

Performance Practices for Photoplaying at Three Texas Motion Picture Palaces

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Paper Abstract

Rick Altman writes that by the mid-1920s, cinema music directors and musicians had come to rely heavily on published suggestions and cue sheets.¹ Yet there is very little published documentation about exactly how and when these cue sheets or suggestions were used. Just as full scores issued by the studios for films were often jettisoned for simpler and technically easier compilations (such as was done for *Joan the Woman* in 1916)², ignored or discarded in favor of cue sheet versions (*The Thief of Bagdad*, 1925, was released with both a full orchestral score and a cue sheet for pianists and organists to use), abridged, and edited, cue sheets were likewise modified or even ignored. By examining cue sheets once owned and used by silent cinema accompanists, however, we can create a more accurate biography of musical suggestions and their use in silent cinema performances. Here I survey cue sheets and suggestions from the collection of Hazel Burnett, the film accompanist at the Majestic Theater in Austin and the Queen Theater and the Aztec in San Antonio during the 1920s. I explore Burnett's markings and edits of cue sheets and suggested music and compare her original compilations with those published by established trade industry magazines and studios, offering an analysis of musical prescriptions versus actual performance practices in large movie houses.

¹ Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 353.

² Kendra Preston Leonard, "Using Resources for Silent Film Music," *Fontes Artis Musicae* 63, no. 4 (October-December 2016).