

People & Places

Cinema

A strange limbo

Now silent, a Kabul cinema awaits fate

KABUL, Afghanistan, Nov 22, (AP): The cool 1960s-style lines of the Ariana Cinema's marquee stand over a traffic-clogged roundabout in downtown Kabul. For decades, the historic cinema has entertained Afghans and borne witness to Afghanistan's wars, hopes and cultural shifts.

Now the marquee is stripped of the posters of Bollywood movies and American action flicks that used to adorn it. The gates are closed.

After recapturing power three months ago, the Taliban ordered the Ariana and other cinemas to stop operating. The Islamic militant guerrillas-turned-rulers say they have yet to decide whether they will allow movies in Afghanistan.



Van Damme

Like the rest of the country, the Ariana is in a strange limbo, waiting to see how the Taliban will rule.

The cinema's nearly 20 employees, all men, still show up at work, logging in their attendance in hopes they will eventually get paid. The landmark Ariana, one of only four cinemas in the capital, is owned by the Kabul municipality, so its employees are government workers and remain on the payroll.

The men while away the hours. They hang out in the abandoned ticket booth or stroll the Ariana's curving corridors. Rows of plush red seats sit in silent darkness.

The Ariana's director, Asita Ferdous, the first woman in the post, is not even allowed to enter the cinema. The Taliban ordered female government employees to stay away from their workplaces so they don't mix with men, until they determine whether they will be allowed to work.

The 26-year-old Ferdous is part of a post-2001 generation of young Afghans determined to carve out a greater space for women's rights. The Taliban takeover has wrecked their hopes. Also a painter and sculptor, she now stays at home.

"I spend time doing sketches, drawing, just to keep practicing," she said. "I can't do exhibitions anymore."

Interpretation

During their previous time in power from 1996-2001, the Taliban imposed a radical interpretation of Islamic law forbidding women from working or going to school — or even leaving home in many cases — and forcing men to grow beards and attend prayers. They banned music and other art, including movies and cinema.

Under international pressure, the Taliban now say they have changed. But they have been vague about what they will or won't allow. That has put many Afghans' lives — and livelihoods — on hold.

For the Ariana, it is another chapter in a tumultuous six-decade history.

The Ariana opened in 1963. Its sleek architecture mirrored the modernizing spirit that the then-ruling monarchy was trying to bring to the deeply traditional nation.

Kabul resident Ziba Niazi recalled going to the Ariana in the late 1980s, during the rule of Soviet-backed President Najibullah, when there were more than 30 cinemas around the country.

For her, it was an entry to a different world. She had just married, and her new husband brought her from their home village in the mountains to Kabul, where he had a job in the Finance Ministry. She was alone in the house all day while he was at the office.

But when he got off work, they often went together to the Ariana for a Bollywood movie.

After years of communist rule, it was a more secular era than recent decades, at least for a narrow urban elite.

"We had no hijab at that time," said Niazi, now in her late 50s, referring to the headscarf. Many couples went to the cinema, and "there wasn't even a separate section, you could sit wherever you wanted."

At the time, war raged across the country as Najibullah's government battled an American-backed coalition of warlords and Islamic militants. The mujahedeen toppled him in 1992. Then they turned on each other in a fight for power that demolished Kabul and killed thousands of people caught in the crossfire.

The Ariana was heavily damaged, along with most of the surrounding neighborhood, in the frequent bombardments and gunbattles.

It lay abandoned in ruins for years, as the Taliban drove out the mujahedeen and took over Kabul in 1996. Whatever cinemas survived around Kabul were shuttered.

The Ariana's revival came after the Taliban's ouster in the 2001 US-led invasion. The French government helped rebuild the cinema in 2004, part of the flood of billions of dollars of international aid that attempted to reshape Afghanistan over the next 20 years.

With the Taliban gone, cinema saw a new burst of popularity.

Indian movies were always the biggest draw at the Ariana, as were action movies, particularly those featuring **Jean-Claude Van Damme**, said Abdul Malik Wahidi, in charge of tickets. As Afghanistan's domestic film industry revived, the Ariana yielded the handful of Afghan movies produced each year.

Conservative

They had three showings a day, ending in the mid-afternoon, at 50 afghanis a ticket — about 50 cents. Audiences were overwhelmingly men. In Afghanistan's conservative society, cinemas were seen as a male space, and few women attended.

Wahidi recalled how he and other staffers had to preview all foreign films to weed out those with scenes considered too racy — with couples kissing or women showing too much skin, for example.

Letting something slip through could bring the wrath of some movie-goers. Offended audiences were known to hurl objects at the screen, though it didn't happen at the Ariana, Wahidi said. He remembered one patron at the Ariana, outraged by a scene, storming out and shouting at him, "How can you show pornography?"

Ferdous was appointed as the Ariana's director just over a year ago. She previously led the Kabul municipality's Gender Equality division, where she had worked to gain equal pay for women employees and install women as senior officers in the capital's district police departments.

When she came to the Ariana, the male staff were surprised, "but they have been very cooperative and have worked well with me."

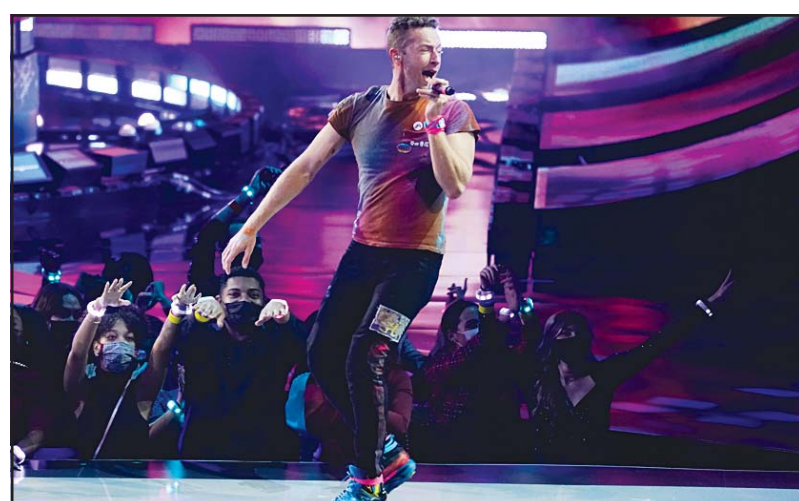
She focused on making the cinema more welcoming to women. They dedicated one side of the auditorium for couples and families where women could sit. Those entering the cinema had to be patted down by guards as a security measure, and Ferdous brought in a female guard so women patrons would feel more comfortable.



Olivia Rodrigo performs 'Traitor' at the American Music Awards on Sunday, Nov. 21, at Microsoft Theater in Los Angeles. (AP)



Taylor Swift appears onscreen to accept the award for favorite pop album for 'Evermore.' (AP)



Chris Martin of Coldplay performs 'My Universe' at the American Music Awards. (AP)



Becky G accepts the award for favorite female Latin artist. (AP)



Rachel Zegler arrives at the American Music Awards. (AP)



Bad Bunny performs 'Lo Siento BB :/' at the American Music Awards. (AP)

American Music Awards winners list

NEW YORK, Nov 22, (AP): List of winners at Sunday's American Music Awards:

■ **Artist of the year:** BTS

■ **Favorite pop song:** BTS, "Butter"

■ **New artist of the year:** Olivia Rodrigo

■ **Favorite female pop artist:** Taylor Swift

■ **Collaboration of the year:** Doja Cat ft. SZA, "Kiss Me More"

■ **Favorite male pop artist:** Ed Sheeran

■ **Favorite pop duo or group:** BTS

■ **Favorite pop album:** Taylor Swift, "Evermore"

■ **Favorite trending song:** Megan Thee Stallion, "Body"

■ **Favorite music video:** Lil Nas X, "MONTERO (Call Me By Your Name)"

■ **Favorite male country artist:** Luke Bryan

■ **Favorite female country artist:** Carrie Underwood

■ **Favorite country duo or group:** Dan + Shay

■ **Favorite male R&B artist:** The Weeknd

■ **Favorite hip-hop song:** Cardi B, "Up"

■ **Favorite female R&B artist:**

Doja Cat

■ **Favorite hip-hop album:** Megan Thee Stallion, "Good News"

■ **Favorite female hip-hop artist:** Megan Thee Stallion

■ **Favorite male hip-hop artist:** Drake

■ **Favorite country album:** Gabby Barrett, "Goldmine"

■ **Favorite country song:** Gabby Barrett, "The Good Ones"

■ **Favorite female Latin artist:** Becky G

■ **Favorite male Latin artist:** Bad Bunny

■ **Favorite Latin duo or group:** Banda MS de Sergio Lizárraga

■ **Favorite Latin album:** Bad Bunny, "El Último Tour Del Mundo"

■ **Favorite R&B song:** Silk Sonic (Bruno Mars, Anderson .Paak), "Leave the Door Open"

■ **Favorite rock artist:** Machine Gun Kelly

■ **Favorite gospel artist:** Kanye West

■ **Favorite R&B album:** Doja Cat, "Planet Her"

■ **Favorite inspirational artist:** Carrie Underwood

■ **Favorite dance/electronic artist:** Marshmello



Zoe Wees performs 'Girls Like Us' at the American Music Awards. (AP)



Mickey Guyton performs 'All American' at the AMAs. (AP)



Machine Gun Kelly poses with award for favorite rock artist. (AP)

Variety

DENVER: Billy Hinsche, a singer-songwriter and musician in a 1960s pop band with **Dino Martin Jr** and **Desi Arnaz Jr** who later recorded and toured for decades with The Beach Boys, has died, according to friends and former associates. He was 70.

Hinsche died Saturday of cancer, actress **Lucie Arnaz**, a longtime friend and brother of Desi Arnaz Jr, said in an Instagram post. She also wrote that Hinsche's mother, **Celia**, passed away Saturday at age 95.

It wasn't immediately known where Hinsche, a resident of **Henderson, Nevada**, died. Messages left by phone, social media and email for **Lucy Arnaz** and music and commercial agents for

The Beach Boys weren't immediately returned Sunday.

"One of the finest humans, friends, storytellers and musicians, on the entire planet just went home to rest," Arnaz said, noting she had known Hinsche since childhood. "We were like brother and sister," she said.

"We lost a great friend, family member, and forever member of The Beach Boys band on Saturday. We'll miss him greatly," Beach Boys co-founder **Mike Love** said via Twitter.

"All of us who had the pleasure of knowing him will miss his jovial nature and immense talent and sense of humor," Love said. "RIP Friend. We Love You Always."

"Love & Mercy Billy Hinsche," tweeted the band's Brian Wilson. According to his website, Hinsche



Hinsche



Arnaz

composed music for his 1960s band known as **Dino, Desi & Billy** and had numerous other contributions, including co-writing "Away" with **Dennis Wilson**. Hinsche collaborated with **Warren Zevon**, **Joan Jett**, **America** and many other artists over his lengthy career.

Born June 29, 1951, in **Manila, Philippines**, Hinsche moved with his family

to **Beverly Hills, California**, where he met **Dean Martin Jr.** and **Desi Arnaz Jr.** in high school. Their band opened for The Beach Boys, Paul Revere & The Raiders and others before Hinsche began recording and performing with The Beach Boys in the 1970s, '80s and '90s.

Hinsche, who held a bachelor of fine arts degree from the University of California Los Angeles, produced several documentary films featuring his time with The Beach Boys. He also released his own music.

Hinsche's sister, **Annie Wilson**, was married to the late **Carl Wilson**, who died in 1998 of cancer. Hinsche sat on the board of the Carl Wilson Foundation, which funds cancer research and assists those with the disease. (AP)