



BOOK REVIEW

AMERICAN THEATRES OF TODAY by R.W. Sexton and B.F. Betts. Text plus 280 pictures, 318 plans, drawings and renderings. 360 pages. Vestal Press, Box 97, Vestal, N.Y. 13850. \$35 (New York State residents must add 7% sales tax.)

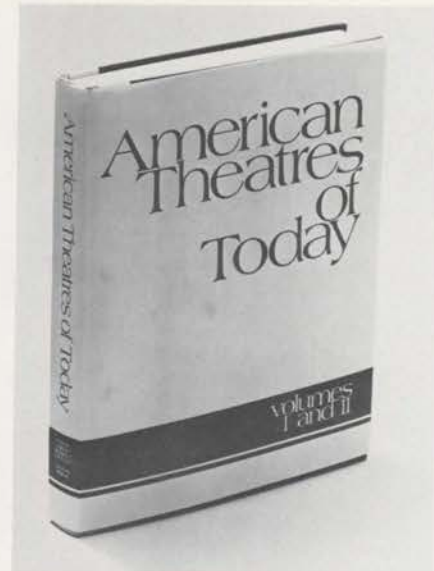
by Lloyd E. Klos

In 1927 and 1930, messrs Sexton and Betts, associate editors of *The American Architect* magazine, compiled two volumes on theatres — from the neighborhood houses to the motion picture palaces — which included construction details, plans and pictures of structures in existence and in the planning stage.

When Ben Hall was researching material for his *Best Remaining Seats* in the fifties, he was hard-put to find material already written on the subject of theatres. The two Sexton-Betts volumes were extremely difficult to locate; in 1958, one volume alone was selling at \$50 in antique bookstores! However, Ben was successful in acquiring copies of each work and upon his death, they were donated to the Theatre Historical Society. Vestal Press has combined them into a limited-edition reprint and it behooves the theatre buff to secure a copy, because in all probability, it will not be re-issued.

Beginning with the original forward by the man whose name was synonymous with the motion picture place, "Roxy" himself, the book features pictures and plans of over 100 theatres in 46 cities and towns in 21 states.

Every facet of theatre construction is covered — from ground layout to final exterior and interior design. All the appurtenances within the building are touched: the stage, fly gallery, orchestra pit, organ chambers, projection room, screen, sight lines,



lighting, heating, ventilation and cooling. Psychology was extensively used when designing theatres as a vehicle to encourage increased patronage.

The text devoted to the organ asserts that "the pipe organ is now considered essential equipment for all motion picture theatres." Placement, size and height of pipe chambers, shutter openings, and chamber walls are discussed. "The organ equipment should be determined before the plans are too far advanced so that the space and arrangement essential for correct installation may be developed in conjunction with the organ builder." In 20 of the book's pictures, organ consoles are plainly visible.

Other chapters include "Tendencies in Present-day Theatre Design," "Planning a Theatre," "Decoration," "Electrical Installation," and "Acoustics." There is a two-page check list of items necessary for theatre operation.

Summing it up, this book is ideal for anyone who is seriously considering building a theatre (in these times?) or operating one. For those not so inclined, but who are devoted theatre buffs, *American Theatres of Today* should be a welcome addition to one's reference library. □

DUES ARE DUE!
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Rosemary Bailey entertains in the Hammond show-room. (Stufoto)

deer made many fleeting appearances but the raccoons hammed it up nightly with their floor shows designed to mooch goodies from the accommodating humans.

Were there any standouts? If audience acclaim is indicative the winner would be David Kelsey. Playing a Baldwin and piano spread-eagled, Dave's concert often sounded like the best moments of Ev Nourse and Frank Denke (Bay Area piano-organ favorites). His stylings and program caught the Festivaleers where they live.

Others who scored high in concert were Bob Birnstihl, Larry Vannucci, Dwight Beacham, Rosemary Bailey (wonderful on jazz), Carol Jones, Bud Iverson, Bruce Erikson, Dan Bellomy, Weldon Flanagan, Jonas Nordwall, Tom Hazleton, Joyce Clifford, Glenn Derringer and Bill Thomson (especially during his well-conceived workshops).

The HOF 1978 committee is already making plans for the next Festival, so get those applications in early. It's a pleasant experience — even for a pipe purist.

Always popular Larry Vannucci played his concert on an Allen model. Larry has been a frequent Festival concert artist since the Festival's Hoberg days. (Stufoto)

