

Coming to a screen near you

OK, long gone are the days when Majestic targeted derelict cinemas for new wine warehouse sites – but the chain is on the expansion trail like never before. Nigel Huddleston asks what it means for independents in its target towns and what they can do to fight back

Oxford Wine competes with two Majestic branches in Oxford itself, and saw a branch open in Witney, close to its flagship store, in July 2012.

Managing director Ted Sandbach says: "Majestic stores are everywhere and the people who want to shop in them will shop in them. It probably takes more customers from Sainsbury's or Waitrose than from businesses like ours. I can't say for certain

'The range in Majestic is fine but it's not exciting any more'

that it's had no effect but we've certainly not seen a big slump.

"If you go into a Majestic, the range is fine but it's not exciting any more. It's not got those exciting little parcels. We offer something different."

Anita Mannion is owner of Leamington Wine, in Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, and started trading in the town when Majestic was already there.

She says that independents should have no fear in going head-to-head with the chain on the same territory – providing they come at things with their own individual approach.

"It's quite a busy branch but they do a lot of wholesale to local pubs and the like. We have a couple of accounts but it's not a side of the business we're focused on," she says.

"It's easy to get trapped into relying on big business accounts, but if they go bust you have a big hole to fill."

Mannion adds: "With our retail customers we try to be very high class with our wine