

The Hoyts Esquire Theatre in Melbourne was unique amongst all the city theatres that supported 70mm screenings during the late 1950s and into the 1960s. It featured a series of decorative pilasters, which were equally spaced along the sidewalls of the auditorium and which formed the vertical frames for a series of "windowed", painted landscapes. The theatre, which was designed by the renowned architect, William Pitt, was constructed at 238 Bourke Street, Melbourne, on the former site of St. George's Hall. It opened as **Hoyts' De Luxe** on 27th March, 1915, under the direction of Arthur F. Russell – the company's founder. Its first feature film was *The Tray o' Hearts*. The theatre was renamed the Esquire on the 15th November 1946, with *The Spanish Main* its first attraction. The Esquire presented *Bwana Devil* in 3D on the 14th May 1953 and its first CinemaScope presentation was *Track of the Cat*, which opened on the 24th November 1955. A gala premiere of the film, *Around the World in 80 Days*, took place at the Esquire on the 30th

October, 1957, with the 66 week season ending on 31st January 1959. The theatre then closed for four-days, to facilitate the completion of the installation of Todd-AO 70mm (including DP70 projectors and associated 6-channel stereophonic sound system) for *South Pacific*; the premiere of which took place on the 5th February 1959. *South Pacific's* 152-week long season was the longest run in the theatre's history. The most successful 35mm season was *Around the World in 80 Days* (66-weeks), followed closely by *The Graduate* (64-weeks), which commenced on 12th September, 1968. With the opening of the three screen Hoyts Cinema Centre [the first multi-screen complex in Australia] at 140 Bourke Street, Melbourne on the 6th June 1969 with the attractions *Joanna*, *The Thomas Crown Affair* and *For Love of Ivy*, Hoyts Theatres then programmed their 70mm openings into the 70mm equipped Cinema Centre with *The Lion in Winter* their first opening on the 7th August 1969. Sadly the Esquire reverted to presenting 35mm presentations up to its closure in 1976. During this six year period, there was only one noteworthy presentation in 35mm at the Esquire with *M\*A\*S\*H* opening on the 23rd July 1970 for a 47 week season. With no 70mm presentations programmed for the Esquire, Hoyts Theatres removed the DP70 projectors and relocated them to Perth for the opening of their new Cinema 2 single screen hardtop for the opening of *Juggernaut*, ironically presented in 35mm on the 20th March 1975. The Esquire projection equipment was replaced with a pair of Kalee 21 and BTH Supa carbon arc lamp houses. Hoyts Esquire closed on the 31st March, 1976; with the double feature, *White Line Fever* and *Chosen Survivors*. The original façade remains today, hidden under a false frontage. Also the structural walls remain, with the internal shell of the Esquire demolished. The site is now occupied by a Target retail store.

70MM OPENINGS	FORMAT	OPENED	CLOSED	WKS
South Pacific	Todd-AO	06/02/59	22/11/61	146
The Miracle of Todd-AO	Todd-AO	06/02/59	22/11/61	146
Solomon and Sheba	Super Technirama 70	23/11/61	14/02/62	12
Can-Can	Todd-AO	15/02/62	28/11/62	41
Oklahoma! - <i>First time in 70mm</i>	Todd-AO	29/11/62	03/04/63	18
The Alamo	Todd-AO	04/04/63	29/05/63	8
Exodus	Panavision 70	31/05/63	06/11/63	23
West Side Story	Panavision 70	07/11/63	21/10/64	50
The King and I - <i>First time in 70mm</i>	Grandeur 70	22/10/64	18/11/64	4
Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines	Todd-AO	18/11/65	02/11/66	50
The Agony and the Ecstasy	Todd-AO	10/11/66	08/03/67	17
The Sand Pebbles	70mm Panavision	13/07/67	01/11/67	16
The Sound of Music - <i>m/over Paris</i>	Todd-AO	21/12/67	11/09/68	38
The Lion in Winter - <i>m/over Cinema Centre</i>	70mm Panavision	04/12/69	18/02/70	11

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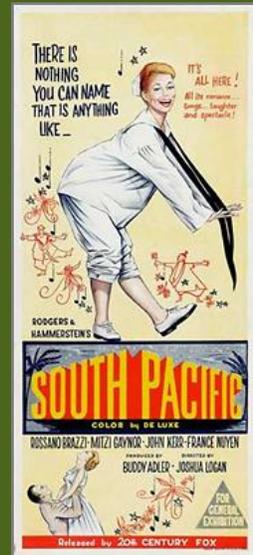


**HOYTS ESQUIRE  
MELBOURNE  
WIDESCREEN TIMELINE**

**CINEMASCOPE  
TRACK OF THE CAT  
24th November 1955**



**PREMIERED 70MM  
SOUTH PACIFIC  
Plus Featurette  
THE MIRACLE OF TODD-AO  
5th February 1959**



**HOYTS ESQUIRE THEATRE**  
238 Bourke St, Melbourne

OPENED  
27th March 1915  
as the, Hoyts De-luxe