

Historic Hemet Theatre

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THE BEST KEPT SECRET IN HEMET IS OUT

Word is spreading that the hottest new music venue in the Inland Empire is tucked away in little old Hemet. Built in 1921, the Historic Hemet Theatre is one of the oldest movie houses in the country. For decades the theatre was a vibrant center of the community, but multiplexes and home entertainment options have taken their toll on small theaters. In 2010, after a fire destroyed the storefronts in the adjacent building, the doors were closed on the Historic Hemet Theatre and it looked like the venue would be lost along with so many other historic theatres.

But a group of dedicated volunteers had a vision that the charming old movie house could be reinvented into an arts center, hosting concerts, vintage movies and a variety of events for the whole community. The Historic Hemet Theatre Foundation took over operation of the facility in 2013, creating a "Tribute Mania" concert series that has attracted fans from across Southern California. In March the Foundation completed the purchase of the property and has begun plans for a million dollar renovation in time for a big 100th birthday celebration in three years.

The transformation has started with plaster and paint in the lobby, using old photos to replicate the art deco flair of the 1930's. New carpet and concession equipment are already on order. Enlarged restrooms and improved green room facilities for performers are on the drawing board, along with a restoration of the pointed marquee with classic neon lights from the 1940's.

Already the venue has hosted over 500 events with more than 40,000 patrons. Fans are discovering that inside that plain little building in the middle of town is a charming art deco auditorium with wonderful acoustics, a series featuring great tribute bands and a big dance floor at the foot of the stage. And bands are discovering the enthusiasm of the Hemet audiences -- cheering, clapping and dancing more than anywhere else they perform.

Both of the local chambers of commerce have presented HHT with prestigious awards and Inland Empire Magazine named it "Best Live Theater Venue."

Upcoming concerts in the Tribute Mania Series include Tribute to The Cars with Heartbeat City (Oct 6), Tribute to Foreigner featuring 4NR (Oct 20), Tribute to Creedence Clearwater Revival with Fortunate Son (Nov 3), Tribute to Neil Diamond with Dean Colley and Hot August Night (Nov 17), Tribute to Queen featuring Queen Nation (Dec 8), and Cash, Killer and the King: a tribute to Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis and Elvis (Dec 15).

Showtime for all Tribute Mania concerts is 7:00 pm, with doors open at 6:15 pm. Tickets are \$22 presale / \$25 day of show. Information on all theatre events is available at www.HistoricHemetTheatre.com or by calling the ticket office, (951) 658-5950. A weekly email blast of upcoming events is available by enrolling on the website.