Dromana Drive-In

B7289 Dromana Drive screen 1

Location

133 Nepean Highway,, DROMANA VIC 3936 - Property No B7289

Municipality

MORNINGTON PENINSULA SHIRE

Level of significance

State

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2219

Heritage Listing

National Trust

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - July 9, 2007

What is significant? The Dromana Drive-in opened as the Peninsula in 1961, with a capacity to accommodate 485 cars. It was an independent operation, built by Mr Whitaker, and operated successfully in the heyday of drive-ins. Perhaps because of its relatively remote location, though one with high visibility and easy access from the freeway, (built in the 1990s), and a captive summer audience, it never ceased operating.

In 1989, Paul Whitaker took over operation from his father, and the place is run as a family business. His wife, Shelly, operates the diner, and in 2005 sons Matt and Daniel help out.

In the early 1990s it was twinned, using a screen from the Hoyts Altona drive-in (built 1971, closed in 1982); the

projection beam for this requires a periscope assembly before hitting the screen. In c2001 a third screen was added. The two newer screens are in the rear corners, but utilize the original beams, with cars simply facing the other way. In 1999 the old speakers were removed, though the posts remain, with sound achieved via your FM car stereo.

The two 'early' screens were built using the lightweight framing typical of the first generation of drive-ins, while the third screen is supported on weightier posts. The diner/projection booth structure is an agglomeration of additions to the first simple square skillion roofed shed-like structure. The interior of 'Shel's Diner' features 1950s style decor. White picket fences separate the three fields. The ticket booths are simple square structures joined by a flat roof. All structures are painted a bright yellow, with red trim. Incandescent festoon light bulbs circle the edge of the ticket booth and the three screens and a possibly original neon sign 'Peninsula' is located behind the south screen.

How is it significant? The Dromana Drive-in is of architectural, social and historical significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it Significant ? The Dromana Drive-in is historically and socially significant as one of only three drive-ins in Victoria to survive intact and still operating out of the 60 that once existed. These three, in Coburg, Dandenong, and Dromana, are the last remnants of a once extremely popular cultural phenomenon, one that appears to have had a real impact only in the US, Canada and Australia. Inspired by American cultural trends, drive-ins, like motels, were a new type of private or domestic space, a mobile extension of the family living room and characterized a trend in personal behaviour to be less formal and inhibited in public spaces. They grew out of the extraordinary popularity and increasing affordability of cars, and provided a novel and easy form of entertainment. They catered to a wide range of audiences, allowing a whole family with young children the convenience of staying in their car, for teenagers to socialize apart from their parents, and especially for young adults who were attracted to particular film genres and the intimate private space provided by the car.

Dromana is the only one of the three never to have closed.

The structures cannot be considered architecturally significant, though the early fabric that does remain is the earliest of the three remaining drive-ins and the original 1961 screen is the earliest remaining in Victoria. The neon sign is unique as the only original such signage to remain of all the drive-ins, and is a relatively early survivor amongst neon signs.

Classified: 01/05/2007

Other Names	Dromana Twin Drive-In, Dromana Twin/Triple Drive-In, Peninsula Drive-in,
Hermes Number	71595
Property Number	

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

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