

STUDIO PROBLEMS OF TINTED VIDEO

By VAL ADAMS

THE highly favorable reaction by most observers to the recent color television demonstration by the Radio Corporation of America in Princeton, N. J., has put new zest into behind-the-scenes activities to bring tinted video to the public. Aside from the engineering and electronic aspects still under development, tricky problems and new methods loom for producers of color programs.

The market for men's blue shirts, deemed technically fashionable in black-and-white television, is expected to drop sharply once color arrives. The well-dressed television man then will turn to gray shirts, which, on color screens, will appear as off-white. Of course he can wear blue if he desires, but white clothing and costumes, which "blossom" when put through an electronic system, still will be taboo in color TV. In monochrome or tint, a white shirt reflects light into an actor's face and makes a jumble of his profile.

The fundamentals of make-up used in black-and-white television will be servicable for color, but the art must be expanded. Minor defects in the handsome face of an actor may not be visible in person, but a color camera will bring them out like a floodlight drawing mosquitos on a hot night in New Jersey. This electronic irritation has been discovered by A. Vance Hallack, for the last four years color production manager for the National Broadcasting Company, an R. C. A. subsidiary.

Skin Tones

"The problem is not so much to make the actor look natural, as he really is," says Mr. Hallack, "but to make him look like what the television audience thinks he should look like. The average person never notices that most men have red noses, but they do. You just don't notice it in real life. Put a man in front of a color camera and his red nose stands out, red being a primary color. The audience might get the wrong impression and ask, 'What's the idea of putting intoxicated actors on your show?' So the make-up department has to work on the nose and give it the same skin tone as the rest of the face. If it's extremely red, we might put on a covering of grease."

Most people have red ears, too, says Mr. Hallack, and on tinted TV they stand out like barn doors. The ears get the same treatment as the nose.

Mr. Hallack recently got a call from a model, just returned from

The Use of Color Raises Many Tricky Questions For the TV Producer

Florida, who said she had a beautiful sun tan that she thought would look fine on one of his color programs. Much to her surprise, he advised her that it wouldn't.

"A sun tan causes a redness in the skin," explains the color expert, "although the skin looks dark. And naturally a dark color reflects less light than a brighter color."

Three to four times more studio lighting is required for color video than for black-and-white. Great skill and care is demanded in arranging lights to cover a whole series of actions so that color patterns, including flesh tones in particular, remain constant. Could a television producer halt his camera and light each action individually, as does a Technicolor movie producer, the job would be much easier.

Because of the amount of lights, it would seem that the studio of the future must be modernly air conditioned, whereas some in use today are not. It will be one of the additional costs which color

will command from the standpoints of program production and technical facilities. No one knows how much a color camera will cost, but experts agree that it will be costly for a station to convert monochrome facilities to originate its own color programs. Only minor adjustments are required, however, for a station to carry a color program fed from a network.

Outdoors

Engineers haven't yet licked the problem of outdoor color pick-ups. Here the camera is a victim of the moving sun, subjected to changing patterns of light which result in unstable color patterns. The worst conditions of all are those when the sun and fast-moving clouds play hide and seek. The best conditions occur on a murky day, when the natural lighting is stable.

Neither have engineers perfected new equipment so that a color TV camera can reproduce color film with a good quality picture. Color film presents a different set of color values from a "live" program in a studio and engineers must learn how to adjust a camera accordingly. If they don't solve the problem, television will be set back five years to the day of "live" programing.