

“More Gen Z guests are choosing to return to their local theatre to see more movies — what do you believe is driving this trend?”

I believe that Gen Z guests are returning to the cinema because it offers a form of escapism that is more worthwhile than what they see on social media. Films provide authentic storytelling with the beauty of art to help enrich communities and instill a sense of hope, whereas social media has quick clips that leaves people feeling drained and empty afterwards. Gen Z is starting to fight this a little, especially with the recent trend of having a “butter mom summer” or “an analog summer,” in which we go back to the 90s before social media had a choke hold on people. This means finding entertainment outside of technology or using simpler forms of technology like VCRs or going to the cinema itself.

I have seen many guests returning to our theater to watch films several times, discussing themes, colors, and various parts of mise-en-scene that held them captive for two hours. I also think that with the economy being so expensive, going to the movies is a great alternative for this generation of guests to see art and even concerts for a great price. For example, in 2023, The Kress showed Taylor Swift’s concert. It was one of our best movies that year outside of *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer*. And the guests were mostly Gen Z for these movies in particular. I also noticed this with *Minecraft* and *BeetleJuice*, as well as with both *Wicked* films and *Project Hail Mary*.

Locally, I believe part of this driving trend is that we have a great connection with the University of Northern Colorado’s campus. We offer free movie tickets to UNC students that come in with their student ID’s on Wednesday nights. It is a really great opportunity because it gets our empty seats filled, and it helps college students see movies that they might not otherwise be able to afford. It has really helped open doors for our guests and build community ties on and off campus to the downtown area in which our theater is situated. In fact, several of our employees are college students.

Working in the film industry has been wonderful because I not only get to use my film minor, but I help plan movie events that help get people inside our movie theater. For example, I helped start our Crafternoon event once a week. We pick out a movie, turn the lights up, and let people work on their crafts and projects for an afternoon. It also builds community with local craft businesses. And funnily enough, many of our crafters are Gen Z. I believe that they are looking for something more life-giving and a way to turn their minds off in a fulfilling way outside of social media. It really is a beautiful thing, especially when so many people criticize the younger generation. I love seeing them do things like watching films and participating in our craft event. They are our future after all, and it is great to see that they are invested in “older” industries like the cinema.