

## Multiple Sound Station Plan to be Revealed in October **SHOWMAN**

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The following statement in reply to Harold B. Franklin's letter, published in **MOTION PICTURE NEWS** of August 18, has been made to the editors by Victor A. Rigamont, Architect, the first installment of whose illustrated article on a new and revolutionary plan of amplified sound distribution for theatres appeared in **THE SHOWMAN** for August.)

**I** HAVE read, with great interest, Mr. Harold B. Franklin's criticism of my sound distribution idea as presented in the August "Showman." I agree that the questions he raises are to be expected because the idea of sound distribution is as revolutionary as the sound picture itself was but a short while back.

It is just with the cooperation of such imaginative and practical leaders as Mr. Franklin that "ideas which will not work out at all" are made to

function efficiently. My conclusions, reached after a scientific investigation of theatre acoustics, clearly demonstrate that sound distribution should logically be by multiple station "soft speakers" and not loud speakers.

A technical discussion of details now would be lengthy and would not be as interesting as the article I am preparing for the October "Showman" describing and illustrating the super theatre of twelve thousand seats, made possible by sound pictures.

Super theatres of this size, with proper sound distribution, will interest Harold Franklin, William Fox, Joseph Kennedy, Carl Laemmle, Nicholas Schenck and Publix.

V. A. Rigamont

## Says Organ is Just as Much "Box Office" as it Was Before He Installed Sound

**A** MONG the many questions regarding a future which is certain to be greatly changed because of the perfection of synchronized speech and music for motion pictures is "will the organ pass out as a feature of presentations in the motion picture theatre?"

Many there are who look toward a day when the show will be wholly mechanical, when the music, the vocal acts as well as the feature pictures will "come out of the can and onto the screen as perfected entertainment of popular appeal." Those who take that position as well as those who are admittedly "up in the air" naturally have no great confidence in the organ's future.

Possibly the day when the show will be wholly mechanical is just around the corner, but it is well to bear in mind that while the synchronized and the talking picture is more or less in the experimental stage, so far as the reaction of the public to it is concerned, as well as the ultimate trend it will take as a dramatic form and the method of its presentation, that we already have some precedent and a little tradition, upon which to base considerations of the future in the experience of theatres which have been presenting "sound pictures" off and on for several months or even more than a year.

For that reason it is worth while to consider a typical case, to look into it and discover what may be said by those who are familiar with it about the future as gauged by the present and the immediate past—particularly with regard to organ.

A theatre located in the Bronx—the only one in the Metropolitan district outside of Broadway—which has been presenting sound pictures since and including the general release of "The Jazz Singer" would seem to yield some facts worthy of consideration. The theatre referred to is the Park Plaza located at University Ave. and Tremont St., the Bronx. It is a comparatively new house, designed by Eugene de Rosa and planned in accordance with the new idea in picture theatres. It has an air conditioning installation of the newest type, luxuriously furnished lounges and fine equipment for projection.

The Park Plaza was first operated by Universal, but later that company relinquished control of the house to the builder.

Its ascendancy to success from the box office standpoint—it is now regarded the most profitable house in the Metropolitan district outside of Broadway—dates to the time when sound equipment was installed, though other progressive policies were instituted at that same time.

**I**T is managed by Louis La Rocca, a young man but a veteran of ten years experience in managing theatres of the neighborhood type in New York City. La Rocca has managed the house since its opening and knows the situation thoroughly.

This department sought him out to give his views on the future of the style of picture theatre presentations which include

sound pictures, based on his observation, information and experience with and without "sound" at the Park Plaza. We were particularly interested in learning what he had thought about the composition of the program which included sound pictures and organ and orchestra features.

**W**E have cut down on our orchestra," Mr. La Rocca said, but we cannot eliminate that because such music is needed for our vaudeville acts, which we are continuing even when we have a sound feature and the regular two short Vitaphone acts we include in every bill. We continue our organ as a feature, and our organ solos are stressed as features in advertising—in newspapers, billing and screen ads, just as they were before the Park Plaza was wired for sound reproduction.

"From what we have seen at the theatre I hardly think that the organ will diminish in its long established power as a feature that has a wide appeal in conjunction with motion picture presentations.

"We have an organist who enjoys a wide reputation as a musician and whose popularity with the patrons of the Park Plaza is an important factor in the drawing power of the house and the satisfaction which the programs as a whole give to the patrons. He is Andre Halphen, well known in musical circles and well versed in theatre organ technique and 'showmanship.'

"Our standard programs consist of an

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organ solo (five or six minutes), news reel (silent and Movietone), four vaudeville acts, two Vitaphone acts, and the feature picture. We have eliminated the orchestral overture, but never have thought of eliminating the organ solo, because it is not only too well established as a popular 'act' but also continues to harmonize effectively with the screen and stage program, despite the development of sound accompanied films. I do not believe that the wholly 'canned' show will be popular for a very long time, if ever it is. The theatre will always need its personality, and that individuality which always has been a factor in its success. The individual 'touch' cannot be given without the addition to the program of some individual piece of entertainment, some element of the show itself, and the organ always has ruled supreme, so far as the houses below the big downtown class are concerned, in accomplishing this result."

La Rocca says that while the vaudeville acts—which, by the way, he offers in the form of a "presentation" rather than as unrelated units—are continued because they are needed at the Park Plaza, that they are not the factor in drawing people to the house as is the feature pic-

ture, which ranks first, and the Vitaphone acts.

He said that one of the obligations added to the burden of the showman by the new sound pictures is honest dealing on another score—that being the clear-cut statement in all advertisements as to whether a "sound picture" merely has a synchronized score, synchronized score and "sound effects" or talking sequences or full dialogue features.

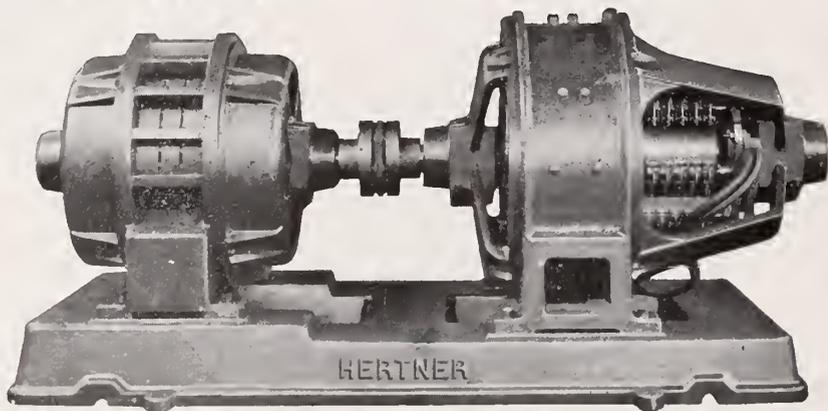
Regarding the advisability of selling the sound installation by describing fully the method whereby the sound reproduction is accomplished—a question which has been raised by several exhibitors who believe such information may result in killing the perfect illusion which the synchronized picture should create—La Rocca said he did not believe anything was gained by such publicity. "If they want to know about it, they will ask, and when patrons come to me and ask to be shown the machinery I show them about, just as I do the patrons, and there are many of them, who are curious to see the machines we have for 'manufacturing weather'."

The Park Plaza changes programs weekly. The admissions are fifty cents week days and seventy-five cents on Sun-

days. The patronage is drawn from a residential district largely populated by professional men and prosperous business men and their families. La Rocca says that he has received the highest type of service on Vitaphone and Movietone films and from the service department of Electrical Research company on inspection and repair of the sound apparatus. He has shown "The Jazz Singer," "Tenderloin," "Glorious Betsy," "Lights of New York," and "Street Angel," in addition to weekly offerings of two Vitaphone acts and a Movietone newsreel, without a single break or interruption in the show. He played a return engagement of "The Jazz Singer," because he wanted to keep the sound feature going during a space when no other dialogue and sound accompanied picture was available, and took in a bigger gross than the picture did on its original presentation, though that total set a new record for the Park Plaza.

## Organist Leading Feature at Palace, Jacksonville

Bob Mitchell, organist at the Palace theatre, Jacksonville, is now broadcasting twice a week—on Saturdays at noon from the Palace and Thursday, from 8 to 8:30, from the Bob Mitchell Organ School. Bob's fans keep him busy with mail and phone calls. During the Thursday evening programs the two telephones averaged two calls per minute until the end of the allotted time, asking for special numbers.



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