

THE ROXY 75TH ANNIVERSARY Official Launch Roxy Cafe & Museum

There is nothing remarkable about a story regarding the demise of a Greek cafe in rural Australia. There is, however, something quite extraordinary about such a cafe being brought back to life.

Forty-five years since serving its last mixed grill, The Roxy Cafe in Bingara, northern New South Wales, has been faithfully restored to its original splendour.

On Saturday 9th April and Sunday 10th April, The Roxy will celebrate its 75th Anniversary with the launch of the refurbished cafe and preview of the site of The Roxy Museum that will be integrated into the venue.

The highlight of the weekend will be the 75th Anniversary Gala Ball. Bringing the glamour of the 1930's back to

Bingara, the Gala Ball will be an unforgettable evening of Greek feasting and festivity under the stars. Guests

will be invited to dance the night away to the live band Ha Va Le, one of the best Greek party bands performing in the country. No Greek celebration would be complete without the smashing of plates, and the Gala Ball will be no exception.

Why the Greek connection? The Roxy was built by three partners from the Greek island of Kythera which lies on the southern tip of the Peloponnese.

Opening in 1936, The Roxy complex boasted an architecturally striking art deco cinema, cafe, three independent retail premises and a guest house. The venue operated as a cinema until 1958 when it closed and spent the next forty years virtually lying dormant. The Roxy Theatre was purchased by the then Bingara Shire Council in 1999 and fully restored.

In 2004, The Roxy Theatre was reopened to the public as a cinema, performing arts venue and multi-purpose

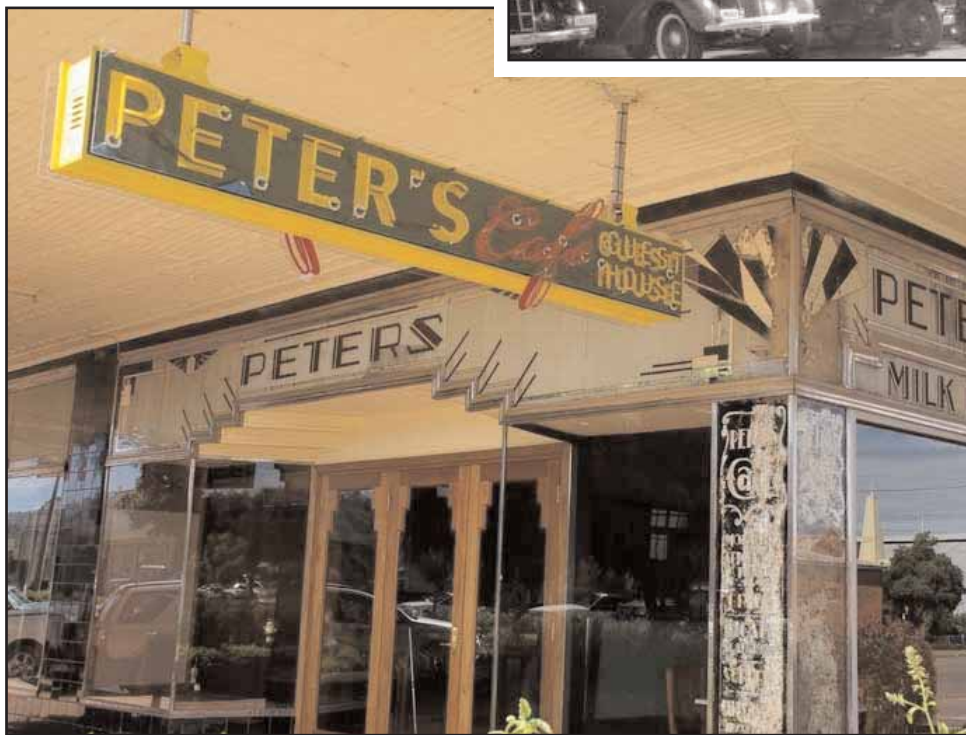
function centre that hosts a variety of conferences, seminars, weddings and private functions.

In 2009, the Gwydir Shire Council was the recipient of a substantial grant from the Department of Heritage, Environment, Water and the Arts to re-

store the art deco cafe adjoining the cinema and incorporate a museum. The Roxy Museum will be dedicated to the history of Greek settlement in country Australia (with a focus on NSW and Queensland).

Roxy Manager, Sandy McNaughton explains that the Museum "will become a place of national and international significance that collects, conserves and protects the important cultural associations between people and place. It will pay tribute to the remarkable legacy of the Greek cafe and cinema operators to ensure the impact they made on the daily lives of hundreds of thousands of people is not forgotten."

The next stage of the project will be to complete the fit-out of the Roxy



Museum which is currently a 'blank canvas.' With the museum yet to be established, it is the cafe that will be the star of the show on the 9th and 10th April.

"What is particularly unique about the cafe restoration is the number of fixtures and fittings from the original cafe that have been brought back to life. Wood paneling, mirrors, cubicles, tables and chairs, as well as the spectacular neon sign that hung under the awning in the 1930s, have all been reinstated" explains Sandy.

Greek cafes changed the course of Australia's cultural history and left a significant legacy on our culinary and cultural landscape. Very few Greek cafes operate as they did 50 years ago. Even fewer complexes that incorporate



a functioning cinema and cafe remain.

"Once complete, The Roxy may be the only original purpose built cinema with adjoining cafe operating in New South Wales, possibly in Australia" states Sandy.

The town of Bingara has a great deal to celebrate by launching the cafe. Sandy notes that while "the doors to the cafe will be thrown open to the public over the April weekend, it will not begin trading commercially until a later date when a suitable operator has been appointed."

The shared narrative of The Roxy's history exemplifies the Greek migration experience: one that made an outstanding contribution to the development of Australia. The restoration of the cafe is an extremely positive and vi-

sionary project in a region that has suffered years of drought and economic downturns. It is inspiring to see what a small rural community that believes in its future can achieve.

It is therefore fitting that following the official launch of the cafe, a Gala Ball be held that will celebrate this triumphant achievement. "We know how much the Greeks love a celebration, so we are intending to throw a party that the original founders would have been proud of" says Sandy. Paying homage to Hollywood's Golden Age, a superb selection of screenings will light up the silver screen over the weekend. Highlights will include well-known actor John Wood presenting the television episode he filmed featuring The Roxy. The first film ever screened at The Roxy opening in 1936, Roberta, starring Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers will also be screened.

The 75th Anniversary Celebrations on the 9th and 10th April will be a step back in time into Australia's future by celebrating an icon to be enjoyed by generations to come.

Tickets for the Gala Ball are available through the Bingara Tourist Information Centre tel: (02) 67 24 0066.

For all 75th Anniversary Celebration enquiries please e-mail:

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