

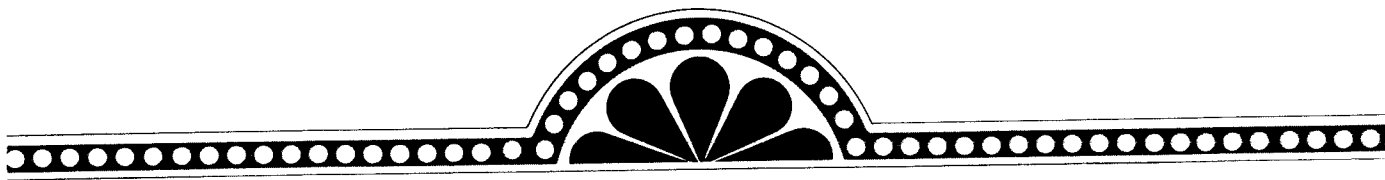
Film-Tech

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tastefully with the lobby decor. Food odors are not overwhelmingly apparent and the area around the stand is free of wrappers, gum wads, and discarded popcorn containers. After making a purchase, the Moviegoers walk into the theatre and down the aisle to find comfortable seats. If needed, an usher is there to help them. The seats are comfortable and offer an unobstructed view of the screen. As they settle down to enjoy the show, they are not aware of distracting noise from the air conditioning system or of stray light reflecting from the screen that would interfere with the artistic illusion intended. Also, someone in authority is on hand to quell any disturbance or commotion among overly exuberant patrons before it gets out of hand and shatters their involvement in the picture.

After the show, Mr. and Mrs. Moviegoer retire to the lobby and the rest rooms. On opening the rest room doors, the odor is faintly antiseptic, suggesting cleanliness. The dispensers are full and the walls are free of graffiti. The floors are clean and dry—the result of frequent inspections and maintenance. On the way home, the Moviegoers remark on the pleasant evening, the good show, and the comfort of the theatre . . . they will be back!

WITH TECHNICAL PERFORMANCE TO MATCH!

Behind the scenes, but equally important, is the technical presentation. The screen size and masking are correctly matched—no spillover on the masking or cutting off at the sides. The screen is clean and without streaks or stains. Screen brightness is within the recommended limits and sound volume is correctly adjusted.

Up in the projection room, a thoughtful projectionist regularly maintains the equipment as specified in the manuals. Worn parts are replaced when needed and the whole area is kept clean. The projectionist keeps an eye on the screen at regular intervals to check the quality of the projected screen image. Of course, the management contributes by insisting on prints in good physical condition. Someone from the front office may have a few words with the distributor from time to time, and they should know that the main



Photograph courtesy United Artists Theatre Circuit, Inc. Quintet Theatre Entrance, Eden Prairie Mall, Eden Prairie, Minnesota.

concern of the owner/operator is the regular attendance of patrons, old or new. Theatre management also provides tasteful and honest advertising in the media.

THE COMMUNITY SHOWPLACE

As part of the business community, a theatre owner shares the responsibility of such a relationship with other members of that group. A theatre that strives to be an asset to the neighborhood will have a better chance for continued success. In some areas, theatres provide special weekend matinee shows for children. The admission price is often adjusted to cover expenses only, or it includes only a minimal profit markup. Other theatres offer special prices for fixed-income patrons and the handicapped. In a broader sense, there are a variety of events and situations in which your theatre can become involved to make people aware of your community interest and presence. For example, charities, fund drives, rallies, and other similar events that need a large comfortable congregating area could benefit if a local theatre were to be made accessible.

On the other hand, economic survival has forced some theatres into showing

controversial films because of the difficulty in obtaining current releases and because of the competition from first-run houses. Even a substantial reduction in admission prices at the so-called controversial as well as other subsequent-run movie houses apparently does not deter very many patrons from seeing a new picture during its first local engagement. The impact on a neighborhood from such a choice of fare will depend on several factors (population, neighborhood economics, and promotional efforts in the media, to name a few), but communication with local civic leaders to explain economic alternatives can sometimes be beneficial. Again, some compensation might be gained by devoting some part of the theatre time to special shows and events that were mentioned earlier.



Whatever your involvement, remember that your patrons have a variety of other diversions available to them; to compete successfully, your enticement will have to suggest an extension of the comfort and convenience Mr. and Mrs. Moviegoer already have—at home.



Showmanship and the Theatre

Many years ago, the words *theater*[†] or *opera theater* suggested the highest form of entertainment to be presented. The expression *legitimate theater* brings back memories of such great names as Bernhardt, Barrymore, and Booth. At that time, the *Nickelodeon* was the only outlet for the infant novelty that has now become a major source of entertainment worldwide. Theater and movies were rarely mentioned in the same breath in those early days, but as the movie industry grew with continuously improving technology and artistic effort, a new era of acceptance developed.

As the motion picture became "legitimate" in its own right, a new showcase became available. The very successful era of vaudeville provided investors with the incentive to build many magnificent show places, and eventually these shows began to include movies along with their vaudeville fare. During this delightful period of mass entertainment, millions of patrons experienced a characteristic elegance and an overall feeling of comfort that is not universally apparent today. Regretfully, most of these "palaces" have been razed and replaced by parking lots or office buildings.



Photograph courtesy Lloyd E. Klos collection. RKO PALACE THEATRE, Rochester, New York. View from the balcony.

[†]Theater: The "er" ending is used here to indicate the legitimate theater or stage

THE TRADE-OFF

The current trend in theatres[†] appears to be multiple-screen complexes that are generally located in shopping centers. The advantages of such trends are obvious (a theatre located where people shop—and with plenty of free parking), but the trade-off for a more spartan environment can certainly take something away from that feeling of elegance that many patrons had become accustomed to. This is not to say that there are not many new and beautiful theatres today

that have retained many of these earlier attributes and added some of the innovations of the present—such as semireclining seats, double-width seats for couples, new specialized projectors, high-fidelity sound systems that seem to surround the entire audience, supersharp images, and almost unending wide screens for presentation.

[†]Theatre: The "re" ending has been adopted by the motion picture exhibitor to differentiate between the movie houses and legitimate-stage-production houses.



OLA McELHINNEY

BENTON BROTHERS STILL HAVE A STAR IN ATLANTA!

Ola McElhinney, a very special and beautiful native Atlantan has, for the past 69 years, carefully prepared high-quality entertainment and diversion for seven generations of moviegoers through her expertise as a film inspection technician.

A current estimate of Ola's 69-year accomplishment shows that she has inspected and repaired, by hand, over 1,668,833,730 feet (that's 316.067 miles—more than 12 times around the world) of 35 mm theatrical release prints.

Now in her 31st year with Benton Brothers Film Forwarding in Atlanta, Ola still attributes her continuing interest in her work to the

excellent rapport and understanding she has developed with company management. Benton Brothers manager W. H. Calloway puts it this way—"Ola is an inspiration to all of our employees and is very efficient in her job." Having recently celebrated her 88th birthday, Ola continues to work a five-day week, drives her automobile to and from work daily and, according to Mr. Calloway, had a perfect attendance record for 1983. In addition to her inspection job, Ola keeps all records of work completed in the inspection room for bookkeeping purposes.

Again, we send our best wishes and congratulations to Ola McElhinney for a job well done!

The Editors of *Film Notes for the REEL PEOPLE*



The largest segment of movie patrons today, the young people, apparently do not miss what they probably never experienced. For their parents and grandparents, however, the difference is real and the elegant environment still seems to be very important to them.

Regardless of the reasons, today's movie theatre has to compete with many diversions that are available to an increasingly selective and affluent society. Of course, there are other factors—such as admission prices, parking, and good pictures; but without an appealing attraction and the comfort, convenience, and pleasant surroundings that can be found at home or elsewhere, the inducement to go to the movies is considerably dampened. To counteract the ingrained habits of home life, your presentation has to be extra . . . on the screen as well as in the theatre.

Many of your potential patrons remember the *movie palaces* with their plush lobbies, tasteful concession stands, and polite ushers who were generally effective in controlling noisy patrons. By contrast, in some of the newer shopping-center multiple-theatre complexes, the concession stand is a major part of the lobby . . . complete with the aromas of popcorn and artificial butter! It is interesting to note, however, that many of the older theatres that have been renovated still retain the elegance and comfort for which they were initially designed.

TAKE A WALK (WITH AN OPEN MIND)

Forgetting these aspects for a minute, put yourself in the patron's shoes. Even before you enter the lobby from the outside, is the surrounding area clean or is there debris indicating a busy night at the concession stand? If you do see these indicators of good sales at the food counter, how do you react to the scene? Would you perhaps have an uneasy feeling that the inside might not be any better? Once inside, are you immediately aware of food odors? Granted, concessions are an important part of your business, but perhaps they could be isolated, along with smoking, from the atmosphere of



Photograph courtesy Lloyd E. Klos Collection. RKO PALACE THEATRE, Rochester, New York. Entrance to the lobby area.

the theatre seating area. As you walk down the aisle to find a seat, do paper wrappers and spilled popcorn crunch under your feet? Are the floors sticky from spilled soft drinks? These can be real distractions, particularly for those patrons sitting along the aisles. Are the seats you have chosen really clean?

When seated, is the picture quality a further disappointment? Is a scratched and cut-up print being projected on a streaked or stained screen by marginally maintained and poorly focused projection equipment? Is the sound sometimes unintelligible, and does the screen image flicker annoyingly? To have all this happening at one time in one theatre would certainly be a "bad scene," but any one of these problems could be enough to influence some of your patrons adversely. Previous articles on Splicing, Film Handling, Projection Techniques, and Maintenance, Kodak Publication Nos. H-50-1, H-50-2, H-50-3, and H-50-4 respectively, discuss these conditions comprehensively. We could go on and on, but let's start from the outside again and try to imagine what a typical patron would like to find.

Through the media or your own promotion, you have interested Mr. and Mrs. Moviegoer in seeing your current attraction. They leave a comfortable home (including color TV), drive to the theatre, and park in a convenient and adequately lit parking lot. They approach a well-lighted entrance that is free of debris and enter a softly lit lobby area. (This lighting emphasis is intended to point out safety, convenience, and appearance considerations that concern a great many theatre patrons.) The rugs are clean, the furniture is not shopworn, and the concession stand blends



Photograph courtesy United Artists Theatre Circuit, Inc. Multiplex Theatre Lobby Entrance, Ann Arbor, Michigan.