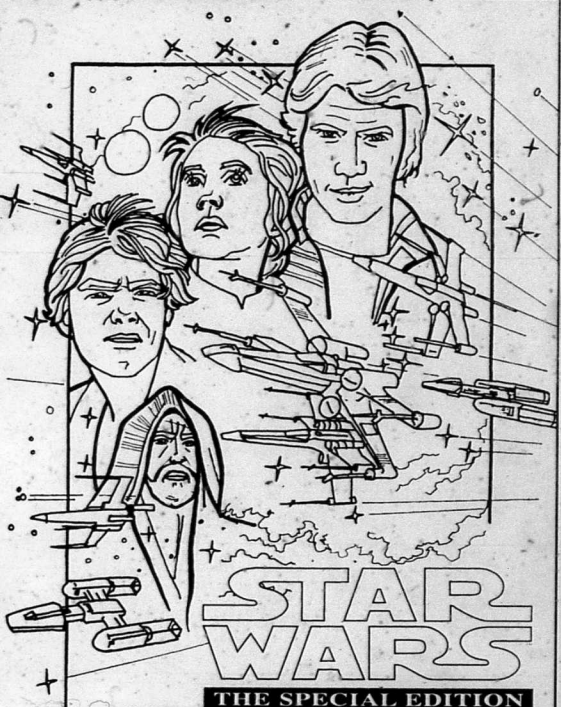
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Movie audiences are regional

NEW Plymouth's TopTown Cinema 4 multiplex — which will now be known as Cinema 5 — draws audiences from throughout the region. Their regular attendances at film sessions in New Plymouth have helped the cinema complex to its acknowledged position as leader among the four-cinema multiplexes in New Zealand.

New Plymouth attendances are at the top end of the strong growth enjoyed by multiplexes in the past five years. Nationally, annual attendances have increased from four million to 14.6 million in that time — an average attendance per head of about five films a year.

The fifth theatre had been discussed at an early stage in the planning for the TopTown multiplex, according to TopTown Cinemas managing director Graham Lindsay, Palmerston North. The multiplex opened in October 1993.

"When we commenced the design process, we nominated that space as the fifth cinema. We jokingly said three to four years and here we are, fortunately spot on."

"Multiplexes have become enormously popular and we have seen a constant pressure on product here.

"One of our frustrations with the growth of the business is that more people are making a wider range of product and we have not been able to show as great a range as we would wish. And we have had to move films on quicker than we wanted to make room for more."

The original four cinemas had to handle between 12 and 14 movies per week at times and that put pressure on movie scheduling, limiting the number of sessions for each movie.

"The public is sometimes a little unforgiving if they cannot go to their favoured movie at their favoured time."

The timing options available with the introduction of the multiplex to Taranaki has been welcomed by the region's audience, however.

Taranaki audiences were unique among their New Zealand peers, Mr Lindsay said. "By the nature of the province, Taranaki audience support for the day sessions is among the highest in the country. I know of no other venue that is better supported during the day."

"The dairying community made a point of coming into town for those day sessions and then returning home to tackle milking."

That demand prompted some seasonal adjustments at TopTown, according to its manager Pam Smith. "During the summer months the changes in milking patterns mean we change the timing of some sessions slightly."

"We also have a big following among schools. They often book out a whole theatre."

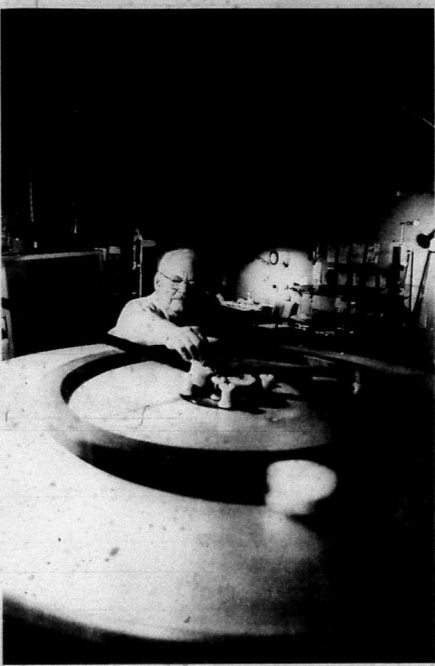
Graham Lindsay also noted the educational content of particular movies — recent examples have been *Shine* and *Romeo and Juliet*. "We have huge support from South Taranaki and have already taken bookings for the South Taranaki District Council for the school holidays."

TOPTOWN Cinema 5 returns some of the support it enjoys to the communities around it.

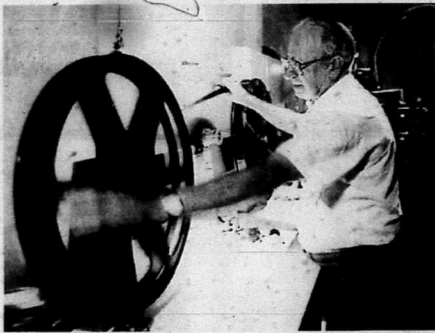
More than 20,000 complimentary passes have been given to clubs and organisations and activities such as school gala days, said Graham Lindsay.

"That's the equivalent of \$120,000 going back into the community."

The development of the multiplex has also been appreciated by special groups in the community. "There has been a lot of support from the disabled who have been unable to go to other facilities. Rest home organisations also use the cinema."



JUST RIGHT: Head projectionist Rex Palmer checks the smooth operation of a film in use at TopTown Cinema 5. The projection room is a popular option with community groups looking through the theatre complex.



REEL WORK: Part-time projectionist Jack Valentine splicing another film together before loading up for another viewing.

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TopTown Cinema 5

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New digital sound sets the tone

Technical specifications for TopTown Cinema 5's new theatre are different to the first four established in the multiplex.

Italian projection equipment and Melbourne-sourced seating are similar to those in the first four theatres, but improvements have been made in other areas.

"In the intervening period, the quality of sound in pictures has dramatically changed," said TopTown Cinemas managing director Graham Lindsay. "Cinema five is equipped with the latest Dolby digital sound."

"The public has been very happy with the other four cinemas but this is state of the art."

"Not all movies require digital sound, but in certain movies sound is absolutely compelling."

"The ideal mix for us here would be two theatres equipped to Dolby digital specifications. And within the next 12 months we anticipate upgrading at least one other cinema at TopTown to this standard."



JUST SO: Projectionist Nelson Pulotu adjusts the new Dolby digital sound heads built into the projector in TopTown Cinema 5's new theatre. Audiences should appreciate movies utilising the state-of-the-art equipment.

Security focus gives customers confidence

TOPTOWN's multiplex cinema has introduced a new way of life to entertainment in Taranaki, according to the shopping complex company's chairman Stuart Green.

"The shopping complex had developed with the multiplex, he said.

"The Time Out entertainment area was a good example, attracting a wide variety of people to its games and activities. "We see businessmen in collar and tie and grandparents as well as kids in there," he said.

"The behaviour is excellent. When you give people something where they can walk in and enjoy it and it's not sleazy, they appreciate it."

"Maintaining the quality of the environment and giving people confidence in its safety and security was important to both shopping complex and cinema company, Mr Green said.

"In the last six months we have placed an emphasis on security, installing a total camera system throughout the complex, starting in the basement car park and extending it up to the

top levels of the complex.

Monitors in the box office and custodian's room provide video records of incidents which can be provided to police for follow-up action.

Those monitors have also given immediate help in less serious cases.

Recently a lost child sitting in the custodian's office pointed to the monitor and said, "Auntie's on TV." The two were quickly re-united.

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