

Lost Cinemas of Edinburgh – The State

A Streamline Moderne cinema located at the west end of Great Junction Street and perched above the Water of Leith. It was opened in 1938 by an independent operator the architect being Sir James Miller, better known for his work on railway stations including Glasgow Central and Wemyss Bay.

With seating for 1,700, it catered to the higher end of the market and branded itself “Leith’s Super Cinema.” The striking exterior was matched by a sophisticated, colour-changing lighting system on the inside and the building was more than just a cinema, it was a one-stop entertainment facility with shops at street level (including the usual R. S. McColl confectioner and tobacconist), a billiards hall and a skittles alley.

"THE STATE" | GREAT JUNCTION ST. | 1938-72



LOST CINEMAS OF EDINBURGH

The State survived as a cinema for only 24 years, closing in 1972 when like many of its peers bingo took over as a way to make the place pay. Bingo lasted until the late 1990s followed by a few years of vacancy, all the time the exterior was slowly crumbling into a sorry state. Then somewhat surprisingly in 2001,

£3m was spent converting it into the Babylon night club which lasted less than 6 months and was sold on within a year since when it has been rented out to the Kingdom Church. Over the last 10 years or so, developers have circled the premises and various schemes have come and gone to convert it into flats, which would involve demolishing the old cinema hall to the

rear and refurbishing the front half of the building. The Hidden Door festival are using the cinema as part of their 2018 programme, which might be your last chance to get a look inside before it is irrevocably altered.

Andy says about himself : *“I’m a self-taught digital illustrator who has learned the long and hard way by plugging away at it for the last 15 or so years, on and off; I confess that I have never studied art or design and am thoroughly useless with pencil and paper.*

“I started out doing technical illustration at university to try and make up for my lack of written effort in essays by embellishing them with elaborate diagrams of earwigs or whatever! With no real training or knowledge of how to go about things, I spent a long time simply finding things I liked and trying to see if I could replicate them.

“This provides some technical skill, but it’s taken a much longer time for me to find a style of my own that I am happy with. I found my feet and style through a love of old cycling posters and bright and quirky mid-century illustration.

“I do most of my image composition work in my head and go straight to the screen if I have an idea I like. I’ve always had a liking for 20th century architecture and also for Edinburgh local history and this series of illustrations is where all 3 of these interests have collided on a page. I have been working on them for some time now, looking back at the dates on the files I’m somewhat horrified to see it’s been 18 months.

“From concept to getting most of the work done probably took about only 1 week and I have been sitting on it since then totally unconvinced with the finer details, digging it out once and a while for an adjustment. Now I hope I have something that is worth sharing with the insatiable market for

Edinburgh nostalgia."