

MOVIE PALACE TREASURES STILL CREATE THE MAGIC

During turbulent times like the Great Depression and World War II, movie theaters played an important role. They not only provided escapism, they were also the place for newsreels that kept the home-front informed about the ongoing conflicts. Too, Hollywood stepped up and produced classic films in the war years such as "Casablanca" and "Mrs. Miniver." But mostly, the old movie houses were grand places with unique architecture, features and design to help folks to "forget your troubles, come on get happy."

Here are some vintage theaters still creating the magic.

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The Patio Theater



6008 W. Irving Park Road, Chicago
thepatiotheater.com

Who wouldn't want to watch a movie under the twinkling lights of a dark blue sky? That was possible in 1927 when the Patio Theater opened its doors on Chicago's northwest side. The theater, which seats 1,500, was decorated in a style reminiscent of the ancient city of Pompeii. It also featured an auditorium ceiling that looked like a dark blue night sky with blinking lights and clouds displayed on the ceiling via projector. The theater was shuttered in 2001 due to failure of its air conditioning chillers and other issues. Renovations began on the theater in 2010, and were finished in 2011. The theater officially reopened on June 3, 2011. The first film to flicker across screen in more than 10 years was "Thor."

Owner Chris Bauman, who also is a concert promoter, purchased the Patio in 2019 and is bringing live music to the venue. It also continues to show movies including a few Halloween-themed flicks that ran in October. Bauman hopes someday to restore the auditorium ceiling with twinkling lights. In the meantime, he is happy this theater is still going strong. "These venues are being lost across the country. They are such treasures," he says.