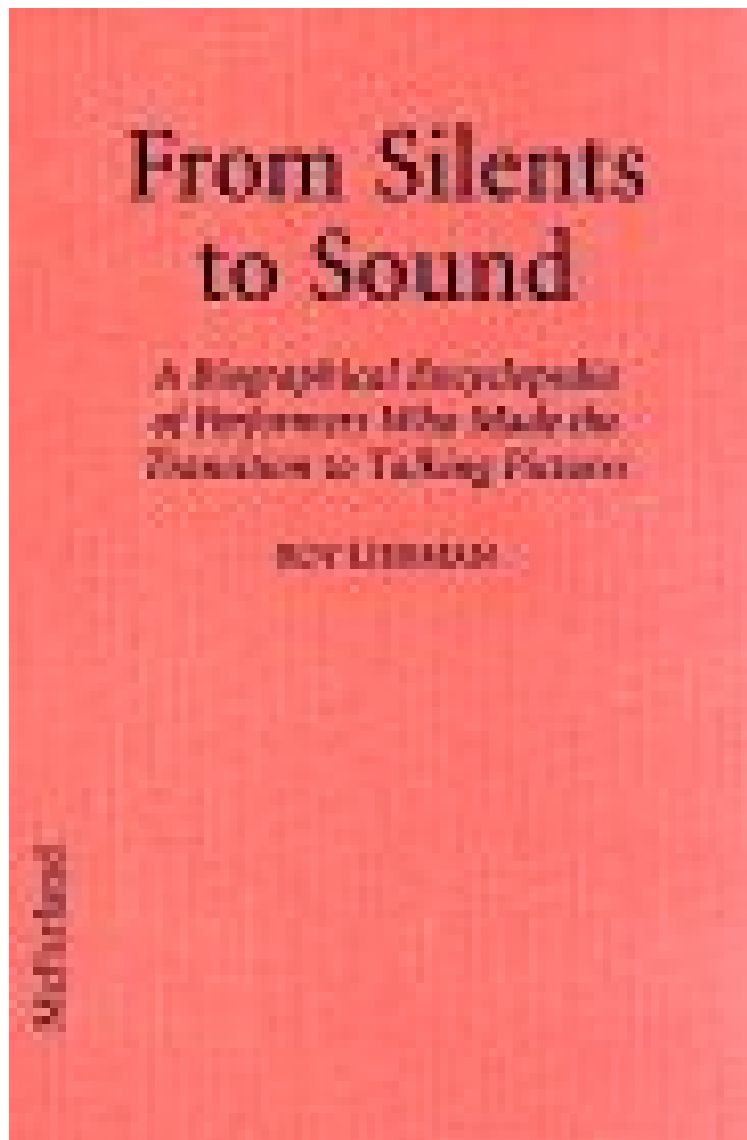


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## From Silents to Sound: A Biographical Encyclopedia of Performers Who Made the Transition to Talking Pictures

Roy Liebman

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**Roy Liebman : From Silents to Sound: A Biographical Encyclopedia of Performers Who Made the Transition to Talking Pictures** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised From Silents to Sound: A Biographical Encyclopedia of Performers Who Made the Transition to Talking Pictures:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. "...speaks her lines well" By F. J. PRISCO-- Variety, reviewing

Myrna Loy's role in "The Squall"Excellent browsing material for the silent-to-sound film enthusiast. Included are all the major names a lot of minor names a well -- it took me a while to think of someone who wasn't included, and now I can't remember who it was [Olive Borden? Nope, she's on pg. 38, with a whole column to herself]. Some minor names get only half a column [Joe Bonomo, no reviews; same for Dorothy Dwan]. Charlie Chaplin gets several pages to himself, as do his rivals Buster Keaton Harold Lloyd; similarly for major stars like Gloria Swanson, Lillian Gish or Mary Pickford.Each entry is established with two bios (one for their pre-sound career, the other for after), then a career commentary followed by excerpted reviews. Sometimes these commentaries are extensive, and their subjective nature allows for personal details of temperament fame -- even conjecture.The reviews are all from the sound era, this book's focus. Taken from various publications [mostly Variety], these offer a fascinating spotlight on how veteran actors from the silent era were regarded in those transitional days. Some laud or criticize acting ability, some simply note the actor's presence; some betray anxiety over voice quality. Sometimes the author adds commentary to explain specific references in the reviews.Bottom line: well-informed, with fascinating tidbits offering the 21st century insight into that bygone era. Much of the info in here can be found elsewhere, but not in such a specifically focused package. Sound films brought an anxious time of great change for film performers; for those interested in that moment of radical change, this is an indispensable book.2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A valuable research toolBy A CustomerAt first glance perhaps a rather narrow concept, "From Silents to Sound" proves to be a valuable tool, not only for researchers of the transition period 1929-1930, but also for silent film historians at large. Liebman's well-researched work lists more than 500 silent actors and actresses who made 3 or more sound films. The author breaks his own rules a couple of times -- what on earth has William S. Hart, who never made one, to do in a book partially about sound films? -- but why quibble? Better to err on the side of inclusion. However, I wish Mr. Liebman would have reprinted the exact reviews from trade-papers instead of paraphrasing. But again, that is a minor complaint which should in no way deter anyone from purchasing this always interesting and illuminating book.

Garbo talked, Gilbert self-destructed and Chaplin refused--thats about all many people know about silent film actors who faced the transition into talking pictures. Yes, Greta Garbos talkie debut was successful, John Gilberts was disastrous, and Charlie Chaplin did not deign to make one for over a decade. But there were many others--both stars and lesser lights--who also made the leap for at least one talking film. From Renee Adoree to Loretta Young, over 500 actors and actresses who made at least three silent films and had some starring or supporting roles in sound films are included in this reference work. For each performer, the place of birth, vital dates, nicknames if any, real name if different from stage name, and a source for filmographic data are included. This information is followed by capsule accounts of the performers silent and sound careers, along with contemporary reviews of selected talkies in which they appeared.

From BooklistAs popularized in the Gene Kelly movie Singin' in the Rain, the common myth about why silent actors failed to make the transition to talking pictures was that the actors had poor voices. Although this was true in some cases, for other actors the reasons were more varied. Some could not adapt their acting technique to talkies or were nearly at the end of their starring careers by 1927. The purpose of this work is to look at the major actors and actresses who went from silents to talkies.The encyclopedia covers 500 actors and actresses who made at least three silent films in which they starred or had major supporting roles and who made at least one talking film. This excludes actors such as John Wayne and Joan Bennett who were bit players in silent films. Also excluded are actors whose silent careers took place in foreign countries, such as Marlene Dietrich. But most of the big names are here: Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks, Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd, Mary Pickford, and Gloria Swanson, among others. A number of actors most people have probably never heard of, such as Ralph Graves, Gilda Gray, and Polly Moran, are listed as well. Many movie watchers forget that Mary Astor, Billie Burke, Gary Cooper, Boris Karloff, and Bela Lugosi began their careers in silent movies.Each entry contains dates of birth and death, real names, stage names and nicknames, brief citations for filmography sources, overview of career, and excerpts of selected reviews for sound movies. The length of the entries corresponds to the success and length of careers; the entry for W. C. Fields is much longer than the entry for western star Rex Lease. The appendixes include a list of silent stars who did not appear in talkies and "one-and two-shot wonders" who only made one or two talking films. A bibliography of film reviews, film periodicals, catalogs, and general books comes next. An index of names completes the work.Although rather narrow in scope, this is a most interesting work. Even the most casual browser will be impressed with how many silent films were made and how many silent film stars did make talking pictures. The speculation on why some could make this transition and others could not is thought provoking. This work is recommended for public and academic libraries with a collection emphasis in motion pictures, popular culture, and entertainment. "[a] well-written, educational, and eminently readable look at the turbulent history of an industry that affects us all" -- ARBA"a wonderful read" -- Public Library Quarterly"fill[s] [a] niche in film biography...useful" -- Choice"five hundred...are profiled" -- Past Times"more than 500 actors and actresses who made at least three silent films and went on to make one or more sound films" -- Classic Images"presents an A-Z of performers who began their careers in the silent era" -- Film "provides real names,

stage names, dates, and references for filmography for more than 500 actors and actresses" -- AB Bookman's Weekly "this is a most interesting work. Even the most casual browser will be impressed...thought provoking...recommended" -- Booklist/RBB "very readable reference book...informative.... The author writes engagingly and his descriptions of the performers and their screen personas are right on target" -- The Silents Majority On-Line Journal About the Author Roy Liebman, the film bibliographer at California State University in Los Angeles, also wrote Silent Film Performers.