

The Munich "Royal-Palast" – Germany's first 3-strip (CINEMIRACLE) and Second Todd-AO Cinema

Written by Gerhard Witte (Berlin) in winter, spring 2022



**The 1957 newly opened "Royal-Palast" on Munich's Goetheplatz (Ludwigvorstadt – Isarvorstadt), which happily still exists today but has been redesigned many times.
(Image from PHILIPS Kinotechnik, issue 24, 1957)**

The planning for the film theatre went back to 1949. It finally opened its doors to the public on 14.06.1957 – already the evening before, a celebratory inauguration event (a charity Gala evening for an emergency fund for artists) took place. At that time, Mr. Rudolf Englberth (Union Filmtheater GmbH.), the experienced theater owner, had always had a premiere theatre in mind that everyone in Germany should be talking about.

MORGEN, Donnerstag, den 13. Juni 1957, 21 Uhr,
festliche Gala-Premiere

OKLAHOMA

in Todd-AO

zugunsten der Filmkünstler-Nothilfe im

ROYAL-PALAST

Münchens neuestem Filmtheater am Goetheplatz,
unter dem Protektorat des Generalkonsuls
der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika, Mr. Edward Page,
in Anwesenheit prominenter Stars von Bühne, Funk und Film

Bis Redaktionsschluß hatten ihr Erscheinen zugesagt:
Magda und Romy Schneider, Marianne Koch,
Adrian Hoven, Horst Buchholz, Helmut Käutner
Es spielt das Symphonie-Orchester Graunke

Smoking oder dunkler Anzug erbeten
Vorverkauf an der Theaterkasse tägl. ab 11 Uhr, Tel. 592538
Eintrittspreis DM 12.-



An advert about the opening of the Munich "Royal-Palast" from the newspaper "Münchner Merkur" dated 12.06.1957.

In the advert is written:

Tomorrow, Thursday, June 13, 1957, at 9 p.m., a festive Gala premiere of "**OKLAHOMA**" in Todd-AO in the "**ROYAL-PALAST**" – for the benefit of the Film Artists' Emergency Fund.

It will take place in Munich's newest movie theatre, the "**Royal-Palast**", on Goetheplatz under the protectorate of the Consul General of the United States of America, Mr. Edward Page, and in the presence of prominent stars of stage, radio and film.

Until the editorial deadline following personalities had confirmed their appearance: Magda and Romy Schneider, Marianne Koch, Adrian Hoven, Horst Buchholz, Helmut Käutner.

The Graunke Symphony Orchestra will play. Tuxedo or dark suit are requested. Advance sales at the box office daily from 11 a.m., phone: 59 25 38, entrance fee DM 12.-.

The opening film in the new "Royal-Palast" and at the same time the film's German premiere was Fred Zinnemann's "**OKLAHOMA**" (USA, 1955) – shown, of course, in Todd-AO/70mm. Before the main feature, the short (11 minutes) 70mm demonstration film "**The Miracle of Todd-AO**" (Das Wunder von Todd-AO / USA, 1956) was presented.

"**The Miracle of Todd-AO**" had already left a big impression on the skeptical press people at a press screening (see the article later in the report) that had already been held beforehand in the new house, leading many participants back then to conclude that this (maybe) would mark the beginning of the film's rescue from nascent television.

The Munich architect Sep Ruf had designed the theatre exactly according to Rudolf Englberth's plans – with 2 theatres under one roof, the "Royal-Palast" and the "Royal-Theater". With his buildings, Sep Ruf had shaped the German post-war architecture, which has been described in expert circles as "lightweight architecture". Professor Sep Ruf (1908-1982) had also been one of the responsible architects for the construction of the German pavilion at the World Exhibition (Expo 1958) in Brussels and for the Chancellor's Bungalow in Bonn.



Rudolf
Englberth

Film salesman and theatre owner Rudolf Englberth Sr. (Image from the German trade magazine "Filmbblätter", issue 52, dated 22.12.1967)

"... you have to make the film experience so overwhelming that the viewer no longer even gets the idea of mentioning cinema and television in one breath."

The luckily still today existing "Royal-Palast" was created as a free-standing monumental building visible from all sides with a total height of 25 metres, of which no less than 7 metres are below street level. The building has a length of 40 metres, is 19 metres wide and rests on 12 concrete columns.

The cinemagoers entered the completely glass-enclosed foyer of the two theatres on the ground floor. In the middle of which was a free-standing, glass-clad cinema box office in an anodised light metal construction. The counters were equipped with new, patented talk-through devices. From the approximately 600 square metre large foyer, cantilevered stairs led up to the "Royal-Palast", but also down to a second theatre, the "Royal-Theater", which was located in the basement.

At the time of its opening, the "Royal-Palast" hall was equipped with 826 seats on parquet and balcony (another source reports 834 seats), the balcony could also be reached via an elevator. The cinema was tailored from the outset to the presentation possibilities of all projection methods – including, of course, the new Todd-AO method with newly installed PHILIPS DP70 projectors. All the equipment was planned and installed by the firm KINOTON, GmbH, Munich.

After the film's screening, filmgoers could leave the "Royal-Palast" via several exits. Then they could directly reach Munich's 'Goetheplatz' via an open terrace and a wide staircase (see the first image in this introduction).

MITTWOCH-DONNERSTAG, 19./20. JUNI 1957 MÜNCHNER MERKUR

Der Riesenerfolg
Ganz München spricht über die Sensation des Jahres

OKLAHOMA
DAS WUNDER VON TODD-AO

nunmehr **2. Woche!** · Sichern Sie sich Karten im Vorverkauf
Eintrittspreise: 3.—, 5.—, 7.— und 9.— · Jugendliche zugelassen

ROYAL-PALAST Anfangszeiten: täglich 14.00 und 20.00 Uhr
Sa., So. u. Feiert. 14.00, 17.00 u. 20.00 Uhr
GOETHEPLATZ · TELEFON 592538

UNSER **ERÖFFNUNGSPROGRAMM:** Walter Koppel
zeigt eine Gyula Trebitsch-Produktion





Tolle Nacht

MARIA SEBALDT + HARALD JUHNKE RUDOLF PLATTE
Hans Nielsen - Paul Henckels - Boy Gobert - Heinz Reincke - Werner Finck - Hubert von Meyerinck - Alice Treff
Franz Muxeneder - Erni Mangold - Gusti Wolf - Es singt: Eva May

Eine Lachbombe mit Aufschlagzündung!

Regie: JOHN OLDEN Drehbuch: Dr. GUSTAV KAMPENDONK Musik: MICHAEL JARY

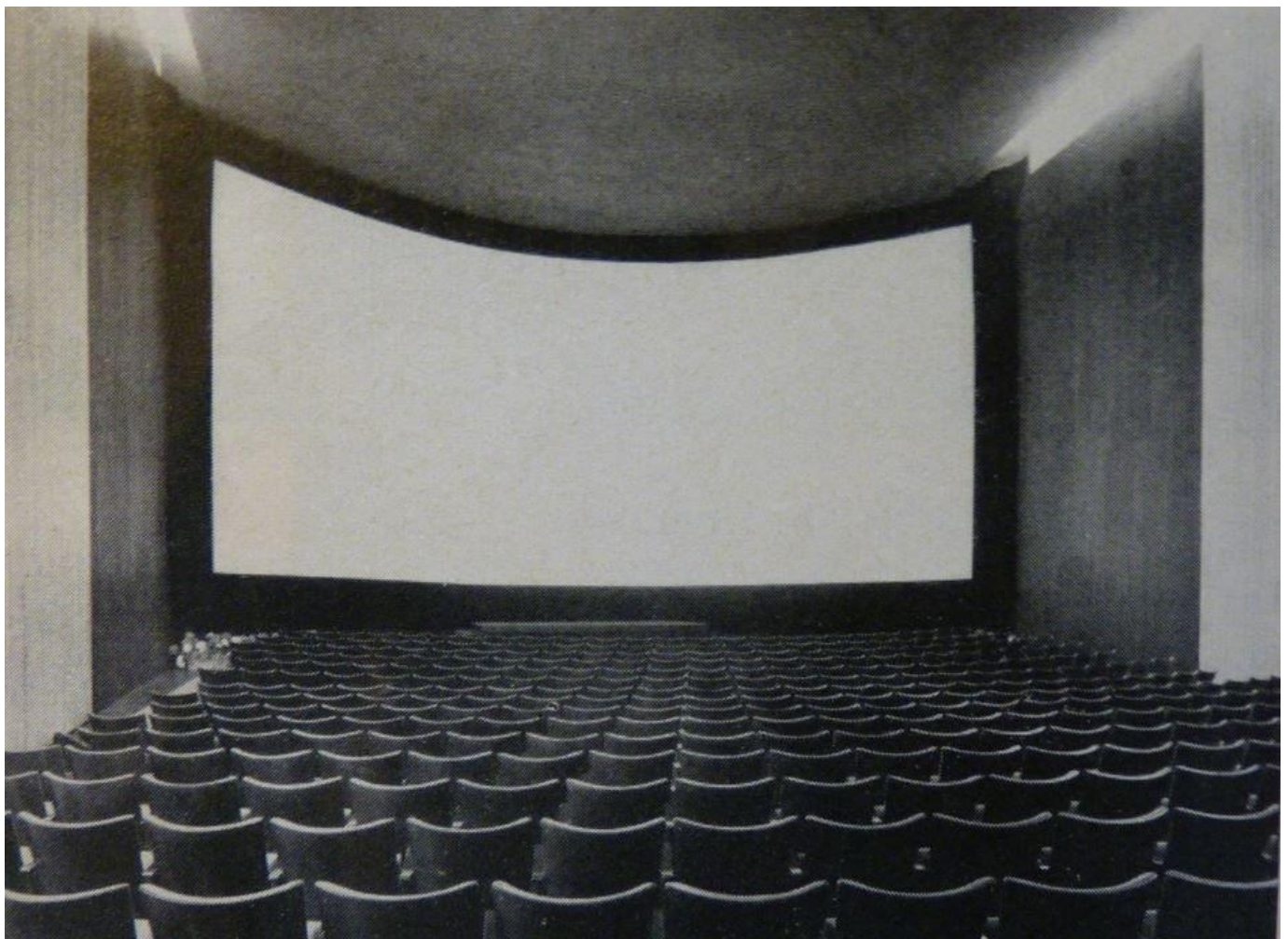
ROYAL-FILMTHEATER Täglich: 14.00, 16.10, 18.20, 20.30
Goetheplatz Telefon 592552

Two adverts from the newspaper "Münchner Merkur" dated 19.06.1957. "Oklahoma" (USA, 1955) successful in its 2nd week, and below the opening program of the "Royal-Theater" with the film "Tolle Nacht" (West Germany, 1957).

The smaller "Royal-Theater" in the basement was inaugurated slightly later, on 19.06.1957, with the film "**Tolle Nacht**" (West Germany, 1957).

However, Europe's and thus also Germany's first for the new Todd-AO method purpose-built cinema is Hamburg's "Savoy-Filmtheater", which fortunately still exists today. It opened its doors on March 14, 1957.

When the theatre opened, they had shown the short 70mm demonstration film "**The Miracle of Todd-AO**" (USA, 1956). At the time, the house was denied the favor of the "**Oklahoma**" premiere because a 70mm print was unfortunately not yet available. As main film they had shown Irving Rapper's "**Roter Staub**" (The Brave One / USA, 1956) in CinemaScope and stereophonic sound.

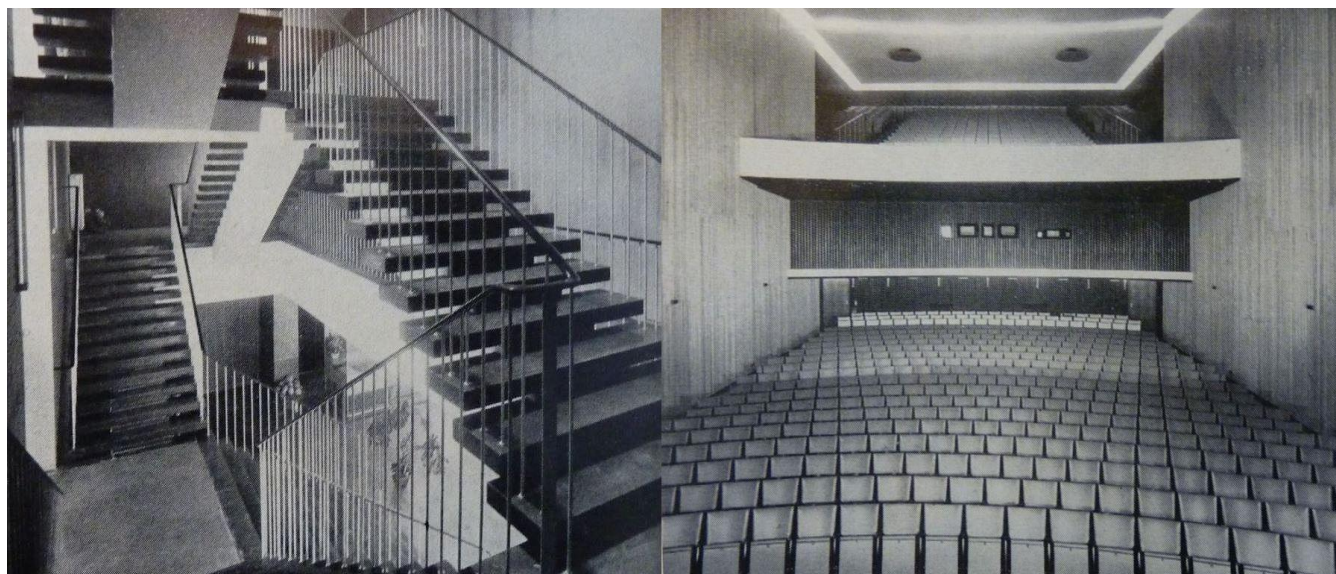


The big cinema hall of the "Royal-Palast" and its large curved Todd-AO screen – size 16,40 m x 8,30m (measured as a chord).

Image from PHILIPS Kinotechnik, issue 24, 1957.

The curtain of the "Royal-Palast" was made of black velvet and occupied the entire front wall of the auditorium with a width of nearly 18 meters. Since the lower edge of the screen was very low, a stage was completely dispensed with. An additional white Austrian curtain

(a draped balloon curtain), which disappeared into the ceiling, had provided a strong contrast to the black color of the main curtain.



Picture left: the cantilevered staircase leading up from the foyer to the "Royal-Palast".

Picture right: the "Royal-Palast" hall with its 18 meter wide projection room, and above the theatre's balcony. (Images from PHILIPS Kinotechnik, issue 24, 1957)

At the time, the projection room was equipped with two PHILIPS DP70 universal projectors, one FP56 35mm projector with a mirror slide facility and a 6-channel amplification system. The sound, reproduced by 5 separate loudspeaker groups behind the screen (channels 1-5) and 12 effect loudspeakers in the hall (channel 6), conveyed an absolutely stereophonic impression. It also involved the viewers acoustically in the film's action. The projection distance was 24 metres and the projection angle 128 degrees. (Images from PHILIPS Kinotechnik, issue 24, 1957)

Verfahren	Seitenverhältnis	Bild	
		Breite	Höhe
Normal	1 : 1,37	7,50 m	5,40 m
Breitwand, VistaVision, Metroscope u. a.	1 : 1,85	10,00 m	5,40 m
CinemaScope (Licht- und Magnetton), Superscope 2,35 (neues Format), Cinepanoramic	1 : 2,34 1 : 2,55	13,20 m 15,00 m	5,40 m 5,40 m
Superscope (altes Format), RKO-Scope	1 : 2	10,80 m	5,40 m
Todd-AO	1 : 2	16,40 m (als Sehne)	8,30 m

**Image (screen) sizes in the "Royal-Palast" at the time of the cinema's opening.
(From PHILIPS Kinotechnik, issue 24, 1957)**

An article taken from the German trade magazine "Filmblätter" dated 14.06.1957:

A Todd-AO Demonstration in Munich's "Royal-Palast" on Goetheplatz

Theatre owner Rudolf Englbert, the RKO and the authorized PHILIPS representative in Munich, the firm KINOTON, GmbH, had invited to an impressive demonstration of the new Todd-AO film method into the just completed house – the most modern cinema in Munich back then. This had been eight days before the theatre's official opening.

They presented the 70mm demonstration film "**The Miracle of Todd-AO**" (Das Wunder von Todd-AO / USA, 1956).

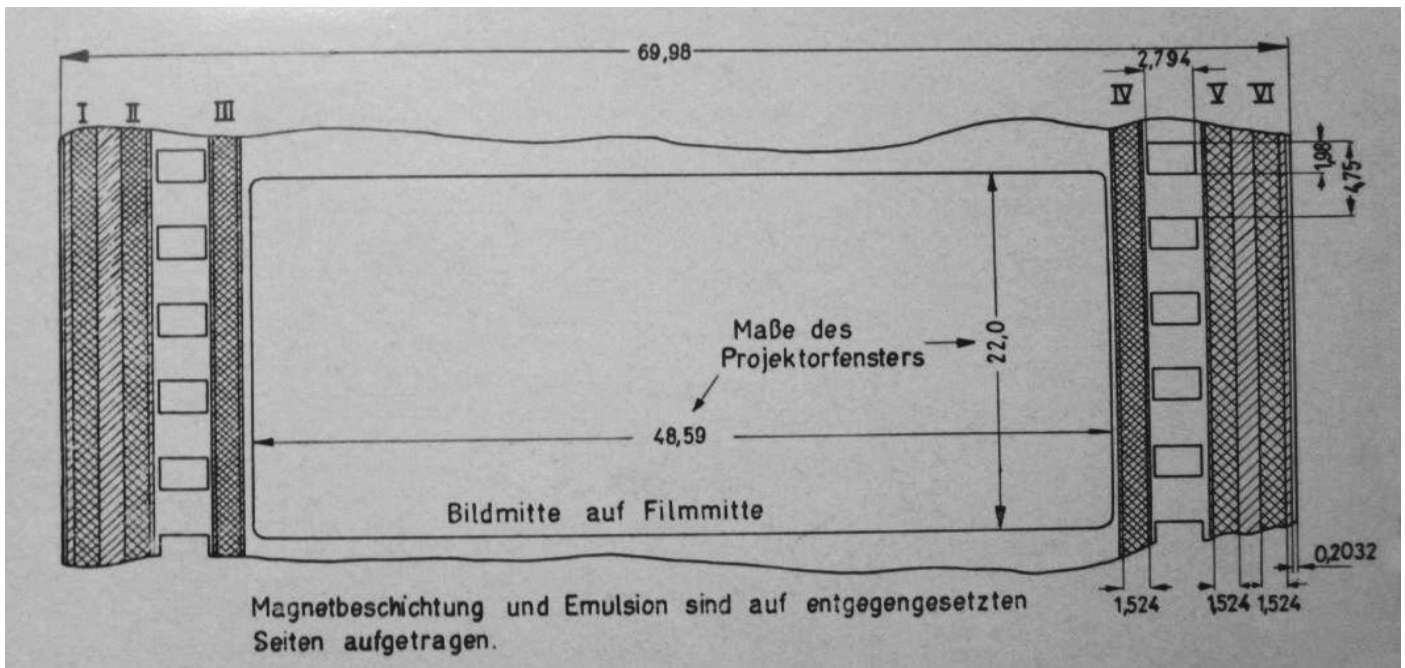
The press representatives had the opportunity to convince themselves of the almost astonishing effect of this innovation. The viewer effectively feels like a player in what is happening on the screen, because the film image literally involves him into the film's action.

One has the feeling of being "in the picture". After the extremely drastic foretaste, in which one experienced a roller-coaster ride and a police patrol ride, among other things, one can look forward to the public premiere of the first big Todd-AO film in Germany, the musical "**OKLAHOMA**" on 14.06.1957.

While the demonstration film was mainly aimed at showing the sensational possibilities of the method, in the "**OKLAHOMA**" film adaptation of the world-famous musical you will now be able to experience and admire the effects presented on "normal" film design. (FBbi)

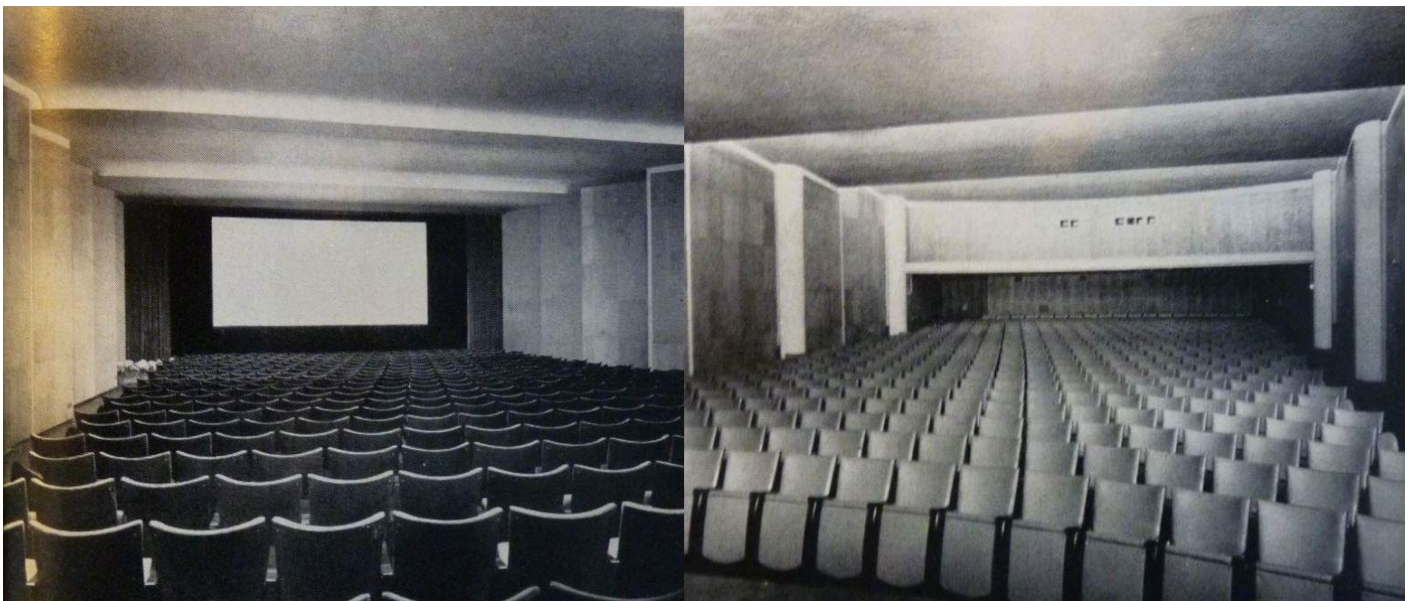
Author's note: previously, from 29.09.1956 to 07.10.1956, the new Todd-AO film process had already been presented for the first time in Europe at the PHOTOKINA in Cologne with the short (11 minutes) demonstration film "**The Miracle of Todd-AO**" (USA, 1956) – additionally also with 70mm excerpts from "**OKLAHOMA**" (USA, 1955).

Have a look here: [Todd-AO, ein neues Filmverfahren \(in70mm.com\)](http://in70mm.com)



The dimensions (in mm) of the Todd-AO film – from PHILIPS Kinotechnik, issue 35, 1960.

The "Royal-Theater" in the Same Building at its Opening.



Images of the "Royal-Theater" and information taken from PHILIPS Kinotechnik, issue 24, 1957.

It was located in the basement below the foyer and was initially equipped with 505 seats. The side walls of the theatre were divided into sloping sections that ran parallel to one another, in the edges of which were installed lighting fixtures. On the side walls there was fixed a wooden cladding with slits, behind which was sound-absorbing material.

The projection room of the cinema was located at the back above the last rows of the parquet, and was initially equipped with two FP56 projectors and a combined optical and magnetic sound system.

Today's "ROYAL-FILMPALAST"



Royal Filmpalast

Munich's "Royal-Filmpalast" in February of 2022 (images courtesy of Günther Menhold). You can see the building's southern and eastern façade with its in 1997/98 added weather protection glazing. On the right edge of the pictures you can

just see a residential and commercial building built in 1971-1973 that was also designed by Sep Ruf. The "Royal-Filmpalast" is now a multiplex cinema equipped with 5 imposing halls.

See: [Kino Säle | Royal Filmpalast \(royal-muenchen.de\)](https://www.kino-saele.de/royal-filmpalast)

In memory of Franz Günter Bläsen, a friend of mine. He was director of the "CINERAMA Europa-Palast" in Essen in the 1960s. He enriched my life a lot and was always open to any questions I had asked him. He passed away on February 23, 2022 at the age of 80.

My report consists of 2 PDF files (in German and English language):

A.) "Oklahoma" (USA, 1955) and some other German Premieres, Openings of 70mm Films at Munich's "Royal-Palast" in the late 1950s and in the 1960s. (41 pages)

B.) 3-strip films (CINEMIRACLE / CINERAMA) shown in Munich's "Royal-Palast" (17 pages)