

AN occasional series of articles by the Editor describing the cinemas and theatres put up by private enthusiasts for their own interest and pleasure. Because, by their very nature, these are *private*, we shall not be printing addresses of these fascinating establishments. However, if readers wish to contact the owners of the buildings featured, the Editor will forward any letters!

Seven p.m. one recent summer's evening, "somewhere in the North West", and your Editor was on his way to visit Clive Garner's famous private cinema. Famous? Yes, within the world of cinema enthusiasts, most certainly!

"Off the motorway, down the slope, under a railway bridge and turn right." The directions were exact. I found



Behind this modest facade is a temple of delights!

myself in a wide residential road, which must be described as "desirable". I surmised that many of the houses must be occupied by bank managers — it was just that sort of road!

A ring on the door — faint scurrying sound from within, to be explained before much longer. The door opened by Mrs Garner — "Mr Harris?" My husband's expecting you, please go through to the cinema.

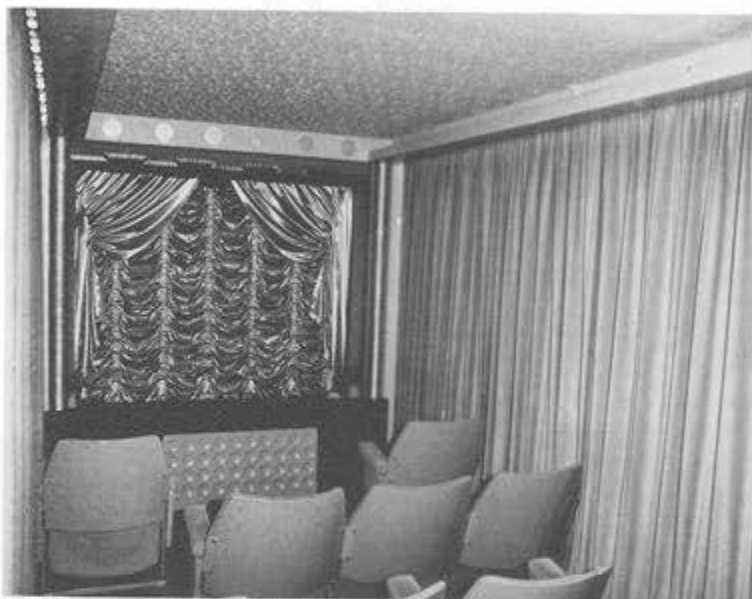
As I entered the cinema vestibule, decorated with a moveable type "categorise board" on which the programme would be listed, as well as favourite photos showing sepia views of local cinemas — many alas now closed — the strains of that delightful 1936 ditty, "Around the Corner at the Odeon" met the editorial ear. A delicate and nicely thought out compliment to TABS and The Rank Organisation indeed. The scurrying sounds were obviously the musical and physical preparations being made!

And then began a truly delightful evening. First, the cinema itself. About the size of a large suburban garage, stepped floor, carpeted in grey with twelve matching grey tip up cinema

\*Note: I should explain for overseas readers that the theatres and cinemas owned by our parent group are all known as "Odeons".

## THE PRIVATE THEATRES & CINEMAS OF BRITAIN

by The Editor



Interior of the Cinema. Drapes and seating by Strand



Strand seating being tested by Clive Garner, the fortunate owner, and the Editor.

chairs, made at our Lowton seating factory — and grey wall drapes. And the auditorium lighting! Homage to Gillespie Williams would be a fitting description. The principles of the former Holophane designer, and, I believe, Managing Director, are beautifully applied. There are coloured lights, red, blue and yellow around the ceiling trough, and another trough with three colours to light the walls, all controlled by a Strand Discoplus. A six kilowatt load, no less.

So there I sat, awash in a symphony of coloured light. The tabs parted, to reveal a reefer curtain, again being

played upon by the on stage lighting! Is Ossa piled upon Pellon? You bet it is! There are floats, battens and X-rays (vertical battens to either side of the pros. arch), all controlled by another Discoplus.

Clive Garner's principle is that the vintage programmes which he shows to a selected group of friends once a month, should always have a newsreel contemporary with the date of the main feature film — in this instance "Passport to Fame" dating from 1935 with Edward G. Robinson and Jean Arthur, so the British Movietone News started with an item called "Hitler

recruits a new German Army!" scenes showed grey coated men grasping flags and repeating an oath, all together. We knew four years later what it all meant, but in 1935 all this must have just been for idle curiosity. There were two delightful advertising films. In the first a knight in armour was seen enjoying a steaming beverage while on sentry duty on a castle's snow covered battlement — the subtle message being "Bovril, for cold nights". This was followed by a small drama in which a rather pudgy young deb with a South Kensington accent you could cut with a knife, tells Daddy that her young man had every right to become her finance "Because he smoked De Reske Minors!" C'est incroyable!

There are two Eif 16mm projectors,



a dual and a single slide lantern, and a double turntable for 78 rpm "Non Sync" records, plus tape units, rewinders, film splicers etc.

The inspiration for the design of Clive's cinema was the Regal, Birkenhead, whose proscenium arch design is exactly reproduced in miniature. So perfect is the illusion, once one is sitting comfortably, that only the size of the seats in relation to the whole gives the game away.

My host, Clive Garner, is a man of many interests. The world of vintage cinema obviously, but also the popular music of the twenties and thirties, this latter enthusiasm being testified by his collection of no less than twenty five thousand 78 r.p.m. records! Louis Levy's original Gaumont British Orchestra recording of the "March of the Movies"? Nothing easier! "Regal Zenophone Hits of 1936"? Naturally. Roy Fox? Al Bowley? All present and correct, and many practically unscratched.

A wonderful evening of interest and enthusiasm — thank you very much, Clive!

\*For non cinema equipment aficionados I should explain that this is the term for the equipment for reproducing record sound through the screen speakers, but non synchronised with the film.