

There is a magic in moviegoing that home viewing can never truly replicate. For two hours in a dark room with no distractions, we are transported to another place, shown another human being's point of view, and on especially good occasions, maybe have the way we see the world changed just a little bit. It is a communal experience with your fellow moviegoers, all of you alone together in the dark. After the movie you can have a discussion. What did it mean? How did it affect you? It can be a fellowship not unlike going to church.

Many businesses were hit hard by the pandemic, none moreso than movie theaters. While many businesses were allowed to continue operating at limited capacities, theaters were forced into complete shutdown. Movie theaters were not included in the \$25 million that went to live performance venues last year and have been largely overlooked in many of the relief aid programs. With theaters only now able to begin reopening, at very throttled capacity, they face a long road to recovery. Many theaters still have massive operating costs that are owed from the shutdown and reopening.

Take Salem Cinema. It is a beloved local institution and an independent business to be proud of. Over the years it has established solid roots in the community, and provided a place for art and culture to come the the citizens of Salem and the surrounding communities. It is a place that has more than once engaged in successful community fundraising to help pay its bills. But there's only so much the community can do alone when facing the ramifications of a pandemic shutdown for over a year. And it is the only independent theater for miles around, the only theater showing the kinds of movies and important culture that the multiplex simply does not offer. Earlier I compared the fellowship of moviegoing to attending church. That's how it has always felt for me. Please don't let my church disappear.