A driving force at 75

Incorporated in 1935 as Associated Theatres, Cathay Cineplexes aims to further build on its success in years to come.

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For most Singaporeans, the five Cs – Choice, Comfort and Convenience – represent a win-win formula that has brought about great success throughout its illustrious history.

Entering its 75th year, this iconic institution shows no signs of slowing down, and aims to further build on its success in the years to come.

Cathay Cineplexes was first incorporated in 1935 as Associated Theatres Ltd. The first theatre was the 1,200-seat Pavilion Cinema in Kuala Lumpur. In 1939, the Cathay building opened, as the first integrated development with apartments, air-conditioned cinema, shops and a hotel. After a brief closure during World War II, Cathay reopened as the first Singapore cinema to screen British and American pictures.

New entity

In the 1960s, Cathay became a household name in the cinematic industry, operating a total of 75 cinemas in Singapore and Malaysia. The next two decades saw rapid growth and diversification and in 1999, a new entity was formed: Cathay Organisation Holdings Ltd. With Cathay Cineplexes Pte Ltd as one of its subsidiaries, a new logo and brand identity was developed, and this marked the start of a new era for the once “old-fashioned” Cathay.

Step into any Cathay Cineplex and be greeted by its themed interior and ergonomic plush seats, boosting the widest leg-room for any cinema in Singapore. Seating in the cinema halls is modelled after sports stadiums for unobstructed viewing and comfort. With a world-class, multi-dimensional cinematic sound and projection system, Cathay is committed to ensuring maximum comfort for its customers.

According to Suhaimi Rafidi, CEO of Cathay Organisation: “Although technological advancements have allowed for more sophisticated home entertainment equipment, nothing can replicate the ambiance and enjoyment derived from visiting our Cineplexes. And comfort is the key in ensuring we deliver on this promise.”

Such dedication is reflected in its TiHx and ISO 9000 certifications. TiHx is a trademark in high-quality audio and visual production for movie theatres, and the ISO 9000 is a specification of strict standards for a quality management system aimed at enhancing and maximising customer satisfaction. Till today, Cathay remains the only Cineplex operator in Singapore to have attained such credentials.

Situated in five locations islandwide, Cathay operates 41 screens with more than 8,000 seats. To offer maximum convenience to customers, Cathay plans to open two more Cineplexes, including an 1800-seat cinema in the upcoming Jurong Gateway.

With hassle-free booking facilities such as automated ticketing kiosks, Cathay seeks to enhance the movie-going experience by minimising the ticket procurement times. The recently launched Cathay application, which can be freely downloaded at the iTunes store, also provides another convenient avenue for customers to purchase movie tickets.

Along with the usual selection of the latest Hollywood blockbusters, Cathay Cineplexes is well known for The Picturehouse Selection. First introduced in 1990 as Singapore’s first arthouse cinema, critically acclaimed films from all over the world are made available at Cathay Cineplexes all across the island.

Customers who want a premier movie experience can also visit the Platinum Movie Suites at The Cathay, boasting amenities such as iPads in the waiting lounge, an exclusive dining menu and full reclining seats.

Apart from the traditional array of snacks found at movie concessionary stands, customers who prefer a healthier alternative can also visit Sandwich Haven stands at Cathay Cineplexes, and choose from a wide variety of freshly made sandwiches. Whether it is choosing the type of movie or deciding on a pre-movie snack, Singaporeans are truly spoilt for choice.

Such is Cathay’s success in cinematic operations that they have been able to lend this expertise to other players in the region. Consultancy services such as provision of ticketing facilities, feasibility studies and staff training programmes have been provided to major cinema operators in Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam. Currently, Cathay serves as consultant to Emaar Dubai, operator of the world-renowned Dubai Mall.

Overseas operations

“Such international exposure allows us the share the values of the Cathay brand with our business partners. If they adopt these values, and are able to reap greater successes for their businesses, it is the greatest achievement and compliment for us,” says Mr Rafidi.

Today, Cathay also has operations in Malaysia and Dubai. In the next five years, Cathay intends to expand its presence to other parts of the Middle East and Asia. Mr Rafidi asserts: “We strive to take our homegrown brand name to greater heights by exploring opportunities beyond our shores and we look forward to focusing our efforts on the Mena (Middle East North Africa) region.”

So, the next time you are in the region and feeling homesick, look around, and you might just spot a familiar face.

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– CEO Suhaimi Rafidi

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