

United Kingdom

Cinema paradise

Open-air movies as they should be. It might be cold outside, but something is coming back to warm your heart, writes **Dave Robinson**

Do you remember the summer? *PSNEurope* does. Sigh. *PSNEurope* remembers those long evenings when you could sit in the park till late, nibble your scotch egg, sip your pinot grigio and – if you were suitably informed ahead of time – watch an arthouse movie.

An evening like this one, in fact: *PSNEurope* is sitting in a director's-style chair in south London's Dulwich Park, mesmerised once again by Tornatore's beautiful *Cinema Paradiso*, currently being projected onto a 10m by 6m inflatable screen. Those who know the movie will recall the scene where old man Alfredo projects a classic romantic movie on to the wall of a nearby apartment block for an audience of locals. This screening couldn't be more "meta" if organiser The Luna Cinema tried...

An idea which began with a bike accident eight years ago, The Luna Cinema has been a phenomenal success story. George Wood, a 26-year-old actor incapacitated for several months by a broken leg, wondered what it might be like to show classic, cult and arthouse films to a paying audience at a chic venue al fresco, as he'd witnessed in Sydney, Australia. His lightbulb moment quickly caught on: within a year, his business was hosting 15 screenings in and around London. A name change to The Luna Cinema in 2011 saw screenings swell to 125 in 2015, at venues as diverse as Hampton Court, Alnwick Castle in Northumberland, One New Change in St Pauls and Brockley Lido (... where they showed – what else? – *Jaws*. Did someone say "meta"?).

"It was far more straightforward to get venues on board than it should have been," admits Wood. "They'd tried open-air theatre before, but not open-air cinema, so they were willing to give it a go.

What's more, TLC has attracted sponsorship from the likes of DoubleTree Hilton, Estrella, Starbucks and – yes! – Branston Pickle. The operation now runs its own mobile bar. "A key factor as we've grown," continues Wood, "is that we turn up, set up in two-and-a-half hours, and don't stay overnight; we are low impact – minimal impact, in fact – for the venue."

Tom Barton takes over the story in Dulwich Park. "One New Change shopping centre was 200 people; Leeds Castle is the biggest venue, with around 3,000." Barton is the event production manager for the "Home Counties" arm of TLC: it's only with the big expansion in 2015 that the entrepreneurial outfit has set up a touring wing, to cover Cardiff, Edinburgh, the Isle of Wight and more.

Key to touring and keeping it low impact has been the purchase of a Nexo GEO M6 system from distributor Orbital Sound. The M6 can be scaled from a groundstack on top of the LS18 subs, to the six-per-side version seen in Dulwich tonight, to a maximum of 12 per side for the bigger performances, such as Hampton Court. Do the math: with two TLC outfits, that was a hefty 48-box purchase from Orbital.

"For the size of the box I think it's incredible," says Barton. "For us, size is a big thing. They don't take up masses of space. M6 is minimal but packs a punch."

The loudspeaker throw required is between 60 and 80m, he notes. "We're not looking at high SPL, it's more about throw and coverage. But when you do want it to be loud, the M6 can do that as well. Plus the size means it travels well."

In another tent to the left of the inflatable screen, away from public gaze, is the technical heart of the enterprise. Here you'll find two Blu-ray players



Event production manager Tom Barton



Flying Nexo GEO M6 in Dulwich Park