

MULTIPLEX WAR

When work and demolition on Top Town Cinema 4 had begun, a major multiplex war hit New Plymouth. It all started in May 1993 when plans were announced to build a \$2 million Cinema 4 complex in opposition to Top Town, to be located in the Carpet and Furniture Warehouse in the middle of Brougham and Powderham Streets.

A former local businessman, Mr. Bob Paton, (developer) now living in Auckland planned to have the four cinemas, confectionery area and cafe bar open by October, the same time Top Town is scheduled to open.

Although both development teams were adamant that with a limit of a 100,000 accessible population, there would only be room for one complex in New Plymouth, both were sure however their's would be the one. This developed into a race against time, the first one opened was thought to be the succeder. This was thought to lead to the incident of Mr. Leans Top Town briefcase being stolen from his Radio Taranaki office by a thirteen year old. The information had got to the competitors in a couple of days.

Mr. Paton had the backing of the Paton Family Trust so that the multiplex could be built debt free. The complex was designed by Mr. Ian Pritchard of New Plymouth and the engineer was Russel Nagel of Holmes Consulting Group.

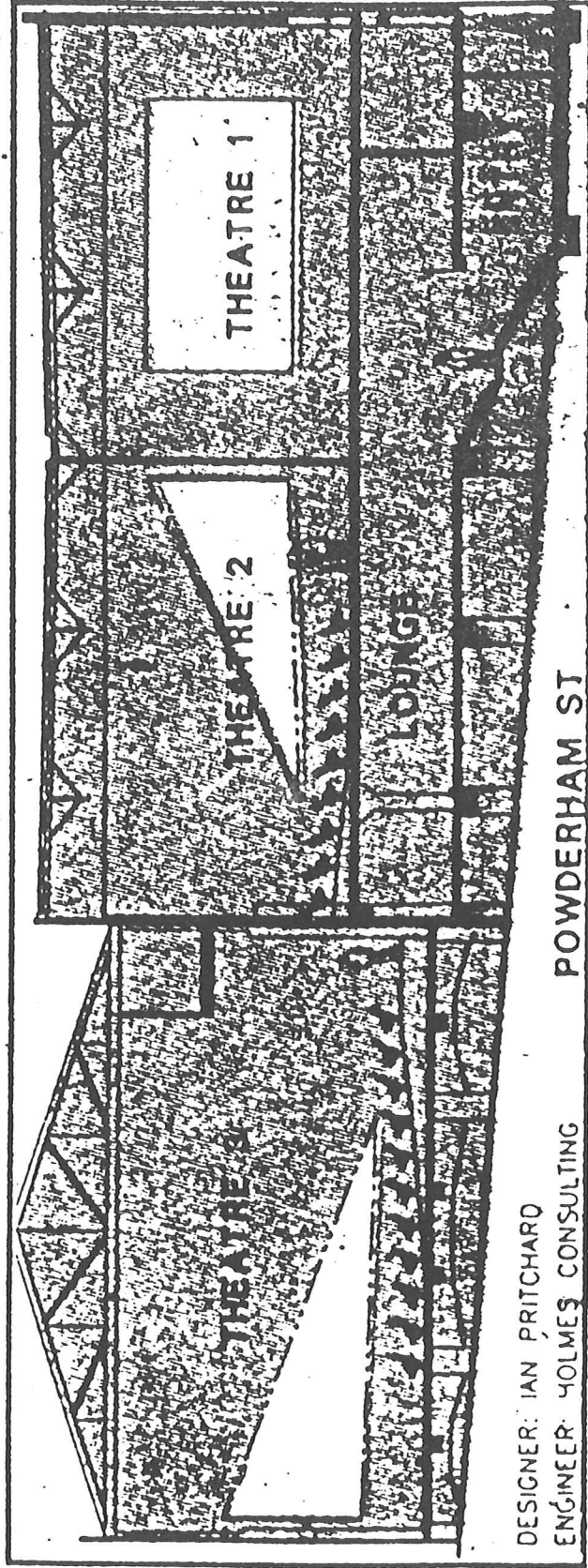
The multiplex design soon changed to incorporate five different sized theatres with large screens and sloping floors. Each theatre would seat between 100 to 300 to make up the total of 700 seats. The Equipment was such that the complex could have multi-programming, enabling it to show nine different films per day. Also to show the one film in three of the five cinemas at one time, was possible.

However after having the Furniture Warehouse structurally strengthened and guttering the third floor, Mr. Paton's plans were abandoned by the middle of 1993, and Mr. Paton ended up owing about \$750,000.

This, from opinion was due to him leaving the development too late and quote Mr. Lean, "not having done his homework properly." Top Town had by this stage got three of the four major film distributors in New Zealand, two of which were investors in the complex; Force Corporation being the major one.

Mr Paton on the other hand only had Everard Cinemas. This meant he may well have access to the majority of the films out, but he'd be supplied with them months after Top Town, when no one would want to see them.

It was at this stage Top Town developers breathed a sigh of relief, (Mr. Lean realised he had lost two stone in the proceedings.) If they had been the losers they would have been out the door owing something like \$1.5 million.



DESIGNER: IAN PRITCHARD
ENGINEER: HOLMES CONSULTING

MULTIPLEX VIEW: Looking at the new complex from Powderham St, only three theatres are illustrated — theatre four will be behind theatre three.