



The Ascot Theatre was located at 246 Pitt Street, in the heart of Sydney's CBD - an address previously occupied by the office of F.J. Palmer (NSW) Pty Ltd. Thomas Virgona, who had operated a number of suburban cinemas, acquired a 20-year lease on the site and set about planning to build a theatre. He engaged the noted Sydney architect, John W. Roberts, who used a variation of the single-floor stadium design he had utilised on Virgona's Padstow and Panania Star cinemas. (Roberts had been responsible for many of the Cinemascope conversions for Hoyts Theatres as well as the fit-out of its Sydney Plaza Theatre for 3-strip Cinerama). In the meantime, Virgona set about securing product for his new theatre. At the time Warner Bros. had no on-going product arrangement with Greater Union or Hoyts, and the distributor was looking to create its own 'circuit' of independent exhibitors to show *My Fair Lady*. Virgona thought he was in with a chance for the Sydney release and, in anticipation, named his venue the Ascot (an appellation derived from the hit musical). However, various problems, and his delay in submitting plans for governmental approval, resulted in Warners releasing the film at the Hoyts Century Theatre. *My Fair Lady* opened in 70mm on the 28th July, 1965. Featuring 970 second-hand recovered tip-up seats, along with new Victoria 8 70/35 projectors and 6-channel stereophonic sound, the Ascot eventually launched with Warner Bros. minor British musical, *Wonderful Life*, on 12th May, 1966. The Ascot's first 70mm attraction was *Gone with the Wind* - which opened on the 25th March, 1967. (This is believed to be its first season in the world in that format). Soon after this record breaking 6-month revival run, Thomas Virgona died (5th December, 1967). His death led to a succession of operator leases of the theatre. MGM, Independent and Universal product was mainly on show. (Universal parent company MCA controlled the premises for a few years). The Ascot was an ideal 70mm house and many wide-gauge titles

screened there in the late 1960s/early 70s, including: *Doctor Zhivago* (revival - its first Sydney season in 70mm), *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *Sweet Charity*, *Airport*, followed by the record-breaking season of *Ryan's Daughter* (83-weeks). The Ascot was eventually acquired by Village Cinemas, with a 70mm reissue of *The Towering Inferno* its first attraction - opening on the 19th October, 1978. Under the Village banner, the Ascot shared numerous key city openings with Village Cinema City, including the eagerly awaited *Superman: The Movie*, which opened on the 21st December, 1978 in Panavision (35mm). The Ascot closed to the public on the 1st February, 1986. Its final film was *Prizzi's Honor*. The Ascot then suffered the indignity of being gutted and turned into a Braschs' Music Store and offices, before the remaining exterior shell of the theatre was demolished. The site is now occupied by an office tower.

Please Note - It has not been possible to confirm whether *Love in 3-D*, *Earthquake* and *Grease* screened in 70mm at the Ascot. Our research for *Australia in 70mm* has found no tabloid advertising or sessions directory promoting the film in 70mm. Accordingly, the film title and season details will remain highlighted in BLUE cells until confirmed either way.

70MM OPENINGS	OPENED	CLOSED	WKS
Gone with the Wind - First time in 70mm	25/03/67	13/09/67	25
Doctor Zhivago - First time in 70mm	21/12/67	21/02/68	9
Far from the Madding Crowd	22/02/68	10/07/68	20
Hellfighters	13/12/68	24/12/68	2
Spartacus - reissue	26/12/68	06/03/69	10
Sweet Charity	15/08/69	15/04/70	35
Airport	16/04/70	21/01/71	40
Ryan's Daughter	22/01/71	24/08/72	83
The Andromeda Strain	25/08/72	21/09/72	4
Never Give an Inch [aka Sometimes a Great Notion]	09/02/73	01/03/73	3
Love in 3-D	22/07/74	21/08/74	4
Camelot - reissue	27/11/75	03/12/75	1
Airport 77 plus Earthquake - reissue	17/09/76	07/10/76	3
The Towering Inferno - reissue	19/10/78	08/11/78	3
Xanadu plus Grease - reissue	26/03/81	08/04/81	2
Rocky III plus Raiders of the Lost Ark - reissue	29/09/83	05/10/83	1

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS – Tabloid advertisements for *Gone with the Wind* and *Ryan's Daughter* sourced from Sydney tabloid microfiche held at the New South Wales state library.



ASCOT SYDNEY
GONE WITH THE WIND
25TH March 1966

Now in 70 mm.
IN WIDE SCREEN AND FULL STEREOPHONIC SOUND

DAVID O. SELZVICKS
MARGARET ARCHULET

GONE WITH THE WIND

TECHNICOLOR NOT SUITABLE FOR CHILDREN

STARRING
CLARK GABLE - VIVIAN LEIGH
LESLIE HOWARD-OLIVIA DEHAVILLAND

EXCLUSIVE SEASON starts
EASTER SAT. 9.30 a.m., 2 and 7.30 p.m.

Book in advance at ASCOT THEATRE
Plans also at D.J.'s and Mitchell's
AT THE NEW LUXURIOUS AIR-CONDITIONED

ASCOT
61-8471

246 PITT STREET, SYDNEY, NEAR LIBERTY

PRICES AND PERFORMANCES

1st	1.50
2nd	1.00
3rd	0.75
4th	0.50
5th	0.25
6th	0.10

FOR PARTY BOOKINGS: PHONE 28-4800

RYAN'S DAUGHTER
21st October 1971

From MGM, producers of David Lean's *Doctor Zhivago*

A story of love
Filmed by David Lean

Ryan's Daughter

MICROCOLOR and SUPER PANAVISION

With ROBERT MCDONALD, TRICHO HOWARD, CHRISTOPHER JONES, JOHN MILLS, LEO MERRIN and SHARON MILLS

PRESENTED IN THE MAGNIFICENCE OF 70 MM.

ASCOT
THEATRE

Comminces Next Friday
Box Plans Now Open. Phone 61 8471



ASCOT SYDNEY
246 Pitt Street, Sydney

OPENED
12th May 1966