



MOVIES, PREMIERES AND BALLYHOO

Although Hollywood had no lock on movie premieres, the publicity rituals seemed most appropriate on Hollywood Boulevard. The Chinese Theater held more premieres than any other Hollywood theater. Warner Theater and the Pantages ran close seconds.

Otto K. Olesen, who lit the Academy Awards, only did an occasional premiere. George Gibson made lighting premieres his bread and butter. A born hustler, Gibson started in the '20s and ended

in the '50s. If he promised fifty klieg lights and a studio publicist scanning the sky counted only thirty-five, George explained, "You gotta change wicks." Gibson's crowd control manager was an ex-Russian ballet dancer gone to seed, whose idea of crowd-control was a two-by-four in a bucket of cement. For years, Gibson touted his red-carpet treatment of stars. When he sold his business in the '50s, the carpet turned out to be a faded piece of red cotton.

Above: Spectators watch a Chinese premiere from the Hollywood Roosevelt rooftop, 1935.

Below: A crowd watches a premiere at Grauman's Chinese Theater, 1931. Sid Grauman used the parking lot east of the theater to advertise the current picture in light bulbs.

Opposite page: Shirley Temple at the American Legion Hall on Highland Avenue, 1936.



