

GEM: Theater could open as soon as a year from now

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of the building will bring in a continuing flow of rent money to pay for maintenance and utilities.

In the early days, the group chipped away at an overwhelming to-do list using a stream of local donations and buckets of sweat equity. Finally, in 2013, the Family Ford Foundation came through with a \$200,000 incentive grant and the project revved up. Other grants followed. The building will soon be powered by a solar array funded with a Pacific Power grant. A water-damaged wall was replaced and improved with a steel frame to provide earthquake protection. Workers removed the back wall and built an addition to allow for larger stage, fly space and orchestra pit.

McIntyre predicted the theater could open as soon as a year from now. A \$300,000 infusion from the Oregon Legislature will push the project over the financial finish line. Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, helped McIntyre lobby for that money. Both spoke in front of the Capital Construction Committee, each for his allotted two minutes. Hansell mentioned that he'd had his first date at the Gem and McIntyre described the restoration and history of the historic theater.

"It gave me great personal satisfaction to be at the right place at the right time to move the project forward," Hansell said.

Even with all the construction, entering the theater these days is like stepping back in time. One can easily imagine a crowd of movie-goers watching a B-grade western after paying their 10 cents admission.

The structure has a rich history. The 1901 building started out as a saloon/restaurant owned by Jacob Betz Brewing and Malting. In 1908, the town council voted to close all saloons. The ruling shut down the town's two breweries, which stood next door to one another. Betz Brewing became a movie house. In the '20s, silent films showed four nights a week. Lloyd and Edith Moore, who owned a chain of theaters, bought the place in 1937. The theater's name changed over the years.

"In 1909, it was the Dime. In 1911, it was the Dreamland," McIntyre said. "During the first World War, it was known as the Standard, and later it was the Gem."

Eventual owner Chet Dugger, also the Athena city recorder, finally shuttered the theater in 1968, though he continued to live in an upstairs apartment. Dugger locked the doors and went about his business. He died in 1978. An out-of-town buyer eventually gave the deteriorating building to the city after buying it at auction. "The owner had bought it in a portfolio. I don't think he ever even saw the building," McIntyre said. "He was told you either have to fix it, tear it down or give it to the city. He gave it to the city."

The city transferred ownership to the Gem nonprofit group with the stipulation that it would become a center of cultural activity.

McIntyre talks about the building as he would an old friend. The group saved



Clockwise from top:

The back of the Gem Theater has been rebuilt and will house the organ, props and other stage gear, and will also have space for an apartment. (E.J. Harris photo)

A bartender and four patrons of the Star Saloon pose for a photo in 1904. The saloon became a movie house after the Athena City Council decided to bar saloons in 1908 and eventually became the Gem Theatre. (Contributed photo)

A gutted Gem Theater with back wall completely removed early in the renovation process in March or 2015. (EO file photo)

The Gem Theatre in 1940. (Contributed photo)

"At first, it was easy to dismiss us as crazy. Then it started to look like we might pull this off."

— Rob McIntyre

WHISKY: Bigger downtown show planned

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country star Miranda Lambert, to whom he was married to from 2011-2015, and pop star Gwen Stefani, a former "The Voice" judge.

He's proved no less popular as a musician, either.

Since breaking out with his 2001 self-titled album, the Oklahoman has had nine albums certified gold or platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America. Shelton has sold more than 10 million albums, more than 30 million singles and his songs have been streamed online 1.7 billion times.

On the awards circuit, he's been nominated for a Grammy nine times, and won numerous awards from the Country Music Association, the Academy of Country

Music and Country Music Television.

McAnally said the key to Pitbull's popularity was in his nickname, "Mr. Worldwide."

Organizers plan to try to appeal to Latinos when they promote the Cuban-American rapper, who has released music in English and Spanish.

Pitbull broke through with his 2009 single "I Know You Want Me (Calle Ocho)," which peaked at No. 2 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart. Two No. 1 singles — "Give Me Everything" and "Timber" — would follow in 2011 and 2013.

McAnally said the Whisky Fest would retain the same format it had last year: four musical acts and a DJ. The two other opening acts will be announced later, with

plans to open the stadium gates at 4 p.m., earlier than last year.

Organizers are also interested in expanding the number of food vendors on the Round-Up Grounds, establishing a food court area off the grass in the main arena, and expanding the kick-off party on Main Street, hiring another "party rock" band to headline the Friday festivities the night before the concert while growing the party's footprint beyond its one-block length.

The organizers' ultimate goal, McAnally said, was to establish a level of quality that concertgoers felt that they needed to go to Whisky Fest every year regardless of the act.

"A happy fan is a returning fan," he said.

EASTERN OREGON FORUM *Presents*

TUESDAY, MARCH 20TH, 2018 AT 7:00 P.M.

BLUE MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE (BMCC), 2411 NW CARDEN, PENDLETON, OR.

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Jim Setzer, Umatilla County Public Health Director, will serve as moderator for the forum.



Eric Holeman obtained a Bachelor Of Science in Pharmacy from Oregon State University in 1986, and received his Doctor of Pharmacy degree and Hospital Residency from University of Washington/Harborview Medical Centers in 1988. Eric developed an interest in pain and opiate management in 1999 when he served as a hospice pain consultant and later in 2002, when he initiated a pharmacist managed pain service at Mid-Columbia Medical Center in The Dalles, Oregon. In 2012, he obtained certification through the American Academy of Pain Management as a credentialed pain provider.



Dr. Joel Rice is Board Certified in General Psychiatry and Addiction Medicine, and started a small addiction clinic, Grande Ronde Recovery, in La Grande almost 20 years ago. Joel has been treating opioid use disorder with Suboxone and other medications in La Grande for 15 years, being the first in eastern Oregon to do so. Retired Pendleton Internist Dr. Dan Marier has the DEA Waiver to treat patients with Suboxone, and has just begun working with Joel.

Eric has been employed at Mid-Columbia Medical Center since 2001, and currently serves in the capacity of Clinical Lead Pharmacist providing consultation related to cancer care, chronic pain, anti-coagulation and acute care management.

Joel has been treating opioid use disorder in Pendleton for 3 years, in coordination with Umatilla County Human Services, and has plans to start seeing patients at their clinic in Hermiston soon. Joel currently has around 200 patients in Umatilla County with Opioid Use Disorder. He has established four "Sober Homes" in La Grande, where individuals with addiction can live in a supported, sober environment. They are working with Umatilla County Human Services to establish sober living residences in Pendleton and Hermiston.

Also in attendance will be Dr. Chuck Hofmann, Medical Director of New Directions Northwest addiction treatment center in Baker City, Mike Stensrud, the Eastern Oregon Prescription Drug Overdose Prevention Coordinator for Umatilla County Public Health, and Pendleton Police Chief, Stuart Roberts.

THE COST FOR THIS SERIES OF 4 FORUMS IS \$15 PER PERSON. \$25 PER COUPLE OR \$5 PER FORUM AT THE DOOR - STUDENTS ARE FREE

For more information about the EO Forum, please contact: Karen Parker at 541-966-3177.

The EO Forum is a collaborative effort among leaders from Blue Mountain Community College, InterMountain Education Service District, the East Oregonian, American Association of University Women, and Harriet Isom, a former United States ambassador who also serves on the committee. This EO Forum program is offered as part of Blue Mountain Community College's annual Arts and Culture Festival. For more information on the festival go to www.bluecc.edu.