

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Finally on DVD! Movie 'Heard Round the World' that Changed Film Industry Forever ...

***THE JAZZ SINGER 80TH ANNIVERSARY
3-DISC COLLECTOR'S EDITION
From Warner Home Video October 16***

**Entertainment Legend Al Jolson Stars in the 1927 Black and White Classic,
Newly Restored, With Collectible Memorabilia and Hours of
Additional Content, including New Documentary "The Dawn of Sound"
And over Three and 1/2 Hours of Rare Vitaphone Shorts**

Burbank, CA (July 9, 2007) – Experience film history on October 16 when Warner Home Video (WHV) debuts on DVD the studio's landmark motion picture, *The Jazz Singer*, the first feature-length film with synchronized dialogue and musical sequences. The movie, which brought Broadway superstar Al Jolson "alive" and seemingly singing from the screen, was an immediate sensation when it opened in 1927 and created a revolution in the history of the motion picture industry.

WHV proudly presents *The Jazz Singer* in a deluxe **3-disc 80th Anniversary Collector's Edition** (at \$39.92 SRP), with the film itself immaculately restored and remastered from earliest surviving nitrate film elements and original Vitaphone sound-on-disc recordings. Hours of rare, and never-before seen features include a myriad of vintage shorts and film excerpts, a 1947 radio show adaptation featuring Jolson, a commentary from film historians Ron Hutchinson (founder of The Vitaphone Project) and Vince Giordano, and a wealth of collectible memorabilia. Orders are due September 11.

Disc two contains a new full-length documentary feature, *The Dawn of Sound*, commissioned by Warner Home Video specifically for this very special DVD release. The 93-minute film covers the 30+ year struggle to successfully unite sound and image on motion picture screens. The fascinating narrative of failures and triumphs is propelled by insights from notable film historians as well as interviews from many talents who reveal their personal experiences of this tumultuous period in film history.

The third disc includes more than four hours of extraordinary Vitaphone shorts (see more detail below), unique and historic rarities that capture performances from the era's great entertainment legends of the era: Burns & Allen, Baby Rose Marie, Weber & Fields, Blossom Seeley and Benny Fields and many others.

Said George Feltenstein, WHV's Senior Vice President Theatrical Catalog Marketing, "Since the arrival of DVD more than ten years ago, we have had a torrent of requests for this cinematic milestone. However, we wanted to take the necessary time and care to create a unique collectible release in a special multi-disc presentation that explores the historical context. We anticipate that this will become a 'must have' item in any serious DVD collection, and we hope the film's legion of fans will be pleased."

The Jazz Singer – Background

The Jazz Singer stars entertainment legend Al Jolson in a story that bore a few similarities to his own life story. Jolson portrays a would-be entertainer whose show-business aspirations conflict with the values of his rabbi father (Warner Oland). *The Jazz Singer* began life as a 1925 Broadway play, and was revived early in 1927, starring George Jessel. The Warner brothers offered Jessel the opportunity to reprise his stage role on the screen, but he and the studio couldn't agree on salary. The studio then offered the part to Eddie Cantor who declined. The part was finally offered to Jolson, who was then at the height of his popularity.

Jolson had broken new ground on the stage and sold millions of phonograph records. Just his name on the marquee of a Broadway theater, or on a piece of sheet music, almost always guaranteed success. He found the challenge of conquering the screen via the new VITAPHONE technology irresistible. Jolson headed to Hollywood and began work on ***The Jazz Singer*** at a fervent pace. Only a few months later, his labors resulted in the creation of an indelible piece of motion picture history.

While a few earlier sound films had bits of dialogue, they were all shorts. The first Warner Bros. Vitaphone feature film, *Don Juan* (1926), starred John Barrymore, and was a handsomely mounted epic. It was a silent film, but one that featured a synchronized instrumental score and sound effects. Audiences and critics responded with great enthusiasm, and *Don Juan* was a box-office smash. Many thought its success was not so much due to the feature film, but more for the fascinating program of Vitaphone shorts that preceded the feature. Its success drove Warner Bros. to try and expand the potential of Vitaphone. Like *Don Juan*, ***The Jazz Singer*** was initially conceived as a silent feature film, with synchronized underscore and sound effects, but this film would have synchronized singing sequences built around Jolson performing as only he could. There was never any intention to have dialogue in the film, but during his first vocal performance, Jolson improvised the words: "Wait a minute, wait a minute, you ain't heard nothin' yet!" In actuality, ***The Jazz Singer*** contains a total of only two minutes of synchronized talking, most of it improvised, while the rest of the "dialogue" is presented through the typical standard "title cards" found in all silent movies of the era. But after Jolson uttered his now famous line, the rest was history.

The movie premiered at the Warner Theater in New York City on October 6, 1927 and soon became a national phenomenon, limited only by the relatively small amount of theaters (200) who were already equipped with Vitaphone's sound-on-disc technology (a process developed by Western Electric and Warner Bros. wherein a 16" disc was synchronized with standard 35mm projection equipment). The film was a smash everywhere it played, and led to the installation of sound equipment all over the nation. Less than 2 years later, nearly 8000 theaters were wired for sound. Fueled by Jolson's charisma and Vitaphone, ***The Jazz Singer*** created the momentum for "talking pictures" that couldn't be stopped. Silent films would soon become virtually extinct.

Directed by Alan Crosland, the film co-stars Warner Oland, May McAvoy, and Eugenie Besserer. Among the hit songs featured in the film are Jolson's trademarks, "Toot-Toot-Tootsie, Goodbye", "Dirty Hands, Dirty Face", "My Mammy", and a then-new song composed by Irving Berlin ... "Blue Skies." The story was remade in 1952, starring Danny Thomas and Peggy Lee, and then again in 1980 with Neil Diamond and Lucie Arnaz. There was even a television version in 1959 starring Jerry Lewis. None of these subsequent iterations were anywhere as successful as Al Jolson's history-making original from 1927.

DVD Special Features:

Disc 1 – The Movie

- All new feature digital transfer and immaculately refurbished soundtrack from restored picture elements and original Vitaphone-Sound-on-Disc recordings
- Commentary by film historians Ron Hutchinson and Vince Giordano
- Collection of rare cartoons and shorts:
 - *I Love to Sing*-a classic 1936 WB parody cartoon directed by Tex Avery
 - *Hollywood Handicap* classic M-G-M short with Al Jolson appearance
 - *A Day at Santa Anita* classic Technicolor Warner Bros. short with Al Jolson & Ruby Keeler cameo appearance
 - "Al Jolson in 'A Plantation Act'" 1926 Vitaphone short made a year prior to ***The Jazz Singer***
 - *An Intimate Dinner in Celebration of Warner Bros. Silver Jubilee*
- 1947 Lux Radio Theater Broadcast starring Al Jolson (audio only)

- Al Jolson Trailer Gallery

Disc 2 – The Early Sound Era

- All-new feature-length documentary *The Dawn of Sound: How Movies Learned to Talk*
- Two rarely-seen Technicolor excerpts from *Gold Diggers of Broadway* (1929 WB film, most of which is considered lost)
- Studio shorts celebrating the early sound era:
- *Finding His Voice* (1929 Western Electric animated promotional short, produced by Max Fleischer)
- *The Voice That Thrilled The World* - Warner Bros. short about sound
- *Okay for Sound* 1946 WB short celebrating the 20th anniversary of Vitaphone
- *When Talkies Were Young* 1955 WB short looking back at the early talkies
- *The Voice from the Screen* 1926 WB 'demonstration' film explores the Vitaphone technology and, looks at the making of a Vitaphone short.

Disc 3 – VITAPHONE SHORTS

In Warner Bros. began producing a series of short films which utilized the Vitaphone process. These films ran the gamut from musical theater legends and vaudeville acts, to dramatic vignettes and classical music performances from the most prestigious artists of the era. Most of these were shorts considered lost for decades, until a consortium of archivists and historians joined forces with a goal to restore these magnificent time capsules of entertainment history. Up until now, contemporary audiences have only been able to see these shorts via rare retrospective showings in a few large cities, or through the limited release of a restored handful of the earliest subjects, which were part of a 1996 laserdisc set. This new collection will finally make these amazing rarities available to the thousands of film fans awaiting their DVD debut.

- Over 3 1/2 hours worth of rare, historic Vitaphone comedy and music shorts

Elsie Janis in a Vaudeville Act: "Behind the Lines"

Bernardo Depace: "Wizard of the Mandolin"

Van and Schneck: "The Pennant Winning Battery of Songland"

Blossom Seeley and Benny Fields

Hazel Green and Company

The Night Court

The Police Quartette

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Ray Mayer & Edith Evans: "When East Meets West"

Adele Rowland: "Stories in Song"

Stoll, Flynn and Company: "The Jazzmania Quintet"

The Ingenues in "The Band Beautiful"

The Foy Family in "Chips off the Old Block"

Dick Rich and His Melodious Monarchs

Gus Arnheim and His Ambassadors [

Shaw and Lee: "The Beau Brummels"

Larry Ceballos' Roof Garden Revue

Trixie Friganza in "My Bag O' Tricks"

Green's Twentieth Century Faydetts

Sol Violinsky: "The Eccentric Entertainer"

Ethel Sinclair and Marge La Marr in "At the Seashore"

Paul Tremaine and His Aristocrats

Baby Rose Marie: "The Child Wonder"

Burns & Allen in "Lambchops"

Joe Frisco in "The Happy Hottentots"

Outstanding Collector's Edition Bonuses:

- Rarely seen behind-the-scenes Photo cards
- Original release Lobby card reproductions

- Original release Souvenir Program book reproduction
- Booklet with vintage document reproductions and DVD features guide
- Reproduction of post-premiere telegram from Al Jolson to Jack L. Warner

THE JAZZ SINGER 80TH ANNIVERSARY 3-DISC DELUXE EDITION

Catalog #: 79889

Street Date: October 16, 2007

Order Due Date: September 11, 2007

\$39.92 SRP

Feature Running Time: 88 minutes

4x3 Fullscreen, B&W

Dolby Digital 1.0 audio

With operations in 90 international territories, Warner Home Video, a Warner Bros. Entertainment Company, commands the largest distribution infrastructure in the global video marketplace. Warner Home Video's film library is the largest of any studio, offering top quality new and vintage titles from the repertoires of Warner Bros. Pictures, Turner Entertainment, Castle Rock Entertainment, HBO Home Video and New Line Home Entertainment.

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