

# HOLLYWOOD TEST

## Successful Color TV Demonstration Seen As Augury of Intensified Competition

By THOMAS M. PRYOR

HOLLYWOOD.

**P**RODUCERS of motion pictures had something to think about last week after witnessing the first coast-to-coast transmission of color television at the National Broadcasting Company studio in near-by Burbank. The perfection of the color in the demonstration staged by the Radio Corporation of America with a half-hour program of both live and filmed video, which originated in New York City, made a deep impression on the invited audience, including film studio executives, directors, producers, writers and actors.

The demonstration foreshadowed a new and more intensified era of competition between the two giants of the entertainment business. There no longer can be any doubt about the future importance of color in television. And when it takes firm hold within the next two to three years the effects of the new set-buying scramble will bite deep into the public's amusement spending money.

Hollywood is, however, in a more fortunate position to prepare for the expected onslaught than it was when television first came in. It knows, or should realize, that the challenge is real and can't be ignored, and, whereas the movie business was technically stagnant five years ago, today there is feverish experimentation with new forms of film presentation aimed at making theatre-going more interesting and exciting.

### Challenge

Now more than ever the movie business will have to come up with types of entertainment beyond the scope of television to remain "fustest" in the hearts of the "mostest." There is no reason to doubt the ability of the movie people to rise to the occasion artistically, but this does not guarantee that the economy of the business will not undergo further tightening before color television loses its novelty impact. In the long run, as experience even now is proving, the tug of war will be decided by the quality of the entertainment available.

Meanwhile, Hollywood no longer can point to color movies as being something television can't duplicate. The cold fact is that color television, even in its present experimental stage, is the equal, when seen under ideal circumstances, of the best quality color movies to be seen in theatres.

This is a circumstance of the utmost importance for the movie company heads to ponder. What happens now to the tremendous reservoir of old movies television long has eyed covetously and which the studios have refrained from releasing to protect theatre business? There are Technicolor prints among this group, but the vast majority of the pictures are in black and white. The business men at the heads of the movie companies will have to decide without undue delay whether to drain the last dollars out of these properties by releasing them to TV while there still is a market for them or to consign them to the vaults.

### Time Factor

David Sarnoff, chairman of the boards of R. C. A. and N. B. C., expects color TV sets to be in volume production within two to three years after the Federal Communications Commission gives the green light—and that is expected to come within a matter of weeks. Therefore, the movie business does not have any time to lose in deciding what to do. More than one film company executive has said in the not too distant past that such movies would be made available when the television market became profitable enough to warrant such action. The question now would seem to be, has time run out on Hollywood?

R. C. A., according to Mr. Sarnoff, is about to give its own demonstration of an electronic innovation of vital interest to the movie business. This is the instantaneous recording of picture images, in color and white and white, via magnetic tape. It is a system similar to that previously shown by the Bing Crosby research laboratories.

The full potential of the development will become more evident to the experts on Dec. 1 when the process will be demonstrated at the R. C. A. laboratories in Princeton, N. J. To quote Mr. Sarnoff: "In my lifetime I have witnessed many advances in radio, television and electronics. But few have stirred my imagination more in recent years than color television and video tape recording \* \* \* electronic motion pictures—in black and white and in color—for television, for the theatre and for the home will stem from this remarkable development."

### Prospects

Perfection of the tape-recording process, and its availability in quantity at a price equal to or less than that of photographic film, could well lead to complete revolution of the motion picture business. With the introduction of the electronic camera to production, a good deal of the present time-consuming and cumbersome techniques of movie making could be eliminated. Directors and producers could project a scene immediately after it was shot to determine how it played on the screen.

There would be no delays caused by overtaxing of laboratory developing facilities such as is the case today, especially in the field of color pictures. Moreover, physical handling of movies on reels of tape only a half inch in width would most likely simplify distribution problems and bring about substantial savings in this operation. Beyond this step there lies a long and adventuresome trail, which, as has been previously suggested, might lead to electronic distribution of movies to theatres in a city from a central telecasting station.

All of these prospective developments raise serious and, perhaps for the immediate future, unanswerable questions for those engaged in the production and exhibition of motion pictures. But while uncertainties may be crowding the horizon and competition looming larger for the movie business, many new paths equally crowded with opportunities also are coming dimly into view. These are waiting to be pioneered by men of daring and imagination. There is plenty of evidence that such men have not faded from the movie scene.

### 3-D to Be?

The future of three-dimensional pictures appeared to be cloudy when we gazed into the departmental crystal ball last week. In New York, the Radio City Music Hall unveiled the standard, or 2-D version of M-G-M's musical "Kiss Me Kate," which was also filmed in 3-D. On Wednesday, the Palace will begin showing Universal-International's melodrama, "The Glass Web" as a standard 2-D offering. This feature, as might be guessed, also comes in a 3-D version.

However, M-G-M relayed the news that the company had run test engagements of "Kiss Me Kate" in six cities which showed that the 3-D version did 40 per cent better business than those which screened the standard prints of the film. The 3-D "Kiss Me Kate" was screened in Columbus, Dallas and Syracuse, while Evansville, Rochester and Houston played the standard version. At this point it seems to be a case of "you pays your money and you takes your choice."