

Alfred Gruenhut Talk-A-Vision / Soundies Collection (gruenhut)

ONLINE RECORD: [HTTPS://BMAC.LIBS.UGA.EDU/INDEX.PHP/DETAIL/COLLECTIONS/3707](https://bmac.libs.uga.edu/index.php/detail/collections/3707)

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Alfred Gruenhut (or Grunhut) was born February 1, 1905 in Augsburg, Germany. He was an inventor and designer. He and his family evacuated Germany prior to Kristallnacht and thus were able to keep their belongings, including a number of Leica cameras which he sold after arriving in the U.S. He arrived in New York City in August, 1937, sponsored by a distant cousin. He eventually moved to Chicago. He brought his wife, Edith, her mother and sister, and both of his parents to the U.S. by 1939. Alfred Gruenhut worked in New York with Yermie Stern on the invention of "Talk-a-Vision," one of several "jukebox shorts" machines which enabled people to watch films in a department store or tavern, like a movie jukebox. His other inventions include a lo-jack for boats, vending machines, and an optical illusion carnival machine.

"Jukebox short" is the umbrella term for these music, dance, and comic performances, which are often all referred to as "Soundies," though that term really identifies only one producer's films. These were short reels of 16mm film that ran inside a coin-operated jukebox with a screen. The machines were an outgrowth of music jukeboxes and were placed in taverns for entertainment and even in department stores for showing sales films. You got to see one short film play by inserting a dime, twice as much as the nickel that got you a song on a record in a jukebox. The films ran on loops of several shorts joined together, and would stop after each individual performance played. If you wanted to see the same short again, you had to wait until the rest of the shorts on that reel had been played. This was one of the major drawbacks of the system: it wasn't as "on demand" as people would have liked, certainly not as simple as music jukeboxes.

The Mills Novelty Company of Chicago made the Panoram machine for playing their films that they called "Soundies." They had several competitors, among them being the Talk-A-Vision machine produced in 1940 by John E. Otterson and Yermie Stern of New York. Talk-A-Vision promoted itself as "The New Movie Cabaret."

Alfred Gruenhut was an inventor and the donation includes blueprints, technical drawings, and patents that related to Talk-A-Vision and optical inventions of his own, as well as patents from Germany. [See his Collection in the Hargrett Library.] In New York, he invented a system that made these jukebox shorts play inside the Talk-A-Vision machine and assigned that invention to Talk-A-Vision. Unfortunately, that company didn't last long, and the Panoram was the machine that outlasted its competitors. Alfred then moved to Chicago and worked for Mills Novelty Company, where the Soundies were produced, and raised his family there.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Telenews jukebox shorts and Soundies

EXTENT OF COLLECTION

44 16mm films, 1 collection of projector parts, springs, pads

Collection Contents

Alfred Gruenhut Talk-A-Vision / Soundies Collection (41 records)

[gruenhut_0001]	[Soundies compilation reel 10]
[gruenhut_0002]	Acad test reel
[gruenhut_0003]	Cartoon, Max and His Gang
[gruenhut_0004]	[Talk-A-Vision compilation reel 1]
[gruenhut_0005]	[Soundies compilation reel 2]
[gruenhut_0006]	Test reel
[gruenhut_0007]	Lanny Ross Fiddle Polka
[gruenhut_0008]	Rhapsody
[gruenhut_0009]	Parade of the Wooden Soldiers
[gruenhut_0011]	[Talk-A-Vision compilation reel 2]
[gruenhut_0012]	[Soundies compilation reel 1]
[gruenhut_0013]	[Talk-A-Vision compilation reel 3]
[gruenhut_0014]	The Music Maids with Sterns and Deane Parade of the Wooden Soldiers
[gruenhut_0015]	Talk-A-Vision Presents London's Maestro of Rhythm Harry Roy in a Harlemaesque Revue featuring Mabel Mercer
[gruenhut_0016]	[Talk-A-Vision compilation Reel 11]
[gruenhut_0017]	[Talk-A-Vision compilation reel 4]

[gruenhut_0018]	[Talk-A-Vision compilation reel 5]
[gruenhut_0019]	[Soundies compilation reel 3]
[gruenhut_0020]	[Soundies compilation reel 4]
[gruenhut_0021]	[Soundies compilation reel 5]
[gruenhut_0022]	[Soundies compilation reel 6]
[gruenhut_0023]	[Talk-A-Vision compilation reel 6]
[gruenhut_0024]	[Soundies compilation reel 7]
[gruenhut_0025]	[Talk-A-Vision compilation reel 7]
[gruenhut_0026]	[Talk-A-Vision compilation reel 8]
[gruenhut_0027]	[Talk-A-Vision compilation reel 9]
[gruenhut_0028]	[Talk-A-Vision compilation reel 10]
[gruenhut_0029]	Title Only
[gruenhut_0030]	Ruth Daye
[gruenhut_0031]	Janice Walter
[gruenhut_0032]	Harry Roy Harleemesque
[gruenhut_0033]	Sticks and Stones
[gruenhut_0034]	Sticks and Stones
[gruenhut_0035]	Latins Know How
[gruenhut_0036]	[Talk-A-Vision compilation reel 12]
[gruenhut_0037]	[Talk-A-Vision compilation reel 13]
[gruenhut_0038]	[Soundies compilation reel 8]
[gruenhut_0039]	[Talk-A-Vision compilation reel 14]
[gruenhut_0040]	[Talk-A-Vision compilation reel 15]
[gruenhut_0041]	Projector parts, springs, pads
[gruenhut_0044]	Eastman Kodak Test Film