

BURNING SIAM, FAREWELL SCALA: LIDO CONNECT, DON'T LET YOUR GUARD DOWN

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ABSTRACT

The Apex theater chain in Siam Square, comprising the *Siam*, *Lido*, and *Scala*, was established in the early 1960s and played a pivotal role in the national film industry as major venues for screening both Thai and international films. Unfortunately, all three theaters were unable to continue their operations in their original forms, each facing closure or transformation due to evolving socio-economic conditions. This study is driven by the discourse surrounding these theaters, as reflected in the article's title. The research draws on data from online media, particularly news websites and entertainment platforms focusing on cinema, covering the period from 2010 to 2020. It also incorporates the researcher's personal experiences as a patron of these cinemas since the late 1970s. The methodology employed includes content and contextual analysis, with key theoretical frameworks such as spatial and discourse analysis, as well as semiotics. The research reveals that media and public interpretations of these cinemas are multifaceted, encompassing meanings tied to their physical locations and symbolic significance. Furthermore, the discourses surrounding each theater are inextricably linked to historical and contemporary socio-political contexts that influenced their eventual closures or transformations. The key finding of this study, situated within the discourse context outlined above, highlights the political significance of the Apex theaters in shaping identity politics. This includes the identities of political activists, members of the artistic and cultural communities, public health advocates, and the LGBT community.

Keywords: First-Class Cinemas, Pathumwan District, Popular Culture, Standalone Cinemas

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