

CATHS Research Working Group
Report From Meeting
Thursday 24 July 2020

PRESENT:

Peter Benn, Ross Campbell, Cameron Hall, Royce Harris, David Kilderry, Ross King, and Ian Smith

APOLOGY

Keith Stevens

BUSINESS ARISING

1. Film Distribution Story

David Kilderry has enlarged his contribution to include the 35 mm majors and more recent entries, as well as 16mm suppliers. Other headings include Smaller Players, Local Pioneers, and Home-grown outfits (27 entries).

Peter supplied details about the Australian Council for Children's Films and Television. Other sources (headings only) include State Film Centre, National Film Board of Canada, French Embassy (and others), Shell Library, Greek and Italian distributors. Peter raised the question of how to organise this material. Meeting agreed that it should include entries on larger-than -life players who have graced the industry, for better or worse. Names such as Nathan Scheingold, Eric Dare and Andrew Gatty.

Action: Forward lists to Eric White for comment. Eric may have suggestions about who to involve interstate. David Donaldson in Adelaide and David Coles in Sydney were mentioned. Eric may wish to write a thumbnail about some players.

2. Eclipse Collingwood

There was some expectation that this site would now be open, but the current website seeks sponsors in what is clearly a crowd-funding exercise to get the project over the line. It's the brain child of Mark Walker, one half of the duo who started the Pivotonian Geelong.

3. Lyalls Plasterer's and Hoyts

This comprehensive story, originally an audio recording by Peter Wolfenden with former Lyall employee John Parsons, has been forwarded to the editors and is now set. It has spawned the possibility of a follow-up story about the essential role of skilled plasterers in creating the character of a theatre. For example, the 1948 rebuild of the Regent Collins Street was too big a job for one firm. Both Lyalls and Picton Hopkins are credited for the plaster work.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. Cinema on the Sapphire Coast

Ian's holiday at Narooma and Merimbula gave the opportunity to observe the local industry.

(i) Kinema Narooma



This quaint theatre is on the market. The stage setting of Cinema 1 is a delight. A water fall curtain, almost identical to the one which graced the former Metro Malvern, complete with gold tassels, is the standout feature of the stage. Ross King pointed out that this theatre was fitted out "old-style" about 30 years ago (see image below) by the late Steve Walsh and partner, who for a time ran the *Bega Kings*, then moved to the Rex Charlton. The 'torches' held by nymphs either side of the screen, was a feature repeated at the Rex.

(ii) Picture Show Man Merimbula

Dennis Parks sold the theatre in December 2017 to the Johannsen family, who knew nothing about the world of film exhibition, but were talked into it by their son Jesse, who had been working for Dennis and showed

enthusiasm and aptitude. Mrs Johannesen explained that they could not have bought in at a worse time. Two years of Covid restrictions halved their audience, and in that time the public switched to streaming services. The good days of pre-Covid have not returned.



(iii) Tathra Theatre

Tathra is a picturesque fishing town, inland from the Princes Highway, with a hotel renowned for a fine lunch. In the 1880s a hotel premises often included a theatre, and the hotel has revived the tradition. The addition was faced in stone in 2000, and is undergoing additional stone work. Not surprisingly, the building shares no visual similarity to the c.1900 hotel. When asked if the theatre was to include cinema, the stonemasons looked insulted. "No, it was a theatre."

2. Henkel Street Cinema

A venue for hire for parties and special events, sourcing product from Roadshow and a company called Amalgamated Movies, a so-called "non-theatrical" distributor.

3. Palace to Screen the New York Time's Top 10 Films of 21st century

Titles in order: *Parasite*, *Mulholland Drive*, *There Will be Blood*, *In the Mood for Love*, *Moonlight*, *No Country for Old Men*, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, *Get Out*, *Spirited Away*, and *The Social Network*.

This list could set off a lot of arguments.

4. Taiwan Reduces Film Output

Cameron explained that the heady days of the Taiwanese *New Wave* of the 80s have long since receded. Both Taiwan and Hong Kong film-makers have not come to terms with the ominous shadow of mainland China. The paucity of new product is reflected by the Chinatown Cinema decision to screen English-language films with Mandarin Subtitles!

5. Vicki Shuttleworth: Finding a Publisher for bio of Louise Lovely

After Vicki's manuscript was rejected by her preferred publisher, she is restructuring the narrative. Vicki says the recent book on the same subject has a different take on the story to her version. She seems undeterred, pointing out that the recent winner of the Miles Franklin Award had his manuscript rejected multiple times before final acceptance.

6. Research Group Declares 3D Dead!

If 3D as a mainstream cinema process still had legs Brad Pitt's *F1* would have been the film for it. Instead, special Imax cameras were used to bring the audience into the action.

7. Cinema Screens Then and Now

David previewed his forthcoming talk at PMI which will compare changes in exhibition from the 50s to the present.

Greek and Italian exhibitors extended the life of many suburban theatres. At one stage 13 of 30 survivors were in foreign hands. In 1955 single screens in Melbourne totalled 138 cinemas with an average of 900 - 1000 seats. Some outer suburbs (beyond Ringwood and Williamstown) did not advertise in the daily papers. Today there are 438 screens in 50 locations which offer approx. the same number of seats as 50 years ago, despite the increase in population.

Village Knox is the multiplex with the biggest auditorium. Most popular multiplexes are Fountain Gate, Hoyts Melbourne Central and Hoyts Chadstone. **Next Meeting:** To be determined