

The Greater Royal Gorge Region

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News and Information from Cañon City
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Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley and John Wayne cut outs decorate the front area of the Rialto Theater, which will offer two fundraisers this week.

‘The King’ to help raise funds for the Rialto Charlotte Burrous/Daily Record

FLORENCE — It’s true. Elvis is alive and coming to Florence.

He will be featured in “Reel Glamour” as part of the Rialto Silver Screen Celebration Committee’s continuing efforts to restore the Rialto Theater.

The fundraiser kicks off with a ladies’ luncheon and fashion show from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Thursday.

Main Street Grille will cater the food for lunch and dinner, said co-chairman Suzanne Phipps said. Aspen Leaf Bakery has donated flamed banana foster for dessert.

During the luncheon, Gary Bennett, also known as the “Human Jukebox,” will do imitations of the voices from the past and present, imitating the likes of Elvis, Dean Martin, James Taylor, Jim Reeves, Neil Diamond, Dean Martin, Willie Nelson and Toby Keith.

‘Reel men’ will pamper the women as they waiting on them during the luncheon.

The fun continues as the spotlight turns to the stage later the same evening. The doors will open at 6 p.m. for libations and entertainment, followed by dinner.

At 7:30 p.m., Elvis and a live band will be showcased.

“The Rocky Mountain entertainment writer said Jonny Barber was the best Elvis he had ever seen,” Phipps said. “So many of them do Karaoke, but he has a two-piece band with him. I heard he was an incredible guitarist.”

In addition, there will be an auction, which starts at 8:30 p.m. and will offer a variety of merchandise.

The money will benefit the restoration process of the Rialto.

Built in 1923, the two-story brick theater was built as an opera house by Richard Elhage to provide entertainment for men working in coal, gold and silver mines, oil workers and employees of the quarries and cement plant, a brochure said.

After the theater was abandoned, the Florence Architectural and Cultural Traditions began efforts to restore it. After more than 40,000 volunteer hours were spent over a 12-year-period, the old roof collapsed, water damaged the walls and major beams sagged.

To help with the efforts, the Colorado Historical Society provided emergency grants. Later, the group updated some of the electrical and plumbing needs. However, two weeks ago, a new sewer line had to be hooked up, Phipps said.

To help to pay for the sewer line and to complete the rest of the renovation efforts, the committee organized the fundraiser.

“We should be in the theater by next year,” Phipps said.

Each event will cost \$40 per person and reservations are required. To reserve a spot, call Phipps at 429-3882.

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