



EXAMPLE of how Video Films makes semi-animated effects at little cost. Station identification (8-10 second) spot was made by first recording sound affect of train on film, then backwinding film and revolving background drum, shooting it at 24fps. Stream of compressed air bobbed train up and down. Spot was ready for air affet processing and editing.



THE SAME 70-DA Filmo company used to make its first Video Filme still proves useful for many assignments such as this shot for series of spots for Air Force. Camera is ideal for filming take-offs and air-to-air scenes.



ply in such locations makes Coloritan lights indispensable. Extra mike is for tape recorder that makes track for editing of interviews.

# Techniques For TV Commercials

TV spots demand the best of film production methods. Here's how Video Films turns out commercials for some of Detroit's leading tele-

vision program sponsors.

By WILLIAM R. WITHERELL, JR. Director, Detroit Television Council

N THE SIX YEARS since television left the laboratory stage and rapidly became a major entertainment medium, one element of the complexity that is television, the TV film commercial, has attracted a growing amount of attention and interest among the members of the motion picture profession.

Back in 1946, there were four principal sources for the film material used by early TV advertisers: many big sponsors made use of sections of industrials already produced; others turned to the film companies that regularly made their industrials.

Another source of film spot material for national accounts proved to be the theatre ad trailer. Already produced with good advertising showmanship, the running time of the theatre trailer was such that it could be put on the air with virtually no trimming.

An unexpected source turned out to be the stations themselves. Many advertisers were far from convinced that TV was here to stay. To attract these doubting Thomases, some stations would offer one simple 60-second film free or at cost with each thirteen week time purchase.

Except for the station, the regional and local advertisers, unlike the national advertisers, had virtually no place to turn. They had no backlog of industrials, no theatre trailers and they couldn't afford the services of the big industrial producers. This gap was quickly filled by a fifth source: hundreds of small, independent motion picture concerns that were formed almost overnight to produce films for television advertising. Today, the relatively few that survived the ensuing years probably turn out the majority of the commercials you see. Video Films is, in history, methods, growth and future prospects, typical of many of these intruders on the motion picture scene.

Video Films was started in Detroit in 1947 by Clifford Hanna, then recently returned from the Pacific where he had photographed Air Force combat and ground activities and had worked with Australian studios to complete his films. A local sponsor, the Detroit Edison Company, responded to Hanna's suggestions for a film commercial. Hanna took the pictures, the footage was cut by a local editing service and shortly thereafter. Video Films' first commercial went on the air.

Our first films were made with a Bell & Howell 70DA, a tripod, an exposure meter and three mushroom photofloods. We had no studio whatsoever. Interiors were shot in any convenient living room, bathroom or kitchen. We made our first dolly shot by placing our tripod on an inverted cardtable and pulling it over a carpet with a piece of clothesline. Today, we own what would be considered a minimum of production equipment by West coast standards. When anything additional is demanded, we rent it. By the same token, our permanent staff is quite small, but this we easily augment for specific occasions.

We certainly make no claim to being experts, but we have arrived at some methods and procedures that might be of interest.

For raw stock we prefer the regular Eastman Super X 16mm Reversal except when shooting 35mm. The use of reversal and the duplicate negative method of making release prints allows for effects and, equally important, gives us a standard emulsion-up 16mm print which cuts in, at the stations, with 35mm program reduction prints. Also, we have found that reversal original can take a lot of punishment and not show it. This handling factor is important because we usually edit the original footage . . . no master positives, no master negatives, no workprint. We commit this original sin for two reasons. The first: a good part of the editing is done in the planning stage. We know almost exactly how long each scene will run and what effects will be used before we shoot. Secondly, we cannot afford the time or the duplication of effort that a workprint necessitates.

It is no more than a coincidence, but it was nevertheless reassuring, to discover on a visit to Rochester, that Eastman, after months of experimenting with excellent closed-circuit facilities, had just chosen to recommend the same basic lighting set ups for TV films that we had settled on a few days previous. While I was there, I was privileged to



A CONVERTIBLE is used as a camera car for travelling shots. Director, behind camera, gives instructions to players in distance via hand mike and short-wave radio. Note lead wire attached to car's radio antenna.

see their excellent booklet The Use of Motion Picture Films in Television, before it went to press. And since Eastman has published its findings, it's no longer a secret that almost flat front lighting, with only the slightest difference between key and fill lights, coupled with overlystrong backlighting gives a very good

final image on the tube. It is a very definite rule with us to keep contrasts quiet. The tube has a way of manufacturing its own contrast, particularly where extremes are adjacent. Similarly, the tube is very unkind to dark areas at the bottom and right edge of the (Continued on Page 540)



TYPICAL Video Films studio setup shows use of vertical lines to reduce "smear." This scene starts with a medium shot, then gill looks up happily as camera travels down inclined tracks as hands uf yeason out of camera range sets down incline the set and the set of the set of the set of the set of poening frames of shot.

# PRODUCTION EOUIPMENT

CINE-SPECIAL II fl.4 Ektar, reflex magnifier, side viewfinder, exceptionally fine...... \$995.00

MAURER film phono, recond, at factory..... \$1,595.00 AURICON RT-70 recorder, amplifier \$425.00

OPTICAL 35mm Recorder, 1000' magazine, sync motor, va galvo, amplifier, fully re-conditioned by original manufacturer, fine production, outfit, price on request. AMPRO 16mm Arc projector, 12" speaker \$895.00

DUPLEX 35-16mm optical reduction printer \$595.00

BRIDGAMATIC model 216B processing \$2,345.00 machine STINEMAN developing system, 3 tanks, \$89.50

drying rack, case, new .......\$89.50 BGH DIPLOMAT projector, case.....\$129.50 BGH FILMOSOUND projector, 12" speaker \$395.00 VICTOR 1600' silent projector ... \$69.50

VICTOR 1600' silent projector VICTOR Lightweight sound projector \$275.00 ZOOMAR 16mm lens, like new.......\$895.00 BARDWELL-McAlister 750 boomlite 125.00

PRESTO K-8 disc recorder, like new 225.00 BRUSH SOUNDMIRROR 1/4" tape recorder \$125.00 MICRO 16mm hot splicer, new......\$75.00

E-K wide angle converter for 1.4 Ektar...... \$69.50 ALL COLORTRAN LIGHTING UNITS AVAILABLE

THE CAMERA MART, INC. 1845 Broadway, near 60th Street New York 23, N.Y. Circle 6-0930 Cable Address: Cameramart

would be to show the man closing his suitcase after packing it and starting for the door, followed by quick shots of him buying his plane ticket, passing through the airport gate, as the camera swings to the sign indicating the plane's destination. Here we make a lap-dissolve or, better perhaps, a fade-out followed by a fadein of the New York skyline, (we use a stock shot for this, or shoot a still of the scene in our titler) then cut to the man unpacking

at his destination. A typical treatment his bag in his (New York) hotel room. Thus in five short scenes, we have pictured the man crossing the continentfive scenes which all could have been filmed in Hollywood where the journey started (or any other place).

And speaking of Hollywood, the pictures that are made there all are pretty good examples of the application of tempo, both in the photography and the cutting. Study them, for no other medium demonstrates so easily how tempo puts the "move" in movies.

# TECHNIQUE FOR TV COMMERCIALS

## (Continued from Page 533)

frame. We keep these areas bright with any sort. TV does its own diffusion all lighting or light-colored props. We are too well. Backgrounds are tremendously imcurrently using a large percentage of portant. We are constantly trying to outlight from ceiling or pipe fixtures which wit what engineers refer to as "horicorrespond with the position of lights in most TV studios. This, we tell our-

zontal smear," an evil resulting from the scanning direction of television systems. selves, will make less noticeable the We have found that a preponderance of switch from live to film. It also helps vertical lines reduces this smear effect keep the floor clear for the many camera considerably and that any pattern is movements called for in most TV spot better than none. One of our favorite "cookies" for small objects, is a wire For exteriors, we like a slightly overrefrigerator rack. Window patterns are cast day, unless the sky is important to

also very successful. the scene. We use reflectors, and, where Essentially, the TV photographer is possible, booster lights to diminish the up against somewhat the same problems ratio between sunlight and shadow. In as his newspaper or publication countermany cases, we will use the sun as our part. Both have their pictures finally backlight and reflectors or boosters as presented by means of an intervening our key and fill. Outdoors or in, we mechanical step. The TV mosiac is not virtually never use diffusion devices of

unlike the photo-engraver's screen and photographers do best when they move in as close as possible and when they do not attempt to record an abundance of detail.

In shooting, we have to remember we have two different audiences: the client and/or agency people who usually view the spot on a projection screen and the home viewer who sees the same picture with a considerable portion of the frame cropped by transmission and reception. We try to fill these marginal areas with pleasant but unimportant picture matter.

We contract with United Sound Systems in Detroit for all our sound work in this area. We record all voice-over spots before shooting. This gives us an exact frame count for each scene, essential for animation and semi-animation, helpful on straight photography particularly where closely-cued movement is involved. Voice and sound effects are first mixed and recorded on tape then onto the track. We try to record above normal level; develop to a density as high as 2.5 so that the track area on the print can be as black as possible to minimize surface noise that sometimes results from rough handling of the prints at the stations.

Sync sound spots in the studio are recorded double system, directly on film in a separate recorder and also on protection tape. We have had good luck with an Ampex tape recorder with synchronous motor on location. In such a case, we will use clapboards at the beginning and end of a scene to determine later the exact amount of "creep." This is rarely over 4 frames in 40 feet, and in the average spot, sync sound sequences are broken up by cuts and voice-over inserts and rarely run over 12 feet.

Recently, we have broken away from the taboo of the visible microphone. In our "sitting at the desk" spots, we use a table microphone in the scene for two reasons. The TV audience is thoroughly accustomed to seeing microphones in newscasts, panel shows and many other programs. It is no shock. Secondly, the additional voice "presence" gained is particularly important in an intimate medium like television and the consequent decrease in room noise, particularly on locations, is another step toward technically perfect recording. When you consider that approximately 90 percent of the stations use 16mm projectors, the sound mechanisms of which may leave something to be desired, anything that can be done to give prints the best possible sound quality and the highest allowable level heavily outweighs artistic considerations.

In the field of animation, for which there is a growing demand, we are now working with an animation technique that calls for very few cels, a number of

111

# For Instant Movability and Advanced Design

"HYDROLLY" (TV or CAMERA DOLLY)

Hydraulic lift type for fast upward and downward motion of TV and Motion Picture cameras. Light weight - sturdy - easily transported in a station wagon. Fits through a 28" door. Adjustable leveling head. In-line wheels for track use. Steering wheel and floor locks.



# PRECISION - ACCURATE "SYNCHRONIZER"

# 16mm or 35mm IMMEDIATE DELIVERY!

Any combination of sprockets assembled to your specifications. Sturdy cast aluminum construction. Foot linear type, with frame divisions engraved on sprockets. Contact rollers adjusted individually for positive film contact. Fast finger-tip roller release. sprocket shaft slip lock, complete with footage counter.

# VARIABLE SPEED MOTOR with TACHOMETER

for Cine Special or Maurer Cameras

115 V. Universal Motor-AC-DC Variable Speed 8 - 64 Frames Separate Base for Cine Special Adapter for Maurer Camera

### INTERCHANGEABLE MOTORS:

12 Volt DC variable Speed 8-64 Frames. 115 Volt AC 60 Cycle, Synchronous Motor, Single Phase

Animation Motors: Cine Special, Maurer, B & H, Mitchell. Motors for Bolex and Filmo Cameras. Time Lapse Equipment

### ● Lens Coating ● "T" Stop Calibration

- Designing and Manufacturing lens mountings and camera equipment for 16mm and 35mm cameras.
- Bausch & Lomb "Baltar" Lenses and others for Motion Picture and TV Cameras.
- Rentals Sales Repairs: Mitchell, Eyemo, Bell & Howell, Wall, Cine Special Cameras.



Write for information and prices







VIDEO FILMS, Detroit, designed this editing table especially for its own use in cutting TV <u>advertising films. Features</u> include magnetic film clips, leader film supply (6 kinds) available through slots in table, viewing glass, sound reader with speaker, and electrically-heated film splicer in pull-out drawer.

۲ American Cinematographer

scripts.

AKELEY CAMERA AND INSTRUMENT CORP. 175 Varick Street

New York 14, New York

- Established 1914 ----

Designers and manufacturers of silent and sound motion picture cameras with 225° shutter opening, (288° shutter opening for television use). gyro tripods and precision instruments. Complete engineering and machine shop facilities for experimental work, model and production runs.

INOUIRIES INVITED

# **Develop Your Own Films**

with BRIDGAMATIC-it pays for itself! A true one-man lab — anyone can run it! Self contained automatic processors, 16mm or 16/35mm machines for TV Stations, Small Labs, Producers, Microfilmers, Reversal and Color models availab, standard or custom built. Prices start at 31095 Write for Illustrated Brochure

S.O.S. Cinema Supply Corp. Dept. F 602 W. 52nd St., New York 19, Cable: SOSOUND



BOLEX H16 OWNERS To One of the World's Finest Cameras, You May Now Add

camera speed. 3 convenient intermediate stops,  $\frac{3}{4}$  open,  $\frac{1}{2}$  open and  $\frac{1}{4}$  open, enable you to expose from 1/18 sec, at true 8 f.p.s. at open to 1/500 sec. at  $\frac{1}{4}$  open at true 64 f.p.s. Make complete transition lap dissolves any-time.

Make complete transition lap custores any time.
Fade-ins and fade-cuts at your fingertips.
Fade-ins and fade-cuts at your fingertips.
Fade-ins and fade-cuts at your fingertips.
Neutral limits outdoors with fast film.
Audible warning sound, when shutter in closed position when filming forward or hand-cranking either way.
Avail yourself of the many other advantages obtainable only with a controlled variable shutter species that sparkling professional touch movies that sparkling PRICES (within U.S.)
Cameras with outside frame counter...\$99.60
Cameras with outside frame counter...\$99.60
Price includes camera transportation back to you, Insurance coverage.

16mm & 8mm

Motion Picture Service

16 mm Reduced to 8 mm

8 mm Enlarged to 16 mm

Color and Black and White

164 North Wacker Drive, Chicago 6, Illinois

PREPARE NOW FOR JOBS IN

**TELEVISION FILMS** 

29 Flatbush

GEO. W. COLBURN

LABORATORY, INC.

35 mm slide duplicates

and film strip service

**16 mm Duplicates** 

**8 mm Duplicates** 

you, insurance coverage, and one year guarantee. (Local and state taxes where applicable, extra) Send for free detailed informative booklet. "Variable Shutter Units for Bolex H16" TULLIO PELLEGRINI 1545 Lombard Street San Francisco 23, Calif.

paper cut-outs and a vast amount of to have a backlog of spots when color patience on the part of the operator. Whereas there is no saving in camera time over full animation because it's still a single-frame method, there is a tremendous saving in artwork. The eight spots we've completed that use this technique may lack fluidity, but they are a great step up from their predecessor, the spot made with static artwork and the zooming camera. This cut-out technique may well give full animation a real run for its money in the TV spot field.

Our editing is handled in a relatively standard manner, except for the omission of the workprint. Our editing desks are specially designed for short lengths. Many of the features of these desks, such as magnetic film clips and the surface slot with a constantly available supply of different leaders, are, as far as we know, original with Video Films. They do not make the difference between good spots and bad, but they do make handling our short epics a little easier.

Final printing and processing is done for us in New York by Precision Film Laboratories. Since we achieve our desired contrast ratio through lighting and exposure of the original film, we do not ask the lab to depart from its normal procedures. Our 35mm footage is processed by either DeLuxe in New York or General Film in Detroit.

Looking ahead, we believe the future holds many challenges, the greatest of which is the nightmare of shooting for color TV. We have made eight 60-second spots in color for a client who wants are being compared by the client and

TV goes commercial. We know, however, that there will be much for us to learn in the meanwhile. We suspect that very soft colors and very soft contrasts will be required on the release print because they will be strengthened by TV until they look somewhat like today's Kodachrome on the home screen. The present CBS mechanical system, for instance, overemphasizes reds to a considerable degree. Correct backgrounds, lighting and processing are going to be even more important than in black-&white TV. Disregarding the dangers of improper station panel settings which might easily turn golden butter a bilious blue-green, Video Films fears most the future client, who may remark after a closed circuit screening, "But my product isn't quite that color!"

In conclusion, it is evident that we have had to work and may always have to work without much of the fine technical equipment available to the major Hollywood producer. We will always have to race against the inflexible, quick deadline, which means high shooting ratios for self-protection, bypassing certain standard procedures, and much improvisation. Despite this, TV film methods bear watching. The days of the unlimited budget for even the biggest feature producer are waning. Many of the time and money-saving short cuts our industry has had to employ may prove helpful in lowering the costs of

the bigger pictures. Conversely, the products of our trade

# Versatile Towmotor Serves Film Producers

PROOF THAT PROFITABLE uses for Towmotor fork lift trucks are not limited to industrial plants is emphasized by operations at Alexander Film Company, Colorado Springs, Colo. Day-in and day-out, this busy movie making organization keeps a Towmotor equally busy at dozens of varied jobs.

As illustrated, using Towmotor as a camera dolly facilitates high-angle shots and the taking of pictures going up or down. In the moving of scenery and equipment from set to set, the fork lift truck's speed and ease of maneuverability has proved highly advantageous for the Colorado studio. Other typical Towmotor motion picture production applications include raising and positioning heavy lights; stretching wire and rope wherever needed; all high rigging shots; loading and unloading heavy equipment; jacking-up cars in a hurry; and moving hard-to-handle flats on location. In between such handling tasks, the Towmotor serves as a scaffold for both painters and carpenters, and

Fork lift camera dolly.

replaces ladders for safer general stage maintenance work.



the viewer, consciously or subconsciously, to what they have seen on the big theatre screen. The eager amateur shutterbug, once "good enough for TV" has been generally displaced by the veteran photographer. It is high time that other members of the motion picture profession take their proper places in the making of TV film spots.

It is no longer excusable that important production planning be the province of recently promoted ad agency copywriters or the client's wife. Agency and client representatives are invaluable in the initial, overall strategy of a TV spot, but the execution of their thinking should be the responsibility of the producer, who should draw upon and utilize the techniques and skills of Hollywood. The Californians, in turn, need no longer belittle the TV spot. It is a distillation of much that is visually exciting in motion pictures and it is crystalizing into a surprisingly exact science, if not an art form. Furthermore, the TV spot, eight seconds or eighty, has solidified economically to a point where we can say with assurance that it is very definitely here to stay.

A truly remarkable improvement to the presentation of any silent film is achieved by the addition of music.



HOT SPLICERS! . . . \$65. 35mm cameras. Shows TV alignment. Your Griswold Splicer, Models R2 and R3. Outlines active receiving area and Academy (sound) aperture. converted to hot splicer . . . . . \$40.

Expert factory repairs. We mount lenses.



### **Always remember this...**

. . . if you are an advertiser with equipment or services to sell the motion picture industry: AMERICAN CINEMATOGRAPHER reaches every motion picture production center throughout the world.

A. Also courses for Amateur Movie Makers. STerling 3 9444 Avenue, Brooklyn 17, N. Y.

One of America's top schools offers concentrated courses in TV commercial film making. Fully equipped shooting stage. Eves. Easy terms. Write or phone Dept.