



# Fundraising campaign to secure cinema's future



Middlesex University design students, here sitting in the Phoenix, have been invited to reimagine the venue's foyer area

By Ruth Anders

There was a packed house of enthusiastic cinemagoers at the Phoenix Cinema on Saturday 16 May to enjoy 1973's tongue-in-cheek horror comedy film *Theatre of Blood*, starring Vincent Price.

The evening's draw card was local celebrity Steve Pemberton, of *The League of Gentlemen* and *Inside Number 9* fame, who chose the film as one of his favourites and who generously spent time answering questions from the stage afterwards.

The evening also marked the launch of the new fundraising



Film fan: Steve Pemberton

campaign, a vital initiative to help secure the cinema's future and improve customers' experience.

Following a welcome from Paul Rossi, Chair of the Phoenix Board of Trustees, the audience were left in no doubt as to the urgency of the support required to keep the landmark building open. Few realise that less than half the price of each ticket supports the running costs of the cinema and, without a dramatic uplift in audience numbers, the Phoenix runs the risk of closure.

As a major part of the campaign, the Phoenix welcomed a group of design students from Middlesex University at the end of April. Their visit was part of a design competition to update the cinema's front-of-house areas.

Budding designers and architects from the university's School of Art, Design and Architecture have been invited to submit plans to 'reimagine'

the cinema's foyer, making it even more welcoming for customers and the wider community, while preserving its historic Art Deco character.

The winning entry will go on public display at the cinema later in the year in a bid to help raise funds to put the plans into action. "We want people to see what we're trying to achieve with the foyer and hopefully that will encourage them to support us with donations," Paul Rossi told *The Archer*. "The initiative is also aimed at giving the students a unique opportunity to work on a real-world, creative brief at a Grade II listed building."

Phoenix Trustee Steve Smith added: "We've weathered hard times in the past, but they seem particularly difficult right now, hence the launch of our new fundraising campaign.

Our goals are ambitious but the marvellous team at the cinema are bursting with ideas about how we can achieve them. Do check us out on Instagram, Facebook, X and TikTok and don't forget to review us, follow us and hashtag us to spread the word."

Keep your eyes open for other upcoming events at the Phoenix, such as a live appearance



Steve Pemberton on stage, right, after the fundraising showing of *Theatre of Blood*. Photo: Mike Coles

by Phoenix Patron Sir Michael Palin on Saturday 27 June when he will introduce David Attenborough's 2020 film *A Life on our Planet*.

And meanwhile, if you can make a donation, no matter how small, visit [www.phoenixcinema.co.uk](http://www.phoenixcinema.co.uk) or use the QR code in this article.

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