

# Lights Up at Hoyts

Using signs and lights instead of gold and velvet, a design team led by architect Thomas Bakalars has created a modern-day version of the classic movie palace in the Hoyts Cinemas' 10-theatre complex in Augusta, Maine.

The theatre lobby has been conceived as a high-energy streetscape, with shop entrances and storefronts defined by signs and lights. The marquee has been moved indoors to become a bright vertical monument on the "street."

What was baroque in the palace lobbies

ARCHITECT USES  
LIVELY SIGNS  
AND BRIGHT  
COLORS  
IN MAINE  
10-PLEX

is now funky, with spaces punctuated by punched aluminum, chrome-plated steel tubing, metal channel letters, odd shapes, laminates and illuminated walls and ceiling panels. The door of the video game room—"The Game Zone"—is framed by pulsing light, colorful signs, and sleek, angled metallic surfaces that play with the light.

"We wanted to use signs and materials to create a playful kind of 'Times Square' feeling," notes Bakalars. "We wanted to bring the notion of movies as entertainment out into the lobby. And since most movie business is after dark, we designed the lobby to be seen at night, with a transparent facade that gives it a jewel-like quality when seen from the parking area.

"The ceiling is drenched with radiant blues, to create a sense of the infinite space of a nighttime sky," he continues. "Ambient light makes it glow, and the fanciful signs enhance the sense of place as they provide information."

## *Cost-Effective Design*

While the design emphasizes aesthetics and the entertainment values of a night at the movies, it also respects the business needs of today's exhibitors.

The signs and displays have been designed and arranged for retailing. The lobby is lined with a series of strategic selling stations, each with an immediately obvious graphic identity. Moviegoers are invited to stop, look and buy.

Cost control was a critical issue throughout the design and construction process. Expenditures for special lighting and custom signage were concentrated on key areas, such as the lobby. The theatre cost only \$70 a square foot to build, compared to conventional megaplex designs that cost as much as \$170 a square foot.

Based in Boston, Bakalars has designed many theatres and movie houses, ranging from a 150,000-square-foot multi-story entertainment complex in Albany, NY, to the Martha's Vineyard summer theatre complex. On the Augusta project, he worked with signage consultants Abrams & La Brecque Design and lighting designer Bob Osten of Lam Partners.



BRIGHT SIGNAGE INTENSIFIES THE LOBBY AS A MERCHANDISING ENVIRONMENT.



EYE-CATCHING ENTRANCE TO THE HOYTS CINEMAS 10.