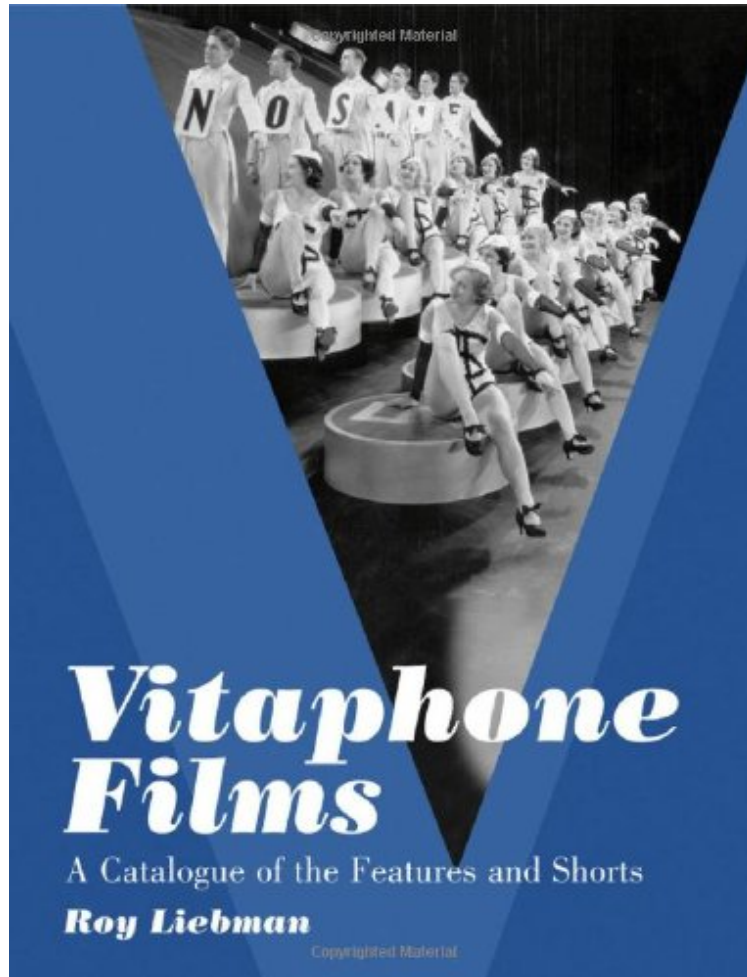


(Free) Vitaphone Films: A Catalogue of the Features and Shorts

## Vitaphone Films: A Catalogue of the Features and Shorts

*Roy Liebman*

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**Roy Liebman : Vitaphone Films: A Catalogue of the Features and Shorts** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Vitaphone Films: A Catalogue of the Features and Shorts:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Vitaphone Films by Roy LiebmanBy Charles BraunThe book is all encompassing in the works of the Vitaphone movies and recordings. Very well written with many fine photographs of some of the stars that acted in them.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A MAJOR AND IMPORTANT BOOKBy Stephen Michael ShearerThis is a book I herald as one of the most important film catalogs available today. VITAPHONE FILMS A CATALOG OF THE FEATURES AND SHORTS written and compiled by Roy Liebman, is a thoroughly concise, accurate, totally absorbing catalog complete with rare photographs, listing every Vitaphone film short and feature film produced in its long history.Beginning in 1926 up until 1970, Vitaphone produced nearly 1000 film shorts, and innumerable feature pictures. When sound first came into popularity in the late 1920s, Vitaphone, sanctioned by Hollywoods Warner Bros. Studios led the way in recording both on film and on disc the miracle of

music and sound. Accompanying the first sound feature released in August 1926, Warner Bros. DON JUAN starring John Barrymore and Mary Astor, was a series of sound shorts (one-reelers) showcasing the likes of The New York Philharmonic Orchestra, opera diva Marion Talley, violinist Efrem Zimbalist (father of Efrem Zimbalist Jr. of TV fame), and movieland censor czar Will Hays speaking directly to the audience. Sound had come permanently to cinema. The following year Warner Bros. released THE JAZZ SINGER, actually a part-talkie, which revolutionized the motion picture industry, and as they say history was made. What Vitaphone historically produced were one-, and later two-reeler film shorts, which today are priceless and invaluable as they captured the artistry of some of the greatest Vaudevillians and entertainers of all time. As Vaudeville itself died out, these film shorts recorded and preserved the art of entertainment by highlighting legendary yet long-forgotten stage, opera, dance, band and orchestra, and radio personalities as Weber and Fields, Lillian Roth, Hal Leroy, Ethel Waters, Lita Grey Chaplin, the Duncan Sisters, Jane Froman, Blossom Seeley, Baby Rose Marie, George Burns Gracie Allen, The Nicholas Brothers, and Ruth Etting, as well as such future film stars as Joan Blondell, James Cagney, Bob Hope, June Allyson, Betty Hutton, James Stewart, and Spencer Tracy, in rarely seen early film appearances. And these are but just a few. (In the above mentioned Lita Grey Chaplin short SEASONED GREETINGS appears Sammy Davis Jr. and unbilled, young stage actor Robert Cummings.) Through the dedicated efforts of such film historians as Ron Hutchinson of The Vitaphone Project, film library curators Leith Adams and Ned Comstock, a great many of these film shorts have been preserved through various fundings. In some cases, either the sound-on-disc, the film itself, or even both, are missing and thus the film short is presumed lost. However, each year more and more of these elements are discovered, through film archives here and abroad, and from various collectors, making historically available our very entertainment culture. Turner Classic Movies, and Warner Home Video, are major exponents in the showing of these amazing Vitaphone treats and making them available to the public. Though this tome is not a complete compendium on Vitaphone, with lengthy backstory to every filming, each film detailed with photographs, reviews, or interviews with the participants, it is justifiably the best book on the subject so far. What author/historian Roy Liebman, through the remarkable auspices of publisher McFarland, has produced is an accounting of these films, complete with cast and crew listings, brief synopsis, release dates, and catalog numbers. Truly, VITAPHONE FILMS A CATALOGUE OF THE FEATURES AND SHORTS is a major contribution to film history, and should be obtained by every film historian, writer, and aficionado of the Golden Age of Hollywood and Vaudeville.

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Keep your eyes open for cheaper "used" prices... a great reference. By CustomerAs the title states, this is a "catalogue" of films given Vitaphone reference numbers. Included are major features from "Don Juan" to "Woodstock", along with the animated Looney Tunes and Merry Melodies (excluding Private Snafu). However, the information on these is quite brief. You'll need to check out Clive Hirschorn's "The Warner Bros. Story", Leonard Maltin's "Of Mice And Magic" and Jerry Beck and Will Friedwald's "A Complete Guide" if that's what you're seeking. No matter. The primary focus (and the reason this book is a valuable reference) concerns the studio's "live-action short subjects". Apart from the equally expensive US Copyright (Library Of Congress) textbooks and the 1972 "Selected Short Subjects" (another Maltin book), there is virtually NOTHING out there concerning this vastly neglected genre. Need to identify all of the "Sports Parade" one-reelers not listed on the Internet Movie Database? Here's your source. Also included are a number of shorts not registered for copyright or given a proper theatrical release. A quick glance reveals that Warner Bros./Vitaphone rivaled Universal and Paramount as the most prolific Hollywood short producer of the 1920s and '30s (although a great many were actually filmed in New York). They utilized synchronized sound a full year before "The Jazz Singer" (another Warner film) and the '20s shorts showcase all of the biggest vaudeville and pop music stars of the period. Technicolor production starts at the Hollywood/Burbank facilities in 1929 and increases after "full" 3-color was available for "Good Morning Eve" and other 1934 Leon Errol and El Brendel comedy-musicals. After New York's Vitaphone facilities close in 1940, there are still many glossy featurettes and musicals churning out in California like "Jammin' The Blues" and "Star In The Night", along with the wonderful Joe McDoakes comedies. However, the post war emphasis seems to be on documentaries (those "Sports Parades" were pretty cheap to make, despite being filmed in color); the last original series were CinemaScope "Scope Gem" travelogues from 1955-57. The sixties saw the declining years of Daffy Duck and Cool Cat and a few independent documentaries. (Good thing the studio had "Bonnie And Clyde".) OK. It is easy to be nit-picky about this book. As great as those film stills are, it would have been even better if some post-1935 pics were also included. Also, the text gets a little sloppy in places: for example, not all of the Technicolor shorts are identified as such. I'm thinking that author Liebman was initially limited in his resources and should consider publishing a "revised" update with additional information, especially since Turner Classic Movies and Warner Home Video's DVDs are only now making available all of those miniature nuggets that once played along-side "Casablanca" and Bugs Bunny.

The headline of the Variety extra on October 27, 1926, proclaimed "Vitaphone1 Thrills L.A.!" Vitaphone, a subsidiary of Warner Bros. formed in association with Western Electric, was one of the major producers of talkies, even though its sound-on-disc technology barely lasted four years. The Vitaphone features and shorts that have survived intact, or

that have been so carefully restored, preserve much of the show business history that might otherwise have been lost with the industry's fast-paced advances in movie making. This book is a catalogue of Vitaphone features and shorts. The first section lists the features and shorts by release number. The New York productions (1926-1940) are listed first, followed by the West Coast productions (1927-1970). For shorts, the following particulars, if known and if applicable, are given: title, alternate title(s), instrumental and vocal selections performed on screen, composer(s) and performers of instrumental and vocal selections, release date and synopsis of the film, names of major cast members and directors, set information if two or fewer sets were used, and the amount paid to early performers. For features, entries list release dates, genre, and major cast members. The section on performers includes only those who appeared in shorts, listing dates and places of birth when known.

"A comprehensive list." --Classic Images"Useful." --ArbaAbout the AuthorRoy Liebman, formerly a librarian and film bibliographer at California State University, works at the Los Angeles Public Library. He is the author of several reference books on the cinema, published by McFarland. A book reviewer for Library Journal and Magill Online s, he lives in California.