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Next up, the Revue One saved, and one still to go

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A community group struggling to resuscitate its defunct neighbourhood theatre, the Revue Cinema, has been given an extended deadline to come up with an opening offer after owners sold one of its other movie houses earlier this month.

The McQuillan siblings originally gave the Save the Revue committee — newly dubbed and incorporated as the Revue Film Society — until Monday to come up with a bid and sustainable business plan. But after selling the Royal Theatre July 4, they decided to push the date back to Aug. 17, giving the committee a slim, but fighting chance to collect the funds.

The group estimates it needs at least \$75,000 to cover rent, repairs, and administrative costs to reopen in September.

"We had hoped to raise \$20,000 by the end of the month as a sign of good faith we were serious. At last count we're \$4,000 short," says society chair Mark Ellwood.

"(But) now that they've sold the Royal, hopefully that eases some of the financial burden. We hope that they could comfortably hold onto the Revue (until we can afford to buy it) ... We're hopeful. The McQuillans have said they want it to stay a theatre."

After their father Peter died, the McQuillan siblings inherited three of the five Festival Cinema group cinemas — the Revue, the Royal and the Kingsway — all three unprofitable repertory movie houses. In May, they announced they would close by June 30.

Since the Revue, located at 365 Roncesvalles Ave., shut its doors, a group of 40 area residents has been working to reopen it as a not-for-profit business. Volunteers have been canvassing for donations door-to-door, selling "Save the Revue" merchandise and requesting that people contribute via their website: savetherevue.com.

"We're also looking at corporate donations, hosting sponsored events and other types of fundraising," says Sarah Kiriliuk. "In a best-case scenario, someone would buy it and let us run it. Bottom line, we want it to stay a theatre."

John Hazen, whose company Theatre D Digital purchased the Royal on College St. W., says he plans to restore it to its original 1939 grandeur and run it as a production studio during the day, while showing movies at night "as a gift to the public." This is what he and partner Dan Peel did with The Regent cinema on Mt. Pleasant Rd. in 2002.

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"Just know that the Royal has been plucked from a fate of becoming a Chapters or Indigo (as the Runnymede theatre did)," he said. "We haven't ruled out looking at the Revue. But we're only eight guys. We are expanding one theatre at a time."

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