

City of Adelaide Heritage Survey (2008)

NAME: *ASO Building, 91-93 Hindley Street*
Former Wests' Cinema

ZONE/POLICY AREA: *CBA – PA14*

APPROVED / CURRENT USE: Music Studio / Offices

FORMER USE: Cinema / Restaurant / Amusement Arcade

DATE(S) OF CONSTRUCTION: 1939

LOCATION: 91-93 Hindley Street
ADELAIDE SA 5000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Adelaide City Council

LAND DESCRIPTION: CT-5663/323

HERITAGE STATUS: Local Heritage Place

OTHER ASSESSMENTS Donovan Marsden & Stark, 1982



ASO Building, 91 Hindley Street – *View to southeast*

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DESCRIPTION:

This is a two storey Art Deco building with a major central vertical feature. The ground floor has been altered significantly. The main Art Deco features are evident in the first floor of the main northern elevation. The fabric is of masonry that has been rendered and painted. The balanced design features five windows either side of the central vertical element which served as a clock tower and has four horizontal banded elements on either side on the southern portion of this feature. The slim pilasters of the first storey, between which are vertically fluted panels above the windows, are joined by a thin incised line to the top of the front wall; and the central mullions of the windows terminate visually in the drop motif below the sills. The windows are timber-framed casements with fixed panes above. There is a plain cantilevered verandah across the northern elevation.

The assessment includes the whole of the building though does not include interior, the cantilevered verandah, external signs, nor the external painting scheme.

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE VALUE:

This building is of heritage value as a good example of Art Deco architecture in Adelaide. It is of particular historical value as an early cinema, and indeed now one of the oldest surviving cinema buildings that were once relatively numerous within the city. It illustrates several key themes in the city's history: 3.6.2 *Entertainment* ; 4.3.2 *Twentieth Century Architects*; 4.5.4 *Inter-War Commercial (1920s to 1942)*; and 6.2.2 *Cinemas*.

RELEVANT CRITERIA (Under Section 23(4) of the *Development Act 1993*):

This building is recommended for Local Heritage listing because it meets the following criteria:

- (a) It displays historical, economical or social themes that are of importance to the local area, particularly with Hindley Street having a long history of being an entertainment centre of the city; and
 - (b) it represents customs or ways of life that are characteristic of the local area, as a place of entertainment; and
 - (d) it displays aesthetic merit, design characteristics or construction techniques of significance to the local area as a good example of Art Deco architecture in Adelaide; and
 - (e) it is associated with a notable local institution as the headquarters and rehearsal studio of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra.
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ELEMENTS OF HERITAGE VALUE:

Inclusions

- External form and scale above verandah, including exterior walls, façade elements, plaster work and roof;
- Fabric and detailing of the façade above cantilevered verandah

Exclusions

- Interior detailing
- Additions at rear
- New services
- Ground level facade

NOTE: The Description of Place and Elements of Heritage Value listed in the Adelaide (City) Development Plan for this property are as follows:

Former West's Cinema; external form, in particular the fabric and detailing of art deco façade. Elements of heritage value include art deco interior, including foyer and staircase. Excludes shopfront and internal alterations.

This is the legally recognised listing and should be used for the purposes of development applicant assessment.

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The site has seen the Olympia Building that in the early 1900s housed the Olympia Skating Rink, a Cyclorama, and a velodrome. In 1909, the *Register* noted that West's Pictures arranged with Milburn and Jeffrey, contractors, to alter the building to the 'Continental fashion' in response to picture projection. From August to November 1911, and probably later into the new year, J. Kirkpatrick, a Sydney architect, was entrusted to extensively alter the Olympic Building, not least by changing the audience viewing direction from the eastern to the western wall. In Autumn 1926, plans submitted to the Adelaide City Council indicated that West's Picture Theatres intended to spend £4,447 on alterations to be carried out by Silver and Albrich builders. By March 1929, West had bought the site and some surrounding freehold properties with the intention to build a 'Saracenic' picture palace, as he had done in Melbourne on the corner of Flinders and Russell Streets.

In March 1929, The *BUILDING & CONSTRUCTION* journal reported that, following the completion of the 'Regent' Theatre by Hoyts, the re-building of Wests Theatre in Hindley Street would be undertaken at a cost of £550,000. The journal noted that:

The theatre will be on the same luxurious lines as the State Theatre, which was opened in Melbourne recently, and which is considered to be one of the finest picture houses in the world. The new theatre will have a frontage of 150 feet to Hindley Street. The huge refrigeration necessary for the elaborate ventilation system which is to be installed has led to Union Theatres acquiring the whole of the Rosina Street property of Uebehaun and Johnstone. Part of Colton, Palmer & Preston's property has also been secured. ...

However, ten years later, in August 1938, tenders were called for the demolition, purchase and removal of Wests Theatre buildings so that work could commence on the new Wests, 'Theatre of Tomorrow' as it became known. Architects for the project were Guy Crick &

Bruce W. Furze, Sydney, in association with Evans, Bruer & Hall, Adelaide. Crick and Furze remodelled many art deco cinemas in Sydney and elsewhere in NSW for the Kings Cinema Chain, the Scone Civic being their last surviving work.

The work of demolition and clearing was obviously completed by early 1939 because in March 1939 Hutcherson Bros, Sydney, was awarded the contract to undertake construction of the new theatre. The theatre opened on 1 December 1939.



B.33454, April 1977 (SLSA)

John Thiele noted that West theatre was 'considered one of the finest examples of the stylish art deco/modern theatres built in Australia in the late 30s.' The British Empire Films exchange was in offices at the front of the building, above the theatre entrance, accessed by 'a narrow staircase next to the main foyer entrance.' West's Picture Theatre patrons frequented the Victoria Hotel (formerly opposite, and remodelled from its 1840 form in 1929) during the ten-minute interval, thus paying 'the weekly rent of the Victoria in the days of late closing.'

Wests closed on 28 February 1977 with Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937).

By the late 1970s, the building has been used as a Chinese restaurant, a nightclub (Sinatra's) which ended with a fire in December 1981, cinemas (Hindley Cinemas 5 and 6), and an amusement arcade (Time Zone Amusement Arcade) before the building became the headquarters of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra. The building was refurbished in 2001: the official opening took place on 26 October 2001. Zone Amusement Arcade occupied the building.

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