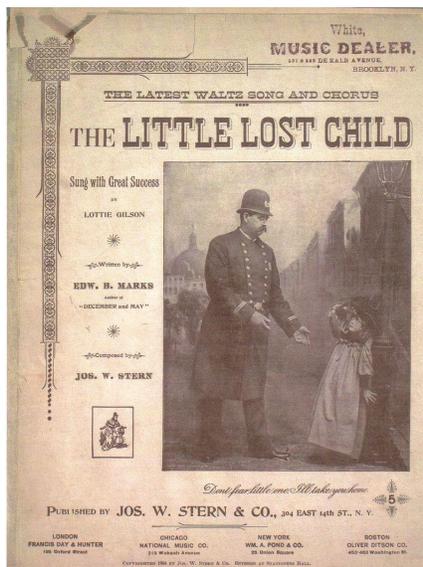


## Handout 2 - Sound and Image in the Era of Recording Technologies

Until Thomas Edison first recorded sound in 1877, sound and image were always experienced as one. It had been that way since music was first made. One saw a performance as one *heard* the music, whether it was a neighbor playing guitar or an orchestra in a concert hall. But suddenly, with the advent of recording technology, a listener could replay *just the sound* from a performance, and a performance that had already past. It was nothing short of a revolution.



It may be, however, that there is a human desire to see as one hears. For just as soon as Edison's invention revolutionized the experience of listening, the audience for those recordings wanted to see something as they listened. Recordings, whether in the form of 78rpm shellac discs or later cassette tapes, had images to accompany the music stored on them. The images could focus the listener's experience. Some argue that the first "music video" was made as early as 1894, when Joseph Stern's and Edward Mark's recording of "The Little Lost Child" was promoted with moving slides and marketed as an "illustrated song." Though the average American did not yet own equipment to play a recording of the song, over 2 million copies of the sheet music of "The Little Lost Child" sold following its appearances in the "nickelodeon" theaters of the era.

When in 1927 technological advances in film allowed the successful synchronization of sound and image in a "moving picture," the film demonstrating this new technology was *The Jazz Singer*, which, not surprisingly, featured the acting *and* singing of recording star Al Jolson. Then, it seemed, sound and image had been restored to their original relationship, arriving to the audience's eyes and ears together. But more was coming.

In 1929, Bessie Smith, "The Empress of the Blues," could be seen and heard performing "St. Louis Blues" in the moments before a feature film played in the movie theater. Of course, the present-day "movie theater," at which one attends a single film, was not yet a fixed concept. Movie houses coupled feature films with "shorts" of various kinds, and some even incorporated them into larger bills that included live dancers, musicians and comedians. In 1945 Louis Jordan and his Tympany Five





released their massive hit “Caldonia” as a “soundie,” to be played on a visual jukeboxes called the “Panoram” (pictured to the right). With the emergence of television, new opportunities extended the possibilities. On *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* a young Ricky Nelson began performing songs at the conclusions of the show--and the audience hungered for more. These are just a few examples among many.

Though the music business remained focused on selling recorded music during its first hundred plus years, there was an awareness that music culture was a thing of both sound and image. With MTV, the fullest possibilities of giving the eyes and ears a shared experience would be explored as never before. But the story of MTV really started many decades before.

