

THE CINEMAS OF INDIA AN EXCEPTIONAL HERITAGE

ELISABETH CRISTELER
SIMON EDELSTEIN



JONGLEZ PUBLISHING



Bellary - Prabath - 2025 - Closed today.



Madurai - Alankar - 2024 - Closed today.

Art Deco Cinemas. India's magnificent Art Deco cinemas, with their refined forms and vibrant colours, lost in dusty towns or hidden behind crumbling walls, proudly preserve their anonymity. Is it out of fear of being crushed by bulldozers? They count their last spectators before extinguishing their flickering lights, soon to be replaced by hideously shaped buildings. Few are those who will be outraged by their disappearance. With pride, they'll tell you that the present must replace the past, gazing at a brand-new shopping centre with the most perfectly common contours. These Art Deco jewels that were once the pride of their owners will hardly survive public indifference and the voracious appetite of property speculators. Others, miraculously preserved, will survive for eternity... but sometimes eternity can prove rather short.



Madurai - Annamallai - 2006.



Madurai - Annamallai - 2012.

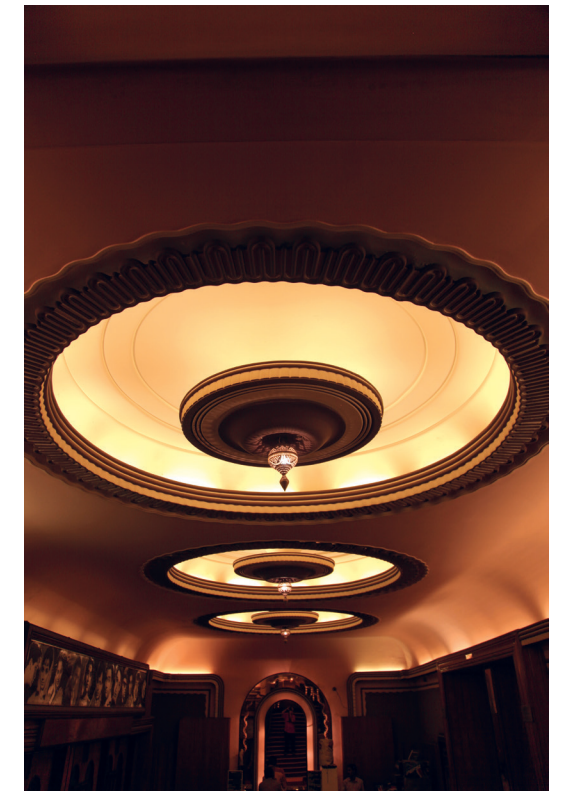


Madurai - Annamallai - 2024 - Still open.

Madurai, Annamallai Cinema. Indians periodically repaint their cinema facades. Playing with colours might transform the very soul of the cinema... Yet they do so chiefly from necessity: monsoons, pollution and climate conspire to weaken both paint and facade. It is also about marking territory. In many towns, the cinema often remains the sole place of beauty. With its vivid hues and daring architecture, it presides with quiet elegance over a labyrinth of dust-laden streets.



Mumbai - Liberty - 2024 - Open for special events.



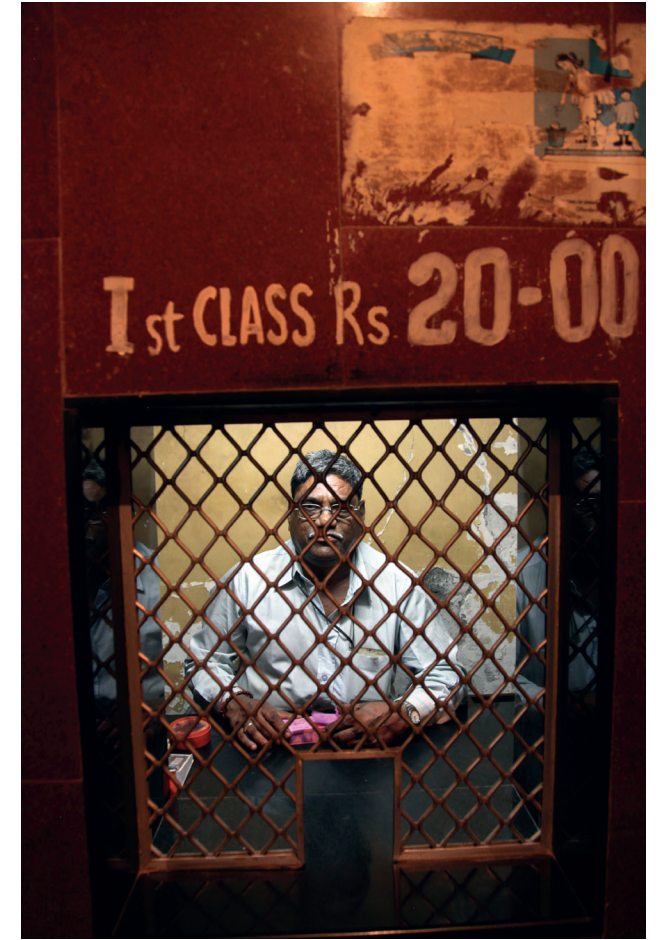
Mumbai, The Liberty. The Liberty, which opened in 1949 to mark India's independence, is an Art Deco gem with a single-screen auditorium seating 1,100, as well as a smaller room with around 30 seats for private screenings. The interiors, designed by architect and designer Namjoshi, amazed audiences with incandescent lights, geometric ceilings, carpeted staircases, and impressive lighting. A curtain covered the screen, decorated with stars and piano keys. Today, maintaining such a beautiful venue is extremely costly, especially as audiences have dwindled, so the cinema now opens only for special events.



Mumbai - Liberty - 2024 - Open for special events.



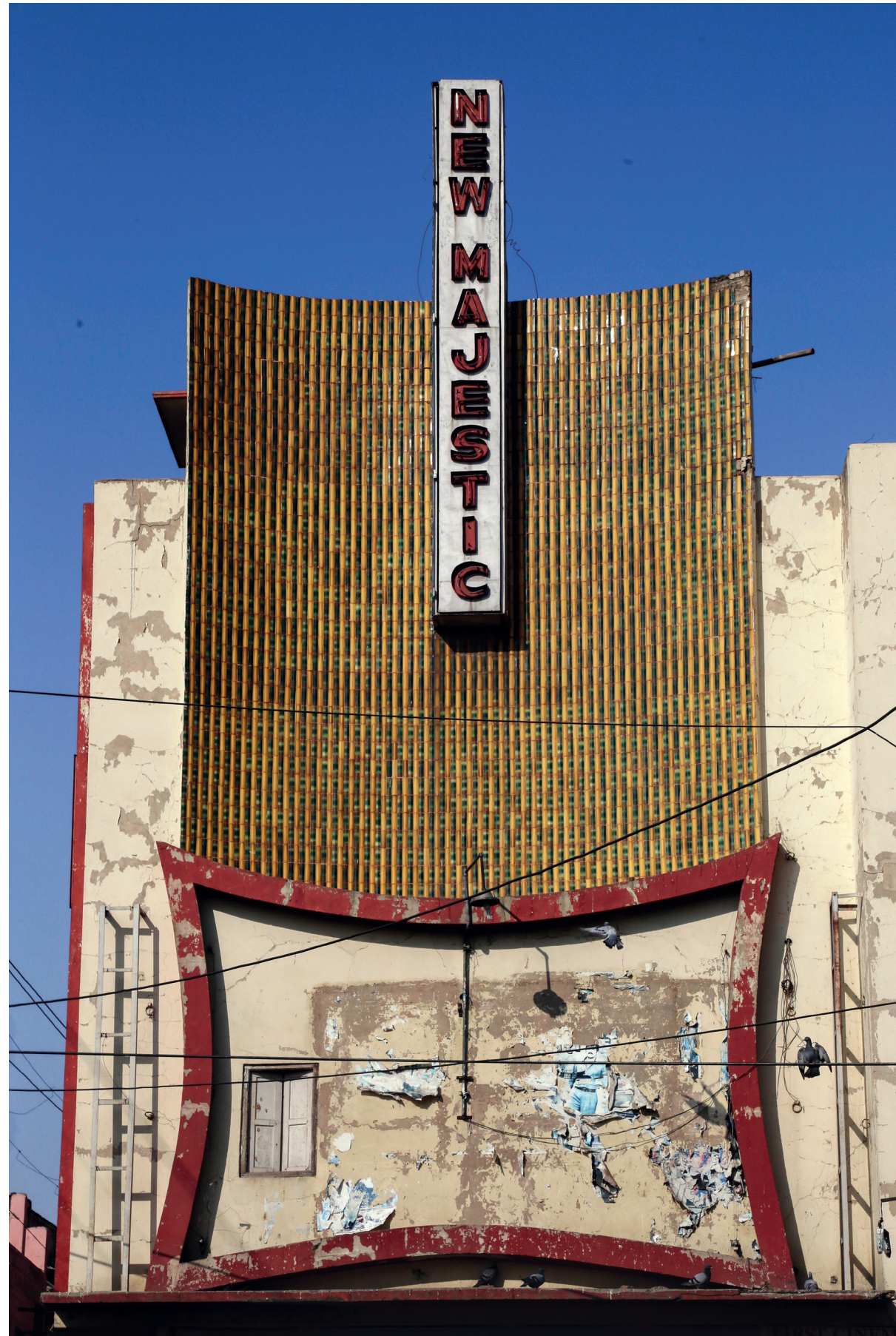
Film City, Mumbai (200 hectares; 42 outdoor sets; 16 sound stages). Over 100 films are made here every year.





Jaipur - Golcha - 2016 - Still open.





Ajmer - New Majestic - 2016 - Destroyed today.



Aurangabad - Gupta - 2014 - Closed today.



Narasipura - Sri Murugan - 2014 - Still open.



Srirangapatna - Sri Jay Lakshmi - 2014 - Closed today.



Chennai - Balaji - 2012 - Still open.



Bannur - Ratnama - 2014 - Still open.



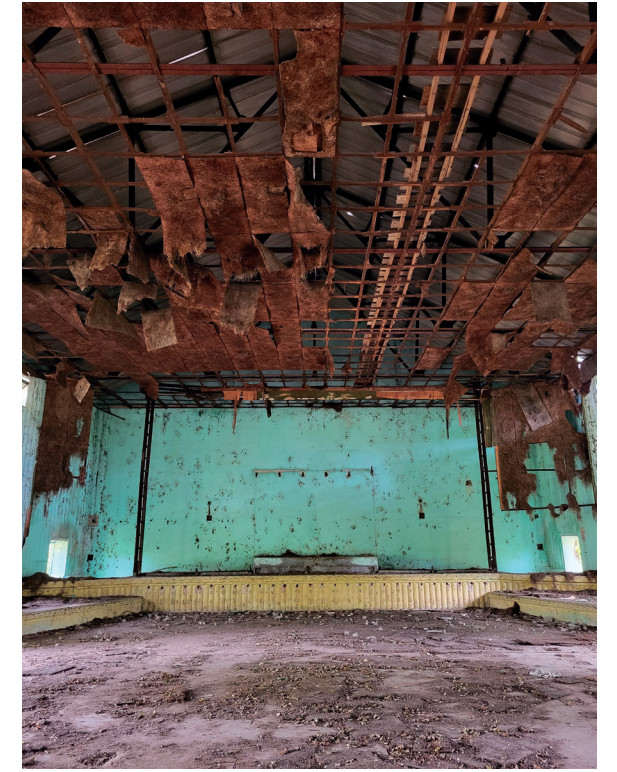
Hassan - Sri Guru - 2025 - Still open.



Nyamathi - Shri Shaila Talkies - 2025 - Still open.



Koradacheri - Avaiyar - 2024 - Abandoned.





Allahabad - Moti Mahal - 2017.



Benares - Sahu Palace - 2017.



Mumbai - Super Plaza - 2017.



Mumbai - Imperial - 2006.



Harihar - Ragavendra - 2025.

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In India, large movie theatres are shutting down one after another. Crushed by the rise of multiplexes and undermined by destructive urban policies, thousands of single-screen cinemas have closed their doors, leaving behind torn seats, silent projectors, and the memories of a popular, vibrant, and lively cinema culture.

For nearly 20 years, Elisabeth Cristeler and Simon Edelstein travelled across India in search of these abandoned or still-standing venues. Faded facades, creaking ticket booths, drowsy spectators dozing in the heat ... Through their lens, we discover a cinephile India — exuberant and deeply human — like a final screening before extinction.

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