

50

**Garden
reborn**Heather and Reg
transform
maternity hospital

52

**Religion
and rage**Agora sets out
to be sweeping
and thoughtful

the break

Café scene revived

Next weekend, Greeks and others will be flocking to Bingara as the Roxy Theatre's famous café is re-launched with a grand, black-tie dinner. It's keeping the incredible tradition of Greek café culture alive in the North West, writes **WENDY SPOONER**.

BINGARA has embarked on a unique restoration project to preserve the golden age of Greek cafes. It is set to become the town's major tourist attraction.

Peter's Café, the large art deco building on the corner of Maitland and Cunningham streets, containing a café, the Roxy Theatre cinema and upstairs conference facilities, is a meticulous snapshot of life in small-town NSW in the 1930s.

Eateries were run by Greek immigrants in the earlier part of the 20th century in rural areas all over Australia, bringing traditions of hospitality and good food from their Mediterranean homelands.

According to a National Museum of Australia exhibition from 2008 called *Selling an American Dream: Australia's Greek café*, Greek cafés in Australia were a Trojan horse for the Americanisation of this nation's eating and sociocultural habits from the very start of the 20th century. They initially introduced American commercial food-catering ideas, technology and products and later influenced the development of cinema and popular music.

The Greek café helped transform Australian popular culture. "Every time you drink a Coke, enjoy an ice-cream or sweet chocolate treat, go to the cinema, or listen to the latest popular music hit, you can thank Australia's Greek settlers," part of the exhibition notes stated.

The Namoi Valley Independent in Gunnedah was able to supply some fascinating information.

"According to a Macquarie University historian, oyster saloons, established at the end of the 19th century, were the foundation on which Greek cafés were built with migrants from the island of Kythera eventually spreading to every corner of the state," *The Namoi Valley Independent* said.

"The investment in cafés was driven, at least in part, by the fact that Greeks were not permitted on factory floors in large numbers until after World War II."

Another article from the paper said that by 1949, about 90 Greeks from Kythera were living and working in the town.

■ **Café Culture continued: Pages 46 and 47**

BUSY BEE:

Peter Zantiotis, left, with his father, Lambros, on the far right, sometime in the 1940s. The other two in the photograph are believed to be visiting relatives.



The Niagara Café, Gundagai, 1938.



Popular Café, Cootamundra.



BINGARA LEGEND: Peters & Co Café, Bingara, during the 1920s.
PHOTO COURTESY PETER PRINEAS

Answerthis

Test your trivia skills

EASY ONE POINTERS

1. Which children's character has a friend named Big Ears and lives in Toytown?
2. How many legs do insects have?
3. In which European city would a Neapolitan live?
4. Which of the Apostles doubted that Jesus had risen from the dead?
5. The Aztecs and Incas were peoples of which continent?
6. Name the creature that appears on the Australian 20 cent coin.
7. Andy Warhol produced a famous series of paintings of a soup can. What brand of soup was the subject?
8. What is the eighth letter of the English alphabet?
9. The crest of the sulphur-crested cockatoo is what colour?
10. Captain Hook was afraid of which animal?
11. What type of fruit is a pink lady?
12. How many sides does a quadrilateral have?
13. Who was the twin brother of Romulus?
14. And which city are they said to have founded?
15. According to the fairytale, what was placed beneath 12 feather mattresses to detect whether a girl was a princess or not?
16. What is a dromedary?
17. What part of a plant is known as the foliage?
18. What title is given to the head of the Roman Catholic Church?
19. Name the most important instrument to the science of astronomy.
20. Which Wiggle wears purple?

NOT SO EASY THREE POINTERS

21. Name the actor who starred in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* with a number of animated characters.
22. In which year was the original *Star Wars* movie released?
23. What was the first number one John Lennon single released following his death?
24. American surgeon John Heynsham Gibbon made a breakthrough in medicine in 1951 when he developed the world's first what?
25. How many mountain ranges in the world are longer than Australia's Great Dividing Range?
26. Which mammal has the longest gestation period, being about 660 days?
27. 2004 saw Mary Donaldson give up her Australian citizenship to marry the crown prince of which nation?
28. Name the basic unit of currency of Zaire.
29. Li is the chemical symbol for what?
30. In which year did Australia grant women the right to vote?
31. How old was mass murderer Martin Bryant at the time of his Port Arthur killing spree?
32. And in which year did that tragedy occur?
33. Which two countries were opposed in the Hundred Years War?
34. Name the first winner of the Melbourne Cup.
35. Which Novelist created the television series *Hart to Hart*?
36. In which city was Muhammad, the founder of Islam born?
37. How many micrometres are there in one metre?
38. Name the fastest fighter aircraft used by the Americans in World War II.
39. Of all island nations, which has the greatest population?
40. What is the world's most widely spoken language?

TOUGH FIVE POINTERS

41. How many times are apples mentioned in the King James Version of the Bible?
42. Which bird is known by the zoological name *struthio camelus camelus*?
43. At what time of day did Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay reach the summit of Mt Everest?
44. And how long did the pair spend at the peak?
45. Which Chinese philosopher said "A journey of a thousand miles must begin with one step"?
46. The Red Baron was killed in a dog fight over which battlefield?
47. What was the fate of the leader of the Boxer Rebellion?
48. In which year did that unsuccessful rebellion take place?
49. According to the Chinese saying, with time and patience what becomes a silk gown?
50. Who wrote "To Think That I Saw It on Mulberry St"?
51. What is the first element on the periodic table?
52. The Model T Ford began production in which city in 1908?
53. The Ngultrum is the basic unit of currency of which nation?
54. And what is the capital of that country?
55. Name the host of the 2000 Logie Awards.
56. What do we call the principle that at a constant temperature the pressure of a fixed quantity of an ideal gas is inversely proportional to the volume occupied by the gas?
57. Name the two animals often associated with stock market conditions.
58. What name is given to the albuminous twisted cords which fasten an egg yolk to the shell membrane?
59. Name the ship in which Dirk Hartog made his historic voyage to the coast of Western Australia.
60. In which year was Genghis Khan born?

Number 311
Solution on page 133

Roxy revives



■ AS IT WAS THEN: A photo of the café in the 1930s

■ From page 45

There were at least three Greek cafés in Gunnedah – the White Rose Café, the Busy Bee and the Acropolis (otherwise known as Comino's), founded by two men, Comino and Panareto.

"The Acropolis would turn over 1000 pounds a week, with rump steak, two eggs and chips and mashed pumpkin or salad for sixpence and milkshakes for two pennies," *The Namoi Valley Independent* said.

The White Rose was bought by Peter Venardos from the Zantos brothers in 1954 and converted into Gunnedah's first supermarket, Thriftway, in 1957.

But now almost all the Greek cafés are long gone.

In the past 12 months alone in our district, another White Rose, in Uralla, has shut, as has Pete's Place, run by Peter and Judy Giannas, in Inverell.

The Regent, in Inverell, shut down in about 2000.

The Busy Bee in Gunnedah, which was run by Peter and Laula Zantiotis, shut down in October 2007. The interior was stripped and sent to the National Museum of Australia in Canberra.

While it was sad to see the Greek café culture slipping away, it was good that their cultural importance was being recognised, said Sandy McNaughton, the Roxy Theatre manager and Gwydir Shire Council marketing and promotions officer.

"That's a fantastic outcome – it's an acknowledgment of the importance these institutions are placing on these cafés," Mrs McNaughton said.

She says the legacy of Greek cafés is a vital part of New England history.

Other towns around NSW which still have Greek cafés are Gundagai, on the South



■ STEP BACK IN TIME: The Roxy Theatre is a great exponent of art deco style. Photo: Ruth Caskey 010111JA17

West Slopes and Plains (Niagara Cafe) and Brewarrina (Cafe Deluxe) on the far western edge of the North West.

The California was one of three Greek-run cafés in Nyngan, in the NSW Far West.

All espoused American names. The others were the Niagara and the Golden Gate.

As for Peter's Café in Bingara, Mrs McNaughton said a \$750,000 government grant from the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts took care of rebuilding basic infrastructure, and fittings – glass and Formica food cabinets, old-

fashioned ice-cream fridges and wooden tables and chairs faithful to the era – have been moved in.

Now the council is looking for expressions of interest to re-open Peter's Café, which will seat up to 150.

"This café was part of the heart and soul of the community in its heyday," Mrs McNaughton said.

Peter and George Psaltis, and Emanuel Aroney from the Greek island of Kythera, opened the café in 1922 and, as business grew, they extended next door to open The Roxy Theatre in 1936.

The pleasures of the cinema were a welcome diversion for people hit hard by the Great Depression.

For those too poverty-stricken to afford a movie, there was always the café next door.

"A poor child could come here, be treated by the Greek owners to a lolly and a drink and go away feeling like a king," Mrs McNaughton said.

The cinema closed and so did the café in 1958. The café became a Chinese restaurant for some years, then it too closed. The site is now owned by the council.

The Roxy was restored in 2003 and re-opened as a cinema in 2004. It also doubles as the town hall and regional arts centre for local and travelling

productions.

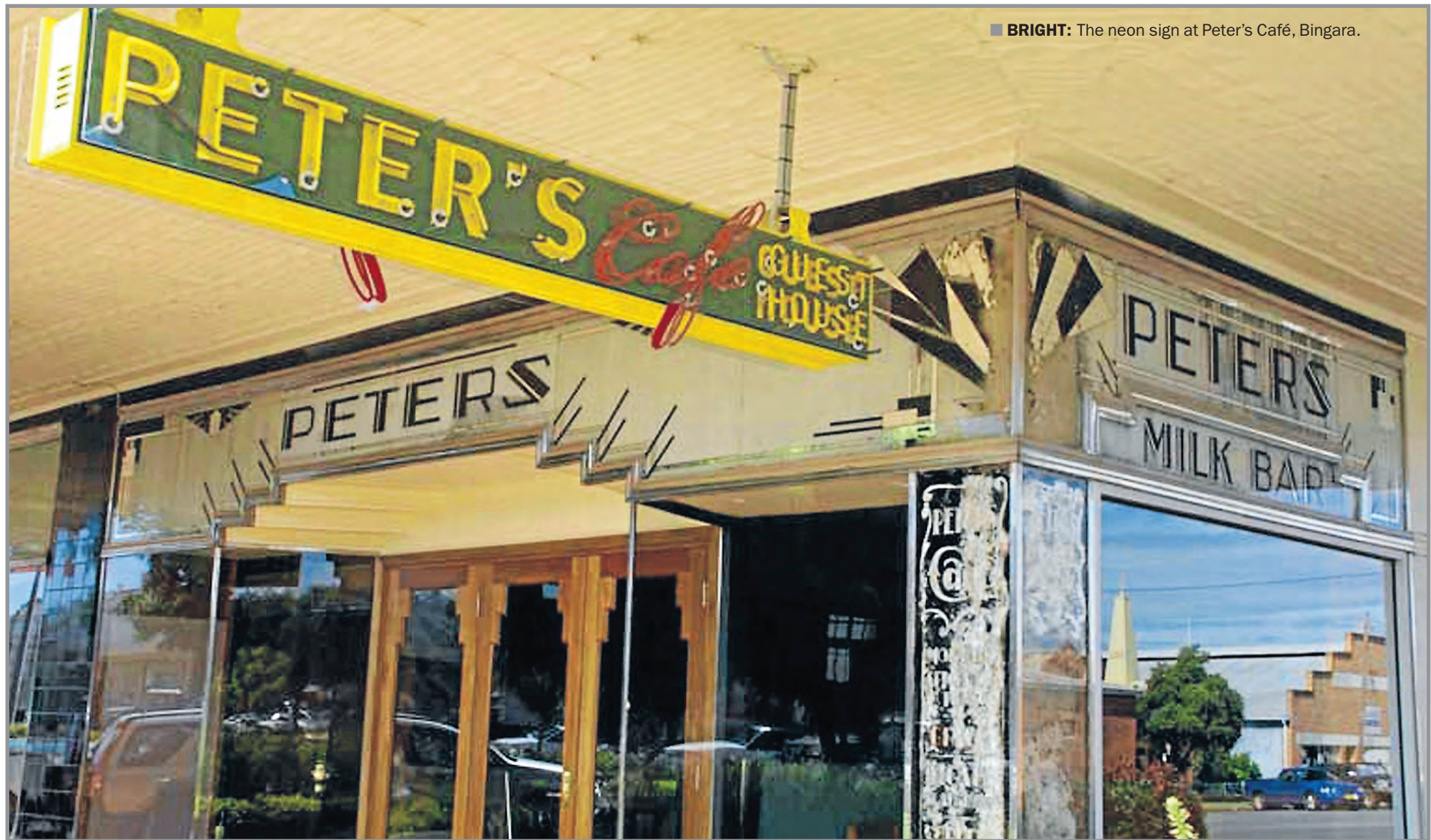
Its original art deco interior – ornate stucco plaster, paintwork and coloured lights from 1936 – remains intact, but it needs restoration.

The site will also be eventually used as the town's information centre and local museum.

"The Roxy needs to have a multiple function in order to stay viable," Mrs McNaughton said.

Bingara, like many small rural towns, has struggled to keep its population.

iconic café culture



Hunt on to find proprietor to run revamped eatery

THE hunt is on for a new proprietor to run the refurbished café at the Roxy Theatre.

The theatre, which includes one of the few surviving exponents of the Greek café culture in rural NSW, is celebrating its 75th anniversary next Friday.

"We'll be having an official launch of the café on April 9 and 10," Roxy Theatre manager Sandy McNaughton said.

A Museum of Greek Settlement is also being incorporated within the refurbishment.

"We're now seeking further funding for the museum," Ms McNaughton said.

The theatre was bought by Gwydir Shire Council in 1999; the cafe was bought by the council in 2007.

The theatre was restored in 2003 and reopened in 2004; the café's restoration process started in February 2010 and was "nearly finished – we're just waiting on the lights", Mrs McNaughton said.

"We've relocated the tourist information centre

as well, to incorporate a stairwell and lift as part of the restoration (of the café)."

She said the theatre had "suspended some shows and screenings" while the café restoration was under way.

The Roxy Theatre was built in 1936. The art deco-styled café, called Peters & Co Café, was run by three Greek immigrants from the island of Kythera – Peter Feros, George Psaltis and Emanuel Aroney.

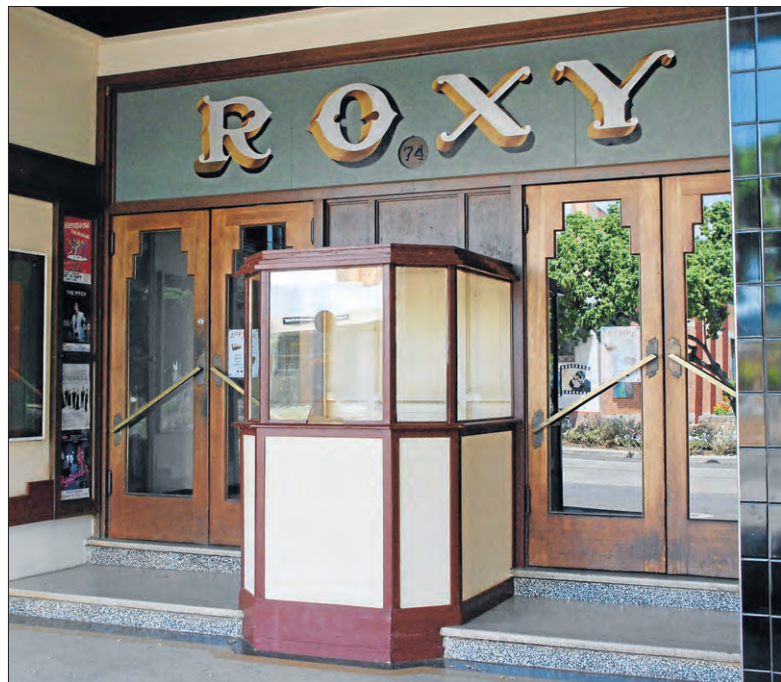
"The café shut down in the 1960s and it became a Chinese restaurant," Mrs McNaughton said.

"We're trying to restore it as faithfully as we can, back to its original state."

Mrs McNaughton said she had an original table and three chairs and the original sign from the front of the café which had been restored, plus some of the original booths.

"We also have reinstated counters from a café in Inverell," she said.

"The historical and heritage aspect is essential."



THE NORTHERN DAILY LEADER

Triple Temptation Competition

LTPM/10/00467

Coupon 6 WEEK 2

Paste **DAY 6** coupon onto your template

WEEK 2 SATURDAY APRIL 2

