

Standing Alone

Screenshots of Bengaluru's Single Screen Theatres

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First day, first show! Silver jubilee! Housefull!!! Familiar, and likely universal, slogans for pre-OTT (over-the-top) cinema aficionados. For movie enthusiasts, theatre-going was serious business indeed. Planning and preparing to watch a movie in the cinema theatre, waiting in the ticket counter line for those coveted seats (balcony to front row, depending on the time of arrival at theatre and purse). Anticipation for those who got tickets, disappointment for those who did not. Walking into the popcorn-scented lobby. The dramatic unfolding of the velvet screen curtains. The advertisements and documentaries - a window for latecomers to enter the movie hall relatively uncensored. And then the movie - to the accompaniment of cheers, whistles and hoots. The interval which also signalled a quick stop at the crowded snack counter. Animated post-movie discussions and plans for the next destination on the way out. Arguably the thrill and excitement of the cinema theatre experience equaled, or even surpassed, watching the movie.

In the urban quotidian, the single screen cinema theatre was a meeting place; a pause point; a destination. A quasi-public space of individual and collective urban life that allowed a varied audience to blend (box, balcony, first- and second-class distinctions notwithstanding) and participate as viewers and creators of a spectacle. Standing alone

or holding its own amidst competitors, the single screen theatre building added to the drama of urban public life, dotting intersections, corners and edges of busy streets. Ranging in appearance and impact from the unremarkable to the flamboyant, Bengaluru's cinema theatres, in their heyday, drew crowds from opening day through jubilee celebrations and special celebrity-studded events. They were also local markers of the city's varied socioeconomic, linguistic and political terrain. Theatres in different localities played (and came to be associated with) different language movies and became, on occasion, contested sites of language and identity politics.

The forces of time, technology and urbanisation have not been kind to the urban single screen theatre. In our times of multiplex theatres and online streaming platforms, the single screen theatre is rapidly becoming an obsolete and vanishing cultural space in Bengaluru, as in other Indian cities. Dependent on the whims and means of their owners, real estate pressures and fickle audiences spoilt for choice, single screen theatres today are either 'modernising' in appearance and technology, or getting replaced by trending spaces of collective consumption. A selected compilation of pictures taken by invited contributors and RVCA's students and faculty, this photo essay provides glimpses of Bengaluru's iconic single screen theatres - some gone, some still standing alone.



Uma Theatre, Bull Temple Road, Chamarajapete (Source: Salila Vanka)



Elgin Talkies, Hazrath Kambal Posh Road, Shivajinagar (Source: Aliyeh Rizvi)



Renuka Theatre, Quadrant Road, Shivajinagar (Source: Aliyeh Rizvi)



Shivaji Talkies, JC Road, Kalasipalya (Source: Ravikumar Kashi)



Triveni Theatre, Subedar Chatram Road, Gandhi Nagar (Source: Salila Vanka)



Sri Siddeshwara Theatre, JP Nagar 6th Phase (Source: Pratham Rathi)



Urvashi Theatre, Doddamavalli, Sudhama Nagar (Source: Sachet Ullal)



Sampige & Savitha Theatres, Malleshwaram (Source: Salila Vanka)



Ajanta Theatre, Annaswamy Mudaliar Road, Ulsoor (Source: Salila Vanka)



Renuka Prasanna Theatre, JP Nagar (Source: Likhith Rajesh & Sania Jain)



Nataraj Theatre, Sampige Road, Seshadripuram (Source: Salila Vanka)



Shankar Nag Swagath Chitramandira, MG Road (Source: Sachin N.Mane & Jennis J. Varghese)



Navrang Theatre, Dr Rajkumar Road, Rajajinagar 2nd Block (Source: Ravikumar Kashi)

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Ticket Counter, Movieland Theatre, SC Road, Gandhi Nagar (Source: Salila Vanka)