

# HAIL CINERAMA'S B.O. PROMISE

## Cinerama—A New Milestone

Cinerama is undeniably a significant milestone in the development of the picture business and in the annals of show biz. Its likening to the impact of Vitaphone and the "The Jazz Singer" a quarter of a century ago is inevitable and obvious.

How and in what manner this new "third dimension" sound photographic technique will be adapted to the film industry, as we know it, has been answered, in a large measure, by showmen over the years because they have been traditionally resourceful in adapting all new advances. So, too, will it apply to this new invention. Maybe Cinerama will be feasible mostly for spectacles or outdoor operas. It's like saying that not every film feature has to be made in Technicolor. The current celebration of the diamond jubilee of Thomas A. Edison's recitative of "Mary had a little lamb" into a crude phonograph dramatizes what American ingenuity and industry have done to carry that forward into the \$200,000,000 industry that the recording business is today. Many showmen remember the opinion of another doyen of the picture business that "this Vitaphone business can't last; people come to the movies to nap and the sound will keep them awake!"

The current debut of Cinerama at the Broadway Theatre is a collection of shorts, most of which force the conclusion that "this is the cheapest (and best) Cook's Tour possible," as it transports the audience from rollercoasters to La Scala, Milan; from Venice and Vienna to Scots drills, Spanish bullfights and, best of all, a "See America First" that is a honey.

Cinerama may not be limited to subjects of scope and size. Obviously, big musicals, under this system, could make some of those Metro and Warner Bros. filmicals look like Fanchon & Marco units. But this new "third dimension" has other potentials, least of which is the same type of hypo for the film boxoffice as the advent of sound. The economics will fall in place thereafter if such is the case. True, there are the elements of equipment; three booths, sound-control engineer and picture-control engineer (all spelling out additional personnel); just as there is the realistic recognition that the panoramic screen, the extra booths, and all that goes with it, must cut down on the seats. The Broadway went from 1,600 to 1,250 capacity—but one thing is certain: the theatre is lit, there is a line around the block, they're getting \$2.80 top on a reserved-seat basis and extra shows on weekends. This is the kind of b.o. impact that even showmen must recognize makes new scientific adventure a good payoff. *Abel.*

## H'wood Doing Its Share, Now Up To Exhibs—Zukor

Chicago, Oct. 7.

"Good pictures won't do it alone—you must go to work," more than 100 exhibitors were warned at luncheon yesterday (Mon.) by Adolph Zukor, board chairman of Paramount Pictures.

Emphasizing that he was speaking for all Hollywood producers and not merely for Paramount, Zukor told the exhibitors that "Hollywood is doing its share; and you must work, harder than ever—with greater showmanship, imagination and exploitation than you've ever used before, if you want to reap the bright future of the motion picture business."

Calling television, ballgames, and special events like prizefights and election results "temporary conditions," Zukor said preselling today's films will get crowds back into the pic houses.

He predicted "tremendous changes" in the film biz, citing Cinerama and other technical advances, but cautioned that even these innovations call for "solid exploitation."

## Exhibs Stress Rise In Overhead as Key To Fight Vs. 20% Tax

While theatre business generally is taking on a firmer tone, the continuing rise in overhead is being stressed by many exhibs in their efforts to convince law-makers of the need to repeal the Federal 20% admissions tax.

It's pointed up that a flock of new pix are ringing up grosses of close to the peak 1946 level, but the operating expenses have climbed so considerably since that time that it's virtually impossible to avoid red ink in the ledgers. Only answer, say the showmen, is the tax relief.

## Negro-White Theatre In Memphis Nixed By Binford on Walcott Pix

Memphis, Oct. 7.

Lloyd T. Binford, Memphis' baffling censor czar, last week tossed a lefthook at the Joe Walcott-Rocky Marciano fight pic, released by RKO. He banned the films from playing the downtown Warner Theatre because the local house has a Negro gallery—but at the same time he okayed the fight pix to play the downtown Strand, where there are no seating facilities for Negroes.

Carroll Beasley, manager of the Strand, said his theatre had bid for the pic, but was second to the Warner house. Beasley told VARIETY that since the Warner theatre was the highest bidder here, "we naturally expected the picture to play there. But the day before the fight (Continued on page 27)

## CINERAMA CAPACITY 35G IN N.Y. DEBUT

Cinerama will be a terrific grosser, judging from its first week ended last night (Tues.) at the Broadway Theatre, N. Y. Playing 17 shows, including three matinees Friday, Saturday and Sunday, it wound up its initial session with \$35,000, or virtually capacity for the 1,250-seat house. It is playing two-a-day policy, strictly reserved-seat, with \$2.80 top at nights and the lowest price 90c, for weekday matinees.

When the Broadway played legit musicals some years ago it had a 1,900-seat capacity, but for "This Is Cinerama" more than 600 seats have been removed. This was necessary to provide for the large, curved screen and additional projection booths, etc., on the main floor.

Long lines have swamped the theatres boxoffice. While the advance seat sale originally was for just eight weeks, it now has been extended to 16 weeks. Ticket agencies are flooded with orders.

For the first few days, when Cinerama had the World Series as afternoon opposition, the matinees were not completely sold out. But after the second afternoon show last Friday (3), every performance has been capacity.

## COMPARE IT TO BIRTH OF SOUND

Public introduction of Cinerama, spectacular process which gives the illusion of tri-dimension, has served to underscore the "new" possibilities on the horizon for the film industry.

Large-screen television for theatres, home-subscription TV as a new outlet for producers, and technological advances in straight filmmaking, along with Cinerama, portend startling changes for the trade. But the big question facing industry leaders centers on Cinerama.

The new film process scored a smash debut at the Broadway Theatre, New York, last Tuesday (30). It obviously thrilled the audience, and reviewers likened it in importance to the advent of sound. Numerous dailies across the country gave it page one importance.

As for its future, a couple of pioneers, in statements to VARIETY, revealed themselves to be greatly impressed with Cinerama's potential.

Adolph Zukor, Paramount board chairman, said: "Those who say they can predict what Cinerama can do are wrong for they simply don't know. But I do believe it's an opening wedge on the future, and the possibilities are enormous. (Continued on page 26)

## 'Blossom Time' Due For Mayer Filming, Maybe in Cinerama

Louis B. Mayer's return to the picture business will probably be in a tieup with Cinerama. He now has three properties, the latest of them "Blossom Time," the Sigmund Romberg operetta based on the Franz Schubert melodies and long a Lee & J. J. Shubert theatrical property. Mayer had to sign 39 different contracts to clear "Blossom Time."

The other properties are "Paint Your Wagon," Broadway legit musical of last season, for which he paid \$200,000 and a percentage, and "Joseph and His Brethren."

## National Boxoffice Survey Key City Biz Holds Strongly; 'Ivanhoe' No. 1, 'Quiet' Still 2d, 'Fatima' 3d, 'Pirate' 4th

Despite TV competition from the World Series for matinees, first-run biz shapes up very strong this session in key cities over the country. Launching of new, virile product, some of it at upped scale, is enabling many houses to land big to socko trade. Several keys covered by VARIETY, such as St. Louis, Chi and Minneapolis, were aided by cold fall weather. However, some spots noted a dent being made in the boxoffice by avid interest in the Presidential campaign.

"Ivanhoe" (M-G), which was champ last week, again is No. 1 by a healthy margin. "Quiet Man" (Rep) held in second spot for the second consecutive week after being leader in the previous stanza. "Miracle of Fatima" (WB), fourth a week ago, moved up to third position. "Crimson Pirate" (WB) was fourth, only a step behind "Fatima." Fifth money goes to "One Minute to Zero" (RKO).

"Just For You" (Par) is capturing sixth place, while "Somebody Loves Me," from same company, will land seventh. "Monkey Business" (20th) is winding up eighth, with "Son of Paleface" (Par) in ninth slot. "Sudden Fear" (RKO) rounds out the Big 10 list.

"Merry Widow" (M-G) and "Fearless Fagan," also from Metro, are the runner-up films in that order. Former was sixth a week ago.

"Because You're Mine" (M-G), which opened hefty in L. A. and

## RKO's New Mgt. Has No Qualms About Selling Pictures to Television

### Sherwood Writes for Rita

Hollywood, Oct. 7.

Columbia has closed a deal with Robert E. Sherwood for an untitled original as a Rita Hayworth starrer. Price is reported to be \$50,000.

## MPEA Protests Italy Restricting U.S. Pix Imports

Italian customs authorities in recent weeks have begun to limit the importation of American films. Their action, which runs counter to the 1951 Italo-U. S. film pact, has brought a sharp protest from the Motion Picture Export Assn.

Violation of the agreement, as well as the problem posed by the reinvocation of the controversial Article X of the Italian film law, under which the Rome government fixes rental terms, will be the subject of discussion between John G. McCarthy, MPEA v.p., and Dr. Nicola de Pirro, director general of the Italian governments Entertainment Industry Bureau, this week.

De Pirro and the rest of the Italian government and industry delegation arrived in New York Oct. 6 to attend the "Salute to Italian Films Week." Among the matters he is discussing during his stay here is the proposed expansion of Italian Films Export to include actual distribution of Italo pix.

Italian customs action is a puzzle to foreign department toppers since their deal with the Italian government clearly provided for unrestricted imports. Indirect American financing of IFE to the tune of \$2,500,000 over two years, coming from 12½% of the frozen U. S. earnings in Italy, was part of the same agreement. Money is (Continued on page 78)

Newly-installed heads of RKO, already on record as declaring themselves "unbound by any dedication to the past" so far as television is concerned, frankly are out to grab a buck from TV if it's economically feasible over the long haul. And they'll have no qualms about exhib sensitivities.

On the Ralph Stoklin-Arnold Grant management side, there's been no pre-determination on which course the company will take concerning TV. However, persons close to the syndicate told VARIETY that it would be unwise to dismiss arbitrarily the possibilities of selling pix to video if it's to enhance the position of the company.

So far as possible exhib resentment is concerned, it's claimed that theatremen would unhesitatingly turn to entertainment other than films if it were available and if the profit potential were attractive.

"If they (exhibs) had a Walcott-Marciano fight every night for large-screen television, undoubtedly they'd take it," said a spokesman for the new owners. His point was that exhibs are not bound by any loyalty to distribs and the latter are under no compulsion to do business only with theatremen.

Part of the statement, which was (Continued on page 71)

## 20th-Fox Engineers Study Eidophor In Mass. Prod. Plans

Engineers at 20th-Fox are studying improvements in the Eidophor color theatre television system, preparatory to putting the equipment into mass production. 20th-Fox owns global right to Eidophor outside of Europe.


Job of turning out the Swiss machine on assembly line basis goes to General Electric but no schedules have as yet been set. Attempt is being made to cut down the size of the projector, which was (Continued on page 54)

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