

Cineworld: in memoriam

Published: January 13, 2026, 7:47 pm

I think there is something much more significant to [this story](#) in the FT than reasonable concern for those who might lose their jobs as a result:

Cineworld, the world's second biggest cinema operator, is preparing to close all its screens in the US and UK after further delays to the new James Bond film pushed its struggling business to the brink.

The indefinite closure of 90 per cent of Cineworld's screens, which is expected as soon as this week, raises fundamental questions over the viability of the company and a cinema sector devastated by the pandemic.

What the story makes clear is that the new normal will be nothing like the old normal. Cinemas have been a normal part of my life. My nearest, a Cineworld, was a reasonably regular venue for me before lockdown, and now it isn't. Nor does it look likely that it will be. And that has consequences.

One consequence is, of course, for those who work at Cineworld.

Another is for the whole film industry. There are large parts of this to which, I admit, I am pretty indifferent, but that is my choice. I am very well aware of the significance of the sector, and of the influence that it has, and that it is both a force for good whilst also being, quite frankly, the producer of some pretty rubbish material.

And there is also the whole knock-on sector that surrounds this. Hospitality will suffer badly without the cinema.

Let me be clear, I am not suggesting for one moment that film will cease to exist: I presume that online consumption is already far in excess of that in cinema locations. So, I am not mourning the whole loss of an arts outlet. But there is, nonetheless, something deeply significant about this.

I cannot remember the last time I watched a film at home. That simply does not work for me. Cinema is a deliberately totally immersive experience, as far as I am concerned.

Sitting in front of the television is not. So even though film will not disappear, it might for me. And I cannot be alone. So too will the way that very large numbers of people consume film change, and that means that film will change too.

But, most of all, film will cease to be an event. And it will cease to be a shared experience. As with almost any arts event, for me the discussion on the way home has very often been the most important part of an evening out at the cinema as different reactions to what has been seen are worked out and shared. That dimension to film will be lost if cinemas close. As are so many things in life, cinema will become a more solitary event.

This, I think does matter. It's not just jobs and bad popcorn that will suffer for this change. So too will we as we then know less about each other and how we frame our view of the world.

Much of what is called the leisure and hospitality sector might be dismissed as pure frippery. And some of it, of course, is. I'm not saying there's anything wrong with that either: sometimes we all need a dose of frippery. There is, however, something much more deeply significant to it than that. I have no great reason to love Cineworld, and I strongly suspect that it is heavily over-gearred with debt, which almost certainly is not helping its survival chances. And yet, its loss will be significant.

Might I also add that it is also totally avoidable? I have little doubt that, debt or not, Cineworld could survive if the rents it pays were to be reduced. But, once more, I suspect that landlord inflexibility will not be available in this case. It is the rentier who is destroying our economy and much of our way of life in the post-Covid world. And it is the landlord, with the banker, who will be destroying jobs. We need to remember that.