books reviewed

Electronic Motion Pictures

By Albert Abramson. Published (1955) University of California Press, Berkeley 4, Calif. 212 pp. Illus. Incl. Glossary and Index. 6 × 9 in. Price $5.00.

The historian, who is the first to explore a new field, undertakes a difficult task. He begins the long time-consuming work of extracting the important events from a mass of historical data, and of giving each proper emphasis in relation to the whole. Subsequent historical writers may build upon his work, so that eventually those facts of real historical significance emerge in correct perspective free of trivial detail.

Albert Abramson, a television engineer, is the first to write a history of the development of the electronic camera. In his book, particular emphasis is placed on the future of the television camera in electronic motion-picture production. His story begins with the work of Edison in motion pictures and of Nipkow in television and carries the reader through the development of the Electronicam system and magnetic video tape.

For his history of early developments in both motion pictures and television, the author evidently is able to rely on the judgment of previous historians; but in the new fields of television recording and electronic motion-picture making, often too much reliance is placed on the sensational claim of press agents. In general, this history suffers from a lack of proper emphasis on historical detail, and a lack of criticalness in evaluating technical aspects of the newer developments, perhaps the unfortunate consequence of being the first work of its kind in this specialized field.

For example, it is stated in a discussion of the Baird mechanical scanning disk system (p. 77): "It became obvious that no mechanical method, regardless of its degree of perfection could compete with an all-electronic television system." But in discussing magnetic video tape (p. 13) the author says, "Without any of the optical losses present in television film recording and with the electrical corrections possible in a television system, the magnetic process should produce recordings equal to live television quality." But yet, magnetic tape certainly must be classified as a mechanical scanning system! How can we reconcile these two statements?

There is much evidence that Mr. Abramson spent a great deal of time and effort in research in preparing this book. An extensive bibliography covering the source material makes the book a useful starting point for the future historian. A glossary of technical terms is also provided.—*R. M. Fraser*, National Broadcasting Co., RCA Bldg., Radio City, New York 20.

Cinéma et TV en Couleurs

By Jean Vivié. Published (1954) Editions B.P.I. 79, Champs-Elysées, Paris-8. 206 pp. 151 illus., 19 color plates. Paper cover. 5¼ × 8¼ in. Price 3,400 francs.

This book is a summary of a course given annually on that subject at the École Technique Photo-Cinema (Paris).

After a historical sketch on the development of color cinematography, the first chapter is devoted to an explanation of the physical properties of light, the physiology of color vision and the classification of colors. This section is followed by a lucid description of the principles, methods and applications of the trichromatic system of color reproduction.

The main section of the book gives an excellent analysis of more than twenty commercial processes which have been used in color cinematography. It would be unwise to assert that some of these processes are only of historical interest as, for example, the obsolete processes which made use of lenticular film may yet find considerable application in color television.

The book also deals with numerous topics associated with color photography, such as studio lighting, the use of filters, color sensitometry and densitometry, and many others. In fact, the whole extensive subject of color cinematography is as thoroughly treated as can be done in a work of this size.

The only adverse comment which could be made is that the title of the book is somewhat misleading, as only one short chapter is devoted to color television. It does, however, give a good description of the various color television systems pioneered in the United States together with some interesting information on the high-definition sequential-simultaneous system which has been developed by the Societe R.B.V.-Radio Industrie.

The book is distinguished by its use of informative color diagrams and color reproductions in addition to a great many excellent monochrome figures. A short bibliography and a table of contents are included.—*Andrew Tarnowski*, Research Laboratories, Eastman Kodak Co., Rochester, N.Y.

High-Speed Photography Volume 5 is a 359-page, paper-bound reprint volume from the *Journal* for July 1952 through February 1954. It contains a 9-page bibliography and 37 articles grouped under five headings: camera equipment; accessory equipment; applications of high-speed photography; general surveys; and data pertaining to high-speed photography.

Many of these papers are from the program of the First International Symposium on High-Speed Photography held at Washington, D.C., in October 1952.

Copies are available from the Society headquarters at 55 West 42 St., New York 36, at $4.50 a copy, with discounts for members or for large lots.