JAFFAS DOWN THE AISLES
A Survey of Cinemas in Country Victoria

For Heritage Victoria, June 2008

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1.   Executive Summary

In June 2007, Heritage Matters Pty Ltd was commissioned by Heritage Victoria to undertake a survey of cinemas, in the past, more often called picture theatres in rural Victoria. The study was to build on existing research, including a survey of metropolitan cinemas undertaken several years before by Daniel Catrice in association with the National Trust of Australia (Vic), various regional heritage studies and nominations held by Heritage Victoria for places to be added to the Victorian Heritage Register. It was also intended to rank the relative significance of places, recommending the most significant for possible addition to the Victorian Heritage Register.

The study has identified some 170 places where moving pictures were shown on a regular basis. The range of buildings is wide including purpose built commercial cinemas, public halls built with cinema facilities, public halls converted to be used as cinemas and a small number of other examples. New buildings ranged in date from immediately after the First World War until the late 1950s, coinciding with the advent of television in rural Victoria. Converted buildings dated from the later nineteenth century with some rare exceptions such as halls associated with early gold fields hotels. Surprisingly few commercial cinemas were built. Importantly, some of these survive as functioning cinemas but many others have been demolished or converted to other uses, often destroying the interiors which was so much part of the cinema experience. Interestingly, many public halls were built as memorials to those who served in the First and the Second World Wars, either as town halls or as extensions to existing halls such as mechanics institutes. These public halls tend to survive better than commercial cinemas.

The social value of 'going to the pictures' was immense and must not be underestimated for rural communities. There is much oral history surviving about the culture surrounding it. Other oral history resides in projectionists who often represent second and third generations of picture theatre families. There is also much intangible heritage associated with the travelling families who maintained often extensive circuits in rural Victoria.

All of the places identified in the study have local significance, more or less, and sometimes for several, layered reasons. In the end, only ten places have been recommended for possible addition to the Victorian Heritage Register as cinemas. Other places may be considered but for reasons different from their role as a cinema.

2.   Brief

A copy of the Brief is attached as Appendix A. The brief was standard for such a project. It was not necessary to change the requirements of the brief significantly during the Study.

3.   Limitations of Study

Geographically, the study was limited to all of the state of Victoria which was not considered by Daniel Catrice in his 'Cinemas in Melbourne 1896-1942', MA (Public History) thesis, Department of History, Monash University, 1991.[1] His inventory included some outer suburban places such as Belgrave (the Cameo Picture Theatre),

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[1] This reference is highly recommended for its excellent bibliography.

and Dandenong (the Boomerang/Mayfair). Chronologically, the study was limited to the period 1900-1960, that is, from the nominal start of cinema in Australia to the effective advent of television in rural Victoria.[2] It was decided not to include places which are demolished but places which are much altered or compromised have been included in the inventory. Places on the Victorian Heritage Register, being fully identified already, were not considered. (See the List in Section 10.) Private cinemas were not considered, such as those at schools, hospitals, armed service facilities (e.g. Australian Army, Puckapunyal and RAAF, Sale), or barracks and prisons (e.g. Bonegilla). These appear to have been irregular venues.

4.   The Study Team
The study team comprised:

Justin Francis manager	Heritage Matters Pty Ltd	project
Timothy Hubbard	Heritage Matters Pty Ltd	researcher
Kelly Wynne assistant	Heritage Matters Pty Ltd	research
Robin Grow	Art Deco Society of Aust (ADSA)	adviser
Gerry Kennedy	Cinema & Theatre Historical Society (CATHS)	adviser

5.   Acknowledgements
There are many people whom we wish to acknowledge, including building owners and operators, former projectionists, local arts and historical society contacts, and other heritage professionals. We would particularly like to thank our colleagues, Ms Wendy Jacobs and Dr David Rowe who have shared much valuable information and advice as well as giving permission for their work to be incorporated into the Heritage Victoria Hermes database (HERitage Management Electronic System). Mr John Smithies (CDNS) and Mr David Guest (Australian Centre for the Moving Image) were also helpful. The passion, knowledge and advice of Mr Gerry Kennedy of CATHS and Mr Robin Grow of the ADSA were stimulating and most useful. Finally, we would specially like to acknowledge the very professional support, assistance and careful double-checking and proof-reading provided by Frances O'Neill, Senior Historian and Anne Cahir, Project Manager at Heritage Victoria.

6.   Definitions
The term 'cinema', which comes from the ancient Greek word for 'movement', when used to describe a building means a place where moving pictures are shown. It was used as the root for *cinématographe,* the word coined in the 1890s by the Lumiere brothers who had invented the system of taking, developing, printing and projecting moving pictures. Subsequently the word was used to describe moving pictures as an art form. However, in Australia the word cinema did not have much popular use until the 1960s, ironically after the demise of the great pictures theatres from television. The national art film magazine *Cinema Papers* was not published until 1969. The term cinema is now more closely associated with Continental and Asian films, the revival of Australian film production and the contemporary film industry. Parallel to this is the term 'movie', which has American and particularly Hollywood associations.

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[2] The Latrobe Valley could receive television from Mount Dandenong transmitters from 1956 but Sunraysia Television did not start until November 1965.

This Study focussed on purpose-built picture theatres or cinemas including buildings with mixed uses, such as town halls, mechanics institutes, World War 1 & World War 2 memorial halls and other public halls. Outdoor cinemas, which existed in the earliest period and intermittently afterwards but which were always ephemeral were not considered. Drive–ins were not considered because they will be researched in other late 20th century typological studies conducted by Heritage Victoria.

7.   Method

The first step in our method was to create a basic inventory of places. This was achieved by documentary research: e.g. Sands & McDougall *Victorian Directories;* the *Film Weekly*, both its weekly 'newspaper' and annual report; local newspaper reports; local historical society records; local histories; etc. Against this we matched existing listings by Heritage Victoria, the National Trust of Australia (Vic), the National Estate Register, CATHS and information held by ADSA. The information held by CATHS and ADSA was particularly useful in fleshing out the basic information in the inventory. Other listings such as the Public Record Office, 'Index for Public Buildings Files' VPRS 7882/P1 were used for detailed research on specific buildings.

The second step was to distribute a call for assistance from local government through their heritage advisers and parallel organisations such as the Cultural Development Network.[3] Similarly the Australian Centre for the Moving Image was approached for assistance.[4] The third step was to undertake field work. Four major tours were undertaken: Western Victoria from Port Fairy to Mildura; Central Goldfields Ballarat to Echuca; North Central to Wodonga-Beechworth; South Gippsland; and the metropolitan periphery. This work revealed a number of places used for the regular showing of films which were not included in the *Victorian Directories* and *Film Weekly*. They tended to be small halls which exhibitors hired for one or two nights a week or a fortnight, showing films on a circuit. Every place was photographed externally and, when possible, internally. Surviving equipment was also photographed. This collection of photographs, as a 'snapshot' of what survives in 2007-08, is a major record. The field work also allowed us to interview individuals who exhibited, projected and watched films.

The fourth step was to set up selection criteria and thresholds for significance, especially to establish cases for state significance. It was clear that the vast number of places identified were of local significance. It was also clear that the places of potential state significance would be determined largely by how representative they were of different phases of cinema development, different types of buildings, different architectural styles, and some for their associations with significant individuals. Finally, integrity and intactness were considered. A matrix was drawn up for the top 38 places and a comparative analysis for relative representative significance was started. This boiled down to the top 19 places ranked into an 'A' and a 'B' list.

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[3] The CDN is 'an association of local government arts, leisure and cultural development managers across the 79 local councils in Victoria'.
[4] The ACMI 'celebrates, champions and explores the moving image in all its forms - film, television, games, new media and art'.

Ten places have been recommended for nomination to the Victorian Heritage Register. The places on the B List should be 'watched' for their potential state significance.

All of the places discovered during the project are included in Appendix B but this should be seen as a work in progress and corrected and amplified as new information comes to light.

A List (Ten)			
Midland/Astor	Ararat	The Lorne Cinema	Lorne
The Regent	Ballarat	The Athenaeum	Sorrento
The Rex	Charlton	The former Town Hall or The Regent	Warracknabeal
The Horsham Theatre	Horsham	The Globe	Winchelsea
Memorial Hall	Koroit	The Regent	Yarram

B List (Ten)			
The Shire Hall	Alexandra	Mechanics Institute	Murtoa
The Former Memorial and Town Hall	Boort	The Roxy[5]	Robinvale
Former Shire of Glenelg Town Hall	Casterton	Swan Hill Town Hall	Swan Hill
Former Town Hall	Healesville	The Swanpool Cinema	Swanpool
The Roxy	Ouyen	Former Town Hall	Yarrawonga

The fifth step was to enter as much information as possible into the Heritage Victoria database, Hermes. Some places were already included from other studies but most were new entries. Those places recommended for addition to the Victorian Heritage Register have been fully documented.

Investigations revealed that the Regent in Yarram and the Regent at Warracknabeal (the former Warracknabeal Town Hall) had been nominated for inclusion in the Register and were awaiting assessment by Heritage Victoria. Detailed Hermes entries have been prepared for them. The Heritage Council determined not to include the Sorrento Athenaeum in the Register in 2000 but based on new and substantial information concerning its use as a cinema we believe that it deserves to be reconsidered and accordingly we have prepared a detailed Hermes entry for it. The Swanpool Cinema was, for some time during the study, considered to be of state significance and a detailed Hermes entry was prepared for it. Of the remainder, the Alexandra Shire Hall had little material associated with its use as a cinema which we could readily find. Accordingly, it should remain of local significance until it might be considered under some other typological study, i.e. as a review of the Typological Study of Local Government Offices and Halls (Andrew Ward, 1994).

We have also prepared detailed Hermes entries to enable the consideration of: the Regent at Ballarat, the Rex at Charlton, the Horsham Picture Theatre, the Memorial Hall at Koroit, the Lorne Cinema, the Regent (former Town Hall) at Warracknabeal,

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[5] This building has since been demolished.

the Globe at Winchelsea and the Regent at Yarram.[6] The Roxy Theatre at Ouyen was considered seriously for its level of significance but the recent renovation works, including the large scale replacement of original fabric and certain alterations, we believe, have too seriously compromised its integrity. The former Boort Town Hall is one of the best representative examples of 1920s 'memorial' town halls but these are already represented on the Victorian Heritage Register by the Soldiers' and Citizens' Memorial Hall and former Hindmarsh Municipal Chambers, Jeparit (VHR 1905). The Maryborough Town Hall, Maryborough (VHR 2152) is a recent addition to the VHR. The Athenaeum and Memorial Hall, Elmore (VHR 1744) and the Victoria Hotel (Tarnagulla Public Hall), Tarnagulla (VHR778) are already on the Victorian Heritage Register.

8.   Cinema Distribution across Victoria

Cinemas of all sorts are found across Victoria but not consistently. There appears to be a predominance in western Victoria which, as well as reflecting basic population distributions, may be the result of the efforts of Soldier Settlers after both World Wars, a general wealth from pastoralism and agriculture and the efforts of individuals and families in the promotion of cinema going.

The authors of this study are based in the south west of the state and are most familiar with the west and south east. We have been anxious not to be biased in our research but practicalities may have crept in. Three guards against this potential bias were to call for help from the state-wide heritage advisory service, using existing listings by expert organisations and by special reference to individuals who are expert in the history and architecture of cinemas. It is interesting to note that there were relatively fewer rural cinemas in Victoria than in New South Wales and that this is reflected not only in the number of cinemas but also in their capacity. Queensland was almost equal to Victoria.

Summary of Theatres throughout Australia - 1950-51[7]						
	Capital City	**Suburban**	**Country**	**Total**	**Total Towns & Suburbs covered.**	**Touring Circuits**
NSW	26	172	405	603	442	12
Vic	20	127	217	364	271	8
Qld	9	60	273	342	270	12
SA	13	52	116	181	151	4
WA	9	99		108	89	16
Tas	6	52		58	50	3
Total	**83**	**1573**		**1656**	**1273**	**55**

Summary of Seating Capacity of Theatres throughout Australia - 1950-51[8]				
(These figures take no account of gardens or touring shows)				
	Capital City	**Suburban**	**Country**	**Total**
NSW	29,467	209,871	251,629	490,967

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[6] We are very grateful for the unlimited access to the excellent research undertaken by our colleagues Dr David Rowe and Ms Wendy Jacobs, especially for the Rex, Charlton, the Globe, Winchelsea and the Lorne Theatre.
[7] *The Film Weekly Motion Picture Directory 1950-51, p.* 14, 'Easy Reference Statistics'.
[8] *The Film Weekly Motion Picture Directory 1950-51, p.* 14, 'Easy Reference Statistics'.

Vic	25,260	134,797	108,884	268,941
Qld	13,069	46,827	136,785	196,681
SA	16,650	49,435	48,998	115,083
WA	12,289	51,200		63,489
Tas	5,541	23,333		28,874
Total	**102,276**	**1,061,759**		**1,164,035**

9.   Outline History

The Beginning of Cinema
It is not known when or where the first moving pictures were shown in rural Victoria. The Lumière brothers, Auguste and Louis, had invented their cinématographe and shown short films publicly in Paris by the end 1895. Just one year later, the Melbourne Cup race was filmed. In 1900 the 'multimedia' version of *Soldiers of the Cross* was exhibited in Melbourne and, in 1906, the hour-long feature *The Story of the Kelly Gang* was exhibited. But these were exceptional examples of cinema. Most very early films were short and, of course, silent except for the accompaniment of a small orchestra or piano. In fact films were first used between acts in vaudeville shows to entertain the audience while sets were changed. One of the earliest references to such a mixed bill is the 'The Bohemian Dramatic Company' which presented short plays accompanied by biograph films at the Lyric Theatre, Bendigo in 1910.[9] The first time a place included 'picture' in its name was Claude Heywood's Picture Pavilion, Malop Street, Geelong in 1913.[10]

The first buildings used for showing motion pictures on a regular basis were existing vaudeville theatres, sometimes stand-alone and sometimes associated with another venue such as a hotel, and theatres in existing mechanics institutes which had a long tradition of popular entertainment. Examples of the former are the Theatre Royal in Castlemaine (1856)(VHR H2144), Her Majesty's Theatre, Ballarat, (1874)(VHR H0648) and the Sorrento Athenaeum (1896)(Hermes 27086). Examples of the latter are the Royal Hotel and Theatre (1857)(VHR H1391), the Victoria Hotel, Tarnagulla (1861)(VHR H0778), the Chewton Hotel (Hermes 26822) and the Commercial Hotel, Merino (1870s)(Hermes 34458) where in the 1950s, a courtyard was enclosed to create the theatre. In 1936, a local café and guest house proprietor built the Victory Theatre next door in Ouyen. There are many examples of mechanics institutes being converted and built with projection facilities. A typical example of the former is the Mechanics Institute, called the Plaza, Lismore, now demolished, which had a bio-box added in the 1920s. A typical small example of the latter is the Mirboo on Tarwin Hall, Mirboo (1928)(VHR H1973). Perhaps the grandest addition to an existing mechanics institute was the enormous extension, in the tradition of the picture palace, after a fire at the Murtoa Mechanics Institute (1928)(Hermes 31072). Only one example of a Masonic hall used as a cinema has been identified, the former Masonic Hall, Bendigo (1873)(VHR H0199) where films were shown from as early as 1909. The space was leased by West's Pictures in 1912 and renamed The New Britannia, then the Capitol Theatre c.1930 (later the Capital Theatre).

The 'Explosion' of Cinema
There were only five places listed under the heading 'Theatres' in the 1902 Sands and McDougall *Victorian Directory*.[11] The numbers soon exploded. By the introduction of the 'talkies' in 1929 there were at least 60 permanent places, increasing to at least

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[9] *Bendigo Advertiser*, 26th July 1910.
[10] S&M, *Directory*, 1913, p. 2771.
[11] S&M, *Directory*, 1902, p. 1684. Including the names of some proprietors, they were: the Gaiety Theatre, View St, Bendigo; Her Majesty's Theatre—Spencer, R., Murphy St, Wangaratta; Princess Theatre, View St, Bendigo; Star Theatre—Daly, E. S., Fryers St, Shepparton; Theatre Royal—Frew, W., lessee, Reid St, Wangaratta. Interestingly, none of the other examples mentioned are listed.

80 during the Great Depression and, at the end of the Second World War, there were over 100. The numbers dip slightly in the 1950s but the largest number of entries in the Directories occurs in 1960 with 104, not including drive-in theatres. The heading 'Picture Theatres' is not used until 1936. At least 150 places, mostly surviving, have been identified in this Study.

The Sands and McDougall Directories' totals are misleading, however, because there were many more places where pictures were shown regularly which were not included. *The Film Weekly Motion Picture Directory 1954-5* has a total of 230 places. Field research and oral history confirms a strong tradition of small public halls being used one or two nights a week. One example of this is the Mechanics Institutes at Lismore and Derrinallum where the same films were shown on a Friday and then a Saturday. In Lismore the hall became the Plaza for the night and in Derrinallum the hall became the Regent. This service was provided by P. L. Dunn and subsequently his son for over forty years. Eight businesses are listed as such 'Country Circuits' in *The Film Weekly Motion Picture Directory 1954-5*, two with double circuits, but not Mr. Dunn.[12]
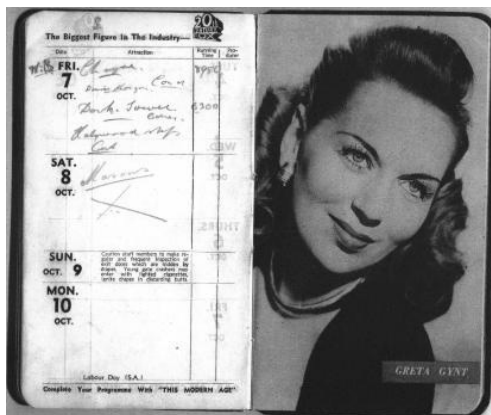
Page from the booking diary supplied by 20th Century Fox to P. L. Dunn, exhibitor.

Receipt from RKO Pictures for the supply of **The Secret Life of Walter Mitty** *to P. L. Dunn in 1950.*

On the other hand, the number of purpose built cinemas was relatively small. These included commercial cinemas with raked floors, town halls with flat floors but built with full cinema facilities and leased commercially, and other public halls such as memorial halls of which there are surprisingly many after both World Wars. There is much variety in scale, style, form and materials.

The Development of Cinema
The first major phase of new building occurred in the 1920s when a series of large commercial cinemas was constructed. These include such 'palaces' as the Regent, Colac (Hermes 26828), the Prince Regent, Hamilton (Hermes 26852), the Horsham Theatre (Hermes 26854) and the Prince Regent, Sale (1927)(Hermes 26940) now demolished. Their capacities were large even by metropolitan standards, being approximately 1300, 1200 and 1000. The largest picture palace ever built in rural Victoria was The Regent, Ballarat (1927)(Hermes 26800) with a capacity of 1950.

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[12] *The Film Weekly Motion Picture Directory 1954-5*, pp. 59, 61, & 63.

One of the more unusual privately constructed buildings was the Globe Theatre (1927)(Hermes 27175) built by the Lawrence family at Winchelsea. Partly built to promote the career of one of the owners, Marjorie Lawrence who became a world-renowned soprano despite falling victim to polio, the original insurance documents include a description of the player piano and the projectors which were worth as much as the building.[13] Its capacity was only 350. It has a flat hall and was clearly intended for more uses than just showing moving pictures for profit.

These commercial cinemas were paralleled by the construction of town halls and other halls, often as memorials to those who had fallen in the First World War. Two examples in the north-west of the state are the Soldiers' and Citizens' Memorial (Town) Hall, Jeparit (1924-5)(VHR H1905), and the former Gordon Shire Hall, Boort (1929)(Hermes 26819). In Gippsland there were the Traralgon Town Hall (1925)(now demolished). Typically, these were smaller buildings with a capacity of 450 and 350. The foundation stone of the Hopetoun Memorial Hall (1922)(Hermes 34451) was 'unveiled by the bereaved mothers'. While the RSL, then the RSSAILA, collaborated with local municipalities and, sometimes, mechanics institutes, it also built halls for itself which included projection facilities. Two examples are the RSL Halls at Sealake (post 1920s)(Hermes 34451) and Minyip (post 1920)(Hermes 34459). These were even smaller, with capacities of 300 and 290.

Typical promotional posters which would be displayed in glazed cabinets outside the entrance to cinemas.

The second major phase began with the introduction of the 'talkies' from 1929 which provided a great impetus for audience numbers. This phase continued strongly despite, if not because of the Great Depression. While some very large cinemas were constructed, most were smaller in scale. One of the largest cinemas, perhaps the second largest ever built in rural Victoria with a capacity of 1450, was the Ozone, Mildura (1938), now demolished. The Capitol Theatre, Warrnambool (1933)(Hermes

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[13] The originals are held, along with other documentation about the cinema by the Winchelsea and District Historical Society.

4695) had a capacity of 720. Some of the smaller commercial cinemas which were built in this phase were the Rex, Daylesford (1932)(Hermes 5283), the Regent, Yarram (c.1931)(Hermes 11549) the Victory Theatre, now Roxy, Ouyen (1936)(Hermes 34460) and the Rex, Charlton (1938)(Hermes 26821). Their capacities were smaller than the 1920s cinemas being 800, 720, 260 and 560. Perhaps the most glamorous of this group was the Astor, now called the Midland, Ararat (1939)(Hermes 26789), with a capacity of 970. Some town halls continued to be built with full projection facilities. The Swan Hill Town Hall, known as the Regent (1934)(Hermes 27098), the Horsham Town Hall (c.1938)(Hermes 26853), and Casterton Town Hall (1937)(Hermes 23792) and the Morwell Town Hall(1936)(Hermes 77049) which replaced the Mechanics Institute burnt down in 1935 are typical. In 1955 they had capacities of 1080, 954, 630, and 400 plus.[14] If the Swan Hill Town Hall was one of the biggest and most glamorous, the most sophisticated of this group was the Warracknabeal Town Hall, called the Regent (1939)(Hermes 14390). This period also saw much refurbishment of existing commercial picture theatres, both sound and projection equipment and new furnishings to attract more patrons. The Athenaeum at Sorrento, a theatre which dated from 1896 was refitted in 1932 with an RCA sound system and redecorated in the Moderne style but this meant that the seating capacity was reduced from 590 to 530.

Little if any construction or refurbishment appears to have occurred in rural cinemas during or immediately after the Second World War. It is perhaps surprising, however, to see how much took place in the early 1950s and even in the 1960s. The new Port Fairy cinema, which had been delayed by the War, was built in the early 1950s with a capacity of 600. The Swanpool Theatre was built in the mid 1950s as the Swanpool and District Memorial Hall with a capacity of 240. The Koroit Memorial Hall was built by the Catholic Church in 1957. Two of the last places to be built with full cinema facilities were the Shire of Heytesbury Town Hall, Cobden and the Toora Community Hall which were not started until 1965.

There has also been a long tradition of open air theatre. These places are very transitory, requiring fine weather and holiday crowds. At different times they occurred in Beechworth, Benalla, Mildura, Tidal River and Yarrawonga. One of the most interesting cinemas is at Ouyen, which has side walls which open up as large shutters to allow a breeze to blow through the building. The original seating was deck chairs. It was inspired by a trip by its owner to Far North Queensland and, consequently, is known locally as a 'tropical' cinema.

Other examples of cinemas include facilities built for institutions such as Kyneton Secondary College (1928)(VHR H1999) and Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Ballarat, and for the armed forces, such as for the RAAF at Sale and the Army at Puckapunyal. Several Catholic parishes built multi-purpose halls which included full cinema projection facilities. These included the St Thomas Hall, Terang (1930), the Cathedral Hall, Sale (1955) and the Memorial Hall, Koroit (1957)(Hermes 26871). Pictures were also shown at special communities, such as at Camp No. 1 Internment Camp, Tatura and later migrant camps such as at Bonegilla.

Effect of Television from 1956-65

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[14] Motion Picture Directory 1954-5, The Film Weekly, pp. 59-63.

Daniel Catrice states 'The rapid proliferation of television in Australia had an immediate and devastating effect on cinema attendances. During 1957 attendances in Victoria had declined by 5.4 million; by 1960, despite the exhortation of the trade journal *Film Weekly* for the industry to "close its ranks … in vigorous showmanship and forceful selling," admissions had fallen a further 52%'.[15] The effect of television on going to the pictures was not as immediate in rural Victoria as it may have been in metropolitan Melbourne.[16] The delivery of TV in rural areas, especially in more remote parts, was delayed and the expense of purchasing a TV set may have been harder to meet in rural communities although the late 1950s and early 1960s were prosperous times. The listings in the Sands and McDougall Directories actually increased 5% after falling for fifteen years from 1945. Then, the advent of colour television in the 1970s and video in the 1980s reinforced the decline which has more recently continued with the advent of DVDs. Many important examples of cinemas, especially commercial cinemas, were converted to other uses or demolished. A few have been split into multi-screen cinemas such as the Astor/Midland, Ararat (3 screens), and the Capitol, Warrnambool (3 screens) or, in the case of the Horsham Theatre (3 screens) extended and, in the case of the Regent, Ballarat, both split and extended (3 screens and 2 screens).

Nonetheless, there has been some survival and a continuing nostalgia for cinema leading to a revival in rural Victoria. Holiday resorts such as Sorrento, Lorne, Apollo Bay and Port Fairy have full programs for the summer season. Warrnambool Council holds outdoor cinemas in summer. Strong audience support has continued at the Royal, Castlemaine. The Rex at Charlton has become an important revival cinema now in community ownership. Many big cinemas continue to operate profitably and smaller cinemas continue to be operated by film societies or during holiday seasons. What has fallen away is the use of small public halls for showing films, a tradition which was of great social significance to small rural communities until the early 1960s.

The use of DVD to transport and project films cheaply may be an economic saviour but it means the end of the traditional role of the projectionist and their early equipment. Similarly, new technology to allow for simulcast projection from remote locations may provide another boost to the use of rural cinemas. This service is provided by the Australian Film Commission but to only one rural cinema in Victoria, the Regent at Yarram.

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[15] Catrice, 'Cinemas in Melbourne 1896-1942', p. 60, quoting *The Age*, 5th November 1958 and Bertrand, I (ed.), *Cinema in Australia*, pp. 255-6.
[16] An exact assessment would require the analysis of the returns which exhibitors were required to make to distributors, separating city, suburban and rural returns, but such detailed research is beyond the scope of this report.

The Regent, located in the Warracknabeal Town Hall (1940) was operated by O'Halloran Theatres Pty Ltd.

The Regent, Yarram (1929) was operated by Mr. & Mrs. A. J. Thompson, local property developers.

Proprietors, Chains, Distributors and Exhibitors

The two big chains, specifically Hoyts Theatres Ltd and Greater Union Theatres Pty Ltd, which were both based in Sydney, were clearly national 'circuit' players.[17] However, by the mid 1950s in rural Victoria, Hoyts only owned and operated the Regent and Plaza in Ballarat and Greater Union had only an 'association' with the Britannia, Ballarat and the Geelong Theatre, Geelong.[18] Consolidated Theatres Pty Ltd, based in Melbourne, through its subsidiaries Wimmera Theatres Pty Ltd operated the Twentieth Century, Horsham and through Horsham Theatre Pty Ltd, the Horsham Theatre. Woodrow Corporation Pty Ltd which was based in Melbourne operated the Corio, Geelong, Her Majesty's, Ballarat and the Royal Princess, Bendigo as well as two city and one suburban theatre. O'Halloran Theatres Pty Ltd, which was based in Swan Hill and the only rural distributor and exhibitor company, operated six theatres all called the Regent in Warracknabeal, Nyah West, Swan Hill, Kerang, Cohuna and Nhill as well as two in NSW. This shows that the vast majority of places, 85% of the total number of cinemas listed in the Sands and McDougall Directories, were operated by independent proprietors and/or exhibitors.

The relationship between large scale distributors and small scale exhibitors, it seems, has always been difficult and, in the view of the independent proprietor, one-sided. Independent proprietors and exhibitors still complain. Neville Dunn, a projectionist for his father and subsequently a small scale exhibitor in the Western District in his own right recalls that 'the films were mostly American movies … you had to take what the distributor provided: first rate features but we also had to show second rate features'.[19] Films in canisters were almost always distributed long distances by train with short distances by car or truck especially when an exhibitor operated within a circuit. The truck might also carry the projector, the screen and the sound equipment. Several members of the family might travel together and even sleep in the truck to save money. Showing one film in several places over a week maximised the profit from its hire and provided freshness from week to week. The usual cartoons, serials and newsreels were shown before the interval and promotional trailers would accompany the main feature as 'teasers' to attend the following week. The distributor usually provided the package for a week.

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[17] They operated under a number of affiliated companies loosely state based.
[18] *The Film Weekly Motion Picture Directory 1954-5*, p. 42 & 46.
[19] Pers. comm.., Neville Dunn 10th Sept 2007.

A small number of highly localised families dominated the exhibition of films in rural Victoria. These included: the Nulty family in the far north-west; the Scotts who were based in Cobram; the Lawrence Brothers in Gippsland; and the Glovers in East Gippsland. The Lawrence Brothers had up to twenty locations serviced by three vehicles. The way of life was immortalised in the 1977 Australian film, *The Picture Show Man*. The screenplay was written by Joan Long 'who had made a documentary in 1973 about early Australian cinema. It was based partly on her own research and an unpublished memoir by Lyle Penn, who had spent his youth on the road with his father's travelling picture show.'[20]

The Nulty family from Walpeup in the far north-west of Victoria was perhaps the most representative and successful. Francis Murray (Jim) Nulty, a butcher and then a motor dealer, secured a motion picture projector as payment of a debt and began showing silent motion pictures in the local hall with his wife, Ethel playing the piano.[21] From the early 1930s they started touring the Millewa including into South Australia, showing films and running dances with a small orchestra. They operated from an old truck and, with the advent of talkies, could afford to buy a new Bedford truck and generator in 1933. Their first permanent theatre was in Ouyen where they 'screened films every Tuesday at the Mayfair Open-air Theatre, where a tin screen was built, and a projection room, and the people relaxed in big canvas deck chairs'.[22] In winter the show was relocated to the local fire brigade hall. This was in competition with the local picture show in the public hall. In 1936 Hugh Ingwarson built the permanent Victory Theatre, now the Roxy, at Ouyen with a capacity of 300 which was operated by Jim Nulty as both a theatre and a dance hall. At the peak of their business, operating as Nulty's Pictures Pty Ltd, the family showed films regularly at the Birchip Town Hall, Culgoa Public Hall, Robinvale Public Hall and the Sea Lake Memorial Hall. Their circuits continued with the Gunbower, Piangil and Pyramid Hill Public Halls on Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday nights and at Manangatang and Woomelang or Underbool fortnightly.[23] The family branched but continued to show movies. Len Nulty took over the Charlton Theatre and renaming it the Roxy but then moving to Mildura to run the Crossroad Drive-in and the Cinema Deakin. E T (Mick) Nulty built the new picture theatre in Robinvale in the 1950s using a Nissan Hut.

Intangible Heritage
Much intangible heritage revolves around going to the pictures. It had great social value for children who might otherwise be isolated, for families coming to town together off properties, for couples who were courting and for the broader community when it could mix democratically. This study has brought forth many reminiscences from proprietors, projectionists and patrons. People always remember how much they paid. Neville Dunn charged two shillings and sixpence per adult in the 1950s. As a child in the 1950s, you paid one shilling and threepence to sit in the stalls and an extra sixpence to sit in the dress circle. If a boy didn't have to 'escort' his sister and sit upstairs, that meant more money to spend at the interval on sweets and ice-cream. People also remember clearly the sweets and ice-creams which were sold in the shop within the theatre or the milk bar nearby. The ice-creams were usually Peter's

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[20] http://australianscreen.com.au/titles/picture-show-man/ accessed 12/5/2009.
[21] 'The Nulty Family', notes, Local Histroy Resource Centre Collection, Ouyen.
[22] loc. cit.
[23] *The Film Weekly Motion Picture Directory 1954-5*, p. 63.

'Dixie', elegantly eaten with a little wooden spoon. The sweets included everlasting 'Choo-choo' bars, the cheap chocolate and toffee of 'Cobber' blocks, liquorice of various types and, of course, 'Fantales' with brief biographical notes about film stars on the wrappers. The Jaffa syndrome, when a lolly would be dropped at a critical moment for best effect, is very fondly remembered.

Usherettes at the Regent Theatre, Lydiard Street, Ballarat

The importance of cinema-going for building communities was all the more important when the many social effects of the First and Second World War are taken into account. It is clear that the memorial role of new cinema buildings was paramount. Many were built in places which were undergoing the mixed tensions and benefits of the soldier settlement schemes after both Wars. Several post Second World War examples are notable such as the Robinvale cinema, which is of interest for its use of a Nissan Hut, and perhaps the best representative example, the cinema at Swanpool, designed by a local architect and built with volunteer labour at a time of great austerity. It is one of the very few which is still operating and still using carbon arc lamphouses.

One of the more interesting traditions of going to the pictures was the obligatory playing of the National Anthem. Many people interviewed for this study could remember standing at the beginning of each screening. In 1950, Otto Spehr the owner and exhibitor of the Midland Theatre, Ararat became notorious when he declared he would not play the National Anthem anymore unless he received an apology from the King or the Governor General for a ten shilling traffic fine which he considered unjust and for what he claimed was rude treatment by Melbourne police. Following a very large public meeting, a boycott was imposed and Spehr eventually abandoned his resolve.[24]

Other memories, such as projectionists', were not so happy. They had to work in very difficult conditions. The bio-boxes were usually small. They were always very hot from the arc lights used until the 1950s and until later in some smaller places. This was exacerbated in the summer with inside temperatures reputedly reaching 50 degrees Celsius. Films would be broken and require splicing. And there was the

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[24] *Sun*, 4th March 1950; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31st October 1950; *Herald*, 31st October 1950; *Herald*, 4th November 1950

constant threat of fire. Smoking was prohibited. Fairly early on, building regulations required two exits from a bio-box but one at least would be down a very steep flight of stairs and the other might be across the roof. Regulations also required the bio-box to be lined with asbestos sheeting. Until surprisingly late in the history of rural cinemas, it was necessary to have a member of the local fire brigade present during a screening.[25]
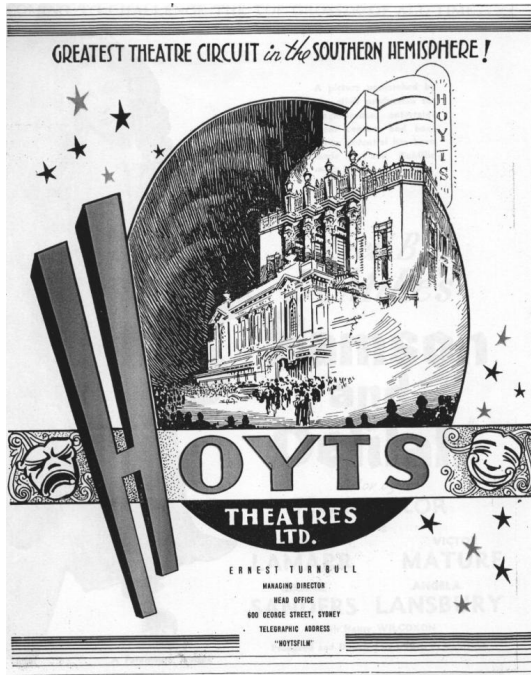
This advertisement for Hoyts Theatres Pty Ltd which appeared in the **Film Weekly Motion Picture Directory 1954-5,** *illustrates the three major phases of development in architectural style.*

Architecture

The architecture of rural cinemas has always been important aesthetically, socially, commercially and historically. Ultimately, the architecture of cinemas can be traced back to the theatres of ancient Greece and Rome and through the re-interpretation of Classicism both as high art and popular culture. It is not just a coincidence that similar associations can be found for mechanics institutes and athenaeums. A clear stylistic sequence can be followed from the formality of the neo-Classical picture palaces of the early 1920s, through the Hollywood allusions of the Mission Revival style of the late 1920s and early 1930s to the Moderne-Art Deco style of the 1930s, which dominated the post-silent period and continued into the 1940s. It applies equally to commercial and to non-commercial cinemas. Commercially it is acknowledged in a 1953 Hoyts Theatres Ltd advertisement which shows the three stylistic phases culminating with a triumphant Art Deco sign saying 'Hoyts' in flashing lights.[26] The advertisement, with its traditional Greek masks representing Comedy and Tragedy, also claims that the neo-Classicism of the Hoyts Regent chain is rooted in the architecture of nineteenth century theatres. Indeed, William Pitt who had designed the Princess Theatre (H0093) in Melbourne in 1886 was the architect for the Hoyts De-Luxe Theatre in 1915. The Second Empire style of the Princess Theatre shifted through a version of Edwardian Baroque to the ponderous sort of

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[25] Correspondence found at the PROV refers to a complaint about a fireman absenting himself from his post at the Theatre Royal, Castlemaine during a film screening in 1957. (VPRS 7882/P1 Public Building Files, 1874-1988).

[26] *The Film Weekly Motion Picture Directory 1952-3*, p. 47.

Roman Revival style used for the Ballarat Regent Theatre (Hermes 26800) by architects, Arthur W. Purnell and Cedric H. Ballantyne in 1926-7. This was reinforced, or at least not changed by the new architects, Cowper Murphy and Associates when the cinema was rebuilt after a disastrous fire in 1943.[27] Neo-Classicism's inherent dignity was appropriate for the memorial halls and town halls built in the 1920s which were used as cinemas, such as the 1922 Hopetoun Memorial Hall (Hermes 34451), the 1924 Elmore Memorial Hall (H1774), and the 1924 Jeparit Soldiers' and Citizens' Memorial Hall and Municipal Chambers (H1905). There is a parallel source with the conventional neo-Classicism of mechanics institutes where moving pictures were shown, particularly in the country.

The interior of the Murtoa Mechanics Institute is typical of late 1920s Classicism.

The interior of the Star Cinema, Portland is typical of 1930s Art Deco.

The link between Hollywood and the Spanish Mission style is clear and coincides with the introduction of the talkies.[28] One of the most unusual memorial town halls built with cinema facilities is that at Boort (Hermes 34447). The foundation stone was laid by Brigadier General Elliott late in 1929. The architect was C D Graham AMIE (Australia), presumably the Gordon Shire Engineer. It is loosely in the Spanish Mission style and incorporates tiled battlements, an oversized entrance arch supported by stock barley-sugar columns, all surmounted by the AIF symbol of the rising sun on the bio-box. The Spanish Mission style is, perhaps surprisingly, relatively rare in commercial cinemas in rural Victoria. The 1928 Capitol, Warrnambool (Hermes 4695), the 1932 Rex, Daylesford (Hermes 5283) and the Plaza Theatre, Kyabram (Hermes 11783) are examples. Several cinemas got Spanish Mission details when they 'retro-fitted' for sound and there was a new wave of theatre-going. The Regent Theatre Company from Geelong purchased the 1925 neo-Classical Paramount Theatre in Colac (Hermes 26828) in 1931. It had richly decorated Plateresque grilles added to hide sound equipment on either side of the proscenium. But no surviving cinemas use the Spanish Mission style in a particularly inventive way as sometimes demonstrated in car show rooms. To confirm the link with Hollywood, the Rosebud Theatre was called the Broadway (Hermes 26938).

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[27] This may be due as much to the serious lack of building materials during the Second World War. The reconstruction was given a special concession by the government to proceed. Admission [on the re-opening night] was only by the purchase of War Savings Bonds' with a probable minimum of ten pounds 'going up to one thousand pounds for a seat in the Royal Box'. Note on Ballarat Theatres, Betty Borchers, August 2005, provided by Anne Beggs Sunter, University of Ballarat.
[28] It is necessary to note that, as used in Australia, 'Spanish Mission' is a hybrid term. In the US there is a distinction between the Spanish Revival style and the Mission (or sometimes Monterey) style. See R Apperly et al., p. *176ff.*

Much stronger was the influence of the Moderne Movement, which ranged from a superficial coating of Art Deco detailing, also associated with the introduction of the talkies, through to the very sophisticated work of leading architects such as A C Leith & Associates and Seabrook and Fildes. The former were responsible for several sturdy town halls such as Swan Hill (Hermes 27118)(1934) and Casterton (Hermes 26816)(1937). The latter designed the Warracknabeal Town Hall (Hermes 14390)(1939) continuing their work in the Dutch De Stijl idiom which had started with their ground-breaking MacRobertson Girls High School (H1641)(1934). Other complexes were the Memorial Hall at Donald (Hermes 26832)(1936). Several important commercial cinemas were designed in the Moderne-Art Deco style. The Rex at Charlton (Hermes 26821)(1929) is one of the earliest. One of the last and largest to be built before the Second World War was the Astor (Hermes 26789)(1939) at Ararat, designed by the leading Modernist architect from Melbourne, Rhys Hopkins. After the War, the Swanpool & District Memorial Hall (Hermes 27121)(1955) was designed by a Benalla architect, Harold Hanlon in what could be described as a proto-Brutalist style.

There is another group of buildings used for cinemas before the Second World War which demonstrates a more domestic scale and style of architecture. These are smaller public halls, and sometimes commercial theatres, which are more Queen Anne or Arts and Crafts in their feel. The RSL halls at Rupunyap (Hermes 43096)(1920), Minyip (Hermes 34459)(post 1920) and Sealake (Hermes 34463)(post 1920) are typical. One of the most important of these vernacular theatres is the Globe at Winchelsea, built by the family of the great soprano, Marjorie Lawrence to further her career but also as a commercial cinema.

The practice of including full projection facilities in memorial and town halls continued after the Second World War. These new cinemas and the modernisation of existing halls came at a pivotal moment. The sense of personal loss and societal change because of the War was immediate and strong. The Soldier Settlers Scheme was proceeding at full pace, especially in the Western District as some of the last great pastoral estates were subdivided.[29] Rationing of building materials was mostly over. Economic prosperity was consolidating in rural areas as well as in Melbourne, especially because of the wool boom. And television was imminent. The Mechanics Institute at Camperdown already had a very substantial cinema, called the Theatre Royal dating from the 1920s (H1415) but the large Mechanics Institute at Terang (Hermes 42854) was modernised after the Second World War. Many smaller halls were modernised, such as the Glenthompson Mechanics Institute (Hermes 23392)(1902 & 1955) or upgraded, such as the Branxholme Mechanics Institute (Hermes 23300)(1884 & 1959) to cope with an influx of returned soldiers and their growing families. A memorial hall was built in Willaura in 1957 (Hermes 42856)(1956). The Catholic Church built a memorial hall in Koroit in 1957 and used novel steel portal frames in its construction. The Shire of Heywood built a new hall in the late 1950s (Hermes 42857). One of the last and largest town hall, cinema and municipal office complexes was built in 1965 at Cobden for the Shire of Heytesbury (Hermes 26824).

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[29] See the map used as the end papers in Rosalind Smallwood, *Hard to Bung, World War 11 Soldier Settlement in Victoria 1945-1962*.

A few commercial cinemas were built after the Second World War. Perhaps the most important is the Robinvale picture theatre, called the Roxy (Hermes 26936)(mid-1950s) which used a British Nissen or an American Quonset hut to form the auditorium with a Moderne entrance pavilion to one side. This cinema had a deep pedigree. It was established by a member of the Nulty family from Walpeup. They had first shown films in public halls as travellers, then they established the Roxy at Ouyen, took over the Rex at Charlton and finally drive-in cinemas in Mildura. Robinvale was the most important Soldier Settlement area in north western Victoria. A similar Nissen hut was used for the Monash Theatre at Yallourn North where the Latrobe Valley electricity workers were increasing in numbers. The cinema was demolished in 2009. The Traralgon Valley Theatre was the largest, with seating for 900, built using a Nissen of Quonset hut.[30]

Building Types
Cinemas in rural Victoria can be divided broadly into two building types: purpose built cinemas and public halls used for, amongst other purposes, showing films. Of the former, there were two sorts, the traditional theatre with stalls underneath the dress circle and the rare 'stadium' form with no seating under the circle. The only example of this sub-type in rural Victoria is the Midland Complex, the former Astor Theatre at Ararat (1939)(Hermes 26789). It is also significant for having a parabolic floor, i.e. one which rises up slightly just in front of the screen. According to the trade journal, *Decoration and Glass*, a parabolic floor had been used for the first time in metropolitan Melbourne in 1939 by Cowper Murphy & Associates in their design for the Circle Theatre, Preston.[31] But the Sun Theatre, Yarraville, which had a parabolic floor, opened six months earlier.[32] The clearest distinction between the two main types is that the former has a sloping floor to maximise viewing and the latter has a flat floor suitable for dinners, dances and other events. Emergency exits and fire safety issues are similar between both types with the special consideration of fireproofing bio-boxes. These were usually lined with asbestos cement sheeting, required two separate exits (one of which could be across a roof) and had to have a separate room for rewinding and storing film. There were also special provisions for heating and cooling, including substantial boilers for heating, such as that surviving at the Regent, Warracknabeal and wall mounted electric fans. True air-conditioning seems to have been rare before the Second World War. Sound equipment, first introduced for films in the very late 1920s, was increasingly sophisticated. New sound equipment was required for Cinemascope, for example, and was introduced in an attempt to attract patrons away from television in the late 1950s.

One subset is the use of Nissan or Quonset huts after the Second World War. These include The Roxy, Robinvale (Hermes 43184) and the Monash Theatre and Community Hall, Yallourn North (Hermes 27278). The Valley Theatre, Traralgon (Hermes 119549) had a curved roof but 'was built from the ground up mainly using the Quonset style. It was not a hut. Because of post-War shortages and restrictions of building supplies all materials except the hardwood flooring, had to be either sourced outside of Victoria or be second hand. The following is noted: metal trusses – UK; corrugated roofing iron – Japan; cement for all poured concrete walls – Sweden; nails

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[30] Gerry Kennedy, CATHS, pers. comm., 30th Set 2009.
[31] *Decoration and Glass*, April 1939, p. 30.
[32] *Film Weekly*, 2nd June, 1938.

– Japan.'[33] The first two use the semi-circular shape as the roof whereas the latter
had a 'Quonset' shaped roof and ceiling but this rose from low walls. It was designed
by Cowper Murphy and Associates in 1951, and seated 900 people. The cinema
closed in 1978 and was converted into reception rooms and a nightclub. The current
owners recently decided to put a gabled roof over the original because the corrugated
iron profile could not be matched in Australia.[34]

Special design techniques were used to create the sense of glamour and occasion
when going to the cinema. For example, one, two or three steps would separate the
pavement from the ground floor foyer. The foyer floor might slope slightly upwards.
The upper levels were reached by passing through a narrow stairwell which opens up
to the expansive upper foyer. Each of these techniques appears even in quite a
humble building, the Paramount Theatre at Maryborough. The Plaza Theatre,
Kyabram has a slightly sloping porch floor. From the upper foyer patrons would
ascend another narrow stairwell only to emerge into the 'enormous' and smartly
decorated auditorium. Advertisements in trade journals offer glamorous furnishings
from carpet, chairs and tables to light fittings and soft furnishings. One cinema, the
Ozone Theatre in Mildura had sloping walls to enhance its acoustics.[35]

This advertisement for Latex Products Pty Ltd, a Victorian firm with offices in six states which appeared in the **Film Weekly Motion Picture Directory 1954-5,** *illustrates the range of post World War Two seating when cast iron bench seating had been largely superseded.*

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[33] Gerry Kennedy, CATHS, pers. comm., 30th Sept 2009.
[34] ibid.
[35] *Argus*, 13 Jan 1938.

Individual Architects and Firms

A wide range of architects worked in the field but only a few firms specialised. The leading firms were Taylor & Soilleaux and Cowper Murphy & Associates. The former, as well as many very significant city and metropolitan cinemas, was responsible for: The Lyric, Bendigo; the 1933 reworking of the Olympia, Mildura; the new 1938 Ozone Theatre, Mildura; and the Union Theatre, Wonthaggi, a 1940 reworking of the cinema owned by the Miners' Union. The firm worked in a developing range of fashionable styles. They acted as consultants to the State Electricity Commission in the design of the very impressive Moderne Yallourn Theatre.[36] The firm Bohringer Taylor & Johnson was responsible for: the Prince Regent (1924), Hamilton; The Horsham Theatre (1926), Horsham; the Rex, Daylesford (1932); the Prince Regent (1920s), Sale; the Theatre Royal, Bairnsdale (1930s); and the Prince Regent (1930s), Lakes Entrance. While Charles Bohringer focused on cinemas in NSW, R. Morton Taylor was responsible cinemas in Victoria. A. C. Leith, who specialised in hospitals and town halls, designed the municipal complexes at Swan Hill (1934), Morwell (1935), Casterton (1937) and Horsham (1938). Cowper Murphy & Associates who were based in Melbourne but worked across Australia were the most prolific and their known work is set out in the following table. The firm existed from the later 1920s until the mid-1930s when it became Cowper Murphy and Appleford, reverting to the former name in 1948. The following information is drawn from a range of primary and secondary sources and the Art Deco Society and Cinema and Theatre Historical Society databases.[37]

YEAR	FIRM	NAME	LOCATION	CLIENT
	CM &Ass	Crescent Theatre	Fairfield, NSW	Hoyts Theatres
	CM &Ass	Civic Theatre	Newcastle, NSW	
	CM &Ass	Olympic Theatre	Bondi, NSW	
	CM &Ass	Palatial Theatre	Burwood, NSW	
	CM &Ass	Regent Theatre	Melbourne, Vic	Hoyts Theatres
	CM &Ass	St. James Theatre	Brisbane, Qld	
1927	CM &Ass	Melba Theatre	Strathfield, NSW	
1933	CM &App	Playhouse Theatre	Melbourne, Vic	
1934	CM &App	Tatler Theatre	Collins St, Melbourne, Vic.	Australia Arcade
1934	CM &App	Plaza Theatre	Bendigo, Vic	
1935	CM &App	Capitol (conversion)	Mildura, Vic	
1936	CM &App	Vogue Theatre	Kew, Vic	Yeomans & Heron
1936	CM &App	Majestic Theatre (rebuild)	173 Flinders St, Melbourne, Vic.	
1936	CM &App	Wonderland	Mildura, Vic	Wonderland Picture Theatre
1936	CM &App	Waverley Theatre	Waverley Rd, Malvern, Vic	
1937	CM &App	Astor (rebuild)	Mildura, Vic	E C Yeomans Circuit
1937	CM &App	Avalon Theatre	Hobart, Tasmania	
1937	CM &App	Princess Theatre (renovation)	Bendigo, Vic	
1937	CM &App	Plaza Theatre	Launceston, Tasmania	
1938	CM &App	Circle Theatre	High St, Preston, Vic	Hoyts Theatres

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[36] *Kino*, Sept 1993, pp. 15-16.
[37] We are particularly grateful to Mr. Robin Grow, President of the ADS of Australia and Mr. Gerry Kennedy of CATHS for their help in compiling this list.

1938	CM &App	Sun Theatre	Yarraville, Vic	E C Yeomans Circuit
1939	CM &App	Essendon Theatre	Buckley St, Essendon, Vic	
1939	CM &App	National Theatre	Bridge Rd, Richmond, Vic	
1939	CM &App	Glen Theatre	Hawthorn, Vic	
c1940	CM &App	Dendy Theatre	Middle Brighton, Vic	Ward Circuit
1941	CM &App	Times Theatre	449 Whitehorse Rd, Balwyn, Vic	Hoyts Theatres
1943	CM &App	Her Majesty's Theatre (renovation)	Ballarat, Vic	
1943	CM &App	Regent Theatre (rebuild & renovation)	Ballarat, Vic	Hoyts Theatres
1944	CM &App	St Johns Hall	Heidelberg, Vic	Heidelberg Military Hospital
1947	CM &App	Regent Theatre (rebuilt)	Melbourne, Vic	Hoyts Theatres
1948	CM &Ass	Crest Theatre	Granville South, NSW	Hoyts Theatres
1948	CM &App	Castle Theatre	Granville, NSW	Hoyts Theatres
1951	CM &App	Valley Theatre	Traralgon, Vic	Lawrence Brothers
1952-4	CM &Ass	New Theatre, (later Reardon Theatre)	Port Fairy, Vic	Reardon family
1954	CM &Ass	Croydon Drive In	Croydon, Vic	Village
1956	CM &Ass	Orana Theatre	Wangaratta, Vic	North Eastern Theatres
1956	CM &Ass	Maya Theatre	Morwell, Vic	Rex Hamilton Theatres
1957	CM &Ass	Karma Theatre (rebuild)	Morwell, Vic	Rex Hamilton Theatres
1957	CM &Ass	Memorial Theatre	Koroit, Vic	Catholic Diocese of Ballarat
c1957	CM &Ass	(New) Regent	Swan Hill, Vic	O'Halloran Theatres
c1957	CM &Ass	Regent	Deniliquin, NSW	O'Halloran Theatres
c1962	CM &Ass	Forum (rebuild)	Melbourne, Vic	Greater Union
c1962	CM &Ass	Rapallo (rebuild)	Melbourne, Vic	Greater Union

Some municipal buildings were designed by a Shire's engineer, leading to quite idiosyncratic designs such the former Memorial Hall and Council Chambers, Boort (1929) designed by C. D. Graham MAIE who described himself as an 'architect' on the foundation stone. The firm Clegg and Morrow had something of a regional influence through its Ballarat office, and designed the Memorial Hall and Shire of Hindmarsh Municipal Chambers, Jeparit (1925). The architect, Harold Hanlon had a small but busy country practice in Benalla and designed the Swanpool cinema, which opened in 1957. One of the most important architects for his innovation was Rhys Hopkins who designed the Midland-Astor in Ararat. Robin Boyd recognised the firm Seabrook and Fildes as the first truly Moderne architects in Australia and its Regent Theatre, the former Warracknabeal Town Hall is an outstanding example of their oeuvre.

Builders
Most rural cinemas in Victoria appear to have been built by local contractors. Their names are not often known but some appear on foundation stones. F. H. Luckins and Son, were the contractors for the former Memorial Hall and Council Chambers, Boort. Lovell Dudden and Jones were the contractors for the former Memorial Hall

and Council Chambers, Jeparit. Other names can be researched through existing heritage listings and heritage studies. Melbourne firms did build the largest cinemas, such as the Ozone at Mildura built by T. R. and L. Cockram Pty Ltd. No distinctive individuals or building firms have emerged in rural Victoria as a result of this study.

Equipment & Furnishings

Unfortunately, early projectors, sound equipment, screens, heating, cooling, etc. rarely survive. This is the result of modernisation and technical advances, a not unreasonable response by proprietors. Some of the best surviving equipment *in situ* is at the Regent, the former Warracknabeal Town Hall, the Memorial Theatre, Koroit and the Memorial Theatre, Swanpool.

Early projectors still in use in the Swanpool Cinema with arc light ventilation tubes.

Original RCA 'High Fidelity' sound projector Model No. 703 Reg. No. 577 and arc light at the Regent, Warracknabeal

Other equipment has been put on display within cinema foyers, such as the Plaza Theatre, Kyabram. Much equipment has been moved around as cinemas closed. Perhaps the best collection is at the Rex, Charlton. This recycling is all the more likely for redundant seating. However, much original or early seating does survive and this should be protected. Perhaps the rarest survive furnishings are carpets and curtains. The only original carpets which survive are upstairs in the dress circle at the Regent, the former Warracknabeal Town Hall, the Memorial Theatre, Koroit and the Former Shire of Glenelg Town Hall. Much of the original and distinctive architect-designed furniture survives at Koroit and Casterton with a remarkably intact late 1950s kitchen and scullery at Koroit which includes the original refrigerator. Equipment representing significant technical advances is very rare. Cinemascope was first used in rural Victoria at the Lyric Theatre, Bendigo but this has been lost.[38]

10.   Conclusions

Most Serious Losses

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[38] *Bendigo Advertiser*, 18 Aug 1954.

Many cinemas have been demolished or transformed by their conversion to other uses. Typical changes are the levelling of the floors at the Regent, Colac when it was converted for use by the RSL and at the Reardon Theatre, Port Fairy when it was converted to sports courts. The proscenium arch of the Prince Regent, Hamilton was removed when it was converted to a discount disposals store. The whole of the interior of the Astor Cinema in Mildura has been lost in its conversion into a boutique brewery and bar. The most serious losses discovered were the demolition of the Ozone, Mildura and the Yallourn Theatre. There were probably the smartest cinemas outside metropolitan Melbourne and clear rivals to the Rivoli, Camberwell and the Astor, St Kilda. The most distressing loss discovered was the partial demolition of the Rex, Daylesford.

Overall Findings
The following tables represent a summary of findings relating to the most significant cinemas in rural Victoria identified in this study.

Places Already included in the Victorian Heritage Register			
Name	**Township**	**Municipality**	**HVR No.**
Masonic Hall/ Capital Theatre	Bendigo	Greater Bendigo City	H0119
Theatre Royal & Mechanics Institute	Camperdown	Corangamite Shire	H1415
The Royal Theatre	Castlemaine	Mount Alexander Shire	H2144
The Star Theatre	Chiltern	Indigo Shire	H0278
Soldiers and Citizens' Memorial Hall and Municipal Chambers	Jeparit	Hindmarsh Shire	H1905
Mechanics Institute & Library	Kyneton	Macedon Ranges Shire	H1904
Former Royal Hotel & Theatre	Maldon	Mount Alexander Shire	H1391
Mirboo on Tarwin Hall	Mirboo	South Gippsland Shire	H01973
Maryborough Town Hall	Maryborough	Central Goldfields Shire	H2152
Atheneum and Memorial Hall	Elmore	City of Greater Bendigo	H1744
Victoria Hotel (Tarnagulla Public Hall)	Tarnagulla	Loddon Shire	H0778

Places previously nominated for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register			
Name	**Township**	**Municipality**	**Hermes No.**
Regent Theatre former Town Hall	Warracknabeal	Yarriambiack Shire Council	14390 & 35548
The Regent Theatre	Yarram	Wellington Shire Council	11549 & 35549

Places seriously considered in conjunction with other heritage practitioners			
Name	**Township**	**Municipality**	**Researchers**
Globe Theatre	Winchelsea	Surf Coast Shire	Dr David Rowe: Authentic Heritage Services Pty Ltd & Wendy Jacobs: Architect & Heritage Consultant
Lorne Theatre	Lorne	Surf Coast Shire	Context Pty Ltd with David Rowe
The Rex	Charlton	Shire of Buloke	Wendy Jacobs, Vicki Johnson, David Rowe, Phil Taylor, Robyn Ballinger

Places seriously considered solely in the course of this Study.		
Name	**Township**	**Municipality**
Midland	Ararat	Ararat Rural City Council
The Regent	Ballarat	Ballarat City Council
Memorial Hall	Boort	Loddon Shire Council
Horsham Theatre	Horsham	City of Horsham
Memorial Theatre	Koroit	Moyne Shire
Murtoa Mechanics Institute Hall	Murtoa	Yarriambiack Shire
Athenaeum	Sorrento	Mornington Peninsula Shire
The Regent - Town Hall	Swan Hill	Rural City of Swan Hill
Swanpool Cinema	Swanpool	Benalla Shire Council

11.   Recommendations

It is recommended that the following cinemas be considered or re-considered for addition to the Victorian Heritage Register:

- The Regent Theatre, Yarram
- The Regent, former Town Hall, Warracknabeal
- Globe Theatre, Winchelsea
- Lorne Theatre, Lorne
- The Rex, Charlton
- The Midland/Astor, Ararat
- The Regent, Ballarat
- Athenaeum Sorrento
- The Memorial Theatre, Koroit
- The Horsham Theatre, Horsham

It is recommended that, where not already identified and protected under local heritage planning controls, all the other places identified in this study be included as

individually listed places in the Heritage Overlay Schedule of the relative Planning
Scheme. It may be necessary to prepare individual Statements of Cultural
Significance for them. Furthermore, it is very strongly recommended that the
interiors, including surviving fixtures and fittings be specifically protected in Column
4 of the Heritage Overlay Schedule.

We cannot claim to have been exhaustive in our research. Inevitably other places will
emerge, at least at a local level, which are significant. We recommend that further
research on key cinemas for which very little information exists should continue.
Those places which were marginally of state significance should be watched and their
status reviewed. We also recommend that this study be generally reviewed after
seven years.

While it was useful in many ways, we recommend the conversion of the excellent
seminal metropolitan Melbourne study by Daniel Catrice into digital form and the
inclusion of its database into the Hermes database. This process could be used as a
double check to ensure that the places he identified as being of local significance are
protected under their relevant planning scheme.

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