



Welcome to the Kinopalæet experience

For the past 20+ years, many people have regarded one cinema in Copenhagen as the most luxurious cinema ever built in Denmark - The Imperial. Imperial, still state-of-the-art, is the benchmark to which many cinemas are compared. The audience today are probably not aware that, 40 years ago, when the Imperial opened, there were actually several cinemas of similar standard.



I recall seeing a re-run of "The Guns of Navarone" in 1973 (age 10) at Imperial and being VERY impressed by the grandeur and spectacle it had to offer. A few years later I discovered its two siblings, the "3 Falke Bio" and the "Kinopalæet" and the trio became my favourite cinemas.

Unfortunately, the siblings closed in the early 1980s. This is the story of a trilogy of cinemas, all purpose-built for 70mm with huge auditoriums and very wide screens.

Three Great Danish 70mm Cinemas 3 Falke Bio, Kinopalæet and Imperial Bio

By Thomas Hauerslev, in70mm.com

The Beginning

In the 1950s, the municipal management of Frederiksberg, a borough inside Copenhagen, realized that the city was growing and a new City Hall would be needed. The demolition of the old building made way for the building of the "Falconercenter" – a modern hotel, concert, conference and cinema complex with shops and restaurants. The architect was Ole Hagen (1913 – 1984) and his work was revolutionary for its time. He built an 18-floor hotel with a 1200-person conference centre/music theatre and a 1000 seat cinema. The cinema became the 3 Falke Bio and it was the first cinema in Scandinavia built to Todd-AO specifications.

At about the same time, also in Frederiksberg Ole Hagen was commissioned to build the 17 floor Codan Insurance Company high-rise. Behind this huge building, he planned the Kinopalæet with 1223 seats. Kinopalæet was rebuilt 2 years later to accommodate 3-strip Cinerama which premiered there in 1962.

In the city of Copenhagen, quite near to the Town Hall square, the Imperial complex took form in the late 1959. It was a massive building with a large 4-star hotel with 160+ rooms, offices, car park and a cinema.

In the space of three years, 3 gigantic exclusively designed cinemas had been opened, and they were all built for 70mm with huge curved screens. Imperial was reviewed in several magazines including IDEAL KINEMA (April 12, 1962) where it was described it as "The most modern and best designed cinema

in Europe". 3 Falke Bio was awarded a bronze plaque by the "Committee for awarding good and beautiful buildings in Frederiksberg" November 1, 1961.

It was Danish design at it's very best.

Box Office and Foyer Areas

The Imperial and Kinopalæet box offices were located nearly on the sidewalk whereas 3 Falke Bio, not even on the main road, was "hidden away" in a courtyard, sharing the taxi kiss-and-ride entrance with the hotel and concert venue. For years 3 Falke's audience complained about standing outside in the rain and snow buying their tickets. The problem wasn't solved until 1986, 4 years after the closure, when the entire courtyard was covered with a glass roof. Additionally the 3 Falke foyer was quite small and in fact not designed for 1000 guests. It was a major design error and it plagued the cinema for years during intermissions.



The foyer at 3 Falke Bio

Kinopalæet and Imperial offered the audience the comfort of air conditioned indoor ticket sale. At Imperial the customer proceeded inside the high-ceiling main vestibule and met a huge 24 carat gold wall, film poster displays, a kiosk/sweetshop and restrooms. From the lower vestibule a very wide marble staircase let the audience upstairs to the upper foyer and the bar. The cinema was on top of the whole foyer.

At Kinopalæet after showing your ticket in the vestibule a staircase would guide you two floors up to the main foyer with a bar, restrooms, and the kiosk/sweetshop. The stairs and foyer floor was carpeted unlike the Imperial (marble) and the 3 Falke (Linoleum). The foyer was considerably larger than 3 Falke's when it was apparent how troublesome a small foyer could be. Walls were covered in oak or teak wooden panels. At the far end a spiral staircase led upstairs to the projection room, which was right on top of the foyer. Two wide doors let the audience into the theatre.

There were cloakrooms at Imperial and 3 Falke, but I cannot recall any at Kinopalæet. There probably were, but they had possibly been discontinued by the time I started seeing films there.

The auditoria

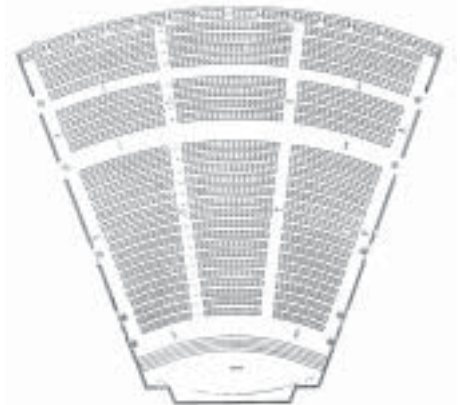
Although all three cinemas were big and spectacular they were quite different from each other. The 3 Falke Bio and Kinopalæet, designed by the same architect, were both intimate, due to the dark color scheme used in the foyer and cinema. The Imperial never had this feeling of intimacy because of the use of marble, steel and a brighter color scheme. And with 1521 seats, Imperial was considerably larger than 3 Falke and



The screen end at 3 Falke Bio

Kinopalæet. Seating in Imperial was fan shaped on a floor which sloped up towards the projection room. The original seats were specifically designed for Imperial and stayed until 1987 when French Quinette seats were brought in. In 1998 new specifically designed Norwegian Skeie "Imperial" seats were installed. All seats have remained red throughout the years though the number of seats declined because the seats were made larger.

When I was young I always sat in the last row enjoying this "ocean of chairs" in front of me with the screen in the background. In later years I preferred moving towards the middle of the cinema to get a "wrap around" feeling from the screen. The only flaw of Imperial was perhaps the screen, which is always viewed up from the floor, i.e., you look upwards.



Seating layout at the Imperial

Seating in 3 Falke bio remained more or less unchanged for all 24 years. The layout was 11 rows on the floor with a easy slope. The remaining 17 rows were on a terrace which sloped quickly up towards projection level. Sitting on row 12 or 13 the view to the screen was absolutely fantastic as you were looking straight into it. Sitting in front of the massive Todd-AO screen was spectacular to say the least. I never got the same feeling of "being in the picture" at Kinopalæet or Imperial.

Kinopalæet originally had 1223 seats, but that number was reduced during its Cinerama days in 1962/63 to around a 1000 seats. In 1972 the layout was again changed to 976 extremely comfortable specially designed chairs. By far the best chair I've ever sat in. I even have 4 of those chairs at home, using one of them in my home cinema.

In short, 3 Falke Bio had the best view to the screen, the best seats were at Kinopalæet and the most grandiose experience was at Imperial.



A grandiose experience...the Imperial's auditorium



Imperial Bio's screen masked for 70mm

installed for SDDS. Since 1979, JBL speakers have been at Imperial making it the largest JBL cinema installation in Denmark.

Repertoire

"**South Pacific**" was the opening movie at the 3 Falke. Todd-AO made quite an impact in those days and 782, 710 people saw the film in 201 weeks. It was THE 70mm house of Denmark and even hosted a couple of 70mm premieres for all Europe ("**Where Eagles Dare**" and "**Gone With the Wind**"). During the first 9 years 3 Falke premiered around 20 films (12 in 70mm). 92% of the BO return came from the 70mm films! The seventies proved to be more difficult and films changed very often, compared to the previous decade. Only 6 films stayed on 3 Falke Bio's vast canvas for more than 3 months from 1970 until closure in 1982. "**The Godfather**" (9 months), "**The Great Gatsby**" (5 months), "**Hello, Dolly!**", "**Kelly's Heroes**" and "**Earthquake**" (all 4 months), "**Close Encounters of the Third Kind**" (3 months).



The Kinopalæet auditorium

Kinopalæet opened with a Danish comedy, "**Far til 4 på Bornholm**" in 35mm mono. The owner of the cinema was ASA Film Studios, and they made the obvious choice and opened with their latest product. A handful of Cinerama films were shown on the huge 29 meter curve. Cinerama was a disaster in Denmark and it stayed only for 14 months. With the exception of "**2001: a space odyssey**" (premiered at the Rialto on an almost flat screen) 70mm films were obviously premiered at Kinopalæet "in Cinerama". Like the 3 Falke, the 1970s proved to be difficult for a large cinema like the Kinopalæet. There were many successes like "**What's up Doc?**" and films starring the likes of James Bond, Clint Eastwood and Charles Bronson. Even Sensurround was installed for "**Rollercoaster**". During the summer of 1976, 78, 78 and 80, a cavalcade of all James Bond movies was shown (a new film every week) and during the early 70s, a "**Cavalcade of Giants**" was shown. That included whatever was available of the old classic 70mm films. A new film every

Projection Equipment

All three cinemas had a pair of DP70s installed. Kinopalæet started out with the Bauer U2 which they later dropped in favour of the Philips masterpiece. Apparently the management wasn't satisfied with the Bauer equipment and wanted the DP70 instead.



Kinopalæet also had a love affair with 3-strip Cinerama and the Century machines. 3 Falke and Imperial were also equipped with a Philips FP56 for adverts and trailers. The Imperial even had a fourth projector, a Leitz 16mm. The Leitz machine stayed until 1998 and was used for less than 100 hours. Bauer Co. also tried to sell U2s to Imperial, but the DP70 was chosen instead.

The 70mm projection lenses of 3 Falke were the American Optical Cine Aperagon Todd-AO lenses. A fabulous set of lenses, which stayed with the cinema until closure. ISCO's lenses were installed at Kinopalæet and Imperial. When Kinopalæet discontinued 3-strip Cinerama (1963), a pair of the massive ISCO 87.5mm T-Kiptagons with a magnifier were installed to project 70mm on the Cinerama screen. A regular set of 100mm ISCO lenses was used at Imperial until 1992, when a new

set of ISCO's 99mm Ultra Star lenses was brought in.

Around 1975 a Kinoton ST270 was installed at 3 Falke. The non rewind system never became particular popular and was ultimately removed. The platter is still in use, however, but now at the Palads, #9. Imperial also got platters in 1987.

All three cinemas originally had 5 sound channels behind the screen and numerous surround speakers. New amplifiers and speakers for 35mm Dolby optical stereo sound were introduced during 1979 in all three cinemas. In 1987, when a CP200 and 70mm Dolby was installed at Imperial, however, it was reconfigured for 3 stage channels. And in 1998 all 5 stage channels came back, being



70mm cinemas



third day. But despite a very expensive refurbishment in 1972, Kinopalæet's days were numbered.

Imperial opened with "Exodus" in 70mm which stayed less than two months making it only a modest success. The cinema has done remarkably well during the past 40 years, the audience appreciates the Imperial, and so the rumour goes some attend no matter what film is shown! The cinema has been the premiere venue for nearly 25 years. I think the turning point came with "Star Wars" December 26, 1977. It played for 4 months. Since then many of the biggest Hollywood productions have opened here and quite often celebrity guests have visited. Two of the longest runs were "Out of Africa" (9 months) in 1986 and "Titanic" (for 11 weeks) in 1998.



Imperial was about to be rebuilt into 5 screens in the summer of 1983, but the plans never materialized as Nordisk Film bought the Sandberg Group. The takeover put an end to rebuilding plans. Nordisk Film quickly realized the potential of Imperial, and spent a lot of money for new sound, seats and maintenance through the 1980s and 90s. Just about every possible piece of 70mm and 35mm sound and projection equipment has been installed.

Epilogue

More than 100 cinemas have opened and closed in Copenhagen during the past 100 years. Much as I like this trio of cinemas, there are 97 other stories to be told.

To this day only the Imperial has survived, but perhaps this situation could have been

different. As early as 1971/2, there were plans to rebuild Kinopalæet into three screens. Two "art" cinemas were supposed to have been built in the rear of the cinema, retaining the large screen, but the plans were never executed. It's my firm belief that if Kinopalæet had been rebuilt, it would probably never have closed. In the fall of 2001 the building was demolished after 20 years extra service as an office block. The rubble was reused as support for new roads. Just think of it; you could be driving on the remains of Kinopalæet.

3 Falke Bio closed because of mismanagement, terrible programming, lack of distributor support and ultimately lack of audience. The closure was a real shame but the auditorium itself has survived (with little change) for 20 odd years as a concert venue.

I feel fortunate that I was trained as a projectionist at 3 Falke and took pictures 20 years ago. A few years later I also ran films at the Imperial for some 7 years. It was a privilege; a great "toy" and I had a ball. Being born in 1963, I never experienced the heydays of 70mm when first run films were "always" presented in 6-track magnetic stereo on big curved screens. I can get emotional, however, with this interest in the three big 70mm cinemas of Copenhagen.



It's sad to see modern "design" of cinemas when I compare it with what they could do 40-50 years ago. Many contemporary cinemas look cheap to me, oversized cardboard boxes thrown up in a hurry with a shovel and a hammer. For me 3 Falke, Kinopalæet and Imperial are truly unique, and designers could learn a great deal by looking back in time.

Sadly, most of our Danish cinema heritage has been rebuilt or demolished in the name of progress. Imperial is one of the very few remaining original cinemas from an era (nearly) gone with the wind.

More information about 70mm and the cinemas at www.in70mm.com

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	3 Falke Bio	Kinopalæet	Imperial Bio
Opened/Closed	23.10.1958/14.12.1982	26.12.1959/15.03.1981	01.11.1961/-
Architect	Ole Hagen	Ole Hagen	Otto Frankild
Licensee	Liberalit Oplysnings Forbund	ASA Film	Folkeligit Oplysnings Forbund
Manager	August A. Andersen (1958-77)	Lau Lauritzen (1959-72)	Jørgen Nielsen (1961-72)
Floors	Linoleum	Carpets	Marble/Carpets
Seats	1000/976	1118/975	1521/1179/1102
Projector	DP70/FP56	Bauer UZ/Century/DP70	DP70/FP56/Leitz 16mm
Sound	BOFA 6-track V40/Dolby CP50	/Dolby CP50	BOFA 6-track V40/Dolby CP50/Dolby CP200/EX/SDDS/DTS70mm
Screen	17,5 x 8 (Todd-AO curve)	20 x 8 (Cinerama curve)	15,7 x 7,64 (just curved)
70mm films Premiere dates can be found at www.in70mm.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> € South Pacific € The Miracle of Todd-AO s) € Porgy and Bess € Oklahoma! € The March of Todd-AO s) € Mutiny on the Bounty € Lawrence of Arabia € Becket € My Fair Lady € The Bible...in the Beginning *) € The Dirty Dozen € Doctor Dolittle € The Comedians € Gone With The Wind € Where Eagles Dare € Funny Girl € Goodbye, Mr. Chips € Ice Station Zebra € Hello, Dolly! € Kelly's Heroes € Waterloo € That's Entertainment € Earthquake **) € Logan's Run € Close Encounters of the Third Kind *) Dimension 150 ** Sensurround s) Short 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> € Solomon and Sheba € Spartacus € Seven Wonders of the World *) € How the West Was Won *) € Cinerama South Seas Adventure *) € The Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm *) € Cinerama Holiday *) € It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World € The Fall of the Roman Empire € Circus World € Cheyenne Autumn € The Greatest Story Ever Told € The Hallelujah Trail € The Agony and the Ecstasy € Michelangelo s) € The Great Race € Shellarama s) € Battle of the Bulge € Khartoum € Grand Prix € Custer of the West € Star! € Krakatoa, East of Java € Oliver! *) Cinerama s) Short 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> € Exodus € El Cid € West Side Story € Barabbas € Le Corsaire s) € Cleopatra € Operation Crossbow € Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines € The Sound of Music € The Sand Pebbles € Camelot € Mackenna's Gold € Elvis, That's the Way It Is € Brainstorm € 2010 € Out of Africa € Lawrence of Arabia *) € Hook € Spartacus *) € Far and Away € Baraka € Titanic **) *) Restoration ** 70mm DTS s) Short

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