Mayfair Theatre

The Mayfair Theatre opened in December 1932 and has been in operation since, despite changing hands several times. It is the oldest functioning theatre in Ottawa (Ottawa Public Affairs, 2008) and was built during the Great Depression in the Spanish-revival atmospheric style common to theatres of the time (Miguelez, 2004). Atmospheric movie theatres used the architecture and design of the theatre to enhance the movie-going experience. In this case, the Mayfair boasts a “glorious Spanish villa-style auditorium that gave the effect of watching an open-air movie in the middle of a Mediterranean plaza” (Miguelez, 2004).

Despite inspiring this grand sense of luxury in its patrons, the Mayfair Theatre is a neighbourhood cinema, advertising regularly in Old Ottawa South Community Association (previously the Ottawa South Community Association Review) issues. A local resident in 1982 discussed how the Mayfair Theatre was fondly remembered in her childhood memories and she continues the tradition with her own children (Maas, 1982, p. 6).

It also is home to the last remaining auditorium clock, a common feature of neighbourhood cinemas, where people would leave their children while they ran errands, and tell their children what time they would be back to pick them up (Mayfair Theatre). Its lighted blue face allowed the children to keep an eye on the time while they watched cartoons.

The Mayfair Theatre is an independent movie house unique in many ways, and by stepping through its doors, one can literally be transported into a theatre designed nearly a century ago, when the needs of its patrons were very different.

Reference List

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