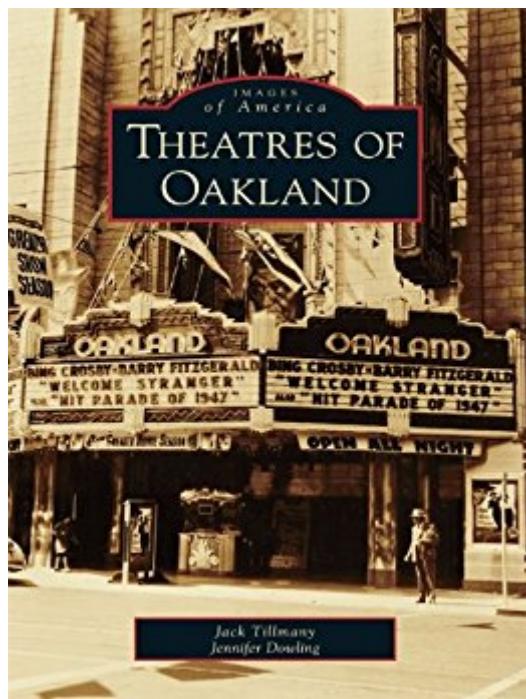


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# Theatres Of Oakland



## **Synopsis**

Oakland has a rich theatre history, from the amusements of a gas-lit downtown light opera and vaudeville stage in the 1870s to the ornate cinematic escape portals of the Great Depression. Dozens of neighborhood theatres, once the site of family outings and first dates, remain cherished memories in the lives of Oaklanders. The city can still boast three fabulous movie palaces from the golden age of cinema: the incomparable art deco Paramount, which now offers live performances and films; the stately Grand Lake gracing the sinuous shores of Lake Merritt; and the magnificently eccentric Fox Oakland, with its imposing Hindu gods flanking the stage. The Paramount and Grand Lake still stir the heartstrings of patrons with showings preceded by interludes on their mighty Wurlitzer organs.

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## **Customer Reviews**

I was stationed at Alameda Naval Airbase near Oakland during the Vietnam era and a trip to 'downtown' was pretty much 'it' as far as finding an evening's entertainment was concerned. This was before the BART interurban trains made transport to San Francisco very easy so excursions to Oakland were a big deal. Many Oakland theatres had already closed by the 1960s but a few

remained and they were welcomed. That landscape has changed completely and, as often happens in memory, one begins to doubt whether many of these landmarks ever even existed. 'Theatres of Oakland' brings back many images of these locales and it was like flipping through an old photo album to find many of them still preserved and remembered. The 'Images of America' series can always be counted upon for evocative views of vanished landscapes, but this book is a standout. Especially welcome were glimpses of the famous Fox Oakland with its 'East Indian Fantasia' interior and the enormous Paramount, easily the grandest monument to Art Deco on the West Coast. So much of our architectural heritage has been lost, but Arcadia Publishing makes the past readily accessible to all of us with its 'Images' series.

Mr. Tillmany, drumming up business for his books, put me onto this terrific book (and its companion volume regarding San Francisco theatres). The book is well-balanced with knowledgeable text and many great photos of theatres, mostly from bygone days, and some from when those moviehouses hit the skids. Although I've never been to Oakland or San Francisco, the bittersweet pang of nostalgia was undeniable. Ever since I watched my first theatrical movie ("Destination Moon") at the Ritz in Big Spring, TX, I've been a gluttonous movie fan. So, thanks, Mr. Tillmany, for the loving preparation that you (and your cohort) gave to this book and the San Francisco book. I treasure both books.--Preston Allison

I just finished reading The Theatres of Oakland cover to cover. I had no idea that the authors had uncovered so many wonderful historical details about so many theatres that are now only dimly remembered. Most theatre books just dismiss these theatres with just a sentence or two, whereas they give a real glimpse of the period and history of the neighborhoods and theatres. Really makes me want to read more beyond the boundaries of Oakland. Berkeley, Alameda, Richmond and many other East Bay cities would be a great addition.

Enjoyed the pictures of the old movie houses of my younger years. I never thought I would ever see a picture of our 1940s West Oakland Star Theatre. There it was. . . A brief history of its origins and end fate. Similar treatment for tons of other neighborhood houses. Lots of historic details on the more lavish downtown movie houses like the Paramount and the Fox Oakland. (Both now fully restored to their past glories) Fun.

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