

Symonds
& Sampson

Bridport Electric Palace

35 South Street, Bridport, Dorset

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35 South Street
Bridport
Dorset DT6 3NY

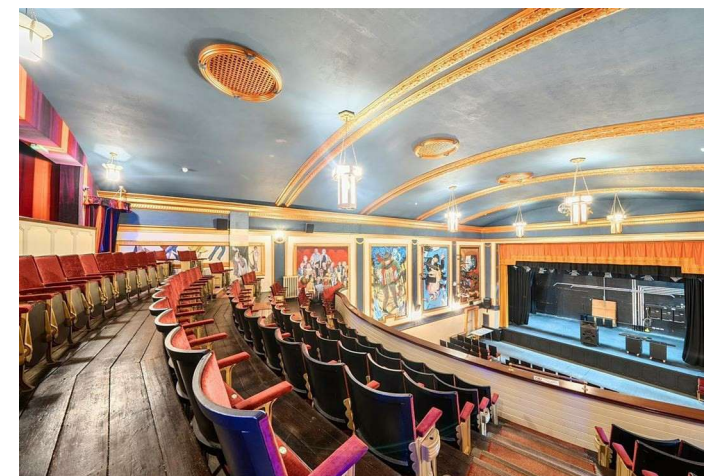
An extraordinary Grade II Listed art deco cinema/theatre available for sale as a going concern situated in Bridport town centre.

- 410 seat theatre/cinema with three bars and large foyer
 - Original art-deco interior, fully restored and Grade II listed
- Fully operational with all equipment and staff as a going concern
 - Central Bridport, prime high street location
 - Freehold interest
 - Full programme of live entertainment
 - Original artwork and murals
- Dorchester 15 miles (London Waterloo 2hrs 30 min), Exeter 39 miles, Bournemouth 45 miles

Offers above **£1,100,000**

Freehold

Dorchester Commercial
01305 261008 ext 5
commercial@symondsandsampson.co.uk



INTRODUCTION

Built in 1926, the Bridport Electric Palace has been described as "one of the most breath-taking cinemas in the world...an art-deco fantasia of 1930's lamps, comfortable velvet seats and pre-war murals reminiscent of Diego Rivera..." (Financial Times, 19 March 2026)

After opening its doors almost 100 years ago, the Palace has operated almost continuously ever since. In recent years it has benefited from a comprehensive and sympathetic programme of refurbishment and the property is now offered to the market in outstanding condition. The Palace presents an exceptional opportunity to steward one of the South West's most atmospheric and culturally significant venues into the next century.

The property is available for sale as a whole or in three separate lots, by private treaty.

LOT 1: Electric Palace cinema/theatre (freehold), including all trade assets and goodwill, as a going concern - offers above £1.1million

LOT 2: Two retail units (long leasehold) - offered together (and not separately) - offers above £190,000

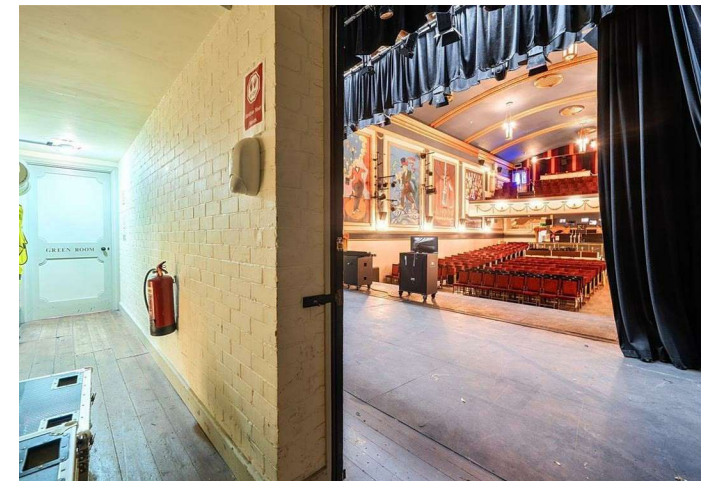
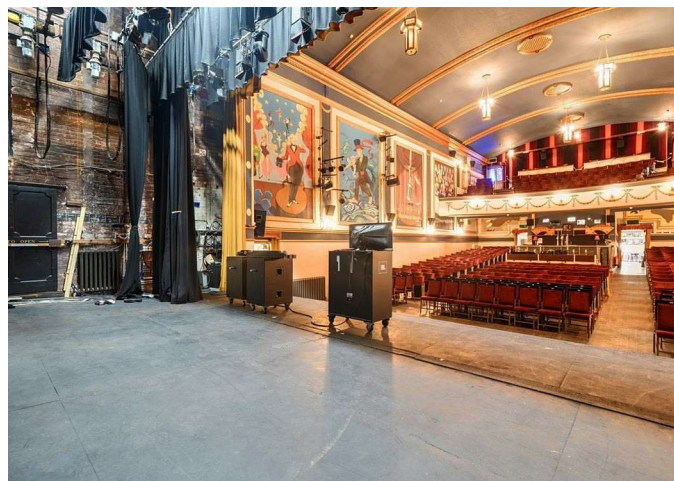
LOT 3: Two residential apartments above retail units (freehold) - offered together (and not separately) - offers above £450,000

SITUATION

The Palace provides a unique opportunity to purchase a fully restored and fully operational art-deco theatre and cinema. With its beautiful original interior, it is one of only a handful of 1920s theatres that are still operating in the UK (outside London) and was recently listed by the Financial Times as one of the "top 24 most breath-taking cinemas in the world".

Standing proudly in the heart of Bridport, the Palace is one of Dorset's most treasured cultural landmarks which is now offered for sale as a thriving going concern, with established goodwill and a full future programme of events, including film, comedy, live music, the spoken word and theatre.

The Palace is arranged behind a two-storey street-facing frontage and, at street level, the entrance and foyer are accessed via a wide arcade walkway leading to the cinema/theatre complex beyond. Either side of the Palace entrance are two street facing retail units, with two beautifully restored residential flats above (each with their own separate street facing access), that are also offered for sale either as a whole with the Palace, or as separate lots.



The properties sit in the heart of the picturesque West Dorset town of Bridport (in the Dorset National Landscape, formerly known as the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) close to Dorset's Jurassic Coast, Lyme Bay and the Chesil Beach, only 5 miles away. Positioned prominently on South Street, within the town centre, the properties occupy a highly desirable and accessible location surrounded by retail, leisure and hospitality amenities.

Bridport is a bustling and vibrant market town, with its famous street market, arts-scene and antiques quarter, located approximately 15 miles to the west of the county-town of Dorchester with its regular rail connections to London. Bridport has a history of rope making and is now a gateway to the Jurassic World Heritage coastline at nearby West Bay. The town hosts an excellent selection of independent shops, as well as supermarkets, hotels, pubs, restaurants and cafes, and numerous arts and music events throughout the year, including the acclaimed Bridport Literary Festival and "From Page to Screen" film festival (both mainly hosted at the Palace), as well as Dorset Arts Week. There is also a thriving twice-weekly street market offering locally sourced vegetables, cheese, meats and other artisan foods, clothes, hardware and antiques.

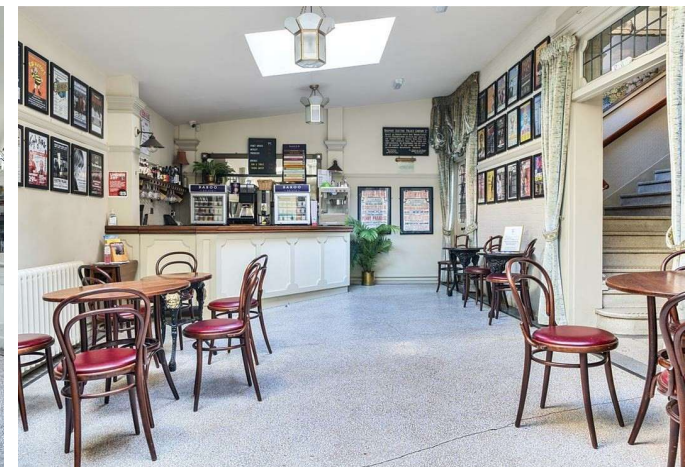
LOT 1 - BRIDPORT ELECTRIC PALACE

"One of the most breath-taking cinemas in the world"

HISTORY

In 1926 a local brewing family took the courageous and enterprising step to build an opera house in Bridport. A new venture in every way, but particularly because it was powered by electricity, a rare commodity for many at the time. Because electricity didn't arrive in the town until 1929, the building needed to generate power from its own "engine room", allowing the people of Bridport to experience the "new age of cinema", as well as opera and other stage and music shows.

The doors first opened almost 100 years ago, on 14 June 1926, to a packed audience of over 500 people and the building was appropriately named the "New Electric Palace". It has been operating almost continuously ever since, originally showing only silent movies until "talkies" arrived in Bridport in 1931 (only three years after they'd arrived in London). Whilst other regional theatres and cinemas have floundered, the Palace has not only survived but flourished, sitting at the heart of the community ever since.





For the last century, the Palace has been a cornerstone of West Dorset's cultural life, evolving into a vibrant multi-arts venue that draws audiences from far beyond the town. Today, it hosts a broad programme of film, comedy, live music, the spoken word and theatre, as well as special events including festivals, weddings and private parties.

The Palace is the largest theatre for almost 20 miles and has, for some years, played host to film and literary festivals, and glittering premieres, developing a reputation for bringing the all-time greats in film, comedy and music to West Dorset. It also sits at the heart of local performing arts activities and local performing arts groups, serving as both a creative hub and a beloved community destination.

In recent years, the Palace has benefited from a comprehensive and sensitive programme of refurbishment, ensuring that its historic charm is perfectly complemented by modern comfort and high-quality presentation.

The property is now offered to the market in outstanding condition and presents an exceptional opportunity to steward one of the South West's most atmospheric and culturally significant venues into its next century.

THE BUILDING

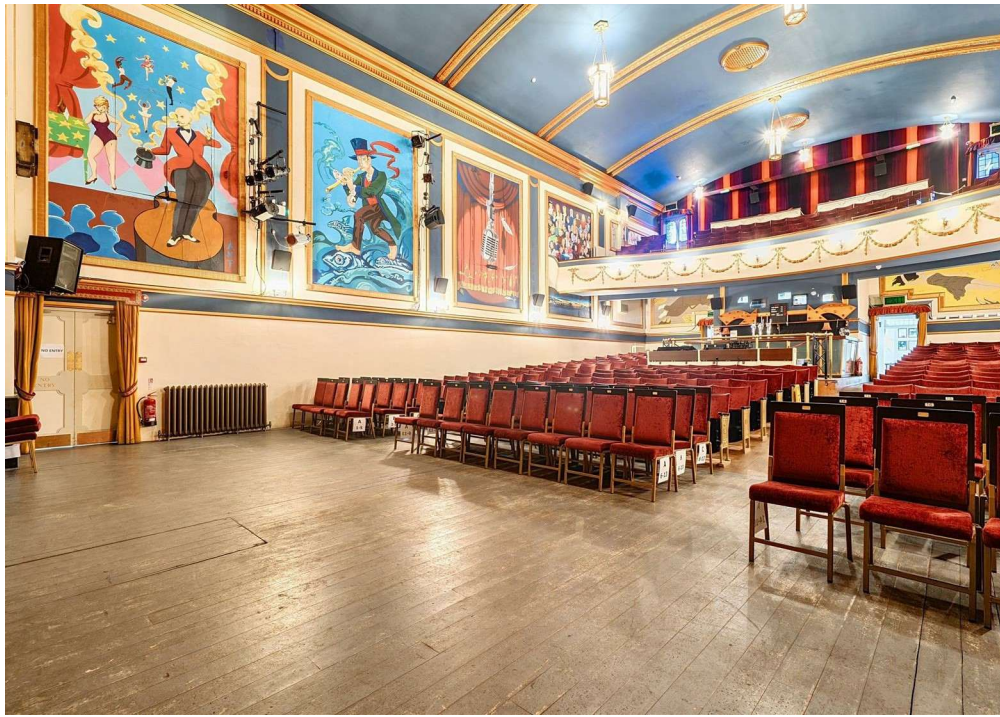
Bridport is fortunate to have not only a cultural gem, but an architectural one too. This Grade II listed masterpiece is a rare surviving example of 1920s entertainment architecture at its most evocative.

The building retains most of its original art-deco features, include the hanging lamps in the foyer and auditorium, the plush red velvet tipping seats and the moulded swags, and the torch lights which enhance the sweep of the balcony. But the centrepiece of the building is the collection of stunning murals painted in the art-deco style that lend the building a unique sense of

character, history and theatrical flourish. These decorate the foyer, stairs and landing and were designed and painted in 1936 by George Biles, the local brewery sign writer.

The auditorium is decorated with eight massive murals by contemporary artists. Laurence Anholt's depicts King Kong reaching a mighty hand out of a film screen to grab at the terrified audience, while Peter Sheridan's pair, designed to look like extra seating in the circle, is filled with portraits of local people. David Brooke, Ant Belmont, Hugh Dunford-Wood, Claudio Munos and Paul Blow are the other mural artists.

The current owners bought the Palace in 2014 and since have spent more than £2 million carefully renovation and restoring the building to modern standards while preserving its 1920s charm, retaining and enhancing its original features and ensuring that it will be with us for another 100 years.



The structural integrity of the building has been improved (with a new roof, electrical system, plumbing and heating system) and the cinema technology, stage, sound equipment and other facilities have all been fully updated. The venue now boasts a "state-of-the-art" Barco SP2K digital projector and a 22-speaker JBL surround sound system with Dolby CP950 sound processor, together with Dorset's largest cinema screen to support its film offering, and a digital multichannel Digico SD9 sound desk, Chamsys MagiQ50 lighting desk, a stage quality PA speaker system and a multi-layered stage lighting array to support its broad offering of live music and theatre.

The building has step-free access for the foyer and auditorium (ground floor) and a "hearing loop" in the auditorium for visitors with hearing aids. An accessible toilet is located on the ground floor in the entrance area (shared with the two retail units), with separate ladies and gents toilets located adjacent to the ground floor foyer and on the foyer balcony. Public car parking is provided in the nearby South Street Car Park (a 2-minute walk away) and offers parking for over 100 cars and easy level access to the Palace.

THE BUSINESS

The Palace represents a rare opportunity to acquire a long-established cultural venue with significant heritage. The sale of the Palace includes the operational venue, staff and the benefit of the business goodwill (as a going concern) and all associated trade fixtures and operating equipment. The Palace offers purchasers the opportunity to continue an established trading business and to further develop one of Dorset's best-known independent entertainment venues.

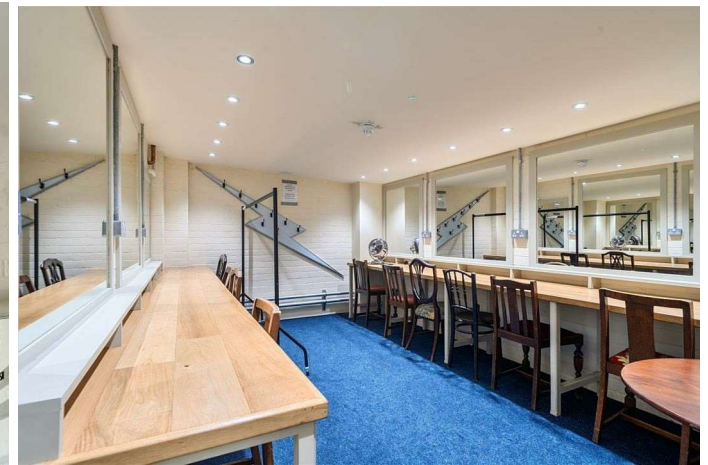
The Palace auditorium provides flexible accommodation for live performances, film and private events, with a capacity of around 480 guests for standing events (including live music) and seating for up to 410 guests (300 in the stalls and 110 in the balcony) for comedy, film, the spoken word and theatre.

The foyer areas and ancillary spaces are suitable for hospitality, receptions and private functions – including weddings, conferences and funerals. The venue has a wedding licence and can provide formal dining for up to 100 guests, with external caterers using a "pop-up" kitchen located in the "engine room" to the rear. The premises are licenced to serve alcohol and provide two bars in the entrance foyer on the ground floor, a third bar inside the auditorium (at the back of the stalls) and a temporary bar that can be opened on the foyer balcony. The chilled cellar (located adjacent to the main foyer bar) allows the sale of draft ales, lager and cider, as well as bottled beers, wines and spirits.

The Palace books a wide array of shows and events every year. Included amongst the amazing comedy acts who have played at the Palace are Bill Bailey, Ruby Wax, Chris McCausland, Milton Jones, Henning Wehn, Benjamin Zephaniah, James Acaster, Kerry Godliman, Rich Hall, Sara Pascoe and Lou Sanders.

From the world of music, recent acts include The Cavern Beatles, All Floyd and Fleetwood Bac – considered to be three of the best cover bands in the world – as well as Cloudbusting (Kate Bush) and Oas-is. Past appearances include PJ Harvey, Billy Bragg, Toyah

Wilcox, Johnny Marr (formerly of The Smiths), Steve Knightly (from Show of Hands), The Manfreds (formerly Manfred Mann), Rankin' Roger (from The Beat), The South (formerly The Beautiful South, including Alison Wheeler), with more regular performances by historic chart-toppers like The Pretenders, Fairport Convention and The Wurzels.



The Palace hosts many prestigious film events, including the renowned "From Page to Screen" film festival (every year in April), featuring special gala screenings with high profile film industry guests, and the "Purbeck Film Festival" (in October), showcasing independent and prestige cinema releases. The venue is renowned for hosting Q&As with filmmakers and directors, and this year includes a 20th Anniversary Gala of Casino Royale with Bond screenwriters, Neal Purvis and Robert Wade, and its composer David Arnold. Previous film festivals have included the Mike Leigh Film Festival at which this acclaimed director presented and hosted Q&A for 7 of his films over three days.

The Palace has also hosted many notable film premieres and special screenings over the years, often with a strong Dorset connection, including the premiere of From Time to Time (filmed in Dorset) attended by writer and producer Julian Fellowes, a gala screening of Tamara Drewe (filmed in Dorset) with writer Posy Simmonds and director Stephen Frears gracing the red carpet, and the premier of Far from the Madding Crowd (filmed in Dorset) with producer Andrew MacDonald. In July 2022, the Palace hosted BBC Radio 4's "Any Questions?" and, given the cultural and heritage significance of the Palace, this is an area that can be developed further by the purchaser.

The Palace started its centenary year with two awards: "My Favourite Business" and "Business of the Year" at the 2026 Bridport Business Awards. The venue was also previously named Best Theatre/Arts Venue in the Muddy Stiletto Awards for Dorset, Somerset & Bristol. With its eclectic mixture of film, live screenings (of ballet, theatre and opera), live comedy, live music and theatre, there is something for everybody, ensuring that the Palace will continue to enthral for many years to come.

PATRONS

The Palace is regularly supported by its patrons, which include a glittering list of famous directors, actors, writers and musicians:

- Lord Julian Fellowes - actor, novelist, and film and TV writer, producer and director, most famous for Downton Abbey and Gosford Park. Oscar winner (Best Original Screenplay), 2x Emmy winner, 4x BAFTA nominee.
- Sir Stephen Frears – Film and TV producer and director, best known for Dangerous Liaisons and The Queen, 3x BAFTA winner, 2x Oscar nominee.
- Mike Leigh, OBE – Film, TV and theatre screenwriter, producer and director, best known for Secrets & Lies, Vera Drake, Abigail's Party, Topsy-Turvy and Peterloo 3x BAFTA winner, 7x Oscar nominee.
- Lady Susan Birtwistle – TV drama and film writer and producer, most famous for Pride and Prejudice and Emma, BAFTA nominee.
- Chris Chibnall - TV drama writer and producer, most famous for Broadchurch and Doctor Who.
- Andrew Dickson – music composer for film and TV drama, most famous for the musical score for High Hopes.
- Sir Richard Eyre, CBE – of the National Theatre, film, theatre, TV and opera director and winner of three Lawrence Olivier Awards, 6x BAFTA nominee.
- Sylvester McCoy – actor and comedian, most famous for The Hobbit film series and Doctor Who.
- Caroline Montague – author and novelist.

EQUIPMENT AND TEAM

The Palace will be sold with all trade fixtures, operating equipment and 5 employees as a going concern, including an experienced general manager, programming manager and technical manager (monthly paid), and an experienced team of duty staff (hourly paid) and volunteer stewards. Further details are available following first inspection for those parties putting forward an acceptable offer for the Palace from the vendors agents, Symonds & Sampson.

SERVICES

Mains electricity, gas, water and drainage. Gas central heating. 2 x telephone lines. Ultrafast Broadband. There is good mobile coverage in the area, please refer to Ofcom.org.uk for more details.

MATERIAL INFORMATION

The property is Grade II listed.

The Palace has the use of an accessible WC located within the common parts (shared with the two retail units).

The Palace is available for sale standalone or as a whole with the two retail units and two residential flats (located above the retail units) as part of a separate negotiation, by private treaty.

The sale of the Palace includes the operational venue (together with staff, as a going concern), associated trade fixtures and equipment, and the benefit of the business goodwill.

The Palace has been nominated by Bridport Town Council as an Asset of Community Value (ACV). Dorset Council has until 27 May 2026 to decide whether to list the Palace as an ACV.

LOCAL AUTHORITY

Dorset Council Tel: 01305 221000

Business Rates Palace: RV £6,600

ENERGY PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

N/A (Grade II listed property)

TENURE

The property will be sold freehold or as a long leasehold (at least 900 years). Terms to be agreed.

DIRECTIONS

What3words:

Palace entrance (from South Street): /// plotting.broached.notched

VIEWINGS

Strictly by appointment only, to be arranged via Symonds & Sampson, Dorchester Commercial Sales on 01305 261008 (Option 5)

GENERAL

VAT:

Any guide price quoted or discussed is exclusive of VAT. If a sale of the property, or any part of it, or any right attached to it, becomes a chargeable supply for the purposes of VAT, such tax will be payable in addition.

Health and safety:

Given the potential hazards of a working cinema/theatre we ask you to be as vigilant as possible when making your inspection for your own personal safety, particularly around the stage and back-stage areas. All visitors to Bridport Electric Palace must be accompanied by a representative of the vendors agents, Symonds & Sampson, and by a member of the Palace staff at all times.

Solicitors:

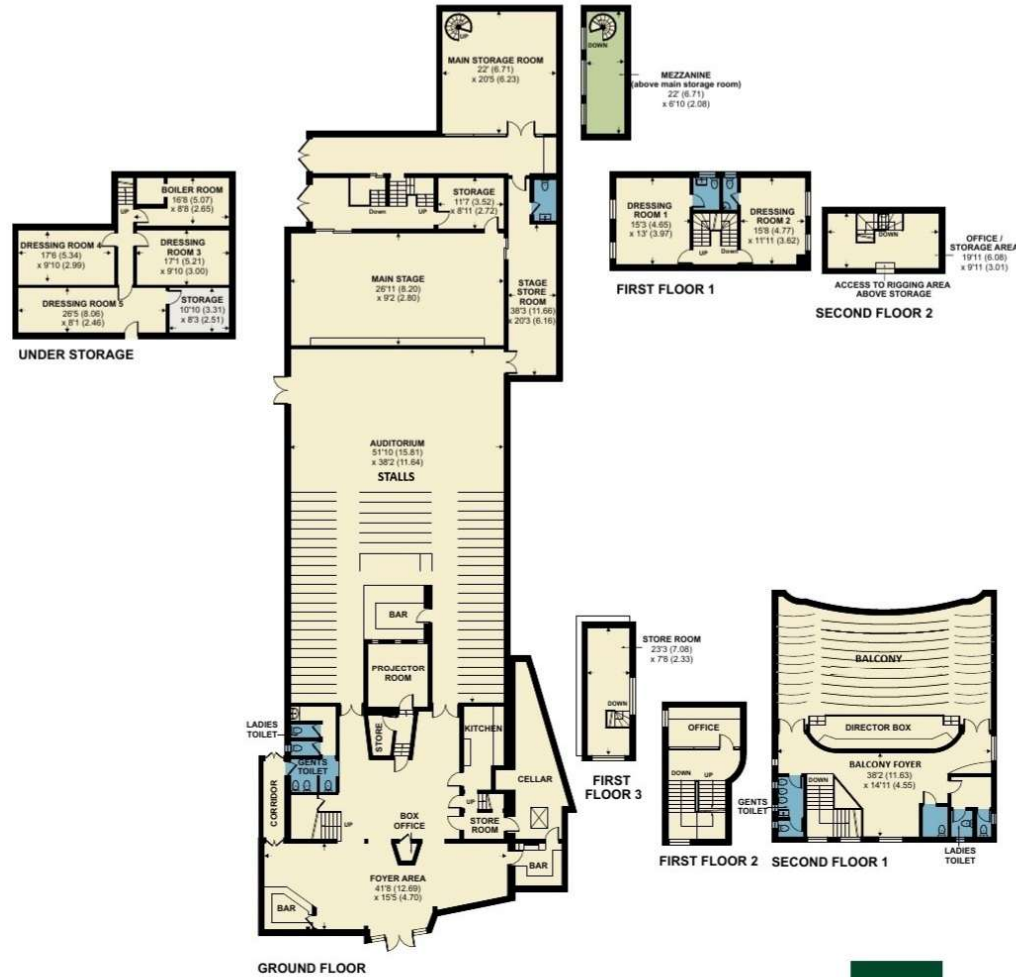
Pengillys LLP, Weymouth.



Bridport Electric Palace, South Street, Bridport

Approximate Area = 10325 sq ft / 959.2 sq m

For identification only - Not to scale



Floor plan produced in accordance with RICS Property Measurement 2nd Edition, Incorporating International Property Measurement Standards (IPMS2 Residential). © nctechcom 2026. Produced for Symonds & Sampson. REF: 1435493



DorCom/RH/01.05.26



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All measurements and distances are approximate. Text, photographs, and plans are for guidance only and may not be comprehensive. It should not be assumed that the property has all necessary planning or regulatory consents, and no services, equipment, or facilities have been tested. No investigations have been made into pollution or contamination; purchasers must make their own enquiries. The property is sold subject to all existing wayleaves, easements, and rights of way (public or private), whether mentioned or not. Vendors are not required to define such rights.