

# Cineville Sweden: A subscription service of unlimited visits

Interview with Joakim Larsson,  
Biografen Zita (Stockholm, Sweden)



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Inspired by the Netherlands, the Cineville Sweden project is scheduled to launch next spring in 18 arthouse theatres across the country, in order to re-ignite the movie-going experience.



Kino in Lund © Folklets Bio Lund Kino

## Why did you choose to launch this project?

In comparison with most other countries in Europe, the cinema-going audience in Sweden has not returned to cinemas on the same scale following the pandemic. In general, admissions are low, not only for independents but also for the majors. As a result of this, we have sadly seen many amazing European arthouse films die an all too quick death, in many cases, disappearing from cinemas shortly after their premiere weekend. This crisis affects cinemas as well as distributors and has resulted in a much smaller selection of titles being on offer in the cinemas. This is the result of the cinemas' survival instinct to return to "safe bets" instead of a broad repertoire. The Cineville model, which is a subscription service that offers

subscribers unlimited cinema visits in selected theatres, had been at the back of our minds for many years. However, it wasn't until a group of cinemas organized a study trip to Amsterdam in 2023, that the decision was taken to seize the initiative and apply for financing, to set up a project and reignite cinema-going in Sweden through the launch of a local Cineville model.

As the concept has been implemented successfully in the Netherlands for 15 years, and with a number of additional markets having launched in the last few years (Belgium, Austria and Germany), many of the technical, communicative and organisational challenges have been more easily facilitated.

It really is an exceptional advantage to be able to lean on

the experience of the other Cineville markets. The project team has already become part of a close-knit professional Cineville-community that enables productive collaborations and the sharing of experiences between markets, which paves the way for success and is far better than having to reinvent the wheel.

## Can you describe the project?

Cineville Sweden follows the Dutch model and we are in very close collaboration with Cineville Netherlands. The Swedish Cineville will feature the same logo, tonality, website, app and general look and feel as the Dutch version. However, the model itself will most likely include minor tweaks to better suit the



Bio Zita in Stockholm © Harry Roth

expectations and habits of the Swedish audience, cinemas, and distributors.

We received the grant from Europa Cinemas just before the summer and could therefore hire a Project Manager quite quickly. The initial preparation started in August and we have already come a long way, getting the organizational structure in place and building a network of participating cinemas. The plan is to roll out the concept in the three main urban areas of Sweden first (Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö/Lund), with around 18 theatres in total. After the launch-phase, we aim to expand the concept into additional cinemas and to other parts of the country as well.

The plan is to work swiftly and to have a public launch at the end of March 2025.

### What was the need for it in your city / country?

The independent, or arthouse cinema scene in Sweden, faces many challenges. A large part of the audience has become very used to watching movies in the comfort of their own homes and seem to have forgotten about the unique experience that a cinema offers. So, we really need to change tactics and find a model



Biograf Reflexen in Kärrtorp © Folkets Bio Lund Kino

that provides a strong incentive for audiences to step away from the couch and see more films in cinemas. Tickets are expensive in Sweden but, with a subscription model like the one that Cineville offers, we can re-frame the perceived cost of a cinema ticket and make the experience more affordable. This will, in turn, also embolden the audience and encourage them to see movies that they would otherwise not have bought a ticket for, creating a greater awareness and more buzz around smaller cinemas and titles.

### What are your expectations?

Currently, there are a lot of subscription services out there, all of which are competing for people's time and money, so we may not see a "Cineville-explosion" immediately. On the other hand, we think that the time to launch Cineville is right, in that it seems to be something that many have been waiting for. The initial subscriber growth from the other Cineville-markets is also very encouraging, so we expect our core, regular, cinema-going audience to be very quick to pick up a subscription, which will encourage them to see more movies. But we also expect a lot of interest from a younger audience. So, we will put a lot of effort and resources into reaching this audience segment, who we don't really see going to the cinema to a great extent currently.

### What could its impact be at a local and national level?

We hope that Cineville will contribute to safeguarding the future survival of arthouse cinemas in Sweden and provide a platform from which they can grow in importance and market share. In the Netherlands, Cineville is not only a business model, it is also a community of film lovers, which we hope to establish in Sweden as well. That community will in turn be an important factor in building the organic growth of the art of film in and of itself. If the audience find their way back to seeing films in theatres, it will also have an impact on producers and financiers. In Sweden, we need a lot more screens for arthouse films and, hopefully, Cineville will contribute to building an interest in re-investing in new cinemas, too.

**Joakim Larsson**, Innovation Founder

Name of the Project: **Cineville Sweden**

Coordinator: **Biografen Zita (Stockholm)**

Partner cinemas: **Biograf Reflexen (Kärrtorp), Kino (Lund), Biografen Spiegeln (Malmö)**