

## Drive-in Cinema: The Comeback of Old Trend

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**ABSTRACT:** *The Covid-19 pandemic, which started to spread all through the world since March 2020, has changed the arrangement of human life. One of which also has an impact is on the cinema. Based on the rules that apply in the current pandemic, which is focusing on physical distancing a lot of indoor cinema had no other choice but to close the business. According to that issues, there are some ideas to bringing back drive-in cinema to be operated in this pandemic era. Indonesia, for the first time also trying this trend. This study will give an idea whether drive-in cinema can be used effectively as a substitute for indoor cinema in order to boost the economy and film market in Indonesia. With the method of literature review and study cases, trying to understand the history and philosophy of making drive-in cinema, also to find out how to design a place to become a space for drive-in cinema. And with the success case from a lot of city in this world, drive-in cinema is surely the great solution for movie-holic in Indonesia in this pandemic era.*

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Cinema, Drive-in Cinema, History, Design, Place Making

### INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has a great impact to human life, including also to the film industry. Cinemas and movie theaters all over the world have been closed, and film releases have been postponed to future dates. Due to this closure, the global box office has suffered a huge loss by billions of dollars. Suddenly movie streaming has become more popular, while this cause the stock of film exhibitors has also dropped.

The lockdown policy in this pandemic will significantly impact our behavior to watch a movie. We must avoid large gatherings by stay away from watching a movie inside the theater. Watching movies online is an attempt to answer this problem.

And also as the outdoor cinema venue have been open up in some of the country over the world in recent weeks. From local small business owners until the big business including also the cinema owners who have been forced to shut down their business operations to comply with Covid-19 social distancing mandates trying to open the drive-in cinema in their parking lots to make up for lost income.

South Korea, in March trying to open drive-in cinema and manage to get increase sales 10-20 percent for weekdays, even sold out in the weekend. It shows that people still have a big interest to watch a movie, but they prefer for safer spaces to enjoy it in this pandemic era.

In Indonesia itself, drive in cinema has also been implemented last June, using the same concept, namely using a parking lot as a substitute for a cinema studio, this activity runs smoothly and can satisfy film lovers who miss watching movies in theaters. This is the first time Indonesia has tried to apply the concept of watching outdoor films like this, as we know, drive in cinema is widely practiced in many countries abroad, they even have fixed locations and schedules. And in a pandemic like this time, Indonesia inevitably has to do various ways to restore the country's economy, using the available land to return to

running a business that was stopped due to this pandemic situation.

### **Research Question**

1. What things must be consider to create a drive-in cinema?
2. With the re-open indoor cinema, which one is the best solution in this pandemic situation? Indoor cinema with new normal regulation or drive-in cinema?
3. Can the drive-in cinema concept be applied with physical distancing rules in the current pandemic era?
4. Can the concept of drive-in cinema improve the economy in the world of cinema in Indonesia?

### **METHODOLOGY**

1. Exploring the various data and facts that occur in all parts of the world.
2. Comparing the methods and strategies of countries in the world which can also be implemented in Indonesia.
3. Conduct research on the urgency of drive-in cinema and how to design a space into a different function.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **A. Drive-In Cinema Definiton and History**

So what is drive-in cinema actually? According to Shannon Bell in her journal article, "Drive-in theaters emerged in the 1930s, multiplied during the post-World War II era, then ceased to be built as quickly as they had appeared. Not simply an usual form to emerge and then all but disappear from the American landscape, drive- in theaters are indicative of the society and economy that created and later abandoned them."

The enthusiasm of car and movies for americans in postwar period was immense. So that's why drive-in cinema is the best concept to unite that two things. Which it can provided the place for them to watch an entertaining movie in their automobile. They can bring their family, or couple to come to this place and if the movie ends they can leaving the place without ever leaving their comfort and spacious car.

The history of drive-in cinema not only because the big passion of the car, but also the experience of Richard Hollingshead from New Jersey. He created drive-in cinema as a solution for people who unable to fit into smaller movie theater seats. And he got the idea after creating a mini drive-in for his mother. With a concept appealing more to families, Hollingshead claims its drive-in concept is a place "The whole family is welcome, regardless of how noisy the children are."

"My invention relates to a new and useful outdoor theater and it relates more particularly to a novel construction in outdoor theaters whereby the transportation facilities to and from the theater are made to constitute an element of the seating facilities of the theater...wherein the performance, such as a motion picture show or the like, may be seen and heard from a series of automobiles so arranged in relation to the stage or the screen, that the successive cars behind each other will not obstruct the view. "- Richard M. Hollingshead, in his patent application submitted on August 6, 1932. (Segrave, 2006).

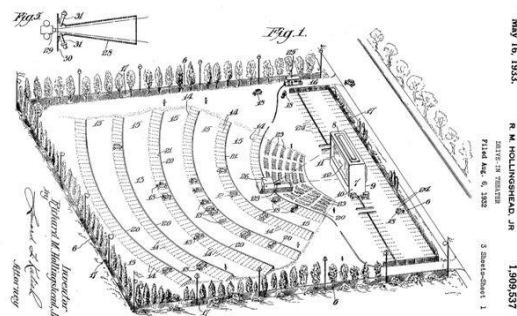
That kind of philosophy or concept can be a great to dealing with pandemic issues. Where the physical distancing is the guidelines to keep safe. Without ever leaving our own

space, which in this context is the car, we can minimize the direct physical contact and keeping the safe healthy bubble.

## B. Drive-In Cinema Design

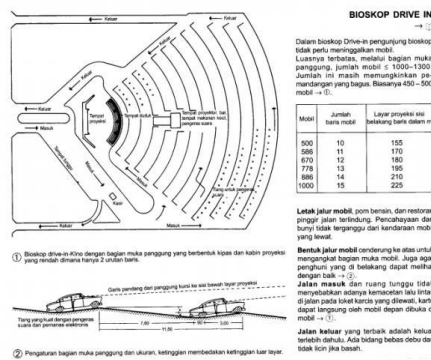
The design of the drive-in theater is deceptively simple : an empty lot with minimal construction. In actuality, it is a series of complicated design solutions based on upon the concept of efficiency. "At the same time, established features of the indoor theater were drawn upon and adapted by drive-in theater designers for the automobile and the roadside. With the natural atmosphere of the starry night sky and rural location, drive-in theaters did not have to provide luxurious, sometimes exotic, surroundings of indoor theater. These elaborate interiors helped transport the viewer into the fantasy world of the film and became part of the movie going experience." - Shannon Bell (From Ticket Booth to Screen Tower: An Architectural Study of Drive- in Theaters in the Baltimore-Washington, D.C.- Richmond Corridor).

In her architectural study of drive-ins, From Ticket Booth to Screen Tower, Shannon Bell also writes that "the drive-in was a model of efficiency in design, an interwoven group of architectural elements responding to a variety of commercial, social and aesthetic demands." Which the key among those demands is space: A 500-car drive-in requires about 10 to 14 acres. You also need low ambient light and graded ramps for proper sightlines.



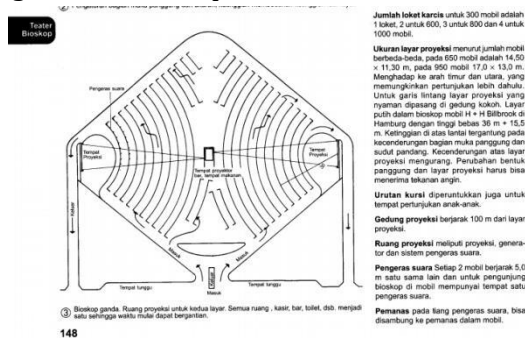
**Figure 1:** Patent issued to Hollingshead for the first drive-in  
Source: freepatentsonline.com

To make a drive-in cinema is neither easy nor difficult. Easy because we just need to providing the empty open spaces that can be use for the car parking. The equipments for showing the movie in drive-in cinema is just to providing the big screen, movie projector, and sound systems. The 'little bit' difficult is to arrange the car so all people can enjoy the movie without being blocked by other's car.



**Figure 2 : Drive-In Cinema Floor Plan**  
Source : Architect's Data (Neufert, 2002)

In the book of Architect's Data written by Neufert (2002), there are some requirements and criteria to make a space for drive-in cinema. Such as the arrangement of the car, the number of the car, car track shape to the projection screen, and also the placement of the speakers. In this book also mention about the effective way to designing a space for the car, which the space must have the area for car so the car can have a straight line of sight from the car seat stage to the bottom projection screen. So the space must provide the car seat stage that can lift up the car a bit to do so.



**Figure 3 : Drive-In Cinema Floor Plan**  
Source : Architect's Data (Neufert, 2002)

As we know the architect's data book is the data that we can use to design new space or building. But what If we just need to use the empty space for making a drive in cinema? It's difficult to transform the spaces to follow all the requirements in Neufert book that already mention above. Especially to make the car seat stage in the permanent car parking made from asphalt. Because the car parking still be use as the car parking, so it impossible to transform it into the other arrangement or shape. To deal with that, the arrangement of the car can be the solution. The car arrangement must form a semicircle facing the screen. So all car can have the free access to see into the screen.

### C. Drive-In Cinema in The World

In some Epic Theatres in U.S, they can accommodate only small crowds fit only 113 and 75 cars. And for the bathroom they offering access to their theaters' indoor bathrooms during screenings, only one group or individual is allowed in at a time, and six feet of space

is mandated between each person or group waiting in line. But this way can result in longer wait times for facilities.

In April, Doc's Drive-In Theatre in Buda, Texas, welcomed 85 cars for a socially distanced wedding live-streamed on the theater's two screens. Churches resumed drive-in services, reviving a practice rooted in the 1950s. In cities around the world, idled shopping malls and empty parking lots hosted ad-hoc screens for pop-up community movies, while existing drive-ins expanded their offerings to include concerts, art shows and stand-up comedy performances. Miami's Hard Rock Stadium turned its football field into a giant outdoor cinema. And in July, a boat-in movie theater even popped up in Key Biscayne, Florida, complete with a 60-foot floating screen.

Thailand, as reported on July 3rd by The Jakarta Post, has emerged as one of Asia's COVID-19 success stories, with no domestic transmission in the past 38 days and only 58 deaths among its 3,179 confirmed cases. It makes eased the restrictions in the city including the cinemas that already reopen. The cinemas have been open for one month with limited seating and regular disinfection. But most people still felt safer to watch a movie in drive in cinema and willing to pay 1,200 baht fee per vehicle for it.

#### **D. Drive-In Cinema vs New Normal Indoor Cinema**

Today, October 21, 2020, some cinema in Indonesia already opened with new regulations and policy. Some of the policies are the temperature check, the e-payment for ticketing, new arrangement of seats which allows by government is 25% audience per studio, the queue distance in entrance, exit, also the ticket counter must in 1 meter. The arrangement of the seating must follow the safe bubble that are require for preventing the spreading of COVID-19.

With indoor cinema reopening but using new regulations, would it be better than holding a drive-in cinema? To knowing about that, it's good to look into the pros and cons of drive-in cinema based on people who have experienced watching on drive-in cinema. In this case, Ryu (2020) reviewing her experience watching a movie on drive-in cinema and give the pros and cons of each aspects she mentions.

From the flexibility to come and go from the place until the specific aspects like the screen, drive-in cinema is still a good ideas to watching a movie if we need a high privacy. But the thing that the most organizer forgot is about the need of clean and proper bathroom for the audiences. Which most of drive-in cinema just providing the portable toilet.

#### **CONCLUSION AND FINDING**

Drive in cinema is the outdoor cinema where the audiences watch a movie inside their own car. The history of drive-in cinema comes from the ideas of Richard Hollingshead. He created his own drive-in cinema as the solution for people who can't fit into movie theater seats. And unexpectedly his ideas also the great concept for people in post-war era.

To design a drive-in cinema is not hard. Just providing the empty spaces which can accommodate the amount of cars to parking, arrange the screen and speaker, and done. Things must be consider to create a drive-in cinema is :

**1. Choose the place that having not too much light from surrounding area.**

Like what the old drive-in cinema choose the area for their driving-cinema which mostly use the area far away from the city or residential to prevent a lot of light from the building so it will not distracting the movie from the screen.

**2. Use a screen size that suitable to the size of the land for the parking audience car.**

Screen size is important so all the audience can have the vision to the screen.

**3. The arrangement of the car in the area also the important thing to look into.**

Car arrangement is the main thing to be consider since it affect the experience of watching a movie for the audiences.

So, which one is the best solution in this pandemic situation? Indoor cinema with new normal regulation or drive-in cinema?

For the answer to the problem of physical distancing in a pandemic era like today, the drive-in cinema that is done in each audience's car is a concept that really supports the maintenance of a 'safe bubble' for all viewers and cinema employees itself. And so all people in the cinema, both the audiences and the employees can feel safer to watch a movie and also to work.

A lot of people still feel uncomfortable to being in an enclosed space with a stranger. So that's why in this pandemic situation still a lot of people prefer to subscribe the movie platform or watch a movie in drive-in cinema although the indoor cinemas already open.

This idea of drive-in cinema can be a good ideas to restore the economy of film and cinema industry in Indonesia. Since to make this drive-in cinema is not too hard. And also because of the many good responses from people who have enjoyed drive-in cinema in Indonesia, it will surely have big attention from movie lovers all over the country.