



# SIGHT AND SOUND UPDATE

(No.23 February/March 2015)

## COUNTRY CLARIFICATION

Ever alert member and Vice-President Ian Stimson responded to a query in the last edition of Sight and Sound about country theatres in WA that operated a disc sound system. The Cummins Theatre at Merredin and the Royal at Collie were equipped with Western Electric Type 1A universal base plants, leased by Western Electric for £5 per week. Geraldton's Radio Theatre and the Cremorne Cinema in Kalgoorlie also had Western Electric sound...more next issue.

## ANOTHER SUNSET DELIVERY

AMMPT received a Christmas present from Daryl Binning when Graeme Lacey took delivery of a large number of items in mid December 2014. They included photographs, glass panels, silent movies music and a rare mercury rectifier from the Ambassadors Theatre. The rectifier was rescued by Hoyts manager John Woodall when the Ambassadors Theatre was demolished and taken by member Graham Sturke to the Wireless Hill Museum.



The rectifier and etched box glass panels are being treated with utmost care due to their significance and fragility.

Another item that surfaced with the delivery for Sunset was an album from country member Max Bell highlighting photographs of country drive in theatres. It appears there are approximately 100 pictures in the album. Max would be known to many people as the author of the 1986 book "Perth – A Cinema History", and a short biography on the life and times of Paddy Baker, titled "Paddy Baker Picture Show Man", published in 2011, which featured some of these pictures.

Member Ken McKay recently obtained and donated to AMMPT a Smith Videotape Editor from Channel 7 that was used during the Perth 1962 Commonwealth Games. Ken used the same machine to edit the popular 1960s Sunday World of Football show.

## CLASSICS OF THE SILVER SCREEN – GRAND CYGNET – MAR.15<sup>th</sup> 10.00am

### “REAR WINDOW”

**Rear Window** is a 1954 American mystery thriller film directed by Alfred Hitchcock, written by John Michael Hayes and based on Cornell Woolrich's 1942 short story "It Had to Be Murder". Originally released by Paramount Pictures, the film stars James Stewart and Grace Kelly.

After breaking his leg photographing a racetrack accident, professional photographer L.B. "Jeff" Jefferies (James Stewart) is confined to his Greenwich Village apartment. His rear window looks out onto a small courtyard and several other apartments. One evening Jeff hears a woman scream "Don't!" and a glass break. Later he is awakened by thunder and notices Thorwald (a travelling Jewelry salesman leaving) his apartment. Later "Jeff" sees Thorwald cleaning a large knife and handsaw and removalists are employed to take a large heavy trunk away from his apartment.



## CLASSICS OF THE SILVER SCREEN - IN NOSTALGIC LOCAL CONTEXT

(from Royal WA Historical Society and AMMPT member Jack Honniball)

All of the 11 classic films we are presenting at the Cygnet this year were first shown in Perth during the period of 24 years, 1936 to 1959, and so are well representative of 'the golden era of cinema'. Each was originally screened at one or other of the seven first-release houses which then enlivened the central city scene.

Our first two offerings made their local debuts at the **Piccadilly**, which long ranked as the 'ace house' of City Theatres' group of three. Paramount's *Rear Window* played four weeks there in February 1957, and Universal's *Pillow Talk* was its Christmas attraction of 1959, running five weeks. Another of Paramount's gems, *Double Indemnity*, had a run of two weeks in November 1945 at the **Royal**, which ranked all that decade as No. 2 in the same trio of theatres. Perth audiences were probably slow to appreciate as yet the genre later to be called film noir, of which this stark drama was one of the first and best exponents.



Piccadilly Theatre – Hay Street Perth

For the rival Hoyts group, their premier house for most of the 1930s was the huge Capitol at the foot of William Street. There in September 1936 RKO Radio's dance musical, *Follow the Fleet*, drew record crowds for two weeks and then moved for a third week to the smaller Majestic in central Hay Street. When the Plaza arose on the site of the Majestic a year later, Hoyts made this sleek new venue their quality house.

However, in 1954 business was generally in the doldrums there, but it evidently took a welcome lift for two weeks in July with *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. Hoyts' other outlet at this stage, the large the large and ornate **Ambassadors**, had been a weekly-change house all

25 years of its life so far and displaying great variety in genres and quality of product. Warner Bros' *Lullaby of Broadway* took its turn there in late November 1953 just a month before the start of extended runs with the new Cinemascope format.

Our four scheduled classics from Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer all entered Perth at the highly regarded **Metro**, the earliest being *Goodbye, Mr Chips*, which played 3½ weeks in September/October 1939. Then, in its long heyday of prosperity, came the three top-notch musicals, each staying for four busy weeks – *For Me and My Gal* in September 1943, *Show Boat* at Christmas 1951, and *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* for Christmas 1954.

Our final show for the year will be Paramount's *Roman holiday*, which came to share the then long-run record of six weeks at the **Grand** in July/August 1954. This venue had begun quite a chequered career as Perth's first purpose-built cinema and later found itself the foundation stone of the long pre-eminent City Theatres Company

### IN FOCUS PRESENTATION –MARCH 18TH – 7.30pm FRED BELL RSL HALL

Our first Wednesday evening "In Focus Presentation" will be John Quicke presenting the topic "On Life and Work on the Other Side of Your Television Screen". John Quicke was the Chief Engineer at TVW during the period of much expansion. Kevin Campbell who worked for Channel 7 for 35 years and was Managing Director Channel 7 Perth for nine years will introduce John.

Our 15<sup>th</sup> April presentation features military historian Len Christie with "Reflections on Gallipoli".

### BUSSELTON DRIVE-IN FAREWELL VISIT

Further to advice in the letter accompanying SSU #22, the date has now been set for 7<sup>th</sup> March. Any person wishing to be part of the visit, please ring John Fuhrmann on 94479837