

Theater Engineering Conference

Promotional Display

Display Frames in the Motion Picture Theater*

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Summary—There is no need to enter upon the importance of displaying advertising in a theater. The reasons are too well known by all; but, the number of frames, type and size, are worth considering in planning the installation of display frames.

WHILE THERE EXISTS no history of the events leading to the evolution of the display frame, it may have begun with a fanfare of trumpets, followed by a courier announcing a message, meant to reach as many as possible; and when in later years we learned to read, the rescript was fastened to the side of a prominent building, thus starting the oldest form of what we know today as "billposting." There is still with us, on highways, barns, roof tops, and sides of buildings, in the form of 24 sheets and smaller sizes of lithographs, hand lettering, electric signs, and other forms of displays.

The earliest print, I have seen, of a theater with posters on each side of the entrance, was the Globe Theater in London, where plays were written and produced by Shakespeare.

Our own "Opera House" of yesterday used the three-sheet lithographed posters, 40 × 80 inches in size, pasting them to "House Boards" in front and around the theater. Such boards consisted of a wood backing with trim molding around the perimeter. Posters were pasted on over another, as each attraction played the theater.

This method was used by the first theaters showing motion pictures; and, as producers and film exchanges started renting one-sheet and three-sheet lithographs, 11- × 14-inch photographs, and similar material, with a rebate upon their return in good condition, a need was apparent for their display without pasting. Thereupon, this

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was done by thumbtacking, and in order to protect them from embryo artists and weather, a glass door was hung in place, the forerunner of today's display frames.

The number of frames is dependent on space available, as well as the policy of the theater, whether playing single or double features, and the number of changes per week. Frames, each side of entrance to theater, are always for "NOW SHOWING." Additional frames, on the front or side of the theater, may be used for "NOW PLAYING" or "NEXT ATTRACTIONS," those in the vestibule are usually for "NEXT ATTRACTIONS," and those in lobby and foyer for "COMING." It is important that all frames be equipped to take the same layout of advertising material, so that the advertising may progress from COMING to NEXT ATTRACTION, to NOW SHOWING, without additional purchases, or having some of it left over in the manager's office. The total number of frames required for any theater cannot be worked out by formula, but from the foregoing, six frames, or two for each category, such as COMING, is the minimum.

Types of frames are usually of wood or metal; wood frames should be of hard wood, such as walnut, oak, or birch. Metal frames should be of such material as will obviate polishing, and aluminum should be anodized to prevent oxidation and pitting.

With the indirect illumination of lobby and foyers with cove lighting and pinpoint downlights, it has become necessary that display frames be illuminated from within. Contemplated theaters should make necessary provisions for this by providing recesses, and carrying electrical outlets to them. In an existing theater, if cutting recesses in the walls, or furring the walls to create room for shadow boxes is inadvisable, display frames can be built out with suitable depth, creating shadow boxes within the display frame itself.

The front or-outside frames should be illuminated, even though the marquee may furnish sufficient light for readability of advertising matter; this is done to create a point of interest at all times, and especially when the marquee ceiling is not lit, as, between the time the box office closes and the break of the show. If fluorescent tubes are used for outside, they should be the low-temperature ones, to insure proper starting in cold weather.

Fluorescent lighting and cold cathode are the two best media, embodying maximum illumination with less current consumption and a minimum amount of heat. Where sufficient recess depth of shadow box is available, approximately 12 inches, incandescent lights of 150

watts set in reflectors top and bottom, 9 inches on centers, are very effective. Fluorescent and cold cathode should be installed on all four sides, for an even distribution of light.

The size of frames is dependent upon policy and the number of changes for each theater. It is important, however, to use frames as large as possible, consistent with architecture and ceiling height. Frames should be a minimum of 40 × 60 inches and a maximum of 40 × 80 inches inside for the individual frame with hinging sash. One opening sliding-glass frame can be 10 to 16 feet long and 72 inches high, glass size. The latter type should have but one sliding glass to each track, to prevent chipping and breakage.

Since advertising material today is well standardized, equipment inside the frame to receive such advertising is easily arranged. Where double features are played, it is desirable to equip a frame to take advertising of both pictures. Prominence can be given to one picture with stills or 11 × 14's of the cofeature. An ideal layout is a 30- × 40-inch, date strip, cofeature title card, and two stills.

Poster exchanges and frame manufacturers will be pleased to work out sizes of frames required for various layouts. Auxiliary stand frames can be used in a prominent location, to advertise a coming attraction, a list of future coming titles, or institutional copy. In some localities, building and public-assembly bureaus frown on stand frames, classifying them as hazards.

Another type of display is the banner, or reader board; this is a frame set above the entrance doors, and is used for COMING, NEXT ATTRACTION; and when placed above the first set of doors on the street side, NOW PLAYING. Lobby banner frames may have a trough of fluorescent or cold-cathode strips, top and bottom, or both, for greater visibility. To realize the maximum from this type of frame, it is advisable to have more than one banner board to progress the material.