

## One of Country's Finest

*Loew's new Midland theatre in Kansas City seats 4,000 and was built at a total cost of \$4,000,000. It is a combination stagemovie and picture house.*

# 4,000 Seat Loew Theatre Opens in Kansas City



**L**OEW'S new Midland theatre in Kansas City, recently opened, is a magnificent work of theatre architecture in which the patron of the motion picture may find the atmosphere of romance and luxury.

The Midland offers to Kansas City a theatre which ranks with the finest in the country, and in appreciation the premiere brought to the house the elite of the city, who crowded and jammed into the \$4,000,000 structure, which seats only 4,000. Kansas City has seen many an auspicious opening, but never anything like the opening of the Midland.

The men who built the theatre thought they had erected a big auditorium until they stuck their heads out of their office windows early the day of the opening to find themselves surrounded by people.

Most of Kansas City seemed anxious to attend the opening night. The first man at the ticket window announced he had arrived there at 4 o'clock that morning and was rewarded by being sold four good seats on the first floor. Long before noon the 4,000 seats in the auditorium had been sold. Only four seats were allowed to a person.

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The line with its head at the ticket window on Main street stretched around the corner of Thirteenth street up the block to Baltimore and on up Baltimore to Twelfth street. It was evidently a thrill-hungry crowd. Persons held bills in their hands that there might be no rummaging for exact change when the house opened. Several platoons of messenger boys were in line to get tickets for those who could not devote the morning to securing them. Several policemen were required to maintain the line and see that there was no cheating for places.

Broadway and Hollywood met in Kansas City the opening night and found it open hearted. There were three visiting film stars, there were speeches, there was an orchestra that rose right out of the floor, mind you, and there was no end of pretty girls.

From the way they all talked it was



quite an event for them, and there is no question about what it was for Kansas City. It has been a long time since Kansas City had had a genuine "first night," in the sense one considers the term in New York or Hollywood. So it was small wonder that everyone was there

—including the mayor, who stood at the edge of the balcony to say how proud he was of the theatre and the men who made it possible, and of the unidentified hero who got up at 4 o'clock to buy the first ticket.

So it was a social as well as an entertaining evening. Long before the lights were turned down the lobby and promenade were filled with guests and patrons inspecting the house.

Kansas City investigated every walnut panel and every marble recess and decided the owners got their money's worth. It is the only theatre in America where one steps upon carpet immediately after entering the house. There are chairs where one may sit and imagine himself a czar and there are ceilings upon which one can read Latin and imagine himself a Caesar.

Crystal chandeliers hang from ceilings decorated with cherubs and roses. Walnut walls are broken by towering mirrors. The grand staircase has posts of marble and balustrades of bronze. Oil paintings create spots of color on the walls and lions and heroes are wrestling on the console tables just where the hands of sculptors arrested them.

\* \* \*

All of that kept the show from opening promptly at 8 o'clock, but no one had expected it to anyway. There was a round of applause when the big front curtain went up and there was a breath of astonishment as the orchestra, on its elevating platform, rose grandly up from the pit. That was a novelty to Kansas City and it approved the novelty. It saved this enthusiasm throughout the entire overture, which was Tschaiowsky's "Marche Slav," with Rubinoff as guest conductor. Behind the musicians delicate lighting effects were thrown on a silver curtain.

Then came a film of greetings, and another telling graphically the story of the building's construction. After that the news reel showed pictures of Lindbergh, of the Yale-Army game, and other interesting persons and events. An enlarged screen was brought into play while scenes from motor races were

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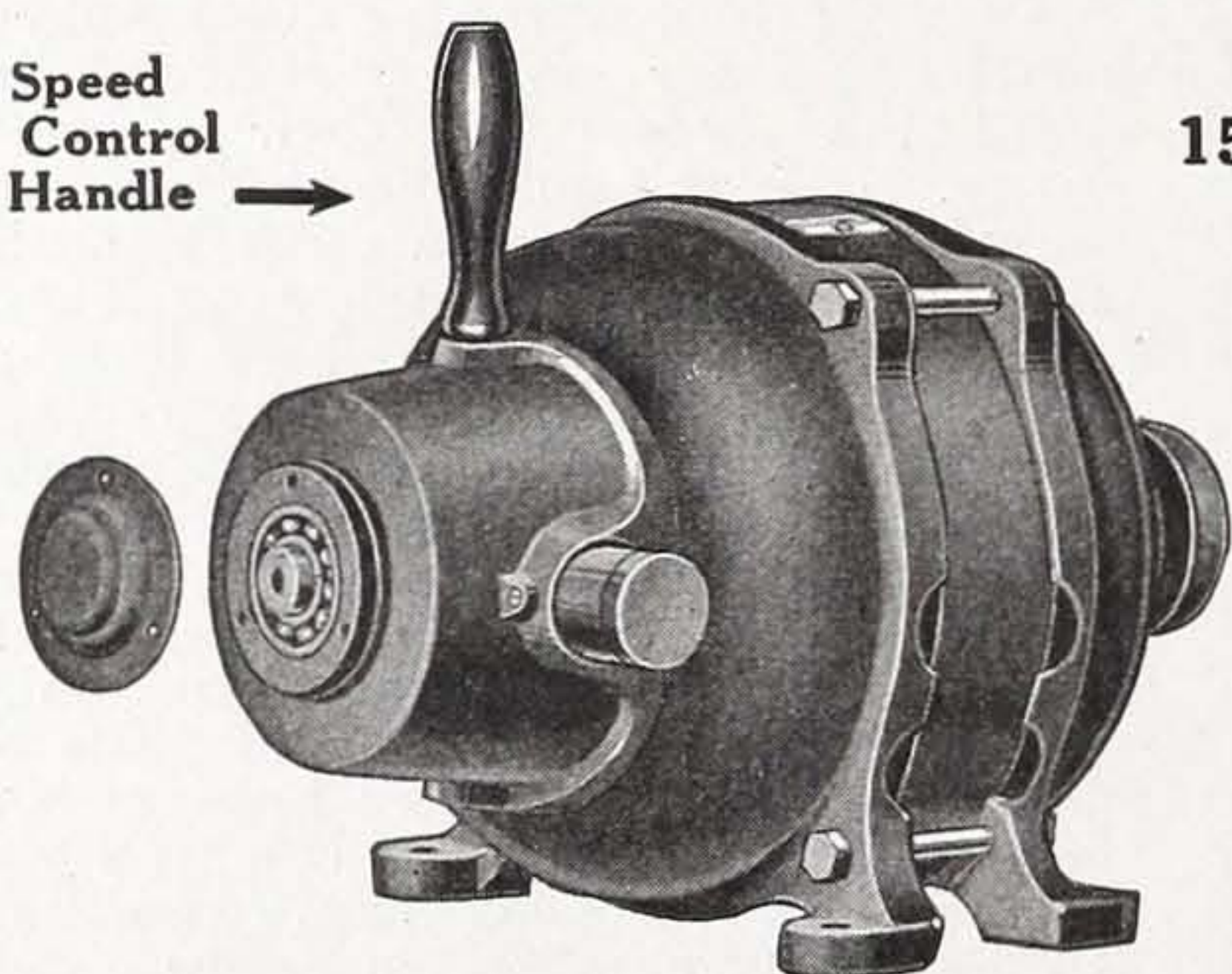
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shown. The huge screen gives such scenes a splendid effect of reality.

After having been delighted at the sight of Rubinoff riding on his elevated platform, the audience gave him a cordial greeting as he stepped out on the stage to play his composition, "Dance of the Russian Peasants," and a diverting arrangement of "Hallelujah."

And so went the entertainment; always a bit novel, variegated and fast moving. P. Hans Flath, at the organ, played an arrangement of popular airs calculated to set forth the history of Kansas City, and there were two tableaux of "The Scout," once as a tribesman and once as the bronze statue in Penn Valley Park. A short reel of sea wonders from the Ufa studios in Germany introduced an educational topic in an amusing fashion.

\* \* \*

Then came Anatole Friedland, once the operator of a highly decorated night club on Manhattan Island. He concocted a bubbly offering of singing, dancing and patter which he served up in a manner that made even the most abstemious members of the audience applaud with just a tinge of hilarity.

When the last dancing girl had cut her capers and the last song had been sung the real business of dedicating Loew's new Midland theatre was undertaken. Mayor Beach was called upon for a speech.

In a brief address he complimented Herbert M. Woolf, vicepresident of the Midland Investment Company, and his associates on the work they had done and wished them success. That was followed by a similar wish by H. F. McElroy, city manager, and then by the introduction of Mr. Woolf, who made a modest response that befitted so lavish a host. Colonel Edward A. Schiller, vicepresident of Loew's, Inc., then told a lot of interesting things about Mr. Woolf's part in the building of the theatre which Mr. Woolf himself had omitted.

"In magnificence," Mr. Schiller said, "this theatre is equal to any theatre in the world. I don't mean that to be an expansive statement. I have seen most of the imposing houses and I believe this performs the important function of combining good taste with luxury better than any of them."

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"The thing this house represents to me," he said, "is the efforts of our company to keep pace with the tendencies of the amusement business. The development of the motion picture has brought many changes, and among them have been the necessity for theatres such as this."

"Do you know what the most revolutionary influence in film exhibition is today? I will tell you. It is the fact that the theatre-goer can leave his home at any hour of the day or evening and go directly to the theatre to find a show in progress. Formerly there were two shows in a day with the audience shifting at the close of each show. The continuous show, if it is a good one, will find people moving in and out throughout the run of the day. Some of them may have to wait for seats. Some of them may want to wait until the beginning of the picture or to meet a friend. There are one hundred reasons why the various parts of the house must at all times be comfortable and presentable.

"The center of interest in the theatre has spread out from the auditorium to other parts of the house. As the theatre is a place where the majority seeks an atmosphere of romance, luxury and well being, it would not pay to keep your audience waiting in any atmosphere but

that. They must not only be comfortable, but they must be placed in a good humor. Roast beef properly served and garnished seems just a trifle more palatable than the same roast beef thrown before you in a 'hashery.' Of course, it must be good roast beef. No matter how fine we make our theatres our entertainment is what we must sell to the public. Novelty and curiosity will not pay out on a \$4,000,000 investment. If we give inferior shows in this house the advantage its grandeur provides soon would be lost. You may be sure we contemplate no such mistake.

\* \* \*

"The motion picture seems to be the keystone of all amusement at this time. It has discounted many of the legitimate theatre's values. It has taught the public the difference between a crowded street and a painted back-drop. It has substituted real engines for pasteboard outlines and it has replaced synthetic effects with realism."

Then came the introduction of Ramond Novarro, Aileen Pringle and Charles "Buddy" Rogers, screen stars, who made brief talks.

The Midland represents the most extensive endeavor in ornamental plaster work ever attempted in a theatre. Silk tapestry fibre, walnut paneling and marble, as well as elaborately wrought and highly colored plaster were used to give what is intended to be, and undoubtedly is, a gorgeous effect.

The decorations are in the baroque style of Louis XIV. They were designed by Emil Milnar, and the work was in the hands of Rambusch Decorating Company of New York. O. E. Jansson was the representative of that company on the job. Gold leaf and silver leaf were used extensively in decorating the plaster work. In all, 6,500,000 square inches of these precious metals in the thin leaf form were used in the theatre. Gold, French blue and ivory are the predominating colors.

\* \* \*

The plaster work is the most extensive, the most exacting phase of the decoration. Fifteen skilled sculptors worked out the wall detail in clay and from these were made molds of glue in which the ornamental plaster wall pieces were made by 100 workmen. They have iron frames which are tied to the metal lath behind them. These wall surfaces are particularly elaborate in detail. Some are conventional patterns, but the majority are very elaborate. There are some 30 panels in the theatre walls in which mural paintings were placed. An artist was busy at this task. Some paintings of considerable intrinsic value are hung in prominent places in the big theatre.

The grand foyer of the theatre is a room of imposing area and decoration. The feature is a mirror 36 feet high. A dome at the ceiling of this room is 53 feet above the carpeted floor. Walls are paneled in walnut above a maple base. There are some noteworthy statuary groups in this room. The height of the ceiling is particularly striking. The great dome of the ceiling is nearly 100 feet above the level of the orchestra seats. A five-story apartment building might be set in the middle of the room and the dome ceiling would clear its roof. From the center of the dome hangs a great chandelier of bronze and crystal, 14 feet in diameter and 24 feet long. This is merely a detail of the extensive lighting facilities, however. Lights of 4-shade tones enable striking effects off, as well as on, the stage.

Probably the most bizarre note of the theatre is to be found in the women's smoking room, just off the women's retiring room, or parlor, which, in turn,



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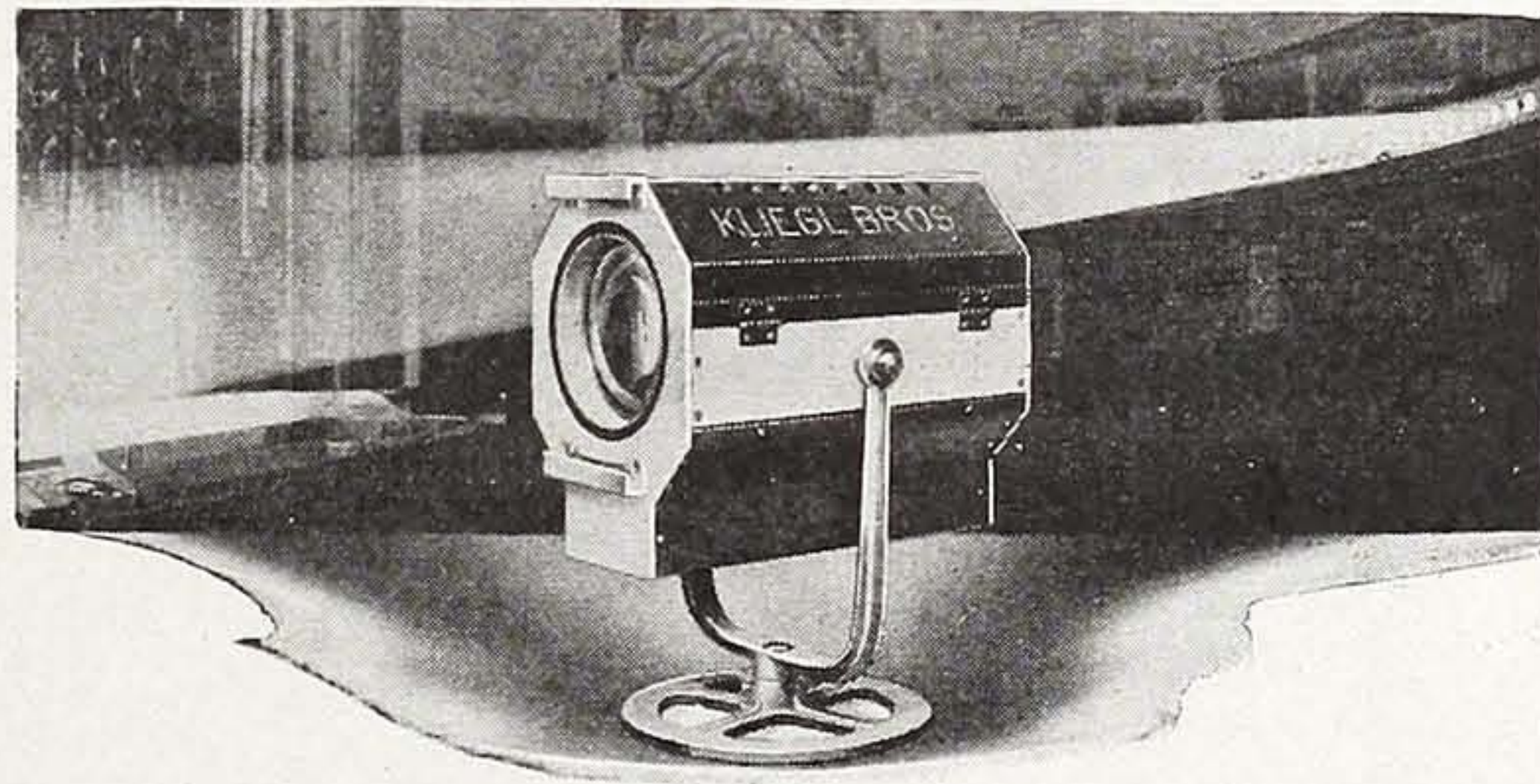
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is just off the main lounge. In this room wall surfaces of mosaic color were installed. The mosaic glass work and marble pillars were taken from one of the Vanderbilt mansions in New York.

\* \* \*

Not the least imposing part of the theatre is the service feature. It has its own transformer station and the electric current it uses would be sufficient for a city of 25,000 population. The machinery of the cooling system is equivalent to that of an ice plant with a daily capacity of 500 tons. A spray pond used in connection with this system forms a little lake atop the building. The same air ducts are used for carrying cooled and warm air as the season demands.

The Miner D. Woodling Heating & Ventilating Company, of Kansas City, installed the ventilating system, while the Carbondale Carbonic Refrigerating System provided the cooling for air conditioning. The seats of heavy leather upholstery were furnished by the American Seating Company, while in the booth are to be found Simplex projection machines. The plumbing and heating was installed by the U. S. Supply Company, of Kansas City, and the roof to the theatre was furnished by the Welch-Sandler Cement Company, Inc., of Kansas City. Warsaw elevators play their part in the house, while the grand stairs in the lobby came from Rogers-Schmitt Wire & Iron Company, of St. Louis. Carpets came from Hardwick & Magee Company, Philadelphia, while cement work was done with Victor cement. The Cook Paint Company, of Kansas City, furnished gallon after gallon of paint. The general contract of the theatre was handled by Boaz-Kiel Construction Company, of St. Louis. A huge Robert Morton organ is one of the outstanding features of the house.

\* \* \*

Leather doors between the main entrance and the auditorium insure quiet and the theatre is absolutely fireproof, of structural steel, reinforced concrete and brick, with 12-inch fire cut-offs between it and adjoining buildings, and between stage and auditorium, except the arch, which is protected by a fireproof screen.

The exterior of the theatre is of Italian design in cream glazed terra cotta. There is a large window treatment on the second floor, hung with gold silk, covering a colored illumination system. The marquee is in antique copper and gold and 3,600 electric light bulbs supply one of the brightest spots in Kansas City's downtown section. The ceiling of the canopy has an indirect lighting system and the facings of the entrance, in black and white grand antique marble, are trimmed in antique gold.



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