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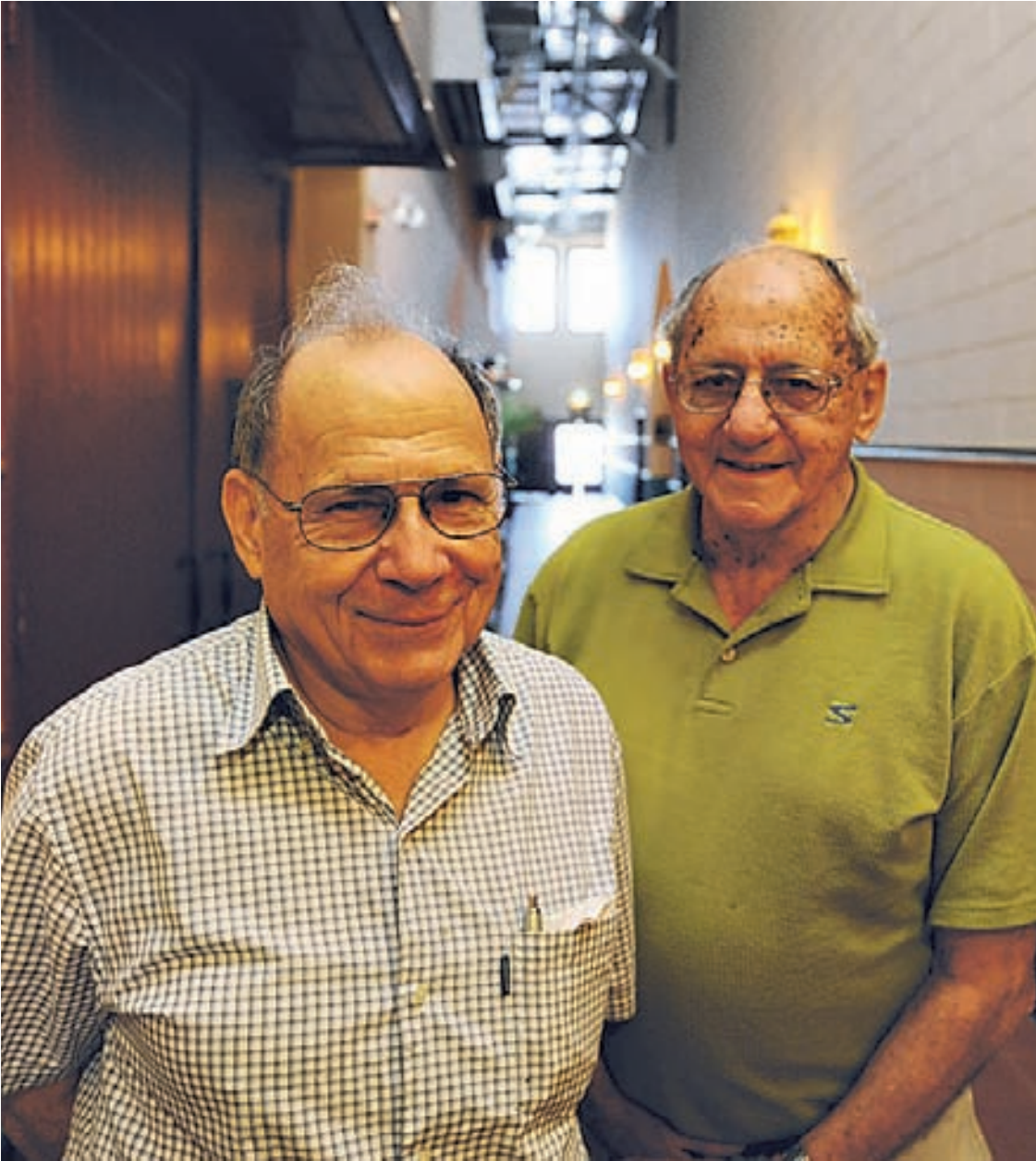
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Andrew & Jan Fletcher & Staff would like to congratulate Angelo & Spiros Notaras & Notaras Bros Entertainment P/L for the renovation of the historic Saraton Theatre and construction of the two new state-of-the-art smaller cinemas. Well done "boys". We are proud and pleased to have been involved with this project and have enjoyed working with that other "boy", builder Bill Norton.

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M.S&CVR2209



Angelo and Spiro Notaras all smiles on opening day.

Back from the brink

■ Geoff Helisma

In 1999 many country cinemas were enduring hard economic times. The Saraton Theatre was set to become a victim of those times, and was on the verge of being demolished to make way for a car park.

The state government had imposed a temporary heritage order on the building, Grafton was divided, and the debate raged on, as highlighted in an ABC 7.30 report on the issue.

Then Grafton councillor, Peter McKenna, described it as "just a fibro building" that had passed its used-by date.

Then deputy mayor, Heather Rowland, who was described in the Maxine McKew hosted story as "historically sensitive", said: "I believe shoppers need car parks, it's as simple as that."

Bruno Notaras said: "We're all sentimental about it. Unfortunately we have to face facts, facts of life."

According to Bruno, as he spoke to ABC reporter, Jacinta Tynan, the Notaras family was left with no alternative other than selling the property. "The family has voted unanimously to do what they've done," he said. "We just got to the stage we've got to face facts."

"There are members of the family who can't get a

pension because they've got shares in the place, and this is tragic. I think, from our point of view, it's the only thing to do."

Of the 12 councillors, one, Leo Ellis, saw things differently. "This is really a historical town, Grafton, and I do believe the historical and heritage is our lifeblood, it's our lifeblood if we look after it properly," he said.

"If we destroy the Saraton Theatre and them other buildings there, it's going to leave a gap in an otherwise heritage street."

The National Trust's Graham Quint shared Cr Ellis's opinion. "It's one of the most decorative and architecturally handsome theatres in NSW," he said. "It's on the Royal Institute of Architects' list of buildings of 20th century significance and it's one of the last remaining theatres in NSW with a balcony."

But, as it turns out, on that fateful day in May of 1999, the 7.30 Report ended its story with a last minute, unexpected twist, in the form of a fax from the developer "saying he intends to withdraw his application to take down the theatre".

"But the theatre hasn't heard the news," Jacinta Tynan concluded. "We await the sequel."

Turns out that the sequel had a happy ending, and the rest, as they say, is history.

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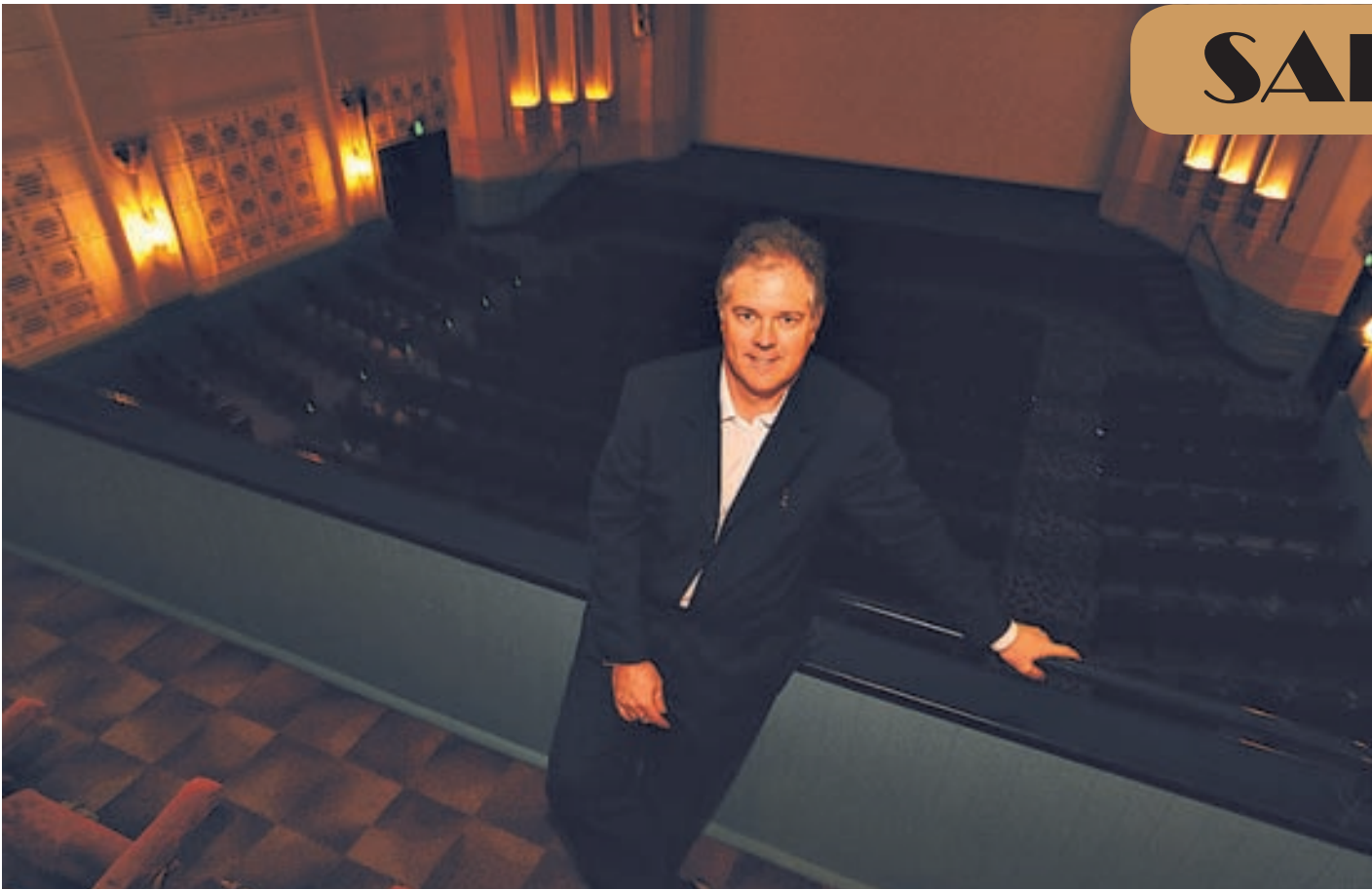
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The Saraton project brief

- Two-story, 1000-seat heritage theatre.
- Extended stage to cater for live acts.
- Two 160-seat multiplex-style cinemas.
- State-of-the-art digital projectors.
- 3D-enabled silver screens.
- Custom-designed sound systems
- New seating.
- Remodelled upstairs and downstairs toilets.
- Candy bar.
- Heritage colours and lighting.
- New plumbing, electrics.
- Fully automated lighting, aircon, and movie projection.

Meet the manager

The theatre's manager, Robbie Seymour, has a great enthusiasm for his job. "I love the cinema industry," he says. "It's an industry where you can put smiles on people's faces." His goal is to have every patron leaving the theatre saying: 'wow we had a fantastic time, thank you very much.'

And he has an amazing and versatile palette to work with. The main theatre, which seats close to a 1,000 people, has "unlimited potential to double as a live performance venue, unmatched on the north coast".

Once all of the work in the main stage is completed "we're going to see live shows in the main theatre", he says. "Anything from rock to country, comedians, musicals, orchestras, it's only limited by your imagination."

He says the theatres could be used for special events like State of Origin. "It would be like being at the match – you'll be able to hear every sound through the [Hypacoustic] sound system, or we

could beam in concerts by satellite for example."

While the official opening date is yet to be set, he says he expects it to be in late October or early November. In the meantime the theatre is open for business. "We've had 8,000 people through the door over the past few weeks.

"And we've had school groups through the theatre, too. They've learnt about things, like how the projectors work, checked out the theatre's chairs and sound system, and learnt about the theatre's history."

Mr Seymour says the theatre is proud to be employing local people. "We've got a pretty good crew here at the moment," he says. "We have got, without a doubt, the best cinema on the north coast. We expect to draw people from around the region, from Lismore, Casino and Coffs Harbour, as well as the Clarence Valley."

Tickets can be booked online at www.saraton.com

*A huge congratulations to both Bill Norton & the Notaras Family on such a wonderful professional job.
We are very proud to be associated with this project as a supplier.*



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Candy Bar kids, Nicole Thompson (left), Alyssha Edwards, supervisor Johanne Kubik and Louisa Bloomer.



Usher Louisa Bloomer hands out 3-D glasses and guides patrons to cinema 2.



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Big benefits to community, says mayor



Mayor Richie Williamson says the theatre restoration will be of much benefit to the community.

The major revitalisation of Grafton’s historic Saraton Theatre will create significant benefits for the Clarence Valley, according to mayor Richie Williamson

Cr Williamson said the Notaras family’s investment had created a state-of-the-art facility, that would attract entertainment that Grafton was previously unable to cater for.

“As far as an arts centre goes it places us right at the top of the tree. There are not too many areas that can boast a theatre that can seat 1000 people,” he said.

“I think we will see some top quality shows and acts that have previously gone to other regional centres, now coming to the Clarence because of the facility that is now available for the public to use in the Saraton Theatre.”

Cr Williamson said improvements to the theatre would also benefit local businesses.

“There will be economic benefits to the Clarence community. There will be the opportunity for businesses to flourish around the CBD of Grafton as more people use the Saraton Theatre, and more shows will be attracted to the Saraton, which has a flow-on effect,” he said.

In addition, Cr Williamson said the revamped heritage theatre would be a boost for the local area’s tourism industry.

“The Saraton has attracted visitors from other areas before the renovations. This is a huge step forward in bringing the old and the new together, and I’m absolutely confident that people from right around the Northern Rivers and beyond will be coming to look at the Saraton, experience the entertainment the Saraton will deliver, and take in the historical and cultural aspects of the Saraton Theatre as well.”



Senior projectionist Danny Broeder with the state of the art equipment in the projection room.

Going high-tech

The owners of the Saraton were determined to have the latest and greatest in digital technology for their major upgrade of Grafton's sole cinema complex. They asked cinema projection experts Edge Digital Technology to take on the job, and no expense was spared. The tech experts at Edge agreed to share the intimate details of the new equipment they installed at the Saraton, with readers of the Clarence Valley Review.

Christie CP2220 Digital Cinema Projectors Qty:3

Purpose-built for exhibitors, the Christie CP2220 digital cinema projector delivers 18,500 lumens with a 3kW lamp in a cost-effective, compact solution for flexible mounting, servicing and installation. The Christie CP2220 is built on proven and reliable 1.2" 2K DMD DLP Cinema® technology, featuring a contrast ratio greater than 2100:1 and reproduces 35.2 trillion colours.

Doremi DCP2000 Digital Cinema Servers Qty:3

The DCP-2000 cinema server provides superior reliability, image quality and an unmatched feature set. It supports JPEG2000 and MPEG2 files. In addition, it feature RealD, XpanD, Dolby and dual projector 3D playback, external control of captioning devices and 4K resolution playback. Each DCP-2000 server includes the CineLister software utility that provides effortless scheduling and playlist admin-

istration. Playlists can include both JPEG2000 and MPEG2 movie files, and pre-show content files.

Alternate Content Scalers Qty:3

The alternate content scaler allows the upscale and switch of standard definition or high definition component sources to resolutions up to 1080p. It allows playback of content from alternate sources, not just Hollywood cinema content.

TMS running Doremi Software Qty:1

The Theatre Management Hardware and Software installed at the Saraton Theatre includes a Dell PowerEdge 14Tb server with CRU 4 Bay dataport and Doremi TMS licenses. The Doremi Theatre Management System software simplifies and streamlines digital screen operations while maximising all the advantages of digital cinema. It gives theatre personnel and network operation centres comprehensive central control over all presentations - for a single screen, large multiplex or an entire network.

Harkness Spectral™ 240 3D Projection Surfaces (screens) Qty:2

Harkness Spectral™ brand products are helping the cinema industry go digital worldwide. Edge Digital Technology

chooses Harkness™ screens because the products are engineered and constructed using the highest quality materials and manufacturing processes to ensure an outstanding finish with excellent brightness, colour rendition and contrast. Spectral™ brand screens deliver crisp left and right eye stereoscopic images, offering outstanding brightness to counter inherent 3D design light losses, and also given excellent 2D performance.

Edge Digital Technology Installation and Support

Edge Digital Technology has a long and proven track record of providing projection and sound equipment to the Australian cinema industry. We offer a broad portfolio of digital cinema products sourced from the industry's premium digital cinema technology manufacturers. With this access, we are able to offer our clients the greatest possible choice and to specify DCinema systems that are tailored to meet our exhibition partners differing requirements. Our DCinema installation capabilities are well demonstrated with over 300 screens installed and operational. With an eye to the future Edge Digital Technology continues to invest in hardware and software solutions that will benefit distribution, exhibition but more importantly the cinema going patron. Our network operations centre provides 24/7 monitoring with authorised service personnel and equipment owners constantly updated on any potential failures before they occur.

Don Bowling



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The Hypacoustic sound experience

■ INTERVIEW: Josh McMahon

The multi-million dollar revamp of Grafton's Saraton Theatre has not only rejuvenated the majestic appearance of the historic building – it has incorporated the latest in cinema technology.

The Notaras family employed New Zealand cinema sound pioneers Hypacoustic to custom-design the audio systems in the main theatre and the two adjoining cinemas, from the amplifiers right through to the speakers.

Hypacoustic director Matthew A. Simmons says that he believes the cutting-edge technology used in the Saraton makes it “the most technically advanced cinema in Australia”.

Mr Simmons spoke recently to The Clarence Valley Review about his company's role in the major restoration project.

Clarence Valley Review:
Okay Matthew, what can you tell me about the system you've put in place at the Saraton Theatre?

Matthew Simmons: First of all it's called Hypacoustic, and it was developed in New Zealand over the last 10 years by our company. The New Zealand Government has invested greatly in this technology. It's basically an audio technology – anything to do with the loudspeakers and the amplifiers is what Hypacoustic covers.

Essentially cinema audio has not changed for 30 or 40 years. They've been using the same horns and amplifiers and basic technology for decades without any change. Traditional cinema has these big horns behind the screen then they use a perforated vinyl screen. What our technology does amongst many



which is a superior audio system and also the most advanced, they're going to have the best sound quality of any cinema in Australia. That goes without question.

CVR: What can people expect as far as the audio experience goes when they go to see a movie in the Saraton?

MS: Traditionally cinema has always been loud, harsh, and brash, and I think people would

and be engrossed in the movie. I think that's one thing that has been drastically missing in the sound reproduction of cinemas of tradition, and this is obviously why we've taken off in the marketplace.

CVR: So the Saraton obviously isn't the only place you've put in place your sound system.

MS: Hypacoustic is used in Hollywood by Kodak, many DVDs and BluRays have been

“ **The three cinemas in Grafton are probably going to have the best picture quality of any cinema in Australia, purely because the screens are solid.** ”

things, the most significant thing we've done we've developed a loudspeaker system that uses multiples of small speakers ... we're using small speakers we place around the screen.

What this enables the cinemas to do is two significant things. First of all they can eliminate the use of perforated vinyl screens. They don't have screens with small holes in them, so that means the picture is brighter because there is more light reflected to the audience, and also the picture is sharper because there's no little dots breaking up the picture.

A further advantage of the system it enables the screen to be pushed forward, whereas it would normally have about a metre of depth to allow the speakers to go behind. It enables the system to be hard up against the wall and that allows the cinema to use an extra row of seats.

The three cinemas in Grafton are probably going to have the best picture quality of any cinema in Australia, purely because the screens are solid. Also because it's using Hypacoustic

agree on that, when they go to the movies it's too loud and their ears tend to get a bit tired after a long movie or especially if they've watched two movies in a row. That's because traditional horns are full of distortion, and the ears get very tired of that. The harshness is because of the nature of horns in general. So when they go to a Hypacoustic cinema the first thing they're going to notice is how easy, how clear and detailed, the sound is, and also how dynamic and exciting the sound is.

I think Angelo's had comments already that people who watch a movie have been more emotionally engaged in the movie, and it tingles down their spine when things happen in the theatre. That's because there's less distortion in the sound, so the brain is allowed to then relax, accept the environment of the cinema as their new reality, and get more engaged in the theatre.

That's really what good sound and video reproduction is about. If the technology is so good then it disappears and you are able to just enjoy the picture and enjoy the sound,

mastered on Hypacoustic systems in Hollywood, the BluRay of Gladiator was mastered on a Hypacoustic system by Kodak. It's also been installed in the British Film Institute in London, and also the hundreds of cinemas we're rolling out through China and India.

CVR: Is this sort of system expensive?

MS: No, it actually ends up being cheaper than a traditional horn-based system - about 15-20 per cent cheaper than a traditional system.

CVR: Is that right.

MS: Yes, absolutely. The other thing is for the cinema owners Hypacoustic comes with an unconditional 10-year warranty on all parts, so for 10 years there's no additional costs or licensing fees.

CVR: Okay, well I'm sure people reading this will be looking forward to going along and experiencing the movies, and thank-you for taking the time to talk to me.



The grand stairway and original mirror leading to the dress circle.



Plasterwork detail.

Art Deco plasterwork bought back to life

■ Josh McMahon

The Saraton is hailed by its owners as featuring some of the best Art Deco plasterwork of the 1930s. The years had taken their toll on the heritage theatre, however, and it was the job of Grafton plasterer Matt See to carry out the delicate job of restoring the deteriorating ceiling finishings.

At the grand entry of the theatre, Matt said the ceiling needed particular attention, with badly peeling paint and deteriorated fibrous plasterboard. The paint was scraped back, special compounds mixed up, and Matt was into what would be around two months of work at the Saraton.

“A lot of it’s hand skill, because you’re trying to match it in and patch it,” he said.

Into the main movie theatre, and Matt pointed again to the roof where he said some sections were too water damaged to rescue. Instead, they needed to be replaced with modern Gyprock.

Matt explained that fibrous plasterboard was different to the modern material, as over time the old plaster would lose its stability and cracks would develop. In contrast,

Gyprock was more durable, and as an added bonus cost a fraction of the price. Once finished and painted, however, Matt said there was no noticeable visual difference between the old and new plasterwork.

Time had also resulted in damage to the cornices – the decorative plasterwork used at the juncture of the walls and ceiling. Again Matt needed to replace the deteriorated sections, and carefully match them to the original work.

Matt also incorporated a modern element into the main theatre – the use of perforated plasterboard on the back wall of the upper level, to improve the venue’s acoustics.

“It makes a noticeable difference with the echo,” he said.

“What it does is it takes the sound into the holes and eliminates it from rebounding.”

The new 150-seat cinemas have also incorporated extensive use of the perforated plasterboard, which covers at least 60 per cent of the walls. A special impact resistant version of the material has been used in accessible areas to ensure a long life. Matt said the reinforced plasterboard was extremely durable, and was also used in police stations.



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Career highlight for veteran builder

■ Josh McMahon

Grafton builder Bill Norton has been in the game almost 50 years, and he says supervising restoration of the historic Saraton has been the highlight of his career.

Bill says as a young bloke growing up in Grafton he didn't go into the Saraton often, as his family didn't have enough money to pay for tickets. But for the past two-and-a-half years, the theatre has been his home away from home.

Looking back on what he says was a challenging project, Bill puts the Saraton revamp right up there as his best ever jobs, alongside restoration of Yugalbah Castle at Baryulgil, back in the 1960s.

"I'm happy. Really good it is. I've worked on some good jobs but this is up there at the top. It's not every day you get to work on restoration of a theatre," he said.

"It's a challenge and has you thinking all the time. Some of the things we've never done, like fitting the movie screens."

Co-ordinating dozens of subcontractors, Bill says a key part of his role was to ensure the right person was working at the theatre at the right time.

"That's very important actually. Everything's got to be co-ordinated. One bloke's got to have his



Grafton builder Bill Norton is proud of the job his team has done on restoring the Saraton Theatre. Pic: Josh McMahon

"I've worked on some good jobs but this is up there at the top. It's not every day you get to work on restoration of a theatre"

work done so the next can start. If he doesn't it drags things out," Bill said.

"You see the colour of my hair? It was dark before I got here ... you've got to be persuasive sometimes to get people on the job."

Restoring the heritage theatre was far more complex than creating a new building, according to Bill. Holes needed to be cut to feed in the extensive network

of new wiring in the walls and floors, then repainted to look like it had never been disturbed. Asbestos needed to be removed and access walkways built above the ceiling; old plasterwork was carefully patched; the floorboards were re-nailed; plumbing was replaced; and extensive scaffolding was required to carry out work in the high-ceilinged theatre.

But before anyone did anything, heritage experts needed

to be consulted to ensure all work was done to the highest possible standard of historical accuracy and authenticity.

"You've got to be aware of the heritage stuff – you can't change things willy-nilly," Bill said.

"When you're doing heritage stuff it slows things down a bit, compared to a new job. A new job you put everything in as you go, but with old ones you have to hide your wiring, plumbing. It's a challenge."

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Julie Van Dalsen, left, of Ramornie, with Jody O'Connor, of Junction Hill, spoiled for choice with three movies to watch at once.



Louisa Bloomer greets Julie Van Dalsen, left, of Ramornie, with Jody O'Connor, of Junction Hill, for Tomorrow When the War Began.



Nicole Thompson manning the candy bar.



Senior projectionist Danny Broeder with the state of the art equipment in the projection room.



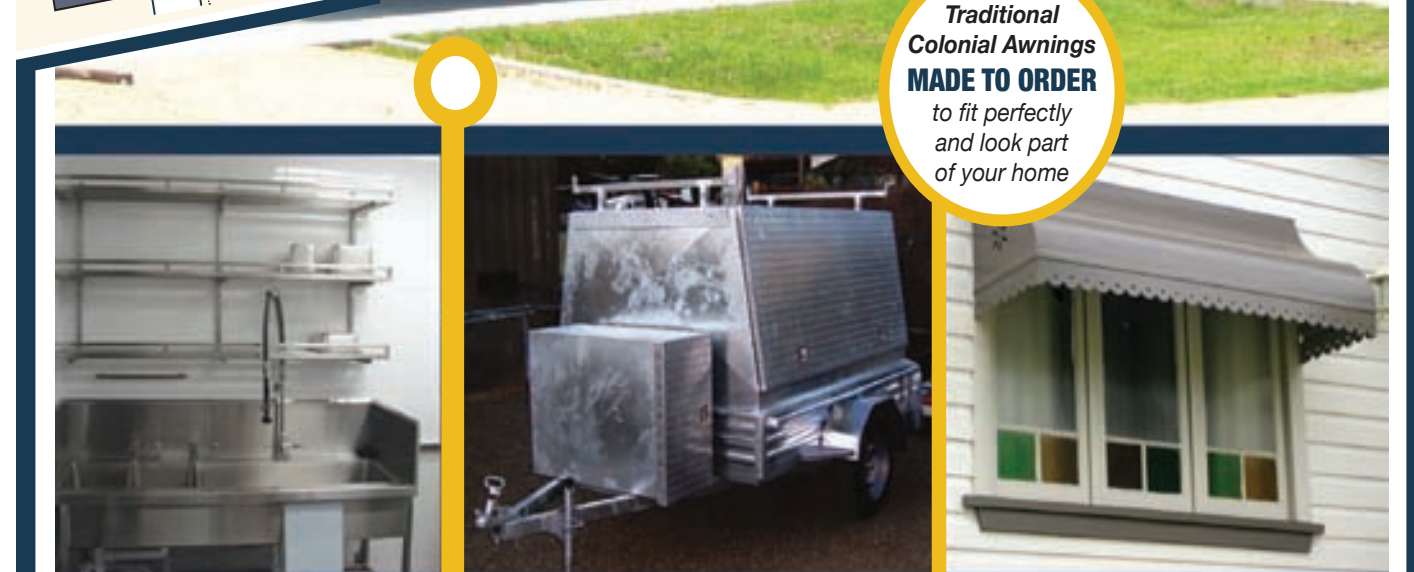
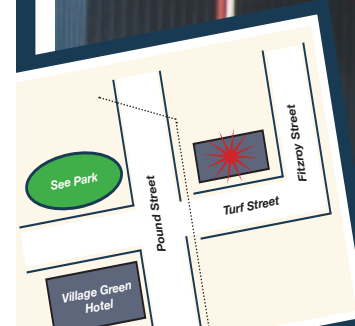
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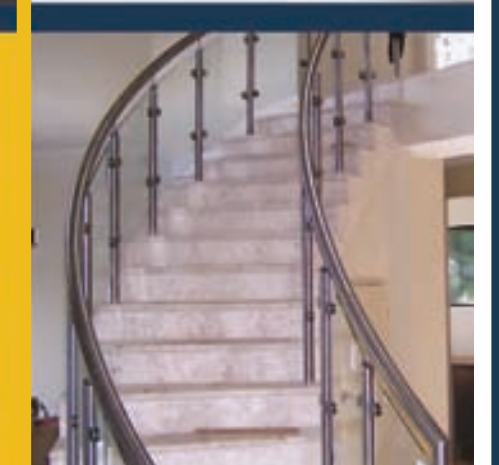
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Pic ABOVE & BELOW Cinema 3 trailers.

A landmark in the Saraton's history

After a two and a half year restoration and fit out, Australia's oldest and largest cinema is still owned by the same family has been re-opened.

The Saraton Theatre complex is in the geographic centre of Grafton with a 300 space car park adjacent.

The multi million dollar restoration and construction programme also included two new additional 150 stadium seating cinemas. State-of-the-art Christie Digital 2K/4K projectors with Panalogue 3D capability, new Hypacoustic sound system and special electronic audio hearing system for the hearing impaired were installed in all cinemas. The entire complex is controlled by "Vantage" automation system and meets strictest new and potential building and health codes. Water saving devices and low energy lighting, heating and cooling considerably reduces running costs. Future plans include generating sufficient solar power to run the complex during daylight hours.

Specially designed and woven axminster carpets were laid throughout the complex, together with luxurious comfortable seating. A new Heritage design candy bar with electronic ticketing and point of sale allows patrons large choices and quick service of all ticketing and refreshments. Heritage terracotta and black tiles in foyers and walkways compliment the project.

The heritage cinema, with over 1000 seating capacity, has been restored to its former magnificence of 1939 with its striking all colour originality and lighting. The Saraton features some of Australia's best original Art Deco plasterwork of the 1930's. The stage has been increased in size allowing for full live theatre productions. The roll-up/down screen is the largest in Australia allowing cinema to live theatre operation at the touch of a button.

The Hypacoustic sound system, the largest ever installed with over 160 speakers on all walls of the

theatre, produces superb lifelike sound. The subwoofer sound shakes the building bringing a new sound dimension to action movies.

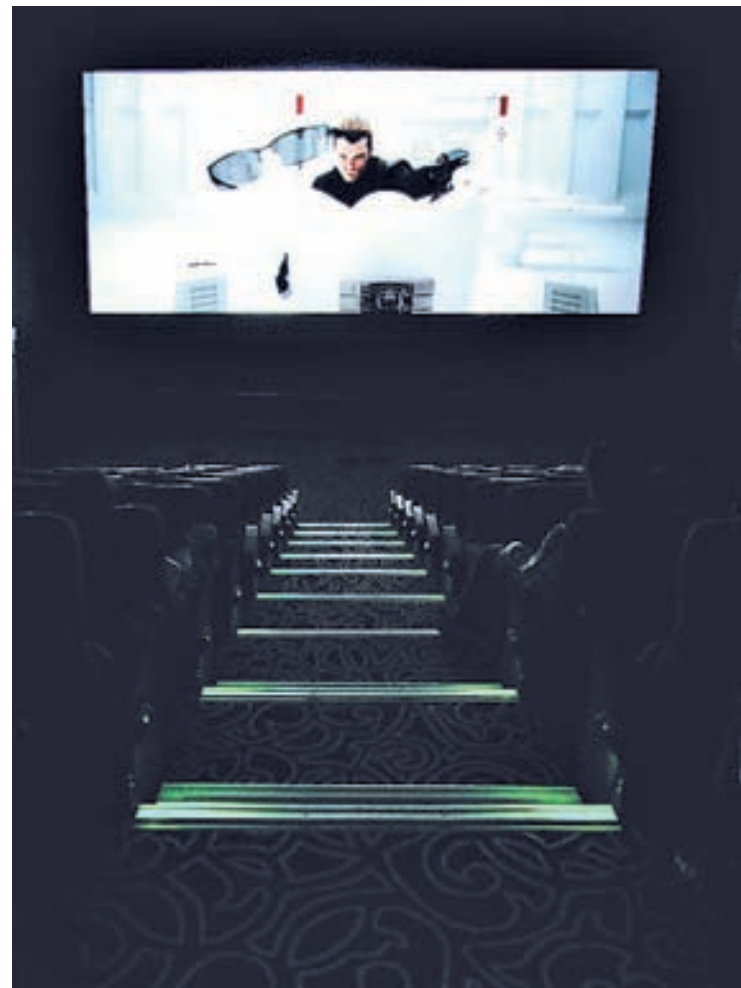
All cinemas in the complex can receive programmes by satellite including all sports, concerts, special events etc.

The Heritage listed Saraton Theatre restoration, and new additional cinema project, was assisted with a \$335,000 Grant from the NSW Heritage Office. Clarence Valley Council also gave full support and guidance to the project.

The multi-million dollar cost of the programme and construction was carried out by brothers Angelo, John and Mitchell Notaras

and cousin Spiro Notaras, sons of Tony and Jack Notaras who arrived in Grafton from Kythera Greece in 1910 and at the age of 30 in 1926 constructed the Saraton Theatre.

Two and a half years ago as a tribute to their fathers and to celebrate the anniversary of 100 years in Grafton and to all Australians, Angelo, John, Mitchell and Spiro purchased the Saraton property from the extended Notaras family so that their fathers' dream of providing first class entertainment to the Clarence Valley would continue with the Heritage listed Saraton Theatre returned to its former glory and to be ably supported financially by new additional cinemas.



A brief history

The Saraton Theatre was designed by Lismore architect F J Board, for the Notaras family. The builder was Mr Walters. The Mayor of Grafton, Ald W T Robinson, opened the Saraton Theatre on 17 July 1926. The Saraton was the first theatre to be built in Grafton.

During its time, the Saraton Theatre has experienced three fires. On 20 August 1932 a fire in the theatre damaged the picture screen, stage tab and curtains, baffle board, roof rafters and flooring of the stage. The Theatre remained closed as a cinema for the next eight years, however occasional dances, concerts and other social functions were still held in the theatre.

“ The Saraton was the first theatre to be built in Grafton. ”

In July 1940 the Saraton was renovated and remodelled internally by Queensland theatre architect George Rae. The result was an auditorium in the art moderne style.

The Saraton suffered a second fire on 10 May 1944. The curtain and screen were destroyed, but the cinema was back in operation by late June 1944.

The Saraton was closed in the early 1970s. Family member Irene Notaras, after extensive renovations, reopened the theatre on 10 December 1982.

The Saraton Theatre suffered a third fire - on 13 January 1989. An employee was charged with setting fire to the projection box. However, the cinema was closed for less than a month.

The site of the theatre was reported to be proposed for a carpark in April 1999, but never eventuated after the placing of an interim conservation order on the historic building.



The new facade.

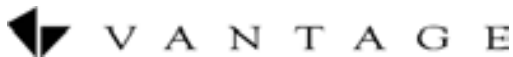
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Thank you to Angelo , Spiro , John and Mitchell Notaras of NOTARAS BROTHERS ENTERTAINMENT Pty Ltd and Builder Bill Norton for trusting us to design, supply, install and integrate all of the automation and electrical services within this wonderful entertainment facility . We hope your enthusiasm and passion for the Saraton Theatre will be shared by everyone for many years to come .



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Stylish art work in keeping with the art deco style adorns the new entrance.

Memories of the good old days

Lyn Zuber will never forget the time as a young girl she heard world-famous pianist Winifred Atwell perform at the Saraton Theatre.

Then Lyn Creighton, the six-year-old packed into the Saraton with hundreds of others for the special occasion.

She was specially chosen to present the Trinidad-born performer with a bunch of flowers, in front of the hundreds of people who had packed into the theatre for the special event.

"I'll never forget it. I think it was because she was so lovely. I learned music at school and I remember mum saving to get a ticket to go to the show," she said.

The Saraton was a big part of the social life of kids in those days according to Lyn, when there was always a line to get in and the theatre would be packed.

"That's what you did in those days – it was a real treat to go to the Saraton on a Saturday afternoon," she recalled.

"It was really elegant, big mirrors and everything. Out of the three theatres in Grafton at the time, the Saraton was the classy

one."

Lyn saw the first Titanic movie at the Saraton in the 1950s. She would also go to see films with her school. Then at around age 15, she began seeing movies with

17-year-old Peter Zuber. The pair married in 1968.

The Saraton remained a big part of the Zuber's lives, Peter playing at the theatre with his band, Shades of Blue.



One of the old projectors on display.

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Friends Donna Dugh, left, of South Grafton and Joy Whalley, of Grafton jubilant at being among the first to taste the new Saraton offerings.



Detail shots of features.

Land deal key to project

As shopping centre developer Robert McConaghy planned for a \$50million expansion of his Grafton venture around six years ago, he had a problem. The Grafton Shoppingworld expansion required the acquisition of the Duke Street public carpark, and Mr McConaghy needed to satisfy concerns this would mean less parking for those shopping in Prince Street.

Meanwhile, the aging Saraton Theatre was in desperate need of a revamp – a huge operation that would require a significant financial commitment from the Notaras family. The Notaras’ also owned land adjacent to the theatre.

The Notaras’ had land and needed money. Mr McConaghy needed land and had money.

Out of their mutual interest a deal was struck, which resulted in the sale of land to the shopping centre developer that enabled him to build a 350-space carpark that he then gave to council for public use, and the Notaras family had an injection of funds that would help them restore their much-loved theatre.

Angelo and Spiro Notaras have expressed their appreciation for Mr McConaghy’s co-operation, which they said had been key to enabling them to afford the major renovations to the Saraton Theatre.

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ABOVE: The grand entrance hall to Cinema 1. RIGHT & BELOW Detail shots.



Restoring the Saraton to its former glory

■ Josh McMahon

When young Notaras brothers Tony and Jack built the Saraton Theatre in 1926, their 20,000-pound investment became the social hub of Grafton.

People flocked to witness this new world of film, with radio yet to be embraced and television still unimagined. The Saraton was a grand structure in the small town, one of the largest buildings on the Clarence River.

The best part of a century has now passed. An uncountable number of Jaffas have been rolled down the theatre's aisles; couples have met and fallen in love; families have created happy memories. The Saraton has become a vital part of the history of Grafton people.

The 84-year-old theatre has survived the threat of television, which dwindled its numbers

and forced the closure of many other cinemas. The well-built structure has also withstood the test of time, remaining in perfect condition on solid foundations.

Time did, however, result in a move away from the grand original façade and décor. And sadly, the theatre was no longer the bustling social hub of old.

Notaras brothers Angelo, John and Mitchell with their cousin Spiro have now completed the first major step to realising their grand vision to once again make the Saraton the centre of social activity in Grafton.

They have restored the historically significant theatre back to its grand original décor and colour scheme, and built two new cinemas on adjoining land.

The main theatre is now anticipated to attract major live acts including modern and contemporary music, comedy,

drama, school plays and everything in-between. Live events are planned to be held regularly. The theatre is also planned to host 'alternative content', where events such as football finals, opera, or others are beamed in by satellite or cable from around the world in real time.

The latest in digital projection and sound technology has been used to create the best possible entertainment experience for those seeing live acts or films. Cinemas will also show three-dimensional (3D) movies.

Angelo said his family believed it was important to maintain the heritage values of the original theatre, while creating a facility that would offer much to the people of Grafton.

"The theatre is actually unique historically, and when you look at the Heritage Office documentation on cinemas in

Australia, the Saraton is one of the few if not the only original one that's left in this country. Therefore it's very important that it will be preserved," he said.

"We had many offers to sell, but we didn't want it to go into the hands of a buyer who would ignore the heritage issues and the importance of the building. So we as a family have upgraded the theatre to bring it back to its 1939 vintage era, making it by volume probably the largest cinema in Australia outside of the State Theatre and the Capital Theatre in Sydney, and one other in Melbourne."

Angelo said the family was investing more than \$4million of its own money into the project. Cost, however, has come second to more sentimental values.

"It's certainly not a money-making exer-

cise. But look, life's been good to us. We've worked very hard and we've been rewarded, and we're putting some of that back into the community – that's why we're doing it," Angelo said.





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14 Saraton Theatre



Cinema 1 enjoyed a good crowd for its first feature Tomorrow When the War Began.

Saraton Theatre Movie Review...

Tomorrow, When The War Began

Tomorrow, When The War Began follows the journey of eight high school friends in a remote country town whose lives are suddenly and violently upended by a war that no one saw coming. Cut off from their families and their friends, these eight extraordinary teenagers must learn to escape, survive and fight back against hostile military forces.

Stuck helping her parents on their country farm, 17-year-old Ellie Linton (Caitlin Stasey) plans one last adventure before school holidays end – a camping trip to a remote vegetated sinkhole located in the bush that the locals have ominously dubbed „Hell“.

With her parents agreeing to lend the family Land Rover, Ellie gathers her school mates for the trip.

Upon reaching their destination, the group discover “Hell” is anything but: The lush, idyllic sinkhole turns out to be a hidden paradise, complete with a stream and waterfall – the perfect location for friendships to be forged and romances to blossom. During their week-long stay, the outside world becomes a distant memory – that is until a several squads of low-flying jets make an unexpected appearance in the night sky.

Returning to their small hometown of Wirrawee, the seven teenagers soon discover something is amiss: Power to the town has been cut, pets and livestock have been left dead or dying and, most alarmingly of all, everyone’s parents have vanished.

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Thurs Sept 23
to Wed Sept 29

Great movies for you these holidays!

							
3D Cats & Dogs	3D Despicable Me	3D The Last Airbender	3D Step Up	3D Shrek Forever	Charlie St Cloud	Tomorrow When the War Began	The Sorcerer's Apprentice
Daily to Weds: 9.30am, 12.45pm, 4.05pm, 6.00pm	Daily to Weds: 9.35am, 11.00am, 2.20pm, 7.35pm	Daily to Weds: 11.15am, 3.00pm, 6.55pm	Daily to Weds: 9.20am	Daily to Weds: 9.40am	Daily to Weds: 1.10pm, 5.05pm, 8.50pm	Daily to Weds: 1.20pm, 5.15pm, 9.10pm	Daily to Weds: 11.20am, 3.15pm, 7.10pm

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