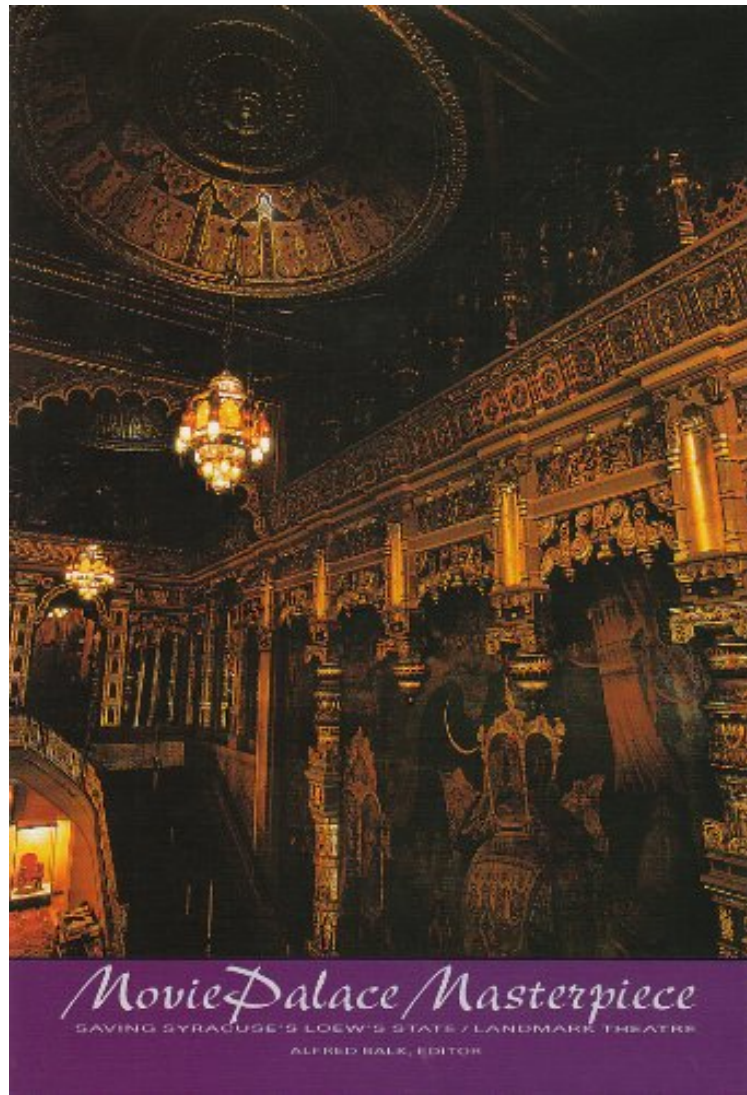


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*Alfred Balk*

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## Movie Palace Masterpiece

**Alfred Balk : Movie Palace Masterpiece** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised [Movie Palace Masterpiece](#):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy MikeExcellent. Very informative.3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A SMALL VIEW INTO A BIG THEATREBy James H. RankinThis work celebrates the exotically beautiful Loew's STATE theatre in Syracuse, NY, USA. The 78 pages of the ten inch high by seven inch wide publication constitute a booklet within hard covers which are entirely black with a gold stamped spine 3/8ths of an inch wide. It has a section of 16 color plates on glossy paper, but the remainder of the sewn-in pages is of standard matte book paper.Those who would review a book on a theatre are those who love theatres and look forward to each

new effort, and the former STATE (now the LANDMARK theatre) is certainly one of architect Thomas Lamb's most wonderful works and deserving of praise, but, unfortunately, this "booklet" is not. While not every book on an individual theatre could be the Magnum Opus that is, for example, "FOX-The Last Word" about the fabulous San Francisco FOX, such books can be more than this amateurish paste-up. The author, Alfred Balk, lists himself as "Editor" because there really is no text, as one would expect of an authored work. He is a former magazine editor and a professor of journalism, yet we find no evidence of the scholarship that such credentials might suggest. Instead, the Editor, in conjunction with a Production Editor apparently from the Syracuse University Press, has assembled a small collection of photos and news clippings together with some captions to tell the theatre's story. Had each of these been exhaustive, they might possibly have delivered all the information a \$25 hardbound might be expected to. Sadly, that is not the case. Mr. Balk as a member of their Board of Directors and Archivist has merely pasted up dozens of newspaper clippings interspersed with photos, the black and white ones being of poor quality on the matte book paper. Often the layout is a montage with one clipping photographed atop another! Not only is the reproduction quality poor making for difficult reading, but often the clipping is cut off wherever the editor wanted to conserve page space and the reader looks in vain for the rest of the item. Is this book about the notable architecture and decor of this famous movie palace? Not really. The 16 pages of color photos do help one gauge the exotic ambience of what remains after much restoration, and there are three full pages of black and white photos which suffer from the book paper. These together with five b/w photos and captions lifted from "Marquee" magazine of the Theatre Historical Society in Elmhurst, Ill. as well as two theatres books, are augmented only by four reproductions of the giant blueprints in much reduced size. Even at reduced size the blueprints are seen to be works of art in themselves but cry out to have been made as foldouts in larger size so that they could be fully appreciated. It is rather like trying to look at the "Mona Lisa" through a peephole. Since it is difficult to economically reproduce 3 by 4-foot blueprints in a book, then there should have been drawings in simplified form made from these to delineate all major facets of the theatre. This is commonplace for floor plans, but not one such is in the book - including no floor plan, which is vital to understanding a structure. This work does, however, make good use of its dust jacket where the front panel is a glossy, varnished color photo of the lobby and the back panel gives us the only view of the organ console in 1950, apparently in situ, but there is no caption about it. So, this is not an architectural work about this 2,900-seat performance hall. Is it a commercial history? Only in the most limited sense in that clippings are again intended to be the bulk of the text about the history of this house. What is the book about? Mostly the "Save-the-State" campaign and subsequent restoration efforts. Sixty-one of the 86 clippings and over half the pages reflect the names involved in these efforts and comments on their progress, the hard work of which volunteers is to be applauded! But the last paragraph of the Introduction gives its real *raison d'être* when it states that they hope the book will stimulate support from many sources. Is your purchase price going to help the LANDMARK with financial support? They don't say. It might be mentioned that the full page photo of the stage switchboard by Westinghouse is a welcome exposition revealing the nine light groups for the auditorium, and 15 such for the stage, all in three colors and ten presets. It is a pity that they didn't key the house controls to numbers on a photo of the auditorium. Such illuminating detail is often overlooked in other books (pun intended). Is this "booklet" worth \$25? Yes, if one has no other images of so mystical a theatre, but those who have other theatre books such as "Great American Movie Theatres" will see almost as much there, albeit not in color. If only this grant-funded book were the masterpiece that the theatre is!

This volume documents the history of the Loew's State/Landmark Theater, from its dazzling beginnings on Syracuse's Little Broadway in 1928 through its inspiring rescue from demolition and into its new life, which began in 1978 as the nonprofit, citizen-owned Landmark Theater.