

## Hoyts Albury Theatres

*Greg Ryan*

Before television arrived in Albury, going to a movie theatre was quite a different experience from what it is today. In the 1960s, the session would start with everyone standing for the national anthem (back then it was 'God Save the Queen'). A Movietone newsreel featuring current national and international events was followed by one or two cartoons.

Once the 'shorts' were out of the way, there was a first feature film before intermission. During the break at matinee screenings, kids would rush to the shop for supplies, then back to the front of the theatre where lots of 'wheeling and dealing' took place as comics were swapped. Then the lights slowly began to fade and it was back to seats for the main feature film.

Albury's first theatre primarily for film screenings was the Regent, built by Betro Abikhair and designed by local architect, Louis Harrison. The theatre was leased by Hoyts and formally opened on February 19, 1927 by Albury Mayor Alf Waugh.

Accommodation was provided for 800 patrons in the upstairs dress circle and 830 in the auditorium. Film-goers could "retire at interval for a smoke and refreshments" to a roof garden facing David Street. The main attraction in the theatre's opening week was *Beau Geste* starring Ronald Colman.

Albury's second movie theatre, Hoyts in Olive Street, was opened ten years later, also by Mayor Alf Waugh on March 12, 1937 and broadcast live on radio 2AY. The theatre



Hoyts Theatre, Olive Street in the 1940s  
on the site occupied in 2020 by Chemist Warehouse

accommodated 660 in the stalls, 228 in lounge seats, 267 in the dress circle, and 12 in the 'crying room,' making a total of 1167. The 'crying room,' enabled mothers "to enjoy the programme without causing any annoyance to the other patrons."

Built in the popular Art Deco style, the theatre was "replete with every modern convenience for theatre-goers." Air conditioning was installed and footwarmers "make it unnecessary to bring rugs in winter." The theatre walls were treated with "sound absorbing materials to eliminate distortion and reflection of sound." Popular with patrons during intermission were roof gardens facing Olive Street and fronting Volt Lane.

For the opening night, "an exceptionally fine programme has been arranged." The first feature was *Pepper* starring Jane Withers followed by the main film *Mr Deed Goes to Town* with Gary Cooper.

Hoyts Theatre closed its doors on April 12, 1972. On October 20, 1974 the building was destroyed by fire. There was conjecture that the fire was deliberately lit but nothing was ever proven.