

NEW FILM PROCESS UNVEILED ON COAST

Todd-A.O. Method Is Shown
to Industry—CinemaScope
Innovations Demonstrated

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—This process-conscious film capital was treated today to demonstrations of the long-talked-about Todd-A. O. big-screen system and the latest innovations in the development of anamorphic, or squeeze, lenses used in the photography and exhibition of CinemaScope.

The sponsors of both developments could well feel proud of their efforts on the basis of comments picked up hastily and informally from industry creators and reporters who attended both showings.

Interest centered primarily on the Todd-A. O. technique, because it had not been shown publicly before and because it was the process selected by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II for the movie edition of their show "Oklahoma!"

The Todd-A. O. process is CinemaScope in simplified form. It engulfs an audience in the same fashion as the CinemaScope. The first part of the demonstration, held on a converted sound stage at the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studio, was almost a duplication of the scenic and thrill shots put on the screen by CinemaScope.

Roller-Coaster Opens Show

Michael Todd, the Broadway showman, who helped to get CinemaScope before the public, inspired the development of Todd-A.O. The A.O. stands for the American Optical Company, which carried out the technical and scientific work under the guidance of Dr. Brian O'Brien.

The demonstrations opened with a roller coaster ride, went on to show Madrid's famous bull ring, the Plaza de Toros, and gondoliers plying the canals of Venice.

To this reporter and others, the roller-coaster ride seemed as thrilling in the Todd-A.O. photography as in CinemaScope. One also experienced the same sensation of expanse and depth in the bull ring and canal sequences.

Mr. Todd said later that he had planned the sequences to emphasize the "identicalness" of the two systems.

During the second half of the showing, tests of dance numbers made in experimenting for "Oklahoma!" were screened. The ability of the huge screen, almost identical in dimensions with that of the screen used for CinemaScope, to portray intimate story drama was exhibited by a brief showing of part of the Smoke House sequence in the Rodgers-Hammerstein musical, with one character on the screen.

The bowl-shaped screen used in connection with Todd-A. O. was fifty-one feet wide and twenty-five feet high. Along the curve, which has a depth of thirteen feet, the screen measured sixty feet.

The big innovation here is that Todd-A. O. requires only one strip of film and one projection machine, whereas in CinemaScope three separate strips of film are run through three projectors in synchronization.

Many theatres can accommodate the simplified Todd-A. O. system without alterations and without the loss of seating capacity in the orchestra because the film is projected from the conventional booth.

Great Saving to Theatres

Costwise, this means tremendous savings to theatres. The new projection machines, now being manufactured in the Netherlands, are designed to accom-

modate standard 35 mm. film as well as the 65 mm. film used in the Todd-A. O. process.

Mr. Todd estimates the machines will cost about \$4,000, and will be in plentiful supply when "Oklahoma!" and other productions are ready for release. "Oklahoma!" will go into production next month, with Fred Zinnemann as the director.

The new refinements in CinemaScope camera lenses, exhibited at the Chinese Theatre here and at the Roxq in New York City by Twentieth Century-Fox, have brought about marked improvement in pictorial quality.

Color composition, clarity and depth of focus were impressively

displayed in out-of-doors sequences taken from such pictures, either just completed or still in production, as "Broken Lance," "Untamed" and "Garden of Evil." Fuzziness previously noticeable at the extreme edges of CinemaScope has been eliminated.

Darryl F. Zanuck, studio production chief who narrated the seventy-five minute demonstration picture, pointed out that mountains that loomed amazingly sharp in the background of the "Broken Lance" clip were twenty-six miles away from the camera.

The audience of approximately 500 Hollywood production workers and press representatives spontaneously applauded the detailed beauty of the outdoor sequences.

The contrasting quality of single-track sound, and four-track stereophonic sound also was effectively demonstrated. The demonstration today proved beyond question that stereophonic recording and reproduction has distinctive merits, especially in the reproduction of music.