

2016 THE ROXY TURNS ANNIVERSARY

2016 BINGARA ORANGE FESTIVAL GOES GREEK

The annual Bingara Orange Festival was held this year from the 1st to 3rd July. It coincided with the 80th birthday of the Roxy Cinema and included the theme of all things Greek in celebration of the contribution of Greek immigrants to rural Australia. In particular, it reflected on the lasting legacy of the Bingara Greeks, namely Messrs. Peter Feros, Emanuel Aroney and George Psaltis, who built Peter's Café and the adjoining Roxy Theatre in 1936. The complex was restored in 2009.

The festival was organised by Gwydir Shire Council with significant input by Peter Prineas who is a grandson of one of the founders, Peter Feros, and who has made significant efforts over the years towards restoration of the café and theatre and their re-opening.

The weather smiled on Bingara over the three day event, sunny during the day and crispy at night.

The festival began on the Friday with orange picking and tours of the nearby Living Classroom Mediterranean Garden.

The Saturday included a toga fun run sponsored by the Bingara Fitness Centre, a Greek style long lunch in the streets of Bingara and an Orange Festival street parade and carnival. At midday, a performance of Greek dancing was presented by the KAA Dancers, headed by Joanna Tsakaridis and including Penelope Samios, with musical accompaniment by the Ha Va Le Greek band. The performance was so well received with much clapping and cheer that the band was asked to continue and many locals then joined with the KAA dancers in an afternoon of Greek dancing. Smashing of plates followed and the whole occasion turned into a joyous street party. Guest speaker for the afternoon was Costa Georgiadis from Gardening Australia. Greek cooking classes were presented by Ilias (from Byron Bay).

On Saturday night the Roxy Theatre Birthday Ball was held at which the KAA Dancers again performed a different program with the Ha Va Le Greek band. Again, it created wide enthusiasm and many locals



joined in the Greek dancing throughout the evening. Ilias (from Byron Bay) and Costa Georgiadis, dressed in traditional evzon costume, were also prominent on the dance floor. Well done by the KAA Dancers! All reports indicated that the KAA dancers were a big hit in Bingara and highlighted successfully the Greek theme of the festival.

On both Saturday and Sunday, lectures and films were presented by Peter Prineas, photographer Effy Alexakis and historian Leonard Janiszewski on the history of Australia's Greek Cafes and Milk Bars. These were also very popular and informative and conveyed in a very interesting way the important contribution that immigrant Greeks had made historically to rural Australia.

All in all, a great and memorable time in Bingara for all who were there and congratulations to all who participated.

Kathy Samios





Photos courtesy of Peter Prineas & Kathy Samios