

# The Cinema Exhibitors' HALL of FAME

Former "Rank Insider"..., Stan Fishman, CBE



Following a perhaps casual introduction to the business, Stan Fishman has risen to become a most respected industry stalwart, his service spanning more than five decades. Stan's story begins back in 1946, having applied as a trainee projectionist at the Stamford Hill Super – despite the Gaumont's chief warning that Cinema's post war decline would be putting paid to any 'career'.

Punctuated by two years' National Service, Fishman's career took in Assistant Engineer (at Odeon's Astoria, Finsbury Park), resuming at Odeon's Regal Edmonton, where his taste for, and subsequent flirtation with, live shows would quickly develop. Indeed, by 1956, following a stint as House Engineer at the Astoria Charing Cross Road, he became Rank's Stage Manager, a role that saw Stan touring the country. Next followed his appointment as Production Director at head office, booking live shows in all Rank cinemas equipped to play them.

A 'film guy' through and through, however, by 1968 Stan returned to the film side of Odeon's activities, now overseeing both Film and Live Show booking until 1981, and winding up this particular chapter as Film Booking Controller. Interestingly, Fishman attributes his success in the role to the peculiar twists and turns of his earlier career path, unencumbered by any involvement within Production-Distribution, he insists, and that it was through a combination of experience gained exclusively through live work and exhibition, coupled with his own movie-going tastes, that developed his 'nose' for booking – an instinct for understanding what makes audiences 'tick'.

By 1984, having secured a seat on the Odeon Board of Directors, Stan emerged a year later as Film Booking and Marketing Director, and

maintains his appreciation of Rank's loyalty to Odeon – through both thick and thin – having contributed much to its Exhibition success.

Renowned for his tough negotiating with distributors (a particularly noteworthy episode having occurred with UIP over *Jurassic Park*), it was Fishman's *naïvety*, he suggests, that paved the way for a more flexible approach to Booking, his managing to persuade distributors that a more straightforward, co-operative approach would lead to better working relationships.

Another, perhaps controversial, area in which changes were wrought, involved Stan's helping abolish the Eady Levy, in removing the outmoded 'quota system' requirement designed initially to funnel resources into

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*"Only Cinema creates effective marketing platforms for product that goes into ever-increasing secondary markets, such as DVD... in fact, if Cinema didn't exist, someone would have to both invent and pay for it!"*  
**Stan Fishman, CBE**

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British film-making. Its demise, coinciding with Exhibition's nadir c.1985, actually assisted the Sector's recovery, now making possible the useful allocation of funds in improving Cinema's existing infrastructure. Indeed, a decade after multiplex' arrival, Stan's prediction that the revival would sky-rocket admissions has proved entirely correct.

In the wake of changes which have witnessed the tightening of exhibitor-distributor marketing schedules, another ongoing determination has been his relentless in marketing the Odeon brand, something he'd helped deliver, and such that today the 'Odeon' name remains without doubt one of the most closely associated with the British movie-going psyche.

Recognising the need to nurture both product and audiences, following his retirement in 1995 (upon which he would receive the Cinema Expo International Achievement Award), Fishman's association with Odeon would by no means end – too much a part of his life after 49 years – where he remained as consultant, whilst continuing as President of the CEA, another role he'd performed admirably during his period of tenure, 1994-99.

Here, Fishman's achievements have spanned a number of worthwhile imperatives: from spearheading the CEA's involvement in 1984's All Industry Marketing (AIM) initiative –

effectively an attempt to promote improved exhibitor-distributor co-operation, out of such emerging an influential sponsorship package with Barclays, the launch of several generic campaigns (Cinema 100, Anti-Piracy etc), as well as funding for the likes of Film Education. Efforts were made, too, to 'protect windows' whilst putting across the importance of Cinema to ancillary markets; also with government – 'production-oriented at the best of times' – in fighting the exhibitor's corner; while, with the SFD (FDA), successfully concluding the ongoing issue of the Standard Terms & Conditions updating the same by which exhibitors and distributors now trade. Other breakthroughs include furthering the Disability issue, and establishing The Film Complaints Panel, an infrequently-used, though nonetheless essential, facility made available to exhibitors voicing complaints over unfair treatment.

In 1997, Fishman was honoured with a CBE for services to the Film industry, and from 2001 remains President of the British Cinema & Television Veterans; also a trustee of the Cinema & Television Benevolent Fund (CTBF) in Golden Square. E

## Stan Fishman, CV

- 1930** Born 24th January, London
- 1946-47** Joins Gaumont as a Rewind Boy at Super Stamford Hill, then Odeon as Assistant Engineer (Astoria Finsbury Park)
- 1950-56** Assist. House Engineer, Regal Edmonton (CMA)/House Engineer Astoria, Charing Cross
- 1956-67** Becomes Rank's Live Show Stage Manager; Stage Director, then Rank Production Director (Live Shows)
- 1968-81** Exec. Assistant to Booking Controller
- 1981-84** Booking Controller, Rank Theatre Division
- 1985-95** Odeon Film Booking & Marketing Dir.
- 1994-99** President, CEA
- 1995** Receives CEI Achievement Award
- 1997** Awarded CBE for services to the Film Industry
- 2001 – present** President British Cinema & TV Veterans, and Trustee of CTBF