

Cinema at the Souk

Downtown Beirut goes multiplex mad



Another cinema in another shopping mall, so what's the big deal you may well ask. Well, the brand-spanking-new movieplex Beirut Souk Cinemacity might just answer your question. Interior architect Nabil Dada and his firm (also responsible for the luxurious Beirut Yacht Club) were in charge of this whopping four-year project where approximately 12,000 square meters were transformed into a sort of spaceship movie heaven. The idea, as they put it to *TOB*, was to 'redefine' the moviegoer's experience by creating a sensory journey throughout the space. Every aspect of the cinema has been thought out to the nth degree, with sensory pleasure at the forefront. The outside bears a slight resemblance to the \$140 million Beijing Olympic Aquatic Centre with its eye catching, UFO-like LED display. Indeed, once you step inside the futuristic, space-age complex you half-expect to see Harrison Ford blade-running up an escalator in hot pursuit of an illegal, bioengineered Nexus 6 replicant. When *TOB* accidentally took the

elevator down to level -3 we literally thought we had stumbled onto the set of *Star Trek*. This gargantuan complex houses 14 theatres, two of which are for the 'VIPs'. The regular theatres vary from 70 to 327 seats and the VIP caters for 40-50, taking the total number of cushioned chairs where you can plonk yourself in front of a screen, to a staggering 2,400. The actual cinema seats were imported from Spanish company 'Figueras' who also design seats for such little-known buildings as The White House. The technologies used in the Beirut Souk Cinemacity are cutting edge. Along with the presidential seating there are transparent elevators that change colour, a ceiling composed of 256 LED screens playing animations specifically

created for the space, sound absorbers, fibre optics, street art and graffiti works – all of which come together to give a unique and modern feel.



You half-expect to see Harrison Ford blade-running up an escalator

The combination of advanced technologies and a simple, almost minimal interior works to a superb effect. There is also a sushi bar if you fancy finding and eating *Nemo* before or after your viewing experience. This cinema is so geared up towards a sensory overload that you don't even have to go into a theatre screen to enjoy it. One could quite happily order some California Rolls, hop in the magic rainbow lift up to the Lego land seating on level 2 and stare at the animated

ceiling for hours.

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