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Phoenix spreads its wings

By John Lawrence

The Phoenix Cinema in East Finchley has been nominated for a major award as it gets ready to introduce a number of programming innovations and bring back some old favourites under a new executive director.

Our local movie venue is in the running for the first-ever Cinema of the Year award, to be announced as part of the British Independent Film Awards. A shortlist of five will be named on Monday 3 November and voting will take place throughout the month ahead of an awards ceremony on 30 November.

It comes as the Phoenix prepares for a busy autumn and winter season with new audience-winners like parent-and-baby screenings, dog-friendly performances and a monthly comedy night, alongside its diverse programme of independent films, opera and theatre screenings, and director Q&As.

Unique spaces

Kathryn Smith was appointed as the cinema's new executive director in June and says she

wants it to "spread its wings", adding that the refurbished 170-seater main auditorium and the new 22-seater second screen can be used in many ways for the benefit of the community.

"We have two unique spaces where we can offer party packages, host podcast recordings or stage conferences and product launches. We can customise the screen and we can organise catering. All people have to do is come along and enjoy," says Kathryn, whose career has included working at Vue and Odeon cinemas, and Picturehouse Central in Piccadilly.

"We have a loyal audience and we'd love to get more people through our doors. We'll always have a strong programme of excellent films and we have ideas for different types of screenings, like dementia-friendly or parent



Laughter lines: Comedian Joe Bar on stage at the Phoenix hosting the September Stand Up night in aid of the cinema. The line-up also featured Sara Barron, Tom Price and Ross Smith. Photo Mike Coles

and baby. And we'd love to open partnerships with local businesses where they can sponsor screenings and get publicity for the services they offer."

Competition

Phoenix trustee Steven Smith said cinemas generally continue

to struggle with competition from TV streamers like Netflix, coupled with a shortage of crowd-pulling releases. On top of that, 45-60% of a ticket price must be handed to the film-makers and distributors, so it is vital for venues to generate other sources of income.

"What matters most is having large audiences who return again and again, but if our guests can also buy a coffee or popcorn from us, or become Phoenix members, that is money that goes directly to the cinema and supports us for the future."

What's on at the Phoenix pg. 10

Ideas welcome at Town Team social

Everyone is welcome to the next Town Team meeting taking place at East Finchley Constitutional Club, 9 The Walks, N2 8DE on Thursday 9 October. Doors open at 7pm for a 7.30pm start and there is a reasonably priced bar.

Perhaps you have some ideas for changes or improvements in the local environment? What can we do to support the High Road and ensure the survival of its traders and businesses?

Are we being blighted by

new building proposals such as the Great North London Leisure Park redevelopment right on our doorstep? Come along if you'd like to discuss, listen to or suggest topics relating to our neck of the woods.

Tell us the news

Have you got a news story or an interesting photo for us? Our readers are our eyes and ears, and we are always pleased to hear what is going on in East Finchley.

Tips, ideas and stories, large or small, are very welcome. Please email news@the-archer.co.uk or leave a message on our free phone line **0800 612 0748**.

Thank you

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