



Films shortage forces Phoenix to scale back

By John Lawrence

A serious lack of new film releases coupled with the traditional summer slump in cinema audiences is forcing the Phoenix Cinema in East Finchley to adjust its opening hours in August... but it says it hopes to be back to business as usual by September. The cinema says there will still be a programme of matinees and evening screenings this month, particularly from Fridays to Sundays, but there may be some weekdays when it is not economical to open its doors at all.

The venue is planning its schedule week by week for the next four to five weeks and urges film-goers to check its website at www.phoenixcinema.co.uk or ask in the foyer for the latest screening times.

Strike action

Many cinemas around the

week, rather than seven," said a spokesperson. "This is just temporary and we hope to be back to normal in September."

On screen

Among the films already slated to run at the Phoenix in August are *A Story of Bones*, telling the story of



Summer nights: The Phoenix is adjusting its opening hours during August. Photo Alison Roberts

country are finding there is a dearth of films out for release following the impact of last year's strike by Hollywood writers and actors, which halted production on scores of projects for months.

Post-pandemic struggle

For the Phoenix, this is coupled with already lower output from independent filmmakers, whose work it would want to show but many of whom are still struggling to recover after the pandemic.

While the big multiplex chains have been pinning their hopes for better audiences on a handful of summer blockbusters like *Gladiator 2*, *Twisters* and *Joker 2*, the Phoenix says the number of suitable new releases available through its own distribution partners is low. "Where there is a film that we think our audiences will enjoy we will still show it but maybe for three or four days a

an horrific discovery on the isolated British territory of Saint Helena, including a Q&A session with its real-life protagonist Annina van Neel on Sunday 4 August, and Luchino Visconti's majestic *The Leopard*, which brings to life one of the most popular Italian novels of all time, on Sunday 11 August.



Timber! The huge branch lies across Brompton Grove and a neighbouring garden. Photo Bob Janes

Road blocked by broken branch

By Bob Janes

It was 5.30am on Saturday 6 July and people living near Brompton Grove, N2, were sleeping peacefully. Then, bang! What on earth was that loud crashing sound? An enormous branch had fallen from an oak tree in Cherry Tree Wood and landed right across the unmade roade, blocking it entirely.

The huge branch was around 15 metres long and must have weighed a tonne or more. It stretched from the Affinity Water building in the Wood to the garden wall of the last house in Ingram Road. Luckily, it didn't hit a house or land directly on any of the cars parked along the Grove.

The people living at the bottom of Ingram Road and Park Hall Road whose gardens had been damaged called Barnet Council's Parks Department and Affinity Water but got little or no response on a Saturday morning.

Tidy up

Fortunately the council did send out a team by Saturday afternoon. They arrived with chain saws and were able to cut back the parts of the branch in the two gardens and across Brompton Grove itself. Affinity Water came on Sunday and Monday to clean up and cut up the remainder of the branch in the Wood.

The garden wall the branch landed on was damaged and will probably need to be replaced.



Near miss: This car was lucky to escape being damaged when the branch fell. Photo Bob Janes

Much of what was in the garden was also damaged, including a slide, chairs and a tennis table. It was fortunate that it did not hit the house itself or the story could have been much worse.

What made it fall? The tree has some visible fungus and recent rainfall on the fresh green oak leaves may have added too much weight causing a stress fracture. The tree itself is very

big and old; and the branch has hung over the Grove for a long time.

It had been reported to Barnet Council on several occasions as posing a risk to people passing underneath it, saying that it was not a matter of 'if' but 'when' it will fall. Hopefully they will now survey this and the other large trees near the Grove, and take preventative action.

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