

GREETING

Good afternoon Council, My name is Michael Raymond. I am an architecture graduate from RMIT University, an avid supporter of the arts and music performance, and I assume the position of Chair with the Save the Palace community group. I am therefore today representing the beliefs of myself, the save the palace committee and some 34,000 people who support our cause.

MATERIALS

1. Today I will be drawing only from the Heritage of Victoria Criteria for Heritage Significance. This presentation however should not be the only information taken into consideration when making your decision. I urge that in making your decision, you consider the mass of information available to you in conjunction to what is heard here today.

Whilst I will focus on just one chapter of this buildings life, I maintain all the previous opinions which have been presented to you in preceding submissions, regarding the extended history of the theatre and its myriad of functions. I also acknowledge and value the contributions made by the Executive Director and Mr Peter Lovell of Lovell Chen.

Today however I would like to focus on the Palace Theatre's history as a live entertainment venue from the 1980's through to the current day. As the former Metro nightclub and now Palace Theatre.

I would like to begin by addressing the Heritage of Victoria Criteria for Heritage Significance

Please pay attention to the screen which will display accompanying photographic and documented evidence.

2. *CRITERION A*

3. The late 1970's and 80's witnessed the establishment of Victoria's first nightclubs. In Melbourne, The Underground and Inflation were two pioneering clubs in King Street, whilst the Metro Nightclub (now known as the Palace Theatre) opened later as the first large scale club.
4. The Palace still operates today and is the quintessential example of a nightclub. It's association to the nightclub period in Victoria's history is reflected in all aspects of the

place which still largely reflect the original nightclub design from when it opened in 1986. Whilst Architects Biltmodern's original fit out remains largely intact, any physical remnants of the original design that are no longer present are well documented through photos, videos, writings and oral histories.

5. To quote Mr Peter Lovell (of Lovell Chen Associates) "the nightclub scene of the 1980's saw the music, graphic design, hospitality and entertainment industries coming together resulting in a vibrant 'scene' in Melbourne",
6. a period that went on to become an important part of Melbourne's and indeed the state of Victoria's cultural heritage. By laying foundations upon which culture, industry and the economy would develop. Those same foundations are what bring prosperity to this state at this current time.

Quote: from Mr Peter Lovell, Heritage Appraisal...

I would like to show you a short 3.5 minute clip from the opening night of the Metro Nightclub. This footage was part of Network 10's special coverage on prime time television program 'Nightlife'.

7. PLAY VIDEO

The footage that you have just seen formed part of an exclusive television broadcast. When else have you witnessed live TV coverage of the opening of a venue of any nature? This simple gesture demonstrates exactly just how important the Metro Nightclub (now Palace Theatre) was and has continued to be to the development of nightclub culture in this nation.

8. As one of the earliest large nightclubs in Victoria, for having set new benchmarks for nightlife entertainment on a national level and for having hosted an array of artists of both local and international success; all combined with its eclectic and extensively well documented history. Combined with the evidence that I have just presented. The Palace Theatre can be readily appreciated better than most other places or objects in Victoria with substantially the same association.

This item does not fulfil any of the Exclusion Guidelines and thus, the Palace Theatre undoubtedly and thoroughly satisfies Criterion A from the Heritage of Victoria Criteria for Heritage Significance.

9. CRITERION C

10. There is both physical and documented evidence that indicates the likelihood that the Palace Theatre contains physical evidence of historical interest that is not currently

visible

- 11.** This first set of images compares a photograph of the ground floor foyer as it existed in 1940, whilst the adjacent photograph shows the current conditions. We can see the new ceiling material is a simple sheet fabric. You may also notice that in the right image, the ceiling height is significantly lower. This would indicate that rather than being removed, the original glass dome has simply been concealed. The lowered ceiling height would come as a result of the necessary additional framework to hold the new materials.
- 12.** This theory is highly plausible as this path of action in renovating the foyer space would be more cost effective as opposed to removing the ceiling dome. If we still believe however that the dome was in fact removed, we may study this section illustration and then question for what purpose or logic, if the dome was removed, have the renovators left a large void space in the ceiling?

Furthermore, this technical drawing outlines the scope of work done to the design of H Vivian Taylor in 1952. Architectural drawing convention indicates items highlighted in red as portions to be demolished, whilst yellow would indicate any new additions. This illustration supports my suggestion.

- 13.** This second example is a photograph of existing signage. This sign is indicative of an underground tunnel that used to connect the Palace Theatre to the Heritage Listed Princess Theatre. There is a great myth behind this tunnel, and a rich story that speaks of the life of the theatre in Victoria back in the 20th century.
- 14.** Whilst the glass dome is significant in its contribution to the level of intactness of the building, the tunnel yields valuable information about Victorian Theatre culture and local myth. The tunnel is believed to still exist but access to it is restricted; as the entrance from the Palace Theatre has been bricked up
- 15.** The tunnel tells the story of the segregation of classes in Victoria at the time. The middle and lower classes would rarely associate with the wealthy and thus they had access to separate amenities. In this circumstance the amenity being entertainment, or more specifically, theatre.

The Palace Theatre operated for the working classes where one would be delighted to matinee performances in theatre and vaudeville. At the conclusion of the performance, the artists would travel underground via a tunnel to the Palace's sister theatre, the Princess where they would immediately entertain an audience of aristocrats and the

wealthy.

- 16.** Local myth which is widely spoken of claims that in the process of bricking up the tunnel, a spirit or ghost was trapped inside. It is believed that upon reopening the tunnel, this spirit will be liberated.

There have also been a number of ghost sightings in the theatres. The most famous perhaps occurred in the Princess theatre where in the finale of the show, performer Federici descended under the stage where he died from a heart attack. He never came back onstage and he never took his final bows. When the company was gathered together to be told that Federici had died, they asked, "When?". Being told of what had happened at the end of the opera, they said, "He's just been onstage and taken the bows with us."

<http://www.abc.net.au/tv/rewind/txt/s1184926.htm>

- 17.** Whilst there are other examples in Victoria that reflect the segregation of classes, such as the exclusion of women and indigenous people, this is a unique example that demonstrates the sheer extent of the history of discrimination in Victorian culture and its place in theatre life.

This information is not formally documented, however this is a legend that is widely spoken of. Furthermore, there is no evidence of any other underground tunnel implication to connect performance theatres and thus this is a unique example.

This item does not fulfil any of the Exclusion Guidelines and thus, the Palace Theatre undoubtedly and wholly satisfies Criterion C from the Heritage of Victoria Criteria for Heritage Significance.

18. CRITERION D

- 19.** The Palace Theatre was at the forefront of the aforementioned nightclub boom period of the 1980's which lay the foundations for the state's current nightlife culture.

The period saw the adaptation of existing spaces for new nightclub functions. These conversions subsequently served to preserve and protect buildings of heritage significance from demolition. The Metro Nightclub was a former theatre and is classed as a large scale nightclub.

Other large scale nightclub venues include Billboard the Venue, the Hi-Fi Bar, The Forum Theatre and Trak Nightclub. Each of these venues is characterised by its former

function as a cinema.

20. Consequently we can associate the Palace with two discriminant but often associated classes of building. Primarily, 'large nightclubs' and secondarily 'theatres turned nightclub'.
21. It is widely recognized that the nightclub period of the 1970's and 80's has made strong, noticeable and influential contributions to the evolution and pattern of Victoria's society.
22. The principal characteristics of a large nightclub parallel those of ordinary nightclubs. However this occurs on a much larger scale. The large format means that the place is of greater technical potential including the ability to cater for larger audiences and more elaborate productions. These are factors that can often make the management and consequential success of the venue harder to harness as opposed to small venues.

The theatre-turned nightclub is defined by the buildings former function as a theatre or cinema. From the examples presented before, all have undergone levelling out of floor spaces but maintain strong physical evidence of their previous life as performance theatres and/or cinemas

23. This series of photos shows that the principal characteristics of the Large Nightclub class are evident in the physical fabric of the place
Photo: Palace Theatre Balconies

24. *Photo: Palace Theatre Balconies + Ground level dance floor*

25. This photo shows the original nightclub infrastructure and configuration remains thus making it a **highly intact example** of its class.

Photo: Palace Theatre staging and infrastructure

26. The Metro Nightclub continues to function as a nightclub and as such retains all of the necessary defining components of this class, thus making it a **fine example**.

Photo: Palace Theatre nightclub seating + ground level dance floor

27. In the case of the Forum Theatre, the venue has been reduced to multiple single storey spaces. The Palace however is a rare example that retains its balconies and thus vistas.

- 28.** The style has been replicated in new establishments around the state and nation such as the forum theatre in Sydney. Thus making it an **influential example** of its class.

Photos: Comparison of Palace Theatre and replicated style; Forum Theatre, Sydney (closed)

- 29.** Other venues around the nation have adopted the tiered format for the nightclub function. The Palace is the only venue to have four tiers.

Photo: Palace Theatre Stage & Balconies

- 30.** This factor in conjunction with the expansive dance floors promotes optimal patron comfort by promoting views to the stage throughout the entire building and by providing adequate space for active patrons to participate in nightclub activities such as dancing.

The tiered format of the Palace Theatre Nightclub also allows the venue to act as a smaller club simply by cordoning off balcony spaces and thus condensing activity to select floors of the venue. It thus encompasses the realms of large, medium and small nightclubs

- 31.** The Metro Nightclub was the first venue to implement audio visual synchronisation through video screens thus making it a **pivotal example** of its class. I will expand on this point later in this presentation.

- 32.** The Palace is consistently at the forefront of new developments in nightlife and nightclub culture. Today it is elevating the clubbing experience to standards of that set in world recognised nightclub meccas such as Ibiza and the Greek Islands.

- 33.** These often involve themed festivities

- 34.** Live acrobatics

- 35.** And other visual enhancements

- 36.** Finally, the Heritage Council of Victoria's framework for Victorian Historical Themes clearly identifies that the Palace Theatre fulfils the criteria presented on the screen.

The evidence that I present before you demonstrates that the Palace Theatre is a notable example of its class.

This item does not fulfil any of the Exclusion Guidelines and thus, the Palace Theatre undoubtedly and wholly satisfies Criterion D from the Heritage of Victoria Criteria for

Heritage Significance.

(Victoria Framework Historical Themes (<http://www.cv.vic.gov.au/heritage-themes/>))

37. CRITERION F

38. The Metro Nightclub was the first place outside the USA and UK to implement audio-visual synchronization technology. The venue still demonstrates these same physical characteristics, though in an evolved state.

39. The audio visual capabilities of the venue were “beyond the ordinary” for their time. As is evidenced in this video

40. PLAY VIDEO

41. The element of video has become a fundamental component of almost every DJ and electronic music performance not just in Victoria and Australia, but world-wide. The Metro Nightclub was the first place in the whole of Australia to introduce and develop this technology; which is seen as breakthrough and has extended the limits of existing technology through its creative adaptation.

42. The nature of the achievements of the Metro Nightclub has been acknowledged as exceptional by Industry figures such as Michael Gudinski, one of Australia’s biggest promoters; as seen in the earlier video.

Photos: Michael Gudinski

43. Wide public acknowledgement also identified the nightclub as one of the best in the world; “In 1988 the Age called it ‘perhaps Australia’s biggest and some might say most impressive nightclub” and by 1989 it was being identified as the most renowned nightclub in the world

44. This excellence also extended through its selection as the TV studio for the ABC’s late ‘80’s prime time television program Countdown Revolution, produced by Molly Meldrum

45. It also played host to a number of esteemed parties, such as the official Australian Open party in 1997

This item does not fulfil any of the Exclusion Guidelines and thus, the Palace Theatre undoubtedly and wholly satisfies Criterion F from the Heritage of Victoria Criteria for Heritage Significance.

46. CRITERION G

- 47.** There are several cultural groups that have developed strong ties to the Palace Theatre over its 27 years of operation. Namely the dance music and rock families who frequently require spaces like the palace theatre. And more broadly, Victoria's music industry.
- 48.** Its association with the dance and rock communities is evidenced by an array of promotional posters, like this one, which are associated with the groups and the venue. Its association with Victoria's music industry is evidenced in its active involvement hosting touring performers and subsequently for providing trade opportunities for promotions, merchandising and other industry associated businesses.
Image: Trance Nation event promotional poster, 2014
- 49.** The association between the groups and the Palace theatre is particularly strong as few other venues contain the necessary staging infrastructure to host live bands and DJs that may be accompanied by elaborate 'set-ups' such as lighting, production design and musical instruments. Neither can they cater for crowds or artists of a similar scale or stature. This condition has existed since the Palace Theatre began operations as the Metro Nightclub.
- 50.** Interstate equivalents have been closed down, leaving their respective states without the necessary infrastructure to host certain performance types. The Palace accommodates visitors from New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania on a regular basis, showing that these special interest groups and communities are widespread across the nation.

Image: Testimonial extracts from Save The Palace supporters

- 51.** The group that I am presenting on behalf of is represented by over 34,000 members from various communities around the world. And 27,000 signatures on our petition combined with a public protest back in October shows that there are still many people with a strong interest in this institution.

The Palace Theatre plays host to a significant portion of touring music performances and whilst few of these events could be seen as historically important in their own right; collectively their historical importance is evident.

It is for these same reasons that The Palace Theatre bears such uniqueness and is thus a vital component of Victoria's music industry.

This item does not fulfil any of the Exclusion Guidelines and thus, the Palace Theatre undoubtedly satisfies Criterion F from the Heritage of Victoria Criteria for Heritage Significance.

52. CRITERION H

53. Mr Peter Lovell recognises that the nightclub scene of the 1970s and 80's went on to become an important part of Melbourne's cultural life. Together with Underground founder Mr Brian Goldsmith, the Frantzeskos brother's role in the development of the industry was instrumental and their part in this phase/period of Melbourne's history is undoubtedly significant.

Mr Lovell goes on to identify that the Metro was a culmination of the Frantzeskos brothers' professional experience and success.

The success of the Frantzeskos brothers' works can also be associated to the works of celebrated Australian architects, Roger Wood and Randal Marsh, whom operated under the name of Biltmodern and were hired by the Frantzeskos brothers to carry out the design work for both of their clubs.

54. The Palace Theatre is the only remaining artefact remaining from the nightclub boom period in Victoria that still has strong physical ties to the work of the Frantzeskos brothers and Biltmodern architects. This is evident in both the existing physical fabric of the Palace Theatre and also in documentary resources and oral history.

55. Just as the Metro Nightclub marked a defining moment in the lives of the Frantzeskos brothers, it did too for both Randal Marsh and Roger Wood.

56. Their design work on nightclubs in the 1980's not only marked a defining moment for Victorian nightlife culture, it also lay the foundations for two very successful careers in architecture. The Palace Theatre is the only remaining nightclub design work of both Biltmodern and the Frantzeskos brothers and thus there exists no other places or objects in Victoria that could challenge the Palace on the grounds outlined above.

This item does not fulfil any of the Exclusion Guidelines and thus, the Palace Theatre undoubtedly satisfies Criterion H from the Heritage of Victoria Criteria for Heritage Significance.

57. VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER

I would now like to make some comparisons between a select few items which are already listed on the Victorian Heritage Register and the Palace Theatre.

58. HVR No. H1929 otherwise known as the Fossil Beach Cement works is recognised for State Significance. The inventory includes kilns, washmill and settling bays among other features. These were established in the early 1860's following the founding of the Septaria Cement Company and the subsequent first attempts to manufacture Roman (hydraulic) cement in Victoria. The company had failed within 12 months of operation and by 1879 part of the site had been cemented over by the Mornington Shire Council.

Excavation in the late 1960's revealed remnants of the Cement Works and confirmed that no industrial activity took place at the site after 1863. No part of the site remains

fully intact.

The site is considered significant for being the first place for the manufacture of Roman cement in Victoria and as having achieved significant technical feats. The Excavation works in the 1960's are identified as the first archaeological excavations in Victoria and thus are attributed to the significance of this Victorian Heritage Registered item.

This item is listed despite the fact that remnants are not fully intact and thus fail as an accurate example of its building type.

The site operated for less than one year in the production of an inferior product; thus the level of significance of its contribution to Victorian Culture was marginal.

Whilst it was the first mixing of Roman concrete in Victoria, the practise of mixing concrete had been common practice for centuries before the existence of Australia had even been documented.

The success or failures of this company could be as much associated with the administration of the company as opposed to its physical fabric.

59. *Photographs: Fossil Beach Cement Works; Kiln then and now*

60. *Photograph: Fossil Beach Cement Works*

61. *Photograph: Fossil Beach Cement Works*

62. **HVR No. H0227** otherwise known as Grand Union Tramway Junction is recognised for State Significance. It is an example of a complex tram track intersection which allows trams to turn in any of four directions. All of the components which include overhead wires and tram rails are replacements for the originals. The tramway junction retains no original fabric. The latest alterations made to the site were completed as recently as 2005 and the altered condition of the junction now remains largely differentiated from its early 20th century form.

The junction is significant to the state for its technical achievements and its historical integrity and is noted for its role in the development of the tram network.

This item is listed despite the fact that it contains no original material and the technical functionality of the item is largely altered from the original design.

63. *Photographs: Grand Union Tramway Junction*

64. **HVR No. H2237** otherwise known as Horse Drawn Stone-Carrying Sled is recognised for State Significance. The item is a V-shaped tree branch junction with attached metal chain used to drag the sled along the ground. It is assumed that the item was used in the construction or maintenance of site fences but information to confirm this is

inconclusive. Thus the assessment has been made through much speculation. The Victorian Heritage Database Record uses terms such as 'probably', 'are thought to' and 'it is not certain' in its statement of significance for this item.

This item is listed despite the fact that there is a lack of information to evidence the significance of this object

The item is merely a tool for moving materials, as a hammer is to fixing nails

There is no associated style to this object.

65. *Photographs: Horse Drawn Stone-Carrying Sled*

66. To date, the Executive Director has made claims that the Palace Theatre fails to satisfy the Criteria for Heritage Significance. The Heritage Items outlined above however, seem to be listed despite bearing evidence that would seem even less viable than the candidate in question. These items have failed on many of the same grounds as the Executive Director claims that the palace has failed.

67. The three aforementioned HVR items, H1929, H0227 and H2237 are listed for;

68. Demonstration of ingenuity and innovation

69. Development of industry

70. Historical significance

71. Archaeological significance

72. Technical significance & pioneering technologies

73. As rare specimen

all factors which could be said to be true of the Palace Theatre.

The Criteria and Thresholds Guidelines only require a place or object to satisfy one criterion in order to be included in the Victorian Heritage Register. I believe the Palace satisfies 6 out of 8 criteria. The Palace Theatre has been operating as a Nightclub for 27 years. This satisfies the recommended period that a place should be established for in order to be considered for heritage listing

For purposes of consistency, one of the goals that the Heritage Council claims to strive for in their mission statement, it would seem only appropriate to include the Palace

Theatre at 20-30 Bourke street on the Victorian Heritage Register.

74. The Heritage Council identifies Culture as a defining feature of humanity, and our heritage is a major expression of the continuity of our culture and this humanity; it is made of things both tangible and intangible, the things, places and practices that define who we are as individuals, as communities and all of which are invaluable for cultural diversity as the wellspring of wealth and creativity. Preserved for posterity. So its framework of reference is the future – the generations yet unborn who will inherit – as much as the past.

A key role of the Heritage Council is to promote to governments, industry and the public the economic, environmental and social benefits of heritage conservation, and the contribution that heritage makes to liveability. This includes building awareness for the role of heritage conservation in environmental management and sustainability. The Council also views its responsibility as advocating the role of heritage in defining cultural identity – whether it's linked to place, object, tradition or memory – and promoting the function of heritage in longer term community building.

75. The council also identifies that they may provide grants and loans from the Heritage Fund and recommend Land Tax Exemptions and other incentives; and Authorise the issuing of Show Cause Notices and Interim Protection Orders.

It has stated in its strategic plan that;

- It will lead a wider appreciation of the contribution heritage makes to community, to sustainability, to cultural identity and to the State economy.
- Work with communities and learn from their knowledge and awareness of heritage.
- Identify and address gaps in the recognition and management of cultural heritage.
- Advocate for creative and innovative use of heritage places.

76. The Palace Theatre is a fundamental component of the story of Victorian nightlife and entertainment culture; it remains as an economically viable and cultural contributor. With the necessary protection the building may continue its reign as a valuable state asset and may even grow in more value. An accurate assessment of this building requires more than just an architectural investigation. The complexity of this building and its history warrants broader recognition.

I strongly urge the council to take great and careful consideration to the potential fate of the venue.

This concludes my presentation.

Thank you.

OTHER

RARE SPECIMEN – Regarded as regionally significant by the National Trust of Australia, Victoria as the second oldest large theatre in Victoria with stucutre and balconies still intact. It is the only theatre from the Edwardian Era.

The Hertiage Criteria does indicates that documented evidence is sufficient in order to satisfy certain criterion. The physical parts of the place or object don't need to be existent.

We have an abundance of new evidence supporting the palace's significance coming to us daily. Some of which I have presented here today.

Whist some of the original materials/components are no longer present, such as the 25 screens, they do still exist in an evolved form which continues to serve this same purpose.

In his submission in reply, mr Peter Lovell states that "clubs would often have a 'moment' of peak popularity before being replaced by another more fashionable venue". This statement is indeed quite true. The Metro Nightclub/Palace Theatre however has sustained consistent levels of interest over its 27 years of operation

The Palace (Metro Nightclub) has continued its reign as a postmodern club leading security reforms in the 1980's whilst today it is bringing Ibiza and international styled performances to clubbing in Australia for the very first time. The venues ability to cater to such performances can be credited to its physical attributes as a former theatre. Its ability to accommodate a diverse range of acts and performance types, combined with its technological capabilities, has allowed it to play host to many of the world's most successful

musicians, DJ's and entertainers including James Brown, Fatboy Slim, Duran Duran, Prince and The Killers; artists that its interstate counterparts could only dream of hosting. The unprecedented level of excellence in nightclub design and function has been continued since opening in 1986. Thus the building's most recent use may be seen as its most significant creative and technical achievements.

The owner may argue that the venue has changed names and thus is a different building. A simple name change does not affect the reality of what something is. If you had your name legally changed, would that mean that you're a different person? No. If that was the case, people like Collingwood footballer Harry O'Brien would have had to reapply to register as a professional footballer with the Collingwood football club. If that was the case, every criminal would seek a name change to erase of their criminal records.