A year at the movies
How cinema made a comeback in Saudi Arabia
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A year at the movies cover
A magical first year at the movies

Films are no longer ‘coming soon’ — there are now six cinemas in Riyadh and Jeddah, with many more on the way across the Kingdom

By Jennifer Bell

There has been a distinct change in the landscape of Saudi Arabia’s film industry, with a significant increase in the number of cinemas and a shift towards a more diverse range of films available for audiences to enjoy. This change is part of a broader cultural transformation that is taking place in the Kingdom, as the government continues to invest in the arts and culture sector.

A year ago, the cinema industry in Saudi Arabia was still in its infancy, with only a handful of cinemas operating in the country. However, since then, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of cinemas across the Kingdom, with six cinemas now operational in Riyadh and Jeddah. This surge in the number of cinemas has been driven by a combination of factors, including the government’s efforts to promote cultural diversity and investment in the arts and culture sector.

One of the key drivers of this change has been the demand for more diverse and inclusive content in Saudi Arabia’s film industry. The Saudi government has been working closely with local and international filmmakers to encourage the production of films that reflect the diverse cultures and experiences of the Saudi people. This has led to a greater focus on storytelling, with filmmakers exploring a range of themes and genres.

In addition to the increase in the number of cinemas, there has also been a significant increase in the number of films available for audiences to watch. This is thanks in part to the Kingdom’s participation in international film festivals and its efforts to promote the arts and culture sector. As a result, audiences in Saudi Arabia now have access to a wider range of films, including critically acclaimed international productions and films that reflect the unique cultural identity of the Kingdom.

This change in the film industry has been welcomed by many in Saudi Arabia, who see it as a positive step towards a more diverse and inclusive cultural landscape. However, there is still a long way to go, and there are many challenges that need to be addressed in order to fully realize the potential of the Saudi film industry.

Despite these challenges, the future of the Saudi film industry is looking bright, with a growing number of filmmakers and cinema operators who are committed to promoting the arts and culture sector in the Kingdom. With continued investment and support from the government, the Saudi film industry is poised to continue its growth and development, offering audiences a rich and diverse range of films for years to come.

Top 10 films at VOX cinemas in Saudi Arabia

1. CAPTAIN MARVEL (2019)
2. TITANIC (1997)
3. FORREST GUMP (1994)
4. THE GODFATHER (1972)
5. FORREST GUMP (1994)
6. THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION (1994)
8. FORREST GUMP (1994)
9. TITANIC (1997)
10. THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION (1994)
Lilly was in awe. And I was a very proud mom, indeed

A year on from cinema’s historic return to Saudi Arabia, a mother recalls a moment of magic with her daughter

Spotlight
CINEMA KINGDOM

April 19, 2019 will go down in cinema’s history as one of the most celebrated dates in Saudi Arabia’s cinematic history. The first screening of a film in over 35 years at the capital Riyadh.

Those outside the kingdom may struggle to understand the significance of this event, but for those unable to attend a film screening in their home for more than three decades, its importance was instantly apparent.

After spending over half of my life abroad, I returned recently to my home country to visit family and friends. My children, my wife and I were all excited to see a film together.

That day, I took my young daughter to see a film. The excitement on her face was infectious. She had never seen a film before, and she was eager to learn about this new experience.

During the screening, I noticed how captivated she was by the story on the screen. She was completely absorbed by the characters and their adventures.

As the film drew to a close, I asked her what she thought of it. She told me she loved it. Her answer filled my heart with joy. It was a moment I will never forget.

After returning to my home country, I found my heart set on attending a film with my young daughter. And I decided to do it.”

LILLY’S REVIEW

I watched ‘Onward’ with mom and Uncle Fair. It was a funny and exciting movie. I was six years old and this was my first time seeing a movie. I really enjoyed the story and the characters were really cool. I loved the adventure. The best part was when I learned that I could fly! I want to fly with my mom. I was really happy when they showed the flying scene. It was really exciting. I hope there will be more movies like this in the future.

A young girl named Lilly shared her thoughts on the film. She was thrilled to watch the movie for the first time and was eager to share her impressions.

The event was covered by media outlets from around the world, including national and international news channels. The positive feedback on the movie was overwhelming.

In conclusion, the return of cinema to Saudi Arabia was a momentous occasion that will be remembered for generations to come. It was a chance for families to come together and enjoy a shared experience in a way that had been absent for far too long.

As we look towards the future, we can only hope that this new era of cinema will continue to bring joy and entertainment to audiences of all ages. The return of cinema to Saudi Arabia was a momentous occasion that will be remembered for generations to come.

This article was written by a Saudi journalist for Al Arab News. The article was translated into English for the Red Tag magazine.

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