Over the past couple of decades, the cinema foyer, or lobby – its form and function – has certainly seen some change, but how does its future augur today, and, equally important, how could it begin to look in your theatres? Well, all good buzzwords, aside, cinema lobbies are already becoming more ‘digitally-interactive’, while offering unsurpassed selling opportunities. At CineEurope, recently, a collaboration between YCD Multimedia, Littlebit Technology, NEC (Europe), Intel and Coca-Cola, unveiled a taste of tomorrow’s newly-interactive lobby. Screentrade was there to investigate. Savvy exhibitors take note.
at CineEurope. YCD’s C-nario Digital Signage Suite, this year, showcased new themes for the lounge, underscoring, for example, the added value of digital signage, and not just to the overall movie-going experience, but also to the all-important revenue-enhancement by virtue of the ‘tools’ available for use within each area.

In fact, in our opinion, the new lobby configurations represent the inevitable result of digitally-inspired progress – on the one hand, simply because the technical possibilities exist; but, on the other, because the customer-self-service and exhibitor-revenue-generation opportunities that go hand-in-hand with tomorrow’s vision of lobby development, together with the potentially-short pre-movie concessions window, remain perhaps too significant to ignore. For those who couldn’t attend CineEurope, recently, or else missed the lobby demos, what follows represents a cursory trip through the new-style of interactive theatre lobby coming soon to a theatre near you.

THEATRE ENTRANCE
The start of the cinema experience is of course the entrance, and the ‘entrance archway’ in the CineEurope demo lobby, represents the cinema entrance, and thus the first potentially interactive customer point-of-contact. On arrival, customers – by dint of their approaching mounted vertical panels – can make the illuminated panel’s Coke bottles and soda bubbles ‘sway and dance’, which is then followed by onscreen directions once a customer stands in front of the display. The patron’s camera-monitored movement cleverly translates their approach into dancing imagery and illustrates how digital signage can be used to create a fun, interactive experience to engage customers, one that perhaps primes them to purchase. The effect could also work particularly well for cinemas in higher-traffic areas – like in shopping malls, for instance – encouraging passers-by to stop, take notice and make a purchase (see inset picture, above).

LOBBY INTERIOR
DIGITAL POSTERS, BOX OFFICE, CONCESSIONS AREAS & LOUNGE
As an increasingly modern alternative to printed movie posters and one-sheets, today’s interactive digital versions offer cinema operators more options to target films toward specific audiences, as well as according to the time of day – the recently well-documented ‘day-parting’ phenomenon. Replacing static promotional images with animated film posters draws attention because of the sudden fluidity of movement which, in turn, becomes a point of attraction. These can also be used to promote additional messaging, such as advertising loyalty and other frequent movie-goer memberships, or even special combo-promotions to encourage audiences to save on admissions and concessions. The same panels can also be used as advertising displays – either for cross-promotional advertising e.g. for contracts with local restaurants or other businesses in the same mall or street, and/or to run revenue-splits so that their use as an advertising vehicle becomes more quantifiable; or even as a direct source of ad-revenue whether done directly or via third-party agencies.

Meanwhile, box office screens and signage, in addition to displaying the usual movie showtime information, can also feature other content, such as displaying the number of seats remaining for a particular showing; or perhaps even as a second-by-second countdown to that showing, thus allowing customers to choose to go to a later show, while, in the meantime (and if adults),
Alongside the digital concessions via the options, customers can still order from, and pay for, the various combo options and thus eliminating the need even to queue – and while not advocating a replacement for casual, if still very important, social interaction, we agree this to be a particularly useful alternative during busy lobby footfall when perhaps, potentially, movie-goers could miss their film-star due to long queues, or perhaps just want to save time. How does it all work? Here, customers watch in high-definition, surrounded by ‘suggestive audio and visuals offerings’. So, how does this work? Here, customers watch in high-definition, as well as heat, the opening of a Coke bottle, as interactive elements to the concessions-ordering transaction, and seems to be where these elements come into their own. The first such consideration is customer self-service.

**SELF-SERVICE ORDERING**

The first element introduced here is a ‘mobile pay-and-order’ system whereby, upon scanning a QR code, (see image-cluster, below), movie-goers could select from, and pay for, the various combo options and thus eliminating the need even to queue – and while not advocating a replacement for casual, if still very important, social interaction, we agree this to be a particularly useful alternative during busy lobby footfall when perhaps, potentially, movie-goers could miss their film-star due to long queues, or perhaps just want to save time. How does it all work? Here, customers watch in high-definition, surrounded by ‘suggestive audio and visuals offerings’. So, how does this work? Here, customers watch in high-definition, as well as heat, the opening of a Coke bottle, as interactive elements to the concessions-ordering transaction, and seems to be where these elements come into their own. The first such consideration is customer self-service.

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**SERVICE WITH A SMILE**

Alongside the digital self-service ordering options, customers can still order concessions via the traditional route.

**FEATURE** INTERACTIVE CINEMA LOBBIES

 territorial route **SERVICE WITH A SMILE**

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areas while using the opportunity to promote visible brand awareness. This is achieved by creating atmospheric and ambiance, as well as via the incitement of interactive and social applications. In the Coke Lounge, this happens during an entire ‘take-over’ moment – think ‘interruptive marketing’ for the same effect – during which all of the audio-visuals for the branding (e.g. of the drink being poured and drank) all reassemble during the same moment and with the effect repeated periodically – see below.

The concept for the adult lounge area has been created specifically to cater to older audiences by assuming a luxury experience with a thoughtful ambience in which cinema owners may construct their own social gathering-point for adults before and after the movie. In the process, a new area of revenue can be generated by offering cocktails wrapped in a targeted content environment with others that might appeal to a more mature clientele – see image below, also on pp56-57.

Lobby Interactivity Packages & Why YCD?

DEPENDING UPON REQUIREMENTS and the extent of lobby solution being considered – be it a part- or fully-interactive package – can run from a few thousands of dollars to over $1m for particularly high-end fits. Indeed, the infrastructure costs, also those of the software, display, and POS, remain one part of the total and system design and integration; while, content, typically the most expensive element, comprises another part of the total purchase. As an illustration only, digitising your lobby may start with elements starting in the $5,000 - $14,000 range.

By contrast, in the teen area, the approach seems to be to try to engage with the more lively and playfully-interactive applications to which free and/or discounted food-and-beverage items or special promotions may be secured for future visits – an approach which, it is felt, might also help engender customer loyalty (see main image, p60). The area incorporates games and social media content so that teens can share their movie-going experiences while encouraging others to attend the cinema, by visual means. We observed content to be tailored toward a teen audience through, for example, the showing of current music video clips and pop culture attractions, like the recent ‘Just Dance Now’ game, which was showing at the time.

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