



# PLEASE OPEN

Directors: Karl Sheridan, Robin Gee Producer: Monster Valley

Cultural icon and cinematic relic The Crystal Palace fights to hold off the final curtain call.

**AVAILABLE ONLINE FROM 9 JULY 2015**

## **SHORT SYNOPSIS**

The Crystal Palace stands on one of Auckland's busiest suburban roads. Passed by hundreds of commuters everyday, the theatre represents a fading memory to some and a mystery to others. *Please Open* explores the spaces, the technology and the people that have kept The Crystal Palace alive since she opened in the 1920s, while pondering her future.

## **LONG SYNOPSIS**

Standing on one of Auckland's busiest suburban roads The Crystal Palace is passed by hundreds of commuters everyday. A fading memory to some the theatre remains a mystery to others. This is not another story about an old cinema closing down because of digitisation. This is a journey; a journey through a building that has been a theatre for both stage and screen, a dance hall, a recording studio, a place where couples met and went on to marry, and a host to a thousand rolling Jaffas. More than lights, plasterwork and architecture, The Crystal Palace is people, the people who danced, played, watched and laughed there.

*Please Open* explores the spaces, the technology and the people that have kept The Crystal Palace alive and functioning since she opened in the 1920s, while pondering the future of such a unique venue.

## **Directors: Karl Sheridan and Robin Gee**

Karl Sheridan has been the Managing Director of his creative production company Monster Valley since 2012 as well as working on community arts projects and developing his career as a filmmaker. After several years in the film industry, Karl co-directed and co-produced the feature street art documentary *Dregs* in 2012.

Robin Gee has worked in film and media education for the past 25 years with a particular focus on audience, film history and new narratives. This documentary project has long been a passion of Robin's and is one of many collaborations between himself and Karl.

## **Producer: Monster Valley**

Monster Valley has been the production company at the helm of this project and the home base for directors Karl Sheridan and Robin Gee, production manager Taylor MacGregor and editor Levi Beamish. Karl is the founder and Managing Director of Monster Valley and has seen producing *Please Open* with the help of Loading Docs as an opportunity to balance their corporate video content production with a documentary film project that is both creatively engaging and important to a broad community in Auckland.



**DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

We would both drive past the The Crystal Palace frequently. The theatre looked tired and was always closed. I suppose she drew us both to her. We wondered what her future would be and even if she had a future. As we started to explore more we found out that the theatre had a great history and we came to really appreciate the beauty and uniqueness of the structure.

There is a romance that old theatres have and the Crystal Palace has it in abundance. With its beautiful plaster work and the pair of old carbon arc projectors that have provided the images for audiences over the decades, we fell under her spell.

There are many documentaries and stories about theatres closing down because of digitisation but our story was never going to be about that. Our story is about a rather unique building – one of Auckland's oldest theatres – standing on one of Auckland's busiest suburban roads, passed by hundreds everyday, and potentially just slowly fading away.

During the making of the documentary we hosted a fundraising event that saw around 500 people turn up to party in the theatre and to support our project and experience the Crystal Palace for themselves.

**PRESS RELEASE**

Next year the Crystal Palace Theatre on Mount Eden Road will hopefully celebrate its 100th birthday. It is hopeful because the theatre is struggling to keep its doors open. Opened in 1916 and once one of Auckland's most happening ballrooms, the theatre closed in the mid-90s and only 2 years ago reopened its doors for irregular screenings and live music performances.

Now the flailing theatre is the subject of 3-minute documentary called *Please Open* that is being launched online as part of the Loading Docs scheme. The film goes behind the scenes at the aged cinema where plaster flakes off the walls, carpet has given way to Kauri floorboards and halogen lights replace once ornate lamps. Filmmakers Karl Sheridan and Robin Gee wanted to create a film that exudes romantic nostalgia for a theatre with such a rich history.

In the process of making the film Sheridan says that they couldn't believe how much support they received for the project from the community: "while we were in the theatre [filming], we literally had people waiting outside and knocking on the door to share their stories." They discovered while making the documentary that the Crystal Palace was never just a movie theatre and ballroom but an iconic building full of memories and an incredibly important part of the local Mt Eden community.

The Loading Docs initiative that *Please Open* is a part of supports 10 filmmaking teams to experiment with the confines of a 3-minute timeframe to make innovative and creative documentaries that tell New Zealand stories, this year based around the theme of connection. You can view *Please Open* online at [www.loadingdocs.net](http://www.loadingdocs.net) and **TVNZ OnDemand** from 9th July, 2015.

**CONTACT**

Notable Pictures  
(09) 973 5731  
[hello@loadingdocs.net](mailto:hello@loadingdocs.net)

