

**CATHS Research Working Group
Report from Meeting
Wednesday 25 September, 2024**

PRESENT:

Peter Benn, Royce Harris, David Kilderry, Ross King, Phil O’Kane and Ian Smith
Phil O’Kane was welcomed to his first in-person meeting.

APOLOGIES:

Keith Davies, Geoff Gunst and Cameron Hall.

BUSINESS ARISING

1. Capitol Theatre Centenary:

(i) RMIT’s Plan

Commemoration of the original Opening Night, 7 November at 5.30pm.

CATHS Participation: Handover of picket (if recovered).

The theatre’s Operations manager Darren Brown has promised CATHS 10 seats at this gala, assuming a presentation can be made. David is quietly working through an intermediary in the hope of retrieving it.

Royce’s Capitol program’s display was considered a winner.

Action: Royce is in touch with Darren re his program collection and the use of a locked glass case.

(ii) TOSA and Pioneers program, Sunday 10 November, at 1.00 pm.

2. Regent Ballarat

Palace Cinemas have made a big financial commitment with their decision to re-open the cinema.

3. Visit to FOMO East Brunswick, Sunday 29 September

Nine members took the time to inspect the six-cinema complex. Most of this group had previously visited Palace Penny Lane at Moonee Ponds. A former manager and now Creative Coordinator Tristan Jones was generous with his time, even though Sunday sessions had commenced. A report will be prepared for CinemaRecord.

4. Concessionaires Ltd

Ross provided this summary by Michael Magnussun posted on *Cinema and Theatre’s* Facebook page.

Concessionaires was run by American businessman Harry Deverich who set up a string of businesses after arriving in Australia after the war. Concessionaires was one of the longer running successes. The company expanded to run food counters in theatres, drive-ins, cafes, amusement parlours and bowling alleys etc.

Hoyts terminated their arrangement with Concessionaires in the 1970s, after deciding to run that side of the business themselves. The probable reason was observing how profitable the sale of popcorn, drinks, and ice-creams was to the bottom line.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. Edit *Melbourne’s Capitol Theatre: A Centenary Tribute*

This story will run in the November/December issue of CR. The group considered improvements to the text and choice of photographs.

2. Regent Collins Street: City of Melbourne Proposal by Mayor to Sell Stake in the Theatre.

Opinion was that it would be a foolish move to sell an asset like this. The mayor’s argument for the sale was that the money would be distributed to arts groups and other worthy entities. But bricks and mortar is substantial, whereas spend the money and it has gone. If the council did sell (its share is 51 percent) the theatre would undoubtedly find a new operator, but the possibility that Live Nation would step in is a worrying prospect.

3. Sale of Paramount Pictures.

Bought by Sumner Redstone in 1994, and until recently chaired by his daughter, this grand old company is now owned by Skydance Studios, an independent outfit which has partnered with Paramount on recent productions. Sale price in July was \$US 8bn with another \$2.4 bn to be paid to acquire Redstone-owned theatres.

Universal built the first studio in Hollywood (opened in March 1915), and Paramount (as Famous Players -Lasky) was second. It's a long time since the slogan, "*If it's a Paramount Picture, it's the Best Show in Town*" had much credence to it. Perhaps this cash injection will revive its place at the top of the mountain.

4. Book - *Melbourne at the Movies: Confessions of a Certified Cinefile* by Ross Campbell

A copy of the book was circulated. A fine publication, at a reasonable price. Copies will be available at the October CATHS meeting.

OTHER THEATRE NEWS

1. Austral Collingwood

Google does not show any current live productions at the site. The arrangement was a short-term lease for experimental theatre, which presumably has not been renewed.

2. Hoyts at Docklands

Despite the closure of the Big Wheel, which might be thought to have reduced foot traffic and interest in this part of town, the cinema is doing reasonably well.

3. Bendigo Cinemas

By modern standards, at least judged by those at Penny Lane Moonee Ponds and Bluestone Way in East Brunswick, the seven cinemas are oversize, with a cut-down Cinema 1 (to make Cinema 7) still seating at least 400 people. Prior to the school holidays, even Half Price Tuesday was not drawing adults to the day sessions. Things have improved throughout the holiday fortnight, but the viability of the cinema in this size is questioned.

NEXT MEETING

January 2025

Date to be determined.