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Six weeks to refit Mayfair

Matt Rilko
matt.rilkoff@dailynews.co.nz

From New Plymouth's grand old lady of cinema, she once sank to a seedy, dimly lit strip bar. But now The Mayfair is to be reborn in the grandeur she deserves.

A collective of five of New Plymouth hospitality bigwigs bought the lease for the building last year and will spend the next six weeks transforming it into the city's largest multi-purpose hospitality venue.

The venue will include bars, a restaurant and a 400-person capacity event area in the same space thousands of Taranaki people watched such classic cinema as *Fort Petticoat*, *BMX Bandits* and Sharon Stone's *Basic Instinct* before the theatre closed in the early 1990s.

"I heard the last film was *Naked Gun 2½*," said Kymon Hill, of Mayfair Hospitality, despite his business partner, Doc van Praagh, earlier swearing it was the morality chiller *Indecent Proposal*.

"And half way through, just before intermission, the people watching heard a shot and someone had robbed the ticket booth. They didn't get to see the second half," Hill said.

The story, true as it is, forms

part of the rich history of the building which, for one of the few times in its 96 years, is closed.

In his role as project manager Hill estimated the grand re-opening to be six weeks of renovation away. It's hard to believe from the current mess it could be finished in less than a lifetime, but he's betting \$500 and a beard on doors opening 14 August.

"If you come back in six weeks and he looks like Willie Nelson that means we haven't finished. He isn't shaving until it's open," said events manager Dave Haskell.

It will be Haskell's job to keep events flowing at the new venue which will cater to everything from live bands to comedy. With \$60,000 worth of sound-proofing they can afford to get loud and Haskell is confident there will be no shortage of gigs.

"I think what has driven this is album sales have just flattened out so artists have to play live to make a living," he said.

The 1100 square metre restaurant, bar and venue will be one of the city's biggest hospitality ventures. Between them the five members of Mayfair Hospitality, the organisation behind The Mayfair, own Crowded House Bar & Cafe, Butlers Reef, Westbar & Cafe and Stumble Inn & Cafe.



Big job: Doc van Praagh, left, Dave Haskell and Kymon Hill say it will cost hundreds of thousands of dollars and take six weeks to renovate the Mayfair in New Plymouth and turn it into one of the city's largest hospitality ventures. Photo: CAMERON BURNELL/FAIRFAX NZ