

Heritage Citation



Red Hill Skate Arena (former)

Key details

Also known as	Red Hill Picture Pops Theatre , State Theatre
Addresses	At 14 Enoggera Terrace, Red Hill, Queensland 4059
Type of place	Cinema, Sportsground
Period	Interwar 1919-1939
Style	Art Deco
Lot plan	L25_RP20643; L27_RP20643; L26_RP20643; L24_RP20643
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 July 2002 Date of Citation — December 2007
Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Masonry

People/associations	Reupert T. Erskine - 1927 alterations (Architect); W Tinnerman - 1927 alterations (Builder)
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Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (D) Representative; (G) Social
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The Red Hill Skate Arena first opened circa 1920 as the Red Hill Picture Pops Theatre. The theatre functioned until around 1964 when new owners converted the building into a 'sound lounge' known as Teen City, where some of Australia's most popular rock n' roll stars including Little Pattie, Col Joy and the BeeGees played. This did not last long however, and in 1965 the building was converted again for use as the Red Hill Skate Arena, which became one of the most popular and well-known skating rinks in Brisbane. It remained open until 2004 when most of the building was destroyed in an arson attack.

History

This part of Red Hill was surveyed and subdivided into suburban portions in the 1860s. The site on which the Skate Arena is situated was part of portion 737, on the southern side of Enoggera Terrace at the junction with Musgrave Road, alienated by George Mannion in 1870. Mannion Street, at the rear of the Skate Arena, is likely to have been named after him. By the late 1880s, portion 737 had been subdivided into smaller residential allotments. From 1889 until 1920, subdivisions 14 to 28 remained on one title, passing through several owners, until title to subdivisions 22-27, near the intersection with Musgrave Road, was transferred to Red Hill Picture Pops Ltd. A number of rental houses had been erected along Enoggera Terrace between Musgrave Road and Jay Street, but it is not clear whether there were any extant buildings on the site acquired by Red Hill Picture Pops Ltd in 1920. During this period, Enoggera Terrace continued to be a social hub of Red Hill with the Ithaca Town Chambers, numerous shops, and other services such as halls and the police station situated along the street.

In 1920 an open-air 'picture palace' was already established on Enoggera Terrace, on the opposite [northern] side of the road, at the corner of Waterworks Road.¹ This picture show functioned from c1912 until replaced by Red Hill Picture Pops Ltd.'s new theatre on the other side of the road, c1920-21. In December 1920, the titles office recorded a bill of mortgage on subdivisions 22-27, portion 737 for £1,500, taken out by Red Hill Picture Pops Limited from The Public Curator of Queensland. It is possible this helped to finance construction of the new theatre, which is first listed in the Post Office street directories in 1921.

A c1924 photograph shows the Red Hill Picture Pops theatre as a large, gable-roofed structure with full length ridge ventilator and a modest façade, on a prominent location on Enoggera Terrace. By March 1925, at least part of the theatre was of brick construction, the western brick wall of the theatre suffering damage from water running off the adjacent Red Hill Police Station site at the corner of Musgrave Road and Enoggera Terrace. In late 1927, the front of the theatre was remodelled at a cost of £380, with the addition of shops. Plans were prepared by Brisbane architect RT Erskine, and the contractor was W Tinnerman.

A c1932 sewerage detail plan indicates that the structure occupied the whole of subdivisions 24-27, with the walls erected to the perimeter. This plan also indicates the buttresses located on subdivisions 22 and 23, along the western side of the theatre, where the land falls steeply.

Through the 1920s and into the early 1930s, Alfred [Bertie] E Moore was secretary of Red Hill Picture Pops Ltd. and manager of the theatre. The Moore family lived on Waterworks Road, initially just past Church Street from c1907-c1911, moving to the corner of Waterworks Road and Enoggera Terrace c1911/12 - about the same time the open-air picture theatre was established next door on Enoggera Terrace. It is likely Bertie Moore was associated with this first picture theatre as well as the c1920 hardtop. Long-time residents of Red Hill have recalled that in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Mrs Moore sold the theatre tickets from an island ticket box in the front foyer. For the evening shows, Bertie Moore always wore a dinner suit and his wife an evening gown with a fresh rose pinned on the shoulder. Apparently they kept a tight rein on their often unruly audiences, and a slogan in the foyer read: If you like the program tell your friends, if you do not like it, tell us.

By June 1930, 'talkie apparatus' had been installed at the Pops Picture Theatre on Enoggera Terrace. Following the release of Warner Brother's first talking picture, *The Jazz Singer*, in 1927, cinemas world-wide either converted to sound or closed down. Sound projection leasing or purchasing arrangements were often exorbitantly high, and many Queensland suburban and rural exhibitors who committed themselves to very expensive sound projection plant at this period, over capitalised, were burdened with running costs, and did not survive the economic depression of the early 1930s.

There were approximately 200 picture theatres in Queensland in the 1930s, of which 54, or about 25%, were located in Brisbane. This was the period when most Brisbane suburbs had at least one picture theatre, if not more, and competition for audiences was strong. The Red Hill Picture Pops' closest competitors were the Plaza Theatre on Latrobe Terrace [opened c1930] and Stephens' New Paddington Theatre, erected on Given Terrace c1924.

In 1931 Red Hill Picture Pops Ltd, possibly struggling to survive the depression and the costs of sound installation, or perhaps renovating the building, took out a second mortgage on the theatre from Richard Francis Stephens, who was associated with the Stephens-Munro chain of suburban theatres on Brisbane's north side. Stephens- Munro ultimately acquired six theatres - the Astor at New Farm, the Imperial at Lutwyche, the Savoy at Clayfield, the Paddington on Given Terrace, the Arcadia at Ascot, and the Jubilee at Toowong - and subsidised other small suburban exhibitors like the Red Hill Picture Pops. It is possible the connection with RF Stephens gave Red Hill Picture Pops Ltd greater bargaining status at the major film distributors' Brisbane film exchanges.

In November 1934, the Red Hill Picture Pops theatre was leased to William Edward Kirby, who eventually gained title to the property early in 1944. Kirby had changed the name of the place to The State Theatre by 1937, and by 1938 the theatre had a seating capacity of 640. In 1948 title passed to State Theatres Pty Ltd, with Kirby still the exhibitor, and renovations were undertaken in 1950. In 1951, State Theatres Pty Ltd sold subdivisions 22 and 23, the two vacant blocks along the western side of the theatre, with a 1952 easement in their favour over a strip of this land adjoining the theatre.

In 1954 title to the property passed briefly to Christopher James Sourris and his wife Effie - [the Sourris family has been connected with other suburban theatres in Brisbane] - but they sold within months to George Londy and his wife Velio. In 1955, Velio Londy transferred her interest in the property to John Sklavos. With the introduction of television to Brisbane in the late 1950s, cinema audiences declined rapidly. Many cinemas installed wide cinemascope screens in an attempt to attract audiences back to the picture theatres, but suburban

cinemas struggled to continue screening films and in the 1960s and 1970s many closed, the buildings converted into alternative uses or the sites redeveloped. By the 1980s, only a handful of single-screen interwar suburban cinemas survived in Brisbane.

In an attempt to retain audiences, Londy and Sklavos renovated The State Theatre in 1958, installing a cinemascope screen, a new ceiling, and decorative sound boards along the sides. By 1960, the seating capacity at The State Theatre had increased to 1000.

Films continued to be screened at the State into the early 1960s, but in January 1964 the theatre was acquired by David and Shirley Venables, who converted it into a 'sound lounge' known as Teen City. Many of Australia's most popular rock and roll stars played at Teen City, including Little Pattie, Col Joy, and the BeeGees, but the venture ceased within a couple of years. In 1965 the place was converted into the Red Hill Skate Arena. The floor to the rink was constructed of timber and Masonite initially - later a concrete floor was laid. As with the picture theatres which struggled to survive the impact of television in the 1960s, new recreational activities - especially skateboarding and rollerblading made popular in the late 20th century - are eroding the popularity of indoor skating. While still operating as a skating rink, the future of the Red Hill Skate Arena remains uncertain.

Description

The Red Hill Skate Arena is a large, brick and concrete structure occupying a prominent landmark position on the southern side of Enoggera Terrace, just past the intersection with Musgrave/Waterworks Road. The block falls steeply to the southwest and at the rear is bounded by Mannion Street, which is a cul-de-sac accessed off Musgrave Road.

The structure is built to the boundaries of the land parcel on which it sits, and on the western side has concrete buttresses supporting a concrete retaining wall, with the buttresses [and possibly part of the retaining and auditorium walls along this side] located on an easement over the adjoining property. These buttresses likely date to c1920-21.

The building comprises two main sections: the large, rectangular auditorium which occupies the bulk of the site and contains rear stage, storage and ablutions spaces; and a front section, built to the angle of the street frontage, which accommodates entrance and foyer, offices, storerooms, shops and former projection booth. The structure appears to have been erected as a whole, with the front section remodelled a number of times to accommodate a variety of popular entertainment forms. The use of different batches of bricks may be the result of economy of construction, rather than an indication of different building stages. Brickwork throughout, other than recent renovations, is of Flemish bond.

The front section facing Enoggera Terrace has a skillion roof hidden behind a rendered brick parapet, from which hangs a suspended street awning, attached to the parapet by steel ties. The awning is lined with fibrous-cement sheeting with thin timber cover strips. It is lower at the western end, where there is a small shop, the front of which has been remodelled with aluminium-framed windows. Along the western side wall of the shop two early window openings with arched brick lintels have been in-filled with later brick. In the centre of the front façade are three sets of entrance doors, opening to the theatre foyer. On the wall above these is the lettering: SKATE ARENA. None of these doors are used at present, the former entrance to the shop on the western side now

serving as the entrance to the skating rink. At the eastern end of the front elevation is a large billboard, obscuring two early window openings visible from inside the building, and similar to those in the western wall.

Along each side of the auditorium, the brickwork extends to the height of a row of high openings with metal louvres [some now sheeted externally], above which are weatherboards. The auditorium has a gabled roof, clad in corrugated galvanised iron, with a ridge ventilator along the entire length of the roof. The gable ends are of timber, with centre panels of louvres. This roof extends over part of the front section, but not to the street frontage. Similarly, the gabled roof does not extend to the rear of the building. The rear wall rises to parapet height, hiding a skillion roof over the rear of the theatre, with decorative brick banding to the top of the parapet. The rear wall has fire exit doors opening onto Mannion Street, and later windows to the toilets beneath the former stage at the rear of the building.

The interior can still be read as a theatre, despite modifications to accommodate the skating rink. The foyer retains a fine c1950s terrazzo floor, and from a small front storage room at the eastern side of the building a steep stair leads to the projection booth in the roof space of the front gable. The wall dividing the front section from the auditorium is of brick, in Flemish bond, and likely dates to c1920-21. It has been clad with later sheeting and acoustic tiles on the auditorium side. Folding doors once separating the foyer from the auditorium have been removed.

The auditorium retains its c1950s theatre ceiling, complete with decorative soundboards along each side. Earlier theatre light fittings have been replaced with rows of fluorescent lights, and a large, central, chandelier-like structure with multiple light fittings and mirror ball. Along the side walls, timber uprights supporting the roof trusses have been boxed, decorative arches have been painted in the bays between the uprights, and the louvres in the side walls have been sheeted.

The original raked timber floor and mezzanine level dress circle in the auditorium have been replaced with a concrete platform at the northern end and an oval-shaped concrete skating rink which occupies the bulk of the auditorium floor. There is a candy bar at the western end of the northern platform, and seating at this end of the auditorium overlooks the skating rink, which is sunken about a metre below the concrete platform, accessed from the platform via timber steps. The rink is bounded by curved walls of concrete blocks approximately 900mm high, with metal mesh attached at northern and southern ends. A narrow passage between the eastern wall of the auditorium and the rink wall gives direct access to the southern end of the building, but there is no similar access along the western side. The rink can be accessed via four openings in the rink wall, two on each long side of the oval.

At the southern end of the auditorium, the c1958 cinemascope screen has been removed and the former stage has been truncated about 1.5-2 metres to accommodate the skating rink. What remains of the stage space has been converted into a viewing balcony overlooking the rink, and accessed by steps at the western side. Behind this balcony is a storage space, formerly the backstage area. Lavatories are located beneath the stage and storage space - the men's at the eastern side, the women's at the western side. Both have c1950s terrazzo partition walls and floor tiling. They are accessed from passageways and steps to either side of the stage, leading to rear fire exits to Mannion Street.

Statement of significance

Relevant assessment criteria

This is a place of local heritage significance and meets one or more of the local heritage criteria under the Heritage planning scheme policy of the *Brisbane City Plan 2014*. It is significant because:

Historical

CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history

For the evidence it provides of the development of popular forms of entertainment in Brisbane throughout the twentieth century including cinema going, rollerskating and live pop music.

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage as a rare example of a former 1920s cinema and 1960s skating rink in Brisbane.

Representative

CRITERION D

The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or classes of cultural places

As an example of a purpose-built interwar cinema with rare surviving remnants of a 1950s interior refurbishment

Social

CRITERION G

The place has a strong or special association with the life or work of a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons

for its social significance over a period of 80 years to several generations of the local community who have enjoyed recreational pursuits on the premises.

References

1. At this period, Enoggera Terrace demarked between Musgrave Road to the south and Waterworks Rd to the north
2. *This citation is based on the Environmental Protection Agency Draft Entry in the Queensland Heritage Register 602241 Red Hill Skate Arena. Jan 2001*
3. Brisbane City Council Building Cards
4. Brisbane City Council Heritage Unit, suburb file for Red Hill
5. Brisbane City Council Water Supply and Sewerage Detail Plans

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Note: This citation has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes available. The purpose of this citation is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

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