

## Saturday arvo at the Austral

One of the highlights of Collingwood kids' week was the Saturday matinee at The Austral picture theatre in Johnston Street.

We didn't call them cinemas or movies – just the pictures.

Every Saturday we would queue up to pay something like sixpence (five cents) to see a feature film, sometimes two, but the great favourite was the serials. These were short films – never long enough – about a hero or heroine trying to rid the world of evil, but they always finished in what was called a cliff-hanger. The main character or close assistant would end in a perilous situation and we kids could hardly fathom how they could possibly escape. Sometimes it could trouble you the whole week.

We just had to come back to see how they managed it. OK, we were a little naive back in those days. Remember there was no television, mobile phones, or the internet.

The adventures always caught your imagination as they depicted the wild west of America, detective stories, jungle adventures, even science fiction. My favourite was Don Winslow of the Navy and then he switched to being Don Winslow of the Coast Guard. I never knew why.

Check with your grandparents to find out their favourites.

The serials were the main talking point for the children and were even more important than the feature films. Mind you animated cartoons were also a big hit. But few of us sat quietly while we watched or ignored the obligatory newsreels.

The Austral building is considered a Collingwood icon these days. But to many people of Collingwood it provided great pleasure and an escape from the harshness of life in hard times. Many families planned their week around at least one visit to the pictures. The Austral opened in 1922 and closed in 1964.

Is the building still standing? Have you seen it? Actually it is at 202 Johnston Street, Collingwood.