



## 8mm and New Small-Format Film Systems

*Following improvements in image and sound quality the mass amateur film of yesterday becomes the sophisticated amateur film of today, and tomorrow it is used for large-scale distribution of prints. This has been the story of 16mm film, and now 8mm is the candidate. Large-scale distribution means new problems, and need for optimum utilization of format—and also a new look at the older film proposed to be displaced. The Journal editorially welcomes this extensive new inquiry into the small format possibilities and the divergent views that have been stimulated. The subject is of such great importance to the Society that the Engineering Vice-President's comments have been solicited.*

PIERRE MERTZ, Chairman of the Board of Editors

### From the SMPTE Engineering Vice-President

DEANE R. WHITE

RECENT discussion of the potentialities of 8mm film for fields of use requiring multiple copies (prints) has been quite spirited. As a medium for home movies the present standard 8mm format gives a widely accepted balance of quality and cost. This fact alone warrants consideration of the system for some other usages where the cost-quality balance is important. Firm conclusions concerning such usages must be based upon accurate appraisal of both technical and economic factors.

No one is arguing publicly for a still smaller format as a means of cutting costs still further; therefore it is logical to consider that today's 8mm format represents the practical low limit of size. It appears widely accepted that the satisfactoriness of presentation of today's 8mm format decreases rather rapidly as audience size increases.

Today's home movie system depends primarily on use of camera originals processed by reversal and shown without duplication. The economics of this process are unique, and conclusions cannot be transferred directly to a system which will be primarily dependent on multiple copies.

Technical papers appearing in the *Journal* have dealt largely with questions of quality, sometimes discussing methods proposed for better meeting particular requirements associated with proposed usage outside the home movie field. Economic factors frequently enter the discussion since it is clearly a cost-quality balance that is involved.

With this background, it is proper and inevitable that the utility of today's established 8mm system will be challenged and re-evaluated to determine its utility in proposed new fields. Only critical comparison of the established system and proposed variants will achieve fundamentally sound long-term policy.

Papers published in this journal together with their oral and contributed discussion are a part of this critical comparison and evaluation.

Need for a more systematic attack on the problem outlined here was expressed at the Los Angeles Convention and took its most definite form in the action of the 16 & 8mm Engineering Committee of the Society. This committee formally recommended

“that a joint subcommittee be formed with representatives from the 16 & 8mm, Sound, Laboratory Practice and Film Dimension Committees and that all proposals for changes in standards for 8mm picture, film dimensions and sound be referred to this committee for discussion, action, and recommendation to the appropriate Engineering Committee for processing.”

The Engineering Vice-President, acting for the Society, has initiated the organization of an ad hoc Committee on Utility of Small-Format Motion-Picture Films. Today's size in this field is the present 8mm format. It will be the responsibility of this committee to

*Develop, for fields such as the educational usage of small format films, information on the technical characteristics vs. utility relationship by*

(1) assembling and developing relevant technical facts concerning the performance of today's 8mm motion-picture system;

(2) considering proposed variants from today's system and assessing their technical importance as solutions to problems evident from data collected under (1) above; and

(3) reporting the results of their work to the Society, including such recommendations to Engineering Committees as they reach.

*(See page 598 for the Committee Roster.)*