



—SP Photo by Gord Waldner

Tom Hutchinson, president of Magic Lantern which renovated the Roxy, has worked in theatres since he was a teen

Movie experience

□ Roxy Theatre, a 75-year-old jewel, shines again

**By Nikhat Ahmed
of The StarPhoenix**

As workers put finishing touches on the Roxy for its grand reopening today, the man behind the million-dollar restoration still doesn't want credit for saving the 75-year-old building from the wrecking ball.

"No one in Saskatoon knows me or needs to know me," said Tom Hutchinson with a smile.

Hutchinson, president of Magic Lantern Theatres, bought his first theatre when he was 17.

Magic Lantern owns 18 cinema locations across Canada. Eleven of those, including the Roxy, are operated under the Rainbow Cinemas banner.

The Roxy has been undergoing restoration for a year and has its premiere show tonight.

Hutchinson has been familiar with the Roxy building since 1974, when he worked as part of a renovation crew. Initially, he didn't see any importance in the building; however, once he noticed similar buildings across the country being torn down, he decided it had to be saved.

"It's probably the best remaining example of this sort of architecture in Canada. So really, Saskatoon has a jewel here. It's something that should be here, it's a wonderful focal point. In 20 or 30 years, people are going to be very glad that it's still here."

Hutchinson noted the Roxy was built at the start of the Depression and provided an escape or "fantasy world" for movie-goers.

"I'd like the original intent of the theatre to still work if it can. And that is to forget life for a little while, forget your troubles for a little while."

Rejuvenation is not a new concept for Hutchinson, who recalled working on a theatre restoration in Woodland, Wash., as a teenager.

"I had been active in audiovisuals at school and thought I knew everything about projectors, just like a 15-year-old would," he laughed.

The owner promised Hutchinson 65 cents an hour for his work, "but went out of business before he got around to paying it."

Hutchinson saw other owners come and go, and eventually bought the theatre himself. He operated it on his own during his last year of high school, but isn't quite sure why he stuck with the movie business all these years.

"Some sort of mental weakness. You just sort of get in and can't get out again, even if it makes sense to."

The weakness definitely doesn't come from being a movie-lover. Hutchinson said he barely watches one or two movies a year and doesn't have a television. All his work is about preserving our "built heritage," he said.

But he won't be discussing the importance of old buildings or bragging about the time and money he put into the Roxy on opening night. He'll most likely be seen with a broom, he said with a straight face.

Hutchinson said he doesn't like using his title of president and would be happy to be referred to as the janitor or projectionist. He said he'll do whatever jobs, big or small, to "make it the sort of active, sparkling operation that it needs to be. When we have that, then I'll be able to sit back and smile."

And as for the future of the Roxy, Hutchinson said he'd like for it to be profitable, but what he really wants is for people to "just come and enjoy it."

Curtain rises

□ The Roxy, located on 20th Street West in Riversdale, was built in 1930.

□ It is one of the last atmospheric theatres in Canada.

□ The theatre has gone through several previous renovations and officially closed in 1995.

□ The cinema hall used to seat 610 people and now seats 480.

□ Hells Angels, directed by Howard Hughes, was the first film ever shown in the Roxy.