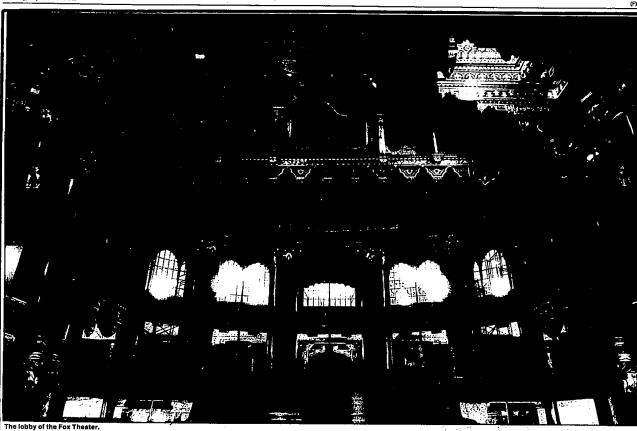
Creative Living





A return to glory

By Brian Lyseght staff writer

DWARD FOX won the race to build a better movie house.

The film mogul's crowning glory was a 5,000-seat movie palace on Woodward Avenue called the Fox Theater. It opened September 21, 1928.

Fox and Detroit architect C. Howard Crane wrapped the building in jewels, dressed it in marble and gold leaf, and called the style "Hindo Temple."

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This was an era when bigger and better was best, and Fox was building movie houses around the country. Detroit had the Capitol, the Michigan, and several more

theaters that invited people to watch movies and shows in grand

theaters that invited people to watch movies and shows in grand style.

But none was as grand as the \$10 million Fox. William Fox, Crane and a host of Detroit heavies attended the grand opening on Sept. 21, 1928 — the day singer Al Jolson married his third wife, 19-year-old Ruby Keeler and the day 1,500 people died in a Florida burricane.

"The Fox is the largest amusement auditorium in the city, seating 6,000 persons, and its monogrammed, medallion tapestry red chairs were filled for the premisers with the professional, including the professional, business and industrial life, 'reported the Detroit Free Press the

I think it's the grandest building people today will ever get into. That's why it's so important to save."

- Ray Shepardson

following day.

The entertainment consisted of newarcels, a film and a "Neapolitan Festival" with a Fox orchestra, choir and the 33 Fox Tilerette dancem ("foremose newponents of unified rhythm").

BUT THE MOVIE palace era ceased soon after for Fox. His wife, who had helped decorate the Detroit theater, died, and the stock market crashed on Blanch Tuesday of October 1939. Fox lost his fortune, but business was good for movie houses through the 1930s and 1940s, with movies and stage shows. Jack Benny, Kate Smith and Benny Goodman played the Fox, and a list anniversary show in 1949 featured Louis Armstrong and Liberace.

Presievy and the Motown reviews in the 1940s, and harder times and horner films for part of the 1970s. The 1980s brought new owners and new wave rock hands. For most of 1983, the Fox has been getting washed, polished, react and repaired, part of new owners Mills Illica's plan to make

hired Ray Shepardson and Sonya Winner to head the project. They have done theater restoration work in Portland, Ore; Seattle, Wash; and St. Louis. But this one, said Shepardson, is different. It's bigger and grander than the other, and is to be restored almost

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door on an 1,100 car parsung garage.

Even the neglected gern across the street, the Etwood Bar, is getting spruced up.

Shepardson calls Little Caesar founder Mike Illitch's decision to move his piras business down-town "miraculous, absolutely miraculous, and gutsy."

SUPPORTERS HOPE the move will pump life into a section of Woodward between Grand Circus Park and the Cultural Con-

Shepardson said the theater is a mix of middle eastern. Mexican.



Ray Sheperdson is directing a cast of hundreds on the renovation of Detroit's bejoweled Fox Theater. The restoration should be completed this year.

Indian and Oriental influences.
"The stagehands call it Cambodian Gothic," he said with a

dian cothic," he said with a laugh.
The lobby's Greek columns, large leaded glass chandeliers, terraro floor leading to marble stairs.

The auditorium inself is halled as innovative in theater design, for wider seats, more leg room and good sight lines. The accordice are excellent, Shepardson said.

Fox, pop, jazz, comedy menic and Broadway-type shows. The ceiling, with its sharp reds, blass and golds, is fascinating. It follows a big top smotif. Shapard-son mid it was moddled after a test for the Arabian nights.

The ceiling sculpture is rich in sculpture. Many are belewaled—inlaid with colored glass. There is a larger-than-life eisphant's bead and dozens of ceramic tassels along the tent's edge. There are too glass and the second of the second seco

en it's show time.



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Staff photoe by BHI Breeler