

1. General Situation

2022 became the year when we were finally able to see the prospect of overcoming the effects of the COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019) pandemic. At the end of 2021, the Coronavirus Omicron variant spread rapidly, and at the beginning of 2022, the Intensive Measures to Prevent Spread the Pandemic was proclaimed. After then, the intermittent increase of the COVID patients continued, however, in general, the situation became gradually stable. In the spring, the restriction against the movie house capacity began to be lifted, and it became possible to operate theaters normally. Upon the opportunity of the spring vacation, a number of family-oriented animated films were released such as DORAEMON, CONAN THE DETECTIVE and CRAYON SHIN-CHAN. As for foreign films, TOP GUN: MAVERICK was released in May and became an enormous commercial hit, welcoming many viewers at theaters. In autumn, Japan's entry restrictions against international travelers began to be little by little eased. Film festivals that had been canceled or to switch to online presentation in 2020-2021 began to take place face-to-face with foreign guests present.

According to the Motion Picture Producers Association of Japan's Japanese Film Industry Statistics, the total theater attendance in 2020 was 106,137,000, 54.5% of that in the year before. In 2021, the total theater attendance was 114,818,000, still only 60% of that in year 2019. In 2022, in contrast, the total theater attendance increased to 152,005,000, 78% of that in year 2019. As for the box office income, 5 films made more than 10 billion yen each, and the group of films making more than 1 billion yen each occupied 72%, monopolizing the box office income market. The box office income shares of Japanese/foreign films were 68.8% vs. 31.2%, making Japanese films much stronger. The next several years will be critical in reconstructing the exhibition environments drastically changed owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Number of Theaters and Screens Nationwide

The number of screens in 2022 was 3,687, a decrease by 16 from that in 2021. The number of theaters was 590, decreased by 6 from that in 2021. During the last 10 years from 2013 to 2022, the number of theaters decreased by 19, while the number of screens increased by 310. Multi-screen theaters (Cinema Complex or "Cine-Com") increased by 36 and by 391 screens, while other types of theaters decreased by 55 and by 81 screens.

Multi-screen theaters have a total of 3,244 screens, 88.1% of the total number of screens in Japan. Since 2011, the number of multi-screen theaters has been larger than that of other types of theaters. In 2022, there were 359 multi-screen theaters, occupying 60.8% of the total number, and 231 other types of theaters.

There were concerns that the number of closed theaters would increase because of their temporary closing and the decrease of the audiences due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the number of the permanently closed theaters during the period of 3 years between 2020 and 2022 was: 11 multi-screen theaters and 19 other types of theaters, not showing a large influence of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the period of 2020-2022, 14 multi-screen theaters opened, and 13 other types of theaters opened (excluding reopened theaters). So far, no particular influence of the COVID-19 pandemic has been shown on the decreased number of theaters.

[fig.01 Change in the Number of Screens 1993-2022](#)

Attendance

In 2022, the Japanese nationwide theater attendance was 152,005,000, 132.4% of that in 2021, and the total box office income was 213,111,000,000 yen, 131.6 % of that in 2021. The box office income of Japanese films was 146,579,000,000 yen, larger than that of the good year of 2019. On the other hand, the box office income of foreign films was 66,532,000,000 yen, 198.3% of that of 2021, almost doubled. This is, however, about 56% of that in 2019, and its recovery is still on the way. The ratio of Japanese film box income vs. foreign film box income in 2021 was 80% vs. 20%, and that in 2022 was 68.8% vs. 31.2%.

In addition, the average admission went up to as large as 1,410 yen in 2021 (in 2019, it was 1,340 yen). It was considered that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the share of the senior population and children in the box office income decreased and the proportion of the regular film-goers with no discount ticket price increased. The year 2022 showed a small decrease to 1,402 yen.

[fig. 02 Changes in the Number of Attendance](#)

Changes in Number of Theaters and Screens according to Theater Type

– Multi-screen Theaters (Cinema Complex/Cine-Com)

There are 359 multi-screen theaters with 3,244 screens, occupying 88.1% of the total number of screens (3,672). During the last 10 years, multi-screen theaters increased by 36 and screens by 391. From 2000 to 2008, roughly 20-30 multi-screen theaters were added annually, but after 2009, the pace has slowed down to the current rate of 5-6 new theaters every year. In 2021 and 2022, 6 new multi-screen theaters opened each year. In 2022, United Cinema Chichibu (in Saitama) and TOHO Cinemas Lala Port Fukuoka opened. On the other hand, Dinos Cinemas Asahikawa (in Hokkaido), Otsu Alex Cinemas (in Shiga) and Aeon Cinema Nishiyamato (in Nara) closed.

– Conventional Theaters

During the last 10 years, conventional theaters have decreased by 40 and by 89 screens, falling to 66 theaters and 152 screens in 2022. During the period from 2010 to 2013, digitalization in film exhibition spread, and conventional theaters that could not afford big-scale facility investment to change from film projection to digital cinema projection began to close, and 15-20 theaters have closed every year. Currently, the situation has stabilized.

Among the conventional theaters, more theaters (Utsunomiya Hikari-za, Chiba Gekijo, Shiojiri Higashi-za, Nagano Roxie, Cinex, Beppu Bluebird Theater, etc.) began to present mini-theater-like programs in order to maintain clear differences from multi-screen theater programming. Also, there have been increasing examples of different organizations taking over closed conventional theaters (Ueda Eigeki, Onari-za, Yokohama Cinemarine, Takada Sekaikan, Toyooka Gekijo, Theater Shiema, Hida Liberte, etc.). On the other hand, “new” types of conventional theaters began to open (Cinema Sunrise Hitachi, Okawa Cinema Hall in Fukuoka, etc.), and it has been difficult to sort out theaters in the existing categories of “multi-screen theaters,” “conventional theaters” and “mini-theaters/repertory theaters.”

– Mini- Theaters and Repertory Theaters

The total number of mini-theaters and repertory theaters together was 136 theaters with 241 screens; an increase of 11 theaters and 35 screens during the last 10 years. In 2022, 2 unique mini-theaters opened in Tokyo: Stranger and Shimokita_Ekimae_CinemaK2. In Masuda City, Shimane, Onozawa Cinema started its operation as a reopened venue of a closed theater, and in Kobe, Kino Cinema Kobe Kokusai reopened taking over Kobe Kokusai Shochiku. Tsuruoka Machinaka Kinema and Toyooka Theater, both closed in 2020-2021, reopened in March 2023.

Different from usual theaters, Zig Theater opened by renovating a former elementary school building in Yurihama-cho Town in Tottori Prefecture and started screenings in July 2021 (a project every month for about 10 days). Cinema de Aeru in Miyako Ciety, Iwate, (2016~), Out Crop Cinema in Akita City (2021~), and Victory Cinema in Maniwa City, Okauama (2022~) also opened as different venue than usual movie theater. Movements to create a place for screenings, different from the “conventional business,” should be increasing from now on.

While new screening venues have been created, a pioneer mini-theater, Iwanami Hall (in Jimbocho, Tokyo), closed at the end of July in 2022. Furthermore, Theatre Umeda which had been leading the mini-theater culture in the Kansai area closed in September, as well as the repertory theater Ginrei Hall in Tokyo, loved by many fans for a long time, closed in November. In Morioka City, mini-theater Art Forum made an announcement to close due to the building deterioration.

During the last 10 years, the number of adult film theaters has decreased, falling to one half their previous number. They decreased to 29 theaters and 35 screens.

[fig. 03 Changes of the Number of Theaters \(Sites\) According to Types \(2005-2022\)](#)

[fig. 04 Changes of # of Screens According to Types \(2005-2022\)](#)

Changes in Number of Theaters and Screens according to Region

In 2022, the total number of movie theaters in Japan was 590, decreasing by 19 during the last 10 years. Meanwhile, the total number of screens in Japan has increased by 310 to 3,672.

In each region, the number of screens has increased. In all the regions except Kanto Region, populations have decreased. Regions with the greatest decrease include Hokkaido/Tohoku (6.3%) and Chugoku/Shikoku (5.4%), larger than others and they have been decreasing more and more each year. The number of theaters has been increasing in Kanto and Kyushu/Okinawa. In Kyushu/Okinawa, 8 theaters and 76 screens have been added during the last 10 years. When comparing each region's ratio of screens to that of population, the number of screen in the Chubu and Kyushu/Okinawa Regions were more than 1% higher than that in other regions.

Multi-screen theaters have increased in almost all regions in both the number of theaters and the number of screens. The pace of increase has been slow since 2009, compared with that of the period between 2000 and 2008 when 20-30 theaters opened annually. Nonetheless, during the last 10 years, both numbers have largely increased in some regions: in the Kanto Region (by 12 theaters and 134 screens); in the Kinki Region (by 8 theaters and 87 screens); and in Kyushu/Okinawa Region (8 theaters and 71 screens). On the other hand, in Hokkaido/Tohoku Region, only 10 screens were added, and in Chugoku/Shikoku Region, 3 theaters and 33 screens.

The numbers of non-multi-screen theaters and screens have decreased in almost all the regions. However, the numbers of mini-theaters and repertory theaters have increased in almost all regions except Hokkaido/Tohoku and Chugoku/Shikoku regions during the last 10 years. During this period, roughly 30 mini-theaters and repertory theaters together opened. Near big cities like Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, Kyoto, and Hiroshima, more mini-theaters opened in small- and middle-sized cities, towns, and villages whose populations are less than 200,000, such as Odate City (Onari-za), Naka City (Amaya-za), Ome City (Cinema Neko), Joetsu City (Takada Sekaikan), Ueda City (Ueda Eigeki/Traum Raise), Tanba City (Ebisu Cinema), Masuda City (Onozawa Cinema), Karatsu City (Theater Enya), and Okinawa City (Theater Donuts and Cine Plaza House 1954).

The number of conventional theaters and that of screens have decreased during the last 10 years: in the Kanto Region, by 12 theaters and 24 screens; in the Chubu Region, by 14 theaters and 29 screens; and in the Kinki Region, by 7 theaters and 23 screens. During the last 10 years, in Tokyo, Nagoya, Shizuoka, Osaka, Hyogo, Hiroshima and so on, conventional theaters have disappeared in the city centers.

The number of adult film theaters has decreased in all regions. In March 2020, an old theater with more than 60 years of history, the Ekimae Cinema in Kanazawa City, closed.

[fig.05 Changes in # of Theaters and Screens According to Theater Types in Each Region \(2013-2022\)](#)