

Virgin Megastore, The Body Shop, HMV, Tower Records, and Sock Shop were all also present at the time of survey, sometimes with more than one branch, reinforcing a sense of similarity to equivalent public spaces elsewhere. Indeed, many of these also featured in Times Square. In Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus this homogenisation of land uses is more obvious because most of the chains have done very little to tailor the design of their outlets (interior or exterior) to the location.

Other land uses include the two theatres, the Prince of Wales and the Criterion, the latter, at the time of survey, staging 'The Full Monty' which was playing simultaneously on Broadway in New York. However, the Leicester Square/Piccadilly Circus study area contained only two hotels, the Radisson Edwardian Hampshire and the Thistle, both of modest size when compared to those in Times Square. Small, low-quality tourist souvenir shops are also present.

Upper-floor land uses in the area are mainly offices, in buildings between five and seven storeys tall. Few are high profile in the sense that the upper-floor occupiers of Times Square are, although London's largest commercial radio station – Capital Radio – occupies space on Leicester Square. A small residential presence remains in the area.

Signage

The advertising signage in the study area hardly compares to the quantity and scale of signage in Times Square. Nevertheless, after Eros, Piccadilly Circus is mostly associated with electric advertising, and indeed it had an electric sign in 1890, a year before Broadway and Times Square (GLC 1980: 11). The signs also have a more immediate impact than those in Times Square, reflecting the relatively small size of the space and their relative dominance over it. Today, the electric adverts in space 3 of the study area are all in the northeast corner of Piccadilly Circus. They advertise a range of international brands, and make no reference to their location and context.

At the time of the survey, prosaic electric signs advertised the Japanese and Korean electronics firms of Sanyo, TDK, and Samsung, while two video screens advertised the twin American giants of McDonald's and Coca-Cola. There was also a small neon advert for the Danish beer Carlsberg. The electric signs all had moving neon lights, as opposed to the dominance of billboards in Times Square. There was also an electronic message reader, as in Times Square, repeating a set pattern of sports news, weather, the time, and advertising for Samsung. The civil/community function was largely negligible.

Finally, in early 2002 Piccadilly Circus also featured an exact double of the billboard message Yoko Ono posted in Times Square. The fact that Ono chose Piccadilly Circus as the only other place to display the message



10.10 Film symbolism in Leicester Square

emphasises the equivalence of the two spaces as perceived international hubs. This was the only large-scale signage element in Piccadilly Circus at the time that was not directly linked to commerce or corporate publicity.

Space 2 contained very little signage above fascia level. At the time of survey a basic video screen on the corner of Coventry Street and Haymarket advertised Vodaphone whilst zippers could be found above the entrance to the Trocadero Centre and Swiss Court. Like most of those in Times Square these zippers had no other function than to advertise the shops and attractions contained in the two centres. The only other signage was temporary in the form of a police sign on the corner of Coventry Street and Whitcomb Street asking for witnesses to a 'serious assault'.

Space 1, Leicester Square, contained advertising mainly through one huge billboard on the façade of the Odeon Leicester Square, advertising the films that were showing. This is part of a richer symbolism of cinema represented by film premieres that take place in the cinemas around the square, as well as actors' handprints on the pavement (Figure 10.10). The handprints extend signage to the ground just outside the railings of the gardens, with around 45 handprints from British and American actors and studio logos, in a similar display to that on Hollywood Boulevard in Los Angeles.

Other signage was limited but included small billboards advertising films, a video screen on the corner of Leicester Street and Leicester Square owned by the concert and event promoters, Mean Fiddler Group, and zippers on each side of the TKTS booth. Temporary signage was also found here, including two large boards on the north terrace of the square displaying messages warning criminals about the use of CCTV and undercover police in the area, and users to keep their valuables safe. In the centre of the gardens on the edge of the circular central path around Shakespeare's statue was a circle of brass plates giving the distances to 50 different cities in 50 Commonwealth countries. The display reflects the symbolism of the space as the historic 'hub of Empire', and compares with the 'crossroads of the world' symbolism of Times Square.