# Cinema adapts to coexist with streaming despite attendance slump



# Cinema: An Evolution, Not an Obsolescence

The cinema experience finds itself at a crossroads, grappling with shifting audience preferences and technological advancements. While audiences have begun to return following the Covid-19 pandemic, ticket sales remain stubbornly low, with figures reflecting those last seen in 1995. One voice amidst this debate is Ted Sarandos, co-CEO of Netflix, who recently characterised cinema attendance as “an outmoded idea” at the Time100 Summit. He posits that the modern consumer leans towards the comfort of home viewing over the shared experience of the big screen, aligning with a growing trend that prioritises convenience.

Sarandos remarked, “We deliver the programme to you in a way you want to watch it… What is the consumer trying to tell us? That they’d like to watch movies at home, thank you.” This sentiment resonates strongly as many former cinema-goers reflect on their own experiences. Many, like the author of this article, have found substitutes for cinema outings, favouring the ease of streaming platforms which provide immediate access to a vast library of films without the associated stresses of crowded theatres.

## The Changing Landscape of Cinema Attendance

The decline in cinema attendance can be attributed to various factors beyond Sarandos's observations. While the pandemic catalysed a change in habits, this trend began beforehand. Cinemas have seen dwindling numbers for several years, especially as ticket prices have inflated—averaging over double what they were two decades ago. This reality, compounded by financial pressures faced by consumers today, leads many to reconsider the value of a trip to the cinema, which is often perceived as a lavish expense.

Moreover, problems within the cinema environments, such as disruptive behaviours and subpar audiovisual experiences, have contributed to the disillusionment. Many viewers have voiced frustrations over unexpected distractions, from improperly tuned sound systems to fellow patrons distracted by their phones. As one ranking film enthusiast lamented, there is a growing sense that the communal experience, once a cornerstone of cinema, no longer delivers the value it once did.

Amid this backdrop, alternatives abound. Home viewing setups now boast impressive sound and picture quality, giving audiences an experience that rivals that of many multiplexes—even if a sizeable contingent remains unsatisfied with their own equipment.

## The Unique Appeal of Cinema

Despite these challenges, there are strong advocates for the cinema experience, often highlighting an essential aspect that streaming cannot replicate: the sheer scale. A visit to an IMAX theatre offers an immersive experience that a standard living room cannot match. With screens stretching over 26.5 metres and sound systems employing hundreds of speakers, cinemas provide an auditory and visual feast that home setups, regardless of quality, struggle to replicate.

Moreover, independent cinemas are increasingly carving out niches by offering curated experiences, including special screenings of classic films, fine dining options, and community-centric events. These establishments can foster a sense of belonging and shared passion for cinema, inviting patrons to engage with like-minded individuals in a shared space dedicated to film appreciation.

News of thriving indie cinemas, such as the Prince Charles Cinema in London, further underscores the community's desire for shared experiences. Following its busiest-ever year in 2024, its popularity highlights the potential for cinemas to thrive, even as the broader landscape experiences turmoil. Such venues cater to those seeking both the nostalgic charm of a traditional cinema and a welcoming environment where discussion and debate flourish.

## A Complementary Future

While Sarandos's assertion holds some truth, it ultimately simplifies a more nuanced reality. Rather than viewing cinema as a relic or an experience on the verge of extinction, it is crucial to recognise its evolving role within a diverse media landscape. Streaming services can coexist with traditional cinemas, each offering unique advantages. Netflix and similar platforms provide convenience and an ever-growing catalogue of titles, yet they cannot supplant the singular immersion offered by a cinema visit.

As society continues to adapt to new norms in leisure consumption, allowing ourselves to revisit the cinema can rekindle a love for the medium. For those who have strayed from theatres or have never experienced the joys of communal film-watching, venturing to a local cinema could reignite a passion for the artistry and spectacle that cinema uniquely provides.

With cinemas increasingly adapting to meet changing consumer preferences, they offer a variety of experiences that appeal to a wide array of audiences. For fans of film, the invitation is clear: explore the evolving cinema landscape, rediscover the magic of film, and allow yourself to be captivated by the big screen once more.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.whathifi.com/streaming-entertainment/netflix-ceo-says-going-to-the-cinema-is-outmoded-but-i-think-the-reality-is-more-complicated> - Please view link - unable to able to access data