

GEAR NEAR & DEAR TO 20TH

Allied in New Rap at 20th 'Pressure'

Exhib Body Criticizes Efforts to Line Up Other Producers 'Fraternally'

Allied States Assn. has charged that 20th-Fox is not only exerting pressure on all the film companies to adopt CinemaScope but is also seeking to have them follow the same policies in reference to screens and sound installations. Complaint, registered in a National Allied bulletin, notes; however, that "Allied is not throwing a monkey wrench in the wheels of progress and it offers no criticism of exhibitors who can afford to and have installed full CinemaScope equipment, including stereophonic sound."

Exhib org's main concern "is for the thousands of exhibitors who either cannot afford the whole works (stereophonic sound accounts for more than one-half the cost) or whose theatres are not adaptable to such installations."

Cited by Allied as an example of the "pressure" is the letter sent in October by Charles Skouras, prez of National Theatres, and brother of 20th topper Spyros Skouras, to Y. Frank Freeman, as chairman of the Motion Picture Producers Assn., urging universal adoption of CinemaScope. Allied notes that in the course of his letter Charles Skouras "described the stake which his circuit formerly directly affiliated with 20th Century" has in CinemaScope.

Allied notes that Metro and Warner Bros. already have announced a number of pictures in CinemaScope. (Continued on page 20)

Nevada Judge Sloughs 3 RKO Stockholders In Tangled Lawsuit

Las Vegas, Dec. 29. Three of the four petitions for intervention in the complicated minority stockholder suit against RKO and Howard Hughes were thrown out of Clark County Superior Court by Judge Frank McNamee. Only petition granted was one by attorney Louis Weiner.

Judge McNamee postponed the trial from Jan. 4 to Jan. 11 and ordered the intervenor to pay all expenses incurred thus far.

Court's action was assailed by Bernard Reich, Beverly Hills attorney originally named as Los Angeles counsel for the plaintiffs. He charged collusion between the defense and NY counsel for these plaintiffs.

Declaring that Judge McNamee's action flies in the face of the universally accepted rule that every stockholder has a right to be heard, Reich added: "If the trial in Nevada is postponed for any appreciable time, I intend to renew my motion for the appointment of a special master before the Federal Court in L. A."

Col Sets Distrib Deal For Aussie-Made 'Jedda'

Sydney, Dec. 22. Leroy Brauer, Columbia Managing director here, pacted a deal with Charles Chauvel for distribution of latter's color pic, "Jedda," shortly coming off the production lines after a span of about two years. Film is a local yarn, with Chauvel producing-directing. It carries an Aussie cast. "Jedda" will probably be released over the Greater Union loop.

Par Top Japan Grosser

Tokyo, Dec. 22. The 10 U. S. major film companies in Japan which released 15 films in November earned a gross of \$2,547,000. Paramount led the list with \$333,300.

Other companies and their totals follow: WB, \$213,800; Metro, \$197,200; Columbia, \$194,400; 20th-Fox, \$175,000; RKO, \$174,000; Universal, \$130,000; Republic, \$61,100; UA (estimated), \$55,500, and Allied Artists, \$13,300.

Arch Oboler
who pioneered 3-D
has his own ideas of
Operation Eyeball
* * *
an amusing byline piece in the
48th Anniversary Number
of
VARIETY
OUT NEXT WEEK

Why Fight Video, Utilize Instead, Says Lightman

M. A. Lightman, prez and general manager of Malco Theatres in the south, is one exhib who wouldn't mind if the distribs sold their old pix to TV. "Television," he said in N.Y. last week, "like radio, is going to help rather than hurt our business. We should use it as much as possible. It creates audiences for us, and in the long run we have something much better to offer."

Lightman returned to the U. S. after a three-week combination business and vacation trip to Europe and is now back at his Memphis headquarters.

"I disagree with a lot of my fellow exhibitors," Lightman observed. "I don't think we should treat TV like the pest. I like CinemaScope—think it's great as a matter of fact—and I'm all for stereophonic sound. I can't see why they keep beating 20th-Fox over the head with it. As I see it, stereophonic sound is going to be just great when they learn how to use it properly. But more important, along with the wide screen (Continued on page 51)

INT'L SCREEN AD SERVICES

Form Advertising Pix Producers Assn. With 5 Countries Repped

London, Dec. 22. Formation of an international organization of advertising film producers was announced in London last week, following prelim confabs in Paris. Foundation members have been recruited from Britain, France, Italy, Belgium and Germany. It is hoped to embrace the principal Commonwealth countries and also the U.S.

Only one producing company will be accepted from each country and arrangements are being developed to promote an interchange of product. The Board of Trade here has been advised of the plan and is hopeful it will prove to be a valuable weapon in Britain's export drive.

British members of the new org, which is known as the International Screen Advertising Services, are Pearl & Dean, which has a tieup with the Associated British circuit as well as about 3,000 other theatres. The other member companies have an entry into 12,300 film houses.

J. P. Byrne Hits Trail

John P. Byrne, Metro's eastern sales manager, began a tour of the company's exchanges throughout the U. S. on Monday (4).

Hop is Byrne's second l. less than a month and is tied up with his extra task as chief of the company's 30th anni sales drive.

WHY GIVE PUBLIC LESS THAN BEST?

By FRED HIFT
Admittedly hardpressed from many sides to ease up on his CinemaScope exhibition standards and merely release widescreen features, leaving the technical equipment questions to the individual theatre, Spyros Skouras left no doubt last week that he is going to fight the campaign to wrest control of the new medium's criteria from 20th Century-Fox.

Interviewed in N. Y. after a three-week European jaunt, the 20th-Fox president emphatically stated he was going to "fight as long as there is life" to keep CinemaScope intact. "Why do we have to bastardize this wonderful thing?" he asked emotionally. "We believe the success of CinemaScope depends on perfection and superiority over 2-D. We must give the public superior entertainment, and you can't do it without the proper light, sound and screen."

Observers, struck by Skouras' unusual vehemence in supporting the 20th point-of-view, saw in it a reflection of Skouras' frustration over both the continuing exhib pressure and the position of the other companies which have indicated that they may not follow the (Continued on page 10)

Skouras, Jr. Readies New Ampex Stereophonic To Serve 1,500-Seat Spots

New stereophonic sound system designed for houses up to 1,500 seats and costing \$3,995 has been developed by the Ampex Corp. which expects to be ready for first deliveries in mid-January.

Describing the three-channel system, Spyros Skouras, Jr., Skouras & Theatres topper and sales manager for Circuit Construction Corp. which handles the Ampex sound equipment, said it featured one 30 watt amplifier for each channel and was unique both for its low price and a variety of safety features.

Ross Snyder, Ampex chief engineer, said all of the Ampex multi-channel equipment, including the company's two more expensive lines, is designed for three tracks. It has four magnetic pickups. If an exhibitor wants to use the fourth track, which is for "surround" sound, he has to lay out an additional \$200 to \$300 for an extra amplifier.

Skouras emphasized that, should a failure occur in one or two of the power amplifiers, or one or two of the preamplifiers, none of the three sound tracks would be lost. They would be mixed into the remaining one or two amplifiers which would then carry all three tracks to the stage speaker. Should one or two of the speakers fail, the unit has an emergency device which channels all sound through the remaining speaker.

It was explained that the low cost of the equipment was due to a simplification of the system to make fuller use of lesser parts. There are about 100 houses currently equipped with Ampex units. Skouras estimated. He expects another 100 to get Ampex multi-channel sound by the end of January. Snyder pointed up the difficulty of getting skilled installation men. Ampex promises seven-day delivery starting in February.

\$6,500,000 So Far for Cinerama

A \$6,500,000 gross for "This Is Cinerama," first picture in the widescreen medium, is seen by Jan. 1 in its seven-city run by Stanley Warner prexy S. H. (SI) Fabian. Cinerama will have been viewed by 3,500,000 persons.

According to Fabian, the gross and attendance, is unmatched by anything in the history of the business. Since its preem in New York on Sept. 30, 1952, Cinerama has opened for long runs in Detroit, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, Washington and Pittsburgh. It bowed in San Francisco Xmas day and opens in Boston today (Wed).

Majors' Experimental New York Depot To Handle Prints Will Cost \$100,000

Morris Loewenstein
(Prez of the Oklahoma Exhibitors Assn.)
accents anew that pix is
Traditionally a Mass Biz—Don't Kill It Off
* * *
one of the many byline pieces in the
48th Anniversary Number
of
VARIETY
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It would cost the majors approximately \$100,000 to launch a central depot in N. Y. to handle shipping and inspection, sales toppers estimate.

Powwow last week took another step towards realization of the center with the sales managers appointing a three-man committee to study the various problems involved. Group which will report after Jan. 1, consists of William C. Gehring (20th-Fox), A. B. Montague (Col.) and Charles Reagan (Metro).

According to current plans, the distribs would set up a separate non-profit org to handle the operation which would be strictly a co-operation venture. However, because of its extensive experience in the field, National Screen Service has agreed to supervise establishment of the depot and to take care of the details involved in getting the N. Y. pilot model off the ground.

Original plan had involved the use of both N. Y. and Charlottesville as test cities. It's now been decided to concentrate on N. Y. as a guinea pig and to figure on the basis of this operation the extent to which savings can be realized. While not all of the companies stand behind the project with equal enthusiasm, no one has indicated so far that he wouldn't (Continued on page 51)

Furber in '48 Private-Eyed Harry Brandt

Name of John G. Broady, identified with a wiretap plot during William O'Dwyer's tenure as mayor of New York, was introduced last week in the trial of Trans-Lux Corp. stockholders' suit against Harry Brandt and directors of the corporation. Trial is currently in its sixth week in N. Y. Supreme Court.

Questioning of Percival E. Furber, prez and board chairman of T-L, by Jerome B. Ross and seven other stockholders, brought to light that Broady was once hired for investigative purposes prior to a proxy battle at Trans-Lux. When Furber's and Brandt's attorneys objected to the line of questioning, Ingraham said his purpose was to show that the witness and other directors of T-L "had substantial mistrust of the intentions, motive, and past action of Harry Brandt." Part of the long complaint against Brandt and the T-L directors charges the latter with negligence in allowing Brandt's buying and (Continued on page 16)

PLUSH C'SCOPE PREVIEW

Brother of Japan's Emperor at 20th-Fox's Tokyo Trial Run

Tokyo, Dec. 22. A plush demonstration of CinemaScope was presented last week by 20th-Fox before an invited audience of diplomats, industry heads and members of the press at Tokyo's Yurakuza Theatre. Prince Takamatsu, eldest brother of the emperor, and his wife, headed the list of dignitaries who saw scenes from "The Robe," which is due to open here Dec. 26; "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" and other C'Scope pix.

Murray Silverstone, 20th-Fox international prexy, made a short speech before the presentation. Silverstone told the press later that the rights for production of the Fox anamorphic lens already have been given to the Japan Optical Co. and the rights to the wide-screen have gone to Yanagi Sound Co. The stereophonic sound system will be manufactured here by the Tokyo Koku Keiki for Western Electric.

Plenty of Juggling Of Prints to Swing 410 C'Scope Xmas Dates

Remarkable print-juggling feat last week made it possible for 20th-Fox to go through with 410 CinemaScope film openings throughout the U. S. on Christmas Day. Dates included 254 for "The Robe," 94 for "How to Marry a Millionaire," 56 for "Beneath the 12 Mile Reef" and six for "King of the Khyber Rifles."

To make possible these mass openings, 20th pulled prints from wherever it could. Situation is made difficult by twin factors: The serious shortage of prints on CinemaScope pix, and the high mortality rate of CinemaScope prints, particularly in relation to stereophonic sound which is recorded on magnetic tracks on the film.

In several instances 20th has lost money when print unavailability has forced the distrib to cancel dates on both features and shorts. "Vesuvius Express," for instance, the CinemaScope short, was supposed to play with "12 Mile Reef." As of last week there were only 10 prints of the subject available for booking and as a result quite a few exhibs went without it even though it's understood that the firstruns are willing to pay six or seven times as much for it than for regular shorts.

Technicolor lab on the Coast can (Continued on page 15)

Pioneertown, A 'Location' Site, Up for Auction

Hollywood, Dec. 29. Pioneertown, 20,000-acre old west tourist showtown, the site of many a cowboy opera, goes on the auction block Wednesday (30) at San Bernardino county courthouse. Security Title Insurance Co. is seeking \$80,000 for its interest.

Involved is 25-year lease on property held by Philip N. Krasne, president of Inter-American Productions, Inc., which makes "Cisco Kid" films.

PCC \$81,500 Short

Hollywood, Dec. 29. Still \$81,500 short of its 1954 goal, the Permanent Charities Committee of the film industry will resume its drive after the holidays to reach a total of \$1,225,000. Campaign was supposed to end by Christmas but the committee's report last week disclosed a total of \$1,143,490.