

indeed, the foundation of a successful film-producing business. We are a service industry, and the value of our service depends upon how closely we identify ourselves with those for whom we perform

the service. And to the extent that our services are of real and tangible value, they will be sought. Which is another way of saying that the fundamental challenge to a producer of commercial films is to

think of himself, and make himself, a valuable partner to American industry. We exist and prosper to the extent that we serve American business and those who build it.

Producing the Sponsored Documentary Film

By HENRY USHIJIMA

There are some special requirements and techniques related to producing sponsored documentary films. The documentary is different from the story-film not only in preparation required but also in basic approach.

PROBABLY NO word in the motion-picture dictionary has been subjected to so much loose usage as documentary. There are company-history documentaries, product documentaries, sales-technique documentaries, and quite possibly on Madison Avenue they're even calling TV spots that tell how fast certain products get from the stomach to the bloodstream — medical documentaries. Of course, in Hollywood, documentary is, and always has been, a dirty word — dating back, perhaps, to the time when Robert Flaherty's *Moana of the South Seas* flopped at the boxoffice in no uncertain terms. The dictionary, having suffered no financial loss, manages to be both objective and specific: "a motion picture that records news events or shows social conditions without fictionalization." Let's accept that, as a starter.

In distinguishing between a "story-film" and documentaries, it is fairly obvious that the former is concerned with development of a plot, whereas the documentary's primary task is exposition of a theme. The two have very little in common in matters of approach, technique and production responsibilities. In the story-film, it is fair to say that the director is the key figure. In the documentary, and this may raise some eyebrows, it is the editor who exerts the determining influence on the shape of the film. Now, that is not to say that the term editor includes only the man at the cutting table. The documentary director, during shooting, should properly perform a combined director-editor function; and prior to that, the writer on the job should similarly anticipate end results and function dually as writer-editor. For a supporting opinion on that, the following is quoted from the book, *Documentary*, by Paul Rotha:

"Not until you come to cut do you realize the importance of correct analysis during camerawork and the essential need for preliminary observation. For unless your material has been understood from the inside, you cannot hope to bring it alive. No amount of cutting, short or otherwise, will give movement to shots in which movement does not already exist. No skill of cross-reference will add poetic imagery to your sequence if you have been unaware of your images during shooting. Your film is given life on the cutting bench, but you cannot create life unless the necessary raw stuff is to hand. Cutting is not confined to the cutting room alone. Cutting must be present all through the stages of production . . . script, photography and approach to natural material . . . finally to take concrete form as the sound is added."

Thus, ideally, the perfect documentary would be one in which the writer-director-editor functions are performed by a single person. Unfortunately there aren't many triple-threat geniuses around in the industry, probably because we have necessarily had to specialize. Even Flaherty didn't do his own editing — at least not in his later works. But the next best thing is a very close collaboration, from the very outset of production, among writer, director and editor. That, I submit, is one of the first ground rules of successful documentary production.

Now we come to a term that is usually associated with the chief opinion-maker of a daily newspaper — editorial honesty. It pertains to the documentary filmmaker, too. It is to the documentary what artistic integrity is to the story-film. Without editorial honesty, the newspaper editor descends to the lowly rank of propagandist — and so does the film-maker. And just as the former must resist dishonest advertiser bias, the film-maker must resist sponsor pressure if it is dishonestly motivated. The documentary stands or falls on the truth of what

it has to say. We should call this ground rule number two.

This is not to imply, of course, that the sponsor is not entitled to a voice in the project. He's paying for it, he's the customer, and without him the film probably wouldn't be made. In most cases it will be intended to serve some valid company purpose — or may, simply, be a goodwill gesture in the public interest. But, in any event, sponsor rights do not include wilful and deliberate falsification or distortion of facts.

It was stated earlier that the documentary has, as its primary task, exposition of a theme, which may be extended to say exposition and interpretation of a theme. And that adds another major responsibility. Most documentary subjects — whether an event, a project, a thing or a concept — largely dictate their own exposition. They write their own story, so to speak, as far as *what* happens is concerned. But the emphasis, both seen and heard, can be controlled by the filmmaker. His *interpretation* of the happenings will, in most cases, have a dominating influence on the film's audiences. And there is more than honesty involved here. Knowledge is required. He must know his subject well enough to qualify as an expert, or his interpretation will almost certainly be inept, incompetent and probably inadequate. So, "Be informed," is ground rule number three.

Now, to the uninitiated, it might seem that the documentary, and especially the documentary-report, is the easiest of all possible films to make. Not so! Oh, it's true that in most cases you start with a ready-made subject, whereas before there can be a *story-film*, the subject must be created, the story must be written. But once you have script in hand, production is a fairly orderly business. There is a sound basis for planning and scheduling — and you know exactly what you have to put in front of your cameras to effect the transfer of story from script to screen. But the documentarist — ah, he'd better know how to "shoot from the hip," or not pack a gun. His finest opportunities may be the impromptu happenings that can't be anticipated. You just pray, live

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right and try to be ready for them. Then, as they say in *My Fair Lady*, "with a little bit of luck" things will turn out fine. Maybe.

Up to this point the emphasis, for the most part, has been on the documentary in general. But the subject can be somewhat more specific: filming conventions, assemblies and special events. Where do we begin?

First, we should decide on a point of view. Basically, this narrows down to a choice between subjective and objective — involved participant or detached observer, although it is sometimes possible to combine the two. It is to some extent a matter of opinion, but we believe the objective viewpoint is most effective when treating a complex and sometimes controversial subject like an assembly or a convention. It is in the special event — an automobile race, a

fishing derby or even a selling contest — that the subjective approach seems to work out best, because it tends to evoke audience participation. Thus, through the familiar device of mounting a camera on a racing car or boat, the film audience can experience the event from the driver's-eye point of view, which is certainly more exciting than seeing it from the grandstand. Couple that with a first-person narration — the driver thinking out loud — and the illusion is quite complete. Old ladies in the audience will faint, in their excitement — young men will exhaust themselves holding tight on the turns and giving 'er the gun on the straightaway — and a fine time will be had by all.

The illusion of reality — that is really what we are after here. Else why go to the expense of using the film medium to tell the story of an event, or a conven-

tion? Much cheaper to read about it in the newspaper — or get hold of the minutes — or study the official reports. But somehow words on paper never quite bring an event to life the way a film does. Reports are dull stuff, but a film — well, that's the next best thing to being there. In fact, sometimes, if it's properly made a film is better than being there, because the camera eye far surpasses the human eye in its ability as a keen and critical observer. Film has the ability to synthesize a complex series of events into something meaningful and easier to comprehend.

(At the Convention film clips were shown to illustrate factors and techniques involved in the production of two documentary films, one of the Lutheran World Federation Assembly and one of a National Aircraft Show.)

Low-Cost Movies for Business

The advent of high-quality 16mm cameras and magnetic-optical projectors, coupled with the new, faster film emulsions, provides increased opportunities for business and industry to use low-cost, internally produced training films. As an illustration of such possibilities, the author describes the production and use of films in connection with his company's Employee Suggestion System.

THE low-cost movie has a very definite place in many businesses today; and although the maker of these films is necessarily limited by the equipment he uses and his own lack of professional experience, these do-it-yourself movies will ultimately create more business for the professional producers.

The wise beginner, making a picture for his firm, will recognize his own limitations and will not attempt more than the basic fundamentals to achieve the initial mission. He will keep his movies as simple as possible. He will use no special sound effects, voices or trick photography. He will try to work as much as possible with one lens. He will avoid fades, dissolves, wipes and musical backgrounds. Although such movies are often used for special sales efforts to limited customer audiences, they turn out best when confined to an in-company audience which will hold within limits the niceties required.

The advantage of these movies to the professional who may not have been able to gain an audience with the company management are twofold: first, the movie is going to make more people in management conscious of the advantages of an

audio-visual program; and second, it is going to give them a taste for movies and a desire for a more professional job. There are many companies which avoid any sort of audio-visual program using movies because of the cost involved. More important, they do not know or do not realize what such a program can do for them in training, in sales and in public relations.

Aid in Selling Heavy Equipment

An example of companies that may find the movie helpful is one selling equipment so bulky that it is impossible for the salesman to transport it from prospect to prospect. It may well be complex equipment which must be seen in operation to be appreciated. Usually it is difficult for the salesman to arrange for his prospects to visit other plants. Someone in the company decides to make a movie of company installations, and does it with amateur cameras. Movies, even first attempts, can be powerful sales tools. They sell the equipment. From then on, any commercial film organization representative will find that company a prospect for a professional motion-picture program. Obviously it will cost more money, but it will sell more goods too. The professional producer knows all the approaches to business and consumer audiences alike, and can easily prove definite results to any company which has seen an example of the effectiveness of a motion picture.

By FRED A. DENZ

At the Remington Rand Division of Sperry Rand Corp., movies made by this writer as director of the Employee Suggestion System are being used internally to give added impetus to the program. My office also heads the suggestion system committees in 29 plants. With only a limited budget, I have found that by using motion pictures made, edited and presented by me, I can do my job better. My work is easier for me and is more effective for the company.

Making a Suggestion System Work

In suggestion work, the most important salesmen are the supervisor, the plant foreman and the office supervisor. My job includes selling the suggestion philosophy to supervisors so that they will in turn enlist employee interest and participation. Although charts, posters, pamphlets, displays and other visual aids have proved very helpful, none have been nearly as effective as movies. Wherever a suggestion is covered in one of the films, an effort is made to show both the "Before and "After" scene and the individual who made the suggestion. Five such films have been made by the Remington Rand Division. The first three were black-and-white, the last two in sound and color. Each of them cost less than five hundred dollars.

The first step in making one of these films is to determine the plant where the operation of the Employee Suggestion System is to be photographed. Then the picture is produced much as some of the old-time movie directors used to do it — extemporaneously. Shooting starts by making pictures of highway markers and route signs to help identify the plant location in the titles and introduction of the

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