



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Harry Mandel papers

1919-1988

*T-Mss 1993-025

Processed by Elisabeth Elkind.

Summary

Creator: Mandel, Harry, 1902-1988

Title: Harry Mandel papers

Date: 1919-1988

Size: 1 linear foot (2 boxes)

Source: Gift of Harry Mandel's son, Myron Mandel, and his granddaughter, Nina Mandel, in May 1993.

Abstract: Primarily printed material and business papers documenting the career of vaudeville and movie promoter, Harry Mandel, from the 1920s to the 1960s at RKO and its predecessors.

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Processing note: Processed by Elisabeth Elkind; Machine-readable finding aid created by Elisabeth Elkind.

Creator History

Harry Mandel began his career in the entertainment business in 1917 as an office boy for B. S. Moss Theatrical Enterprises which ran 8 vaudeville theatres, mostly in Manhattan. In 1920 Moss entered into an arrangement with the B. F. Keith Corporation to form a subsidiary company, the Greater New York Vaudeville Theatres Corporation. Mandel was with this company as a publicist until 1928 when Moss sold out to Keith and through various mergers, the company became the Radio-Keith-Orpheum Corporation or RKO. Mandel remained with RKO for the remainder of his career. In 1938 he was appointed National Director of Advertising, Publicity and Exploitation for the entire RKO circuit of theatres. In 1952 he was promoted to assistant to the vice president for theatre operations, in 1957 he became the vice president for theatre operations and in 1961 he was elected president of RKO, a position he held until he retired in 1966.

During World War II, Mandel was a member of the War Activities Committee of the Motion Picture Industry, serving as public relations chairman for the NY metropolitan area. In this capacity, he oversaw the creation and installation of a replica of the Statue of Liberty in Times Square as part of the successful sixth war loan drive. During the war, he was also asked to promote the film, *North Star*, a sympathetic picture of the Soviet Union. Later, Mandel was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee to explain why he had lauded communists, though RKO was able to provide sufficient documentation to spare him from having to testify.

The creator of the slogan, "Fantasia will Amazia" for the Walt Disney film, Harry Mandel was born on December 31, 1902 in New York City to parents who had immigrated from Eastern Europe. He died on June 17, 1988.

Scope and Content Note

The collection documents the career of vaudeville and movie promoter, Harry Mandel, from the 1920s-1960s. Of particular interest are the printed publicity booklets for the vaudeville houses in the 1920s, the printed propaganda work of the War Activities Committee of the Motion Picture Industry during World War II, RKO printed publicity from the 1950s and Mandel's typescript "Summary of My Business Career." His work at RKO is documented in press releases about him, typescript reports, manuals and addresses he wrote, and ephemera from his trips in the 1960s to Berlin for the premiere of *The Judgment at Nuremberg* and to the Far East to investigate business opportunities. The collection also contains clippings, and a few letters, contracts, minutes, and an award.

Arrangement: Collection is arranged chronologically with the exception of two folders of biographical material on Mandel at the beginning. Series I: Biographical material on Harry Mandel Series II: Chronological arrangement of material documenting his career Series I: Biographical material on Harry Mandel Series II: Chronological arrangement of material documenting his career

Key Terms

Subjects

Motion picture industry -- Public relations
Publicity
Vaudeville
World War, 1939-1945 -- Motion pictures and the war

Names

Mandel, Harry, 1902-1988
B. F. Keith Vaudeville Circuit
B. S. Moss Vaudeville Circuit
RKO Theatres Corporation

Container List

Series I. Biographical material on Harry Mandel 1966-1988 (2 folders)

- b. 1 f. 1 Summary of my business career by Harry Mandel n.d.
Typescript with career highlights
- b. 1 f. 2 Miscellaneous biographical information on Harry Mandel 1966-1988, n.d.
Includes speech in his honor, drawing and obituary.

Series II: Chronological arrangement of material documenting his career 1919-1979 (2 boxes)

Primarily printed publicity from the vaudeville houses in the 1920s, the war efforts of the motion picture industry during World War II, and RKO in the 1950s, but also a few manuscripts by Mandel and a small amount of letters, minutes, reports, contracts, clippings and ephemera.

- b. 1 f. 3 Vaudeville Managers Protective Association 1919 June 10
Illustrated history of vaudeville in a printed program from a dinner.
- b. 1 f. 4 B. S. Moss and B. F. Keith publicity 1920-1924
Booklets, pamphlets of reviews, and other publicity for the New York City vaudeville houses run by B. S. Moss Vaudeville and Picture Circuit and the B. F. Keith Vaudeville Exchange which had purchased a half interest in the Moss circuit in 1920.
- b. 1 f. 5 Clippings 1924-1928
- b. 1 f. 6 RKO press release and luncheon menu 1938
When Mandel was named head of publicity for RKO.
- b. 1 f. 7 Manuscript on the RKO gift ticket book 1938
Typescript [by Mandel] on the history of the motion picture theatre and more specifically, his gift ticket book promotion.
- b. 1 f. 8 Manuscript reports on wartime work 1944
Typescript manuscripts [by Mandel] on war bonds and loan work by the motion picture industry in New York City.
- b. 1 f. 9-10 War Activities Committee of the Motion Picture Industry 1942-1945
Printed publicity by the movie industry during World War II including volumes 1-4 of the pamphlet *Movies at War* and a Red Cross War Fund collection box. Also an issue of *The Film Daily*, *The Industry at War* and publicity for the motion picture drive for the March of Dimes in January 1945.
- b. 1 f. 11 Clippings 1940s
- b. 2 f. 1 RKO annual reports, history and manuals 1943-1961
Includes a boost your business work manual from RKO theatres by Harry Mandel.
- b. 2 f. 2 RKO publicity 1950s
Includes programs for Judy Garland and Liberace at the RKO Palace Theatre and booklets, postcards, flyers and press releases on other RKO theatres.
- b. 2 f. 3 Clippings 1951-1957
- b. 2 f. 4 Press release and board meeting minutes of Glen Alden Corporation, the parent company of RKO 1961 Jan.-Feb
Press release announces Mandel's appointment to the presidency of RKO.
- b. 2 f. 5 Mandel's addresses to RKO managers' meetings 1961 Mar.-Oct
Typescripts with handwritten revisions.
- b. 2 f. 6 *Mandel's trip to Berlin for Judgment at Nuremberg premiere* 1961-1962
Includes letters, itinerary, address by the Governing Mayor of Berlin, Willy Brandt, publicity, programs, clippings and ephemera.
- b. 2 f. 7 Award presented to Harry Mandel as president of RKO 1962 June 4
By New York Mayor Robert F. Wagner, with photo.

Series II: Chronological arrangement of material documenting his career (cont.)

- b. 2 f. 8 **Letters and telegrams to Mandel 1962-1986**
From John F. Kennedy, Hubert Humphrey and others.
- b. 2 f. 9 **Mandel's employment contracts with RKO theatres 1964**
- b. 2 f. 10 **Mandel's trip to the Far East 1964**
Photo, partial itinerary, press release, clippings and ephemera.
- b. 2 f. 11 **Articles by Mandel 1967 Oct.**
His column "Industry Comment" for the *Motion Picture Herald*.
- b. 2 f. 12 **Report of a meeting of the National Entertainment Committee for Youth Opportunity 1968 Apr. 2**
Harry Mandel had just been appointed coordinator for the committee.
- b. 2 f. 13 **Articles from film magazines about Mandel 1960s**
- b. 2 f. 14 **Clippings 1960s**
- b. 2 f. 15 **Radio City Music Hall and RKO Roxy Theatre publicity 1979, n.d**
Souvenir programs.